The Role of Resident Sport Involvement in the Evaluation of Youth Olympic Games Impacts, Resident Qol and Event Support

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The purpose of this study was to explore how psychological sport involvement influences residents’ perceptions of mega event impacts, event support and QoL perceptions. The sport involvement literature suggests when a person is invested psychologically in an activity they tend to be more supportive of that activity or product (Beaton et al., 2011). In the context of residents’ impact perceptions toward mega sport event hosting, it can be hypothesized that higher psychological involvement with a) sport activities and b) a sport event such as the Youth Olympic Games (YOG) can influence perceptions of impacts, Quality of Life (QoL) and support toward the event hosting (Kaplanidou, 2012) through an exchange process (Karadakis & Kaplanidou, 2012).

Method

Data were collected using a web survey through an international consumer panel maintained by the company Qualtrics featuring residents in Oslo and Lillehammer. The data collection started on November 15, 2017 and finished on November 20th, 2017. The questions asked about the residents’ psychological involvement with YOG 2016, their involvement with playing sports in general, their perceived personal and community QoL and their support levels toward 2016 YOG. All scales used either 5 or 7 point scales. There were 171 respondents who answered the web survey. Variables were standardized for the regression tests. In total, 13 linear regressions were estimated with YOG involvement and sports involvement as the independent variables. Nine categories of event impacts (tourism, economic, cultural, emotional, negative, sport development, educational, infrastructure, knowledge development) were the dependent variables. Three items measuring personal and community QoL perceptions were also tested as dependent variables. One item measured event support.

Results

The results revealed that for the nine regressions related to the event impacts, the predominant predictor was the involvement with the YOG with significant standardized beta coefficients ranging from .43 to .61 at p<.05. Sport involvement was a significant predictor only for the knowledge development impact item (b=.24, p=.03). Involvement with YOG influenced personal QoL perceptions related to feeling part of a community (b=.22, p<.05), and also community QoL perceptions related to citizen involvement in social activities (b=.22, p<.05). On the contrary, for overall QoL perceptions (general item) sport involvement was the only significant predictor (b=.24, p<.05). Finally, only YOG involvement significantly influenced event support (b=.62, p<.001).

Discussion

The results of this study support the power of psychological involvement with a specific sport event in creating positive reception of event impacts, QoL and event support, which can help stakeholders guide policy to improve the manner in which event impacts are perceived in Olympic host cities. Finally, sport involvement seems to have an impact on global perceptions related to overall QoL, alluding perhaps to the need to distinguish among types of exchange filters (e.g., sports or Youth Games) residents use to assess event impact and QoL outcomes.