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**Host community attitudes towards sport tourism events: Social impacts of the 2011 Pan American Games**

Identifying the social impacts of sport tourism events is useful for the implementation of planning and management policies. By acknowledging the need to undertake research on the impacts of sport tourism events in third world economies, this paper aims to identify the social impacts of the 2011 Pan American Games as perceived by a host community in Mexico. A total of 384 questionnaires were administered to local residents in 2010. Informants identified that the sporting event will have positive impacts such as investment, new jobs, commercial opportunities, infrastructure improvement and the tourism promotion of the city. However, locals also acknowledged that traffic congestion, crowding and the increase of trash, noise and goods and services prices will come as a consequence of hosting the event. This paper ends by presenting theoretical and practical implications of the event impacts.

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**Key words:** sport tourism event, host community attitudes, social impacts, Pan American Games

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## **Introduction**

Sport tourism events may have relevant impacts on host communities. From a sustainability perspective, special events (including sport tourism) may have an important effect on the economic, social and environmental components of receiving communities (see Weaver, 2006, 147). As a matter of fact, the monitoring of sport event sustainability has been carried out through the triple bottom line. By so doing, managers can identify potential pre-event impacts and establish criteria to assess, for example, employment, investment, social equality, health protection, community participation and the conservation of biodiversity in the destination community (Ma *et al.*, 2011).

Existing literature reveals that economic effects have been commonly studied, but there is paucity of investigations specifically looking at the residents' attitudes towards social consequences of sporting events in developing countries. Considering the attitudes of local people towards sporting events is a key component in the success of such events (Twynam & Johnston, 2004). Through the attitudes of local residents, the large range of both positive and negative impacts on the community at large and individuals can be analysed (Fredline, 2004). Opportunities can then be acknowledged to improve the life of locals, and disadvantages can be minimized through incorporating the views of local people into planning and management procedures. In the case of the 2011 Pan American Games, to be hosted in Mexico, identifying the perceptions of local people towards the actual and potential impacts of such events on the community life may be useful in determining possibilities for the sustainable development and success of the event. “[T]he achievement of sustainable tourism development objectives at any location depends on, among other things, the establishment of a planning and management regime that is not only

sensitive to the social and community impacts of tourism, but also incorporates effective strategies for accentuating the benefits derived from tourism, and avoiding or ameliorating negative impacts” (Faulkner & Tideswell, 1997, 25). This study therefore aims to contribute to such a purpose and to widen the literature on residents’ attitudes towards sporting events in the context of non-developed countries.

### **The 2011 Pan American Games**

The Pan American Games is a sport event among competitors from all nations in Americas and dates back as early as 1920s in the Central American Games. This sporting event takes place four years before the Olympic Games and incorporates the competition in several sports. The XVI edition will be held in Guadalajara, Mexico in October 2011, where the participation of competitors from over 40 countries is expected. Bearing this in mind, the 2011 Pan American Games will be one of the largest tourism multi-sport event held in Mexico.

Guadalajara has become one of the main urban tourism destinations in the country, and receives a large amount of both international and domestic tourists. For the purpose of hosting the event, in which 8000 athletes are expected, the city has contemplated the construction of several sporting centres and house buildings called the *Panamerican Village*. This *Village* is being designed to motivate private investment and the supply of services. In so doing, it aims to promote economic and tourism activity in the city centre, which widely depends on commercial activity. Furthermore, regional and local government have implemented complementary projects that will inevitably cause social impacts on the community. Among these projects are the improvement of the city centre, the lightning of historical buildings and streets, and the construction

of special bus lanes and stops along 16 kilometres in the city. For these purposes, an overall budget of \$250 million has been estimated.

### **Sport tourism**

Sport tourism has been considered as travel to participate in a passive or active sport holiday involving instances where either sport or tourism are the dominant activity or reason for travel away from home (Ritchie & Adair, 2002, 8). Due to the economic, social, and political implications, sport tourism has become an established research object for researchers, government and nongovernment organizations in developed countries. Particularly, the behaviour of fans (Gibson, Willming & Holdmark, 2003) and the acting of sport tourism participants, policy-makers and providers (Weed & Bull, 2004) have been examined. The motives of sport tourists who travel to participate in hallmark events and sport tournaments (Funk & Bruun, 2007; Green & Chalip, 1998) have been the focus of research. Furthermore, academic attention has been paid to sport tourism driven job and income creation in destination communities (Honari, Goudarzi, Heidari, & Emami, 2010; Daniels, Norman, & Henry, 2004). According to Ritchie and Adair (2002), five areas have been identified in sport tourism research: i) definitions related to the field and the nature of the activity; ii) understanding consumers; iii) understanding the supply of sport tourism provision; iv) issues surrounding management and marketing and; v) economic, sociocultural and environmental settings and impacts. Although these works have described and explained the several dimensions of sport tourism events, it is acknowledged that they have been commonly undertaken in first world economies and therefore neglected such dimensions in the framework of developing countries.

