The Expected Social Impact of Hosting Winter Olympic Games from a Non-Host Perspective During the Bidding Stage

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Review of literature
Over the last 30 years, the effects of hallmark sporting events represent a major field of research in the sport management literature. With others, mega-sporting events are supposed to bring a sense of belonging, to boost feel-good effect and civic pride (Kim et al. (2006)) and to generate a positive influence on resident attitude. This is the reason why several studies aim to assess the residents’ perception of sporting events on local communities, especially in terms of social impact (Balbuck et al. (2011), Hritz, Ross (2010)). As argued by Hall (1992), “social impact can be defined as the manner in which events effect changes in the collective and individual value systems, behavior patterns, community structures, lifestyle and quality of life”.

In order to gain an understanding of the non-host residents’ attitudes toward these perceived impacts, social exchange theory has been used as an appropriate theoretical base. This theory has served as an appropriate and effective foundation for studying residents perceptions of tourism. It is a theory which contends that an individual or group will be happy to become involved in an exchange with another party if the individual or group thinks that there will be some kind of derived benefit from the exchange (Gursoy and Kendall 2006). The key benefits of using social exchange theory are in its ability to explain attitudes and investigate exchanges at an individual or group level (Ap, 1992). This theoretical perspective has also been used by Gursoy, Rutherford (2004), Hritz, Ross (2010) and Waitt (2003). On this topic, most of the references deal with hallmark sporting events.

Purpose/Objectives
The primary focus of this paper is the social impact of mega sporting events which became one of the major centers of interest for academics, event organizers and local governing bodies involved in bids for international sport competitions. The first aim is to go further in the understanding of this impact on local population or host-city resident and of the criteria which influence the direction, the type and the importance of the effect (kind of sporting events, duration, type of city/country impacted). The second consider the evidence that the event they organize goes beyond a basic sporting event and can provide a positive multi-dimensional effect on host-territory. The third hope to take multi-benefits, included social, from hosting and financing a hallmark event and also have the desire to reduce undesirable disorder of community life caused by the event.

Method and Data Analysis
For this research, one decided to use mega-sporting events to measure the non-host city residents’ representation of their social impact. Broadcasted in about 150 countries, hosting thousands worldwide journalists and with 2 billion of TV attendance, the Winter Olympic Games belong to the category of mega-sporting events (FIFA World Cup, Rugby World Cup, Tour de France) as defined by Ritchie (1984) as “major one-time or recurring events of limited duration, developed primarily to enhance the awareness, appeal and profitability of a tourism destination in the short and/or long term”. Our submission is particularly focused on the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics.

An initial scale measuring the perceived social impact was first developed based on following two steps. First, secondary sources were used. The initial draft consisted of items used in other event impact studies reported in the literature (e.g. Balduck, Maes, and Buulens, 2011; Ohmann, Jones and Wilkes, 2006). Second, the items were sent to a panel consisting of four sport management professors for review and discussion.
With revision and changes from above steps, the final impact instrument contained 56 items, including 28 positive impact items and 28 negative ones. These impact items were measured on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

In addition, the questionnaire also consisted of questions measuring the following categories: demographic questions, questions testing awareness of Beijing’s bidding, questions relating to the overall evaluation of the possible hosting of the Winter Games, and questions regarding attitude. Demographic background section mainly included gender and age. The attitude section asked the respondents whether they support Beijing’s bidding for the Winter Games, and it was measured on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly oppose) to 5 (strongly support).

Our aim is to study the Shanghai residents’ representation of the social impact of the 2022 Beijing winter Olympic Games. Shanghai is a 24 million city located 1300 kilometers south from Beijing. An empirical survey study was conducted in which data was collected from residents of Shanghai between June 25 and July 15, 2015, weeks before the host city was selected. Ten trained college students were divided into five pairs and assigned to public places (e.g., shopping malls, retail outlets, and university campuses) in Shanghai to collect data through self-completion structured questionnaires.

Procedures in SPSS 15.0 were utilized to analyze the expected social impact of hosting the Winter Games through calculation of descriptive statistics, exploratory factor analysis (EFA), and one sample t test, and regression analysis was conducted to determine the impact of perception on attitude toward the bidding.

Results

While a majority of the respondents (72.7%) believed that the benefits of a possible Winter Beijing Games would outweigh the cost, 38.3% of the respondents also thought the Games are a waste of public money. It also can be seen that while 66.4% of the respondents were in support of Beijing’s bidding, another 28.4 remained neutral and about 5% were opposed to it.

To examine the dimensions underlying the expected impact, an EFA analysis with varimax rotation was undertaken. During several steps, a total of 4 items were eliminated because they did not meet the minimum 0.50 factor loading criterion. The factor analysis was conducted again with the remaining items. The KMO measure of sampling adequacy was 0.925, and the communalities were all above 0.5. A total of 52 items were loaded on 10 factors with eigenvalues greater than 1, and these factors explained 67.56% of the variance. The 10 factors were titled “security, pollution and disease” (11 items), “tourism and environment” (6 items), “life cost and inconvenience” (7 items), “social capital and psychic income” (5 items), “international cooperation and exchange” (4 items), and “infrastructure” (4 items), “culture and image” (4 items), “health and sport” (4 items), “inequitability” (5 items), and “travelling cost” (2 items).

A one sample test was conducted to reflect the levels of perceived impact on different dimensions. Table below shows that all factors are significantly higher than the point of indifference with factor 7 (“culture and image”) ranking 1st, followed by factors 6,5,4,2,3,8,10,9,1 respectively. Score for factor 1 (“security, pollution and disease”) was the lowest and just above the midpoint.

Discussion

Kim, Walker’s (2012) who studied the social impact of the Super Bowl XLIII used 42 items under 7 factors. They found that the item “sense of well-being” had the lowest mean score while “provided entertainment” yielded the highest mean score. Kim and al. (2015) used 32 items under 6 positive factors and 25 items under 5 negative factors to study the F1 Korean GP. For positive items, they found that the lowest mean score was related to the item “preservation of the local culture” and highest to the item “media visibility”. For negative items, the lowest mean score was for “increased psychological anxieties due to security risks” and the highest related to “spending for building Korean international exposure”. In our study, we found that the lowest mean score is for “security, pollution and disease” while the highest mean score is related to “culture and image”.

Trying to compare former results to our own data is quite tricky because of a difference in terms of method. However, one can suggest that the social impact of an event is impacted by the kind of event studied. Thus, the Super Bowl is mainly designed as both sport and entertainment while a F1 GP or Olympics are perceived as
worldwide events. In addition, even if this point should be confirmed with futures researches, expected social impact of a sporting event seems not be so different from perceived social impact of a past or current sporting event. Our findings need futures researches after the event to estimate the evolution of the social impact of 2022 Winter Olympic Games but also to compare the perceived social impact of this event on resident and non-resident population.

References

Hall, C.M. (1992), Hallmark tourist events: impacts, management and planning, Bethaven Press, London.