A Lasting Impact? The MLB All-Star Game and its Impact on Psychic Income

Aaron Clopton, The University of Kansas
Henry Wear, The University of Kansas
Jesse Meyer, The University of Kansas
Bernie Kish, The University of Kansas
Bryan Finch, Oklahoma State University

Organizational theory/culture Abstract 2014-201 Saturday, May 31, 2014 9:20 AM Poster (Urban Room)

The current study examined the extent to which hosting a prestigious national sporting event will be leveraged into a community value that contributes to community sustainability – specifically, a recent Major League Baseball All-Star Game in Kansas City, MO. Myriad research has explored the notion of professional sport teams and events as community assets (e.g. Sparvero & Chalip, 2007), in both fiduciary economic terms (e.g. Coates & Humphreys, 2003) and social or intangible terms (e.g. Chalip, 2006), such as positive spillover effects (e.g. Crompton, 1995) or psychic income (Crompton, 2004). The main impetus for such research is perpetuated by the billions of dollars of public monies spent on facilities, public infrastructure, and organizing activities that accompany professional sport teams or hosting large sporting events (Crompton, 2004). Notably, however, the return on this investment is highly tenuous. Because of the attention, notoriety, and national platform, professional sporting events are generally regarded as economic and development catalysts because they attract sponsors, revitalize deteriorated areas, and create or enhance the image of the host city through increased media attention (Cornelisson & Swart, 2006).

Unfortunately, supporters and organize typically overestimate the economic outcomes and positive image construction while underestimating the public debt and negative social costs that ensue (Whitson & Horne, 2006). These costs have significantly negative effects on the host communities (Fredline, 2004) and can include community displacement, rent increases, community disruption, security issues, pedestrian congestion, parking issues, and pollution (Kim & Walker, 2011). For these reasons, the actual return on the investment for the community is controversial and something Rosentraub (2006, p. 23) refers to as the modern equivalent of “...the fable of the emperor’s new clothes.” It is notable that empirical evidence, in fact, has indicated that professional facilities and events provide little benefits in terms of in terms of income and employment generation (Baade & Sanderson, 1997; Coates & Humphreys, 2003) and the overall employment impact of professional sports can even be negative in some cases (Coates & Humphreys, 2001). For this reason, scholars call for future research to increase the focus of impact analyses on the social intangible impacts on the community (e.g. Crompton, 2004; Swindell & Rosentraub, 1998). As previously mentioned, intangible benefits that may spillover to members in the host community are encompassed in Crompton’s (2004) psychic income paradigm. The psychic income paradigm consists of seven factors, such as community pride resulting from the increased visibility, civic pride from being the host of a major event or team, enhanced collective self-esteem, and more. The notion of psychic income is salient as its factors are often used to defend the use of public monies being spent on professional sports. In fact, from 2000 – 2008, 28 new major professional sport team stadia were built for a total of $9 billion. However, over $5 billion of the costs were funded using public dollars. Notably, this All-Star Game was part of the rationale of voters passing a .375 tax increase in 2006 to renovate Kaufman Stadium. And some of this rationale was based upon the notion of prestige, pride, and enrichment the event will bring to the surrounding community.

To explore this notion, data were collected over the spring and summer in the Kansas City metro area. Participants were selected through local social and homes association listservs and were contacted regarding their opinions on Kansas City hosting the MLB All-Star Game. The study captured 735 responses across 47 zip codes, with gender, race, and class demography representative of the Kansas City metro area. Responses were collected in the spring prior to the All-Star Game and one month after the conclusion of the All-Star Game weekend.

The data were captured through instruments of social capital (Williams, 2006), community identity (Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992) and the Scale of Psychic Income (SPI, Kim & Walker, 2011). The SPI was constructed of five sub-scales: Pride in Kansas City, Attachment to Kansas City, Excitement with Kansas City, Excitement with MLB ASG, and Pride/Belief in Infrastructure Improvements. Because of the timing of the research study, we were able to collect data from individuals both one month before the ASG weekend and one month after the ASG weekend.
Data were analyzed in two segments. First, mean differences were calculated for all variables and compared across the demographical variables of race and gender. In terms of the differences between before the ASG and after the ASG, male respondents reported significantly higher increases in overall psychic income difference ($M=18.81$, $S.D.=3.71$, $p<.001$), belief in infrastructure difference ($M=3.61$, $S.D.=0.73$, $p<.001$), KC pride difference ($M=4.14$, $S.D.=1.27$, $p<.01$), KC attachment difference ($M=3.59$, $S.D.=0.85$, $p<.001$), event excitement ($M=1.55$, $S.D.=0.80$, $p<.001$), KC identity difference ($M=1.27$, $S.D.=0.52$, $p<.05$), and KC team identity difference ($M=2.04$, $S.D.=0.73$, $p<.01$) when compared to their female counterparts.

When the respondents were divided into White, non-Hispanic and non-White groups, White non-Hispanic individuals showed significantly higher improvements than their non-White counterparts in psychic income ($M=14.16$, $S.D.=4.56$, $p<.01$), pride in infrastructure ($M=2.77$, $S.D.=0.90$, $p<.01$), KC attachment ($M=4.96$, $S.D.=1.44$, $p<.05$), event excitement ($M=2.85$, $S.D.=1.36$, $p<.05$), and KC team identity ($M=2.73$, $S.D.=0.90$, $p<.01$).

Finally, a regression analysis was run for both psychic income before the ASG events and after the ASG events. Before the ASG events, results showed race ($\beta=-.25$, $p<.001$), class ($\beta=-.11$, $p<.01$), and years spent in Kansas City ($\beta=-.11$, $p<.05$) significantly detracting from anticipated psychic income totals. Further, for each respondent, their distance from the baseball stadium where most of the events would be held was included, and it was determined that the closer each respondent was to the stadium, the lower their anticipated level of psychic income ($\beta=0.08$, $p<.05$). Not surprisingly, bridging social capital ($\beta=0.22$, $p<.001$), KC identity ($\beta=0.31$, $p<.001$), and KC team identity ($\beta=0.46$, $p<.001$) were significant and positive predictors of anticipated psychic income.

After the ASG events, though, demographical variables such as race, class, and location in the city showed no relationship with psychic income taken from the summer's events. Further, bridging social capital ($\beta=0.26$, $p<.001$), neighborhood identity ($\beta=0.15$, $p<.01$), KC identity ($\beta=0.37$, $p<.001$), and KC team identity ($\beta=0.42$, $p<.001$) all significantly contributed to psychic income totals after the ASG events.

Ultimately, it appeared that results were mixed as male Kansas Citians and White Kansas Citians were disproportionately beneficiaries of the ASG events for the 2012 summer. However, it appears that the KC metro’s efforts in marketing and implementing the ASG events where effective. In fact, a closer look at the salient demographical variables indicates that the presence of the ASG events made an impact on the varied perceptions of community members. While race, class, ZIP code, and years in the area showed significant cynicism regarding the extent to which KC would benefit from the events, these variables showed no relationship after the events. Such a finding suggests that there was a presence of psychic income being derived by the community as whole, and – more importantly – the impact of this psychic income was experienced to some extent among different demographical contexts.

The current results seem to echo previous research which calls for a further and deeper exploration into the social impact of large-scale sporting events. As one-third of the triple-bottom line, measuring an event’s social impact is imperative to predicting the overall sustainability of the short-term gains made by the event. These data reinforce the notion that race, class, and geography continue to play an important role in the makeup of the community’s social fabric in regards to the potential impact of large-scale sporting events.