Sport Events and Residents’ Perception of Quality of Life in Indianapolis, IN

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Sport events have been found to have significant impacts on the host community’s infrastructure, social-cultural environment, and political climate (Fredline et al., 2003; Kaplanidou et al., 2013). However, limited empirical research has been done on residents’ perception of the influence of sport events on their Quality of Life (QoL). The purpose of this study is to investigate the influence of hosting sport events on residents’ perception of QoL in Indianapolis, IN, one of the top sport cities in the U.S. (King, 2014).

A qualitative inductive approach is adopted. One research question was posed that guided the study: what are local residents’ perceptions of QoL in relation to sport events hosted in their city? Data are collected through in-depth semi-structured interviews with residents of Indianapolis. Six interviews have been conducted so far. Purposive and snowball sampling is used to recruit participants. Data are analyzed through a thematic analysis approach. Interviews are transcribed and then coded manually in several steps. Constant comparison methods (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) are used to ensure trustworthiness of the analysis. Codes, interpretations, and categories are discussed by the research team as the research progresses and interview questions, codes, and themes are revised and refined accordingly. The research process will be concluded when saturation is achieved.

It appears that interviewees highly pride themselves on being a resident of Indianapolis. They see both benefits and drawbacks in hosting sport events, however, the benefits seem to outweigh the drawbacks. Economic impact (e.g. direct revenues generated, new job opportunities), sense of pride, downtown developments, enhancement in social life and sense of community, improvement of city image, and entertainment opportunities for locals (either the event itself or the side events during a large-scale event) seem to be prominent benefits. Almost all of the interviewees noted that they feel proud to show off their city to tourists or when events are broadcasted on TV. The economic benefits brought to the city and renovations that have taken place as a positive impact of sport events were also highlighted. The positive impacts of hosting mega events are highly reconcilable, as most participants noted the developments that were undertaken by the city in preparation for hosting the Super Bowl in 2012. Traffic and hassle in downtown during larger scale events appears to be a drawback. Nevertheless, interviewees stated that they are able to manage these issues through strategies such as avoiding the downtown area during those events and it does not impact their QoL. All interviewees stated that overall, they are satisfied with their QoL in Indianapolis and think that the city should continue to host events and even expand what is currently being done.

This study contributes to the sport management scholarship by providing new theoretical insights that can advance conceptualization and measurement of QoL in relation to sport events. Also, findings have implications for practitioners by shedding light on residents’ perception of the current situation and their opinions about future policies and practices in this regard.