In this context, according to Weed (2006) the largest sports tourism activity covered by the research is sports events tourism. The existing literature on this area has concentrated mainly on large-scale events despite the recognition that small-scale sport events may be a useful tool to help communities attract visitors and create economic benefits (Ritchie, 2005). As Ritchie (2005) recognises, small-scale sport events are important for developing the tourism industry and can create marketing, economic and infrastructure development for small destinations. Additionally, small-scale events are more open to cultural, historical or environmental themes that concentrate on sustainability components (Weaver, 2006, 147). As stated before, sport tourism events, either small or large, can produce a number of positive or negative impacts relevant in determining the quality of life of the host community. Therefore effective planning is needed to leverage the benefits of such events (Weed, 2006). Nonetheless, despite the growing interest in monitoring sport tourism impacts, there is still the need for a better understanding of the social impacts and management issues, particularly in developing countries.

Existing studies have sought to identify the nature of sport tourism events by measuring residents' attitudes towards impacts. Attitudes may be understood as enduring predispositions towards a particular aspect of the individual's environment (Getz's, 1994) and are thus closely linked to the behaviour of people. Although there is a need for exploring attitudes towards events in different conditions, most of existing empirical studies on residents' attitudes towards sport tourism events have been undertaken within the context of developed nations; Australia (Fredline, 2004; Soutar & McLeod, 1993), Canada (Twynam & Johnston, 2004) and New Zealand (Ritchie, 2005) have been commonly the focus of research. Consequently, the nature and implications of sport tourism events in developing countries have been neglected. In this context, Fredline and Faulkner (1998), for example, aimed to examine local resident perceptions of the

Gold Coast Indy event social impacts. The authors found that residents acknowledge benefits with regard to tourism promotional effects, community self-esteem, and commercial and job opportunities. On the other hand, residents recognised some disadvantages related to noise level, traffic congestion, overcrowding and disruption to local lifestyle of the community. Later on, Twynam and Johnston (2004) examined the views of residents about the hosting of the 1995 Nordic World Championship held in Canada to assess support, levels of interest, perceptions of change and opinions on impacts. The study revealed that the perceived effects with regard to the availability of parking spaces, restaurants, hotels, shopping areas and recreational opportunities vary according to the period in which the study is undertaken (pre, during or post-event). The same happened with the residents' opinions of potential impacts such as the creation of jobs for local people, community spirit, destination image, environmental impact, among others. Overall, the study found high levels of support for hosting the event. In this regard, some researchers have distinguished different resident groupings: those with positive perceptions, those with negative perceptions, and those who are ambivalent (Fredline & Faulkner, 2002a; 2002b). It must be recognised, however, that the perceived effects and the opinion towards such effects may depend significantly according to the nature of the sport tourism event, the social, cultural, economic and environmental conditions of the host community, its capacity to deal with changes, and even the individual's characteristics. According to Faulkner and Tideswell (1997), the attitudes of local communities towards the social impacts of tourism may be analysed through the extrinsic and intrinsic dimensions. The former encompasses issues such as the stage of tourism development, the tourist/resident ratio, the type of tourist and seasonality. On the other hand, the latter includes residents' individual involvement, socioeconomic characteristics, residential proximity and period of residence. While these dimensions may explain the variation among residents' atti-

tudes towards tourism and therefore become a valuable theoretical base for inferential studies, this type of analysis escapes to the aims and scopes of this research.

## **Research methods**

The scope of this study was exploratory. It aimed to identify the perceptions of local residents towards the potential impacts of the 2011 Pan American Games in Guadalajara, Mexico. The study was basically divided into two phases. The first phase was conducted through in-depth interviewing with 23 local residents and aimed to identify contextual indicators for the development of a questionnaire. Issues such as the perceived future benefits and costs of hosting the event were explored in this stage. The second phase was quantitative. A twenty-nine item questionnaire was administered to local residents. The instrument was designed mainly by considering indicators of previous studies on tourism and sport tourism event impacts (e.g. Brunt & Courtney, 1999; Fredline & Faulkner 1998; Gu & Wong, 2006; Twynam & Johnston, 2004). And enriched by indicators emerging from the first stage. The instrument explored sociodemographic data and perceptions of the sporting event through a 5-point Likert scale. Residents' perceptions towards investment, employment, infrastructure, public services and community pride, among others, were assessed. Also, issues related to crime, drug use, litter, car congestion, noise and use of the natural environment were also evaluated. After a pilot study (n=23), a total of 200 females and 184 males were surveyed in Guadalajara in October 2010. The administration and descriptive analysis of data were undertaken through the use of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

## Results

Due to the exploratory interest of the study, no inferential statistical analysis was made. Instead, data were examined in terms of frequencies, which were considered enough for the scope of this paper. The mean age among informants was 33. Informants were mainly students, sellers, government workers, drivers and housewives. Their mean length of residence in Guadalajara was 26, and over 60% of informants were native to the city. As indicated, perceived benefits and costs were identified. With regard to the perceived benefits, it is clearly noted that the commonly perceived positive impacts identified in the literature were also recognised by residents in the host community. For example, over half of respondents (68.7%) agreed with the idea that the sporting event will generate government and private investment in the locality. Similarly, 64.8% acknowledged that new jobs will be created in the city, and a higher amount of residents (83%) believed that the event will increase commercial opportunities for locals. It should be noted that the latter showed the lowest *Std Dev* value of all items (see Table 1).

**Table 1** Social benefits of the 2011 Pan American Games as perceived by Guadalajara local residents

Indicator	1	2	3	4	5	M	SD
	%						
Government and private investment	18.0	<b>50.7</b>	20.1	8.9	2.3	2.27	0.93
New jobs	16.4	<b>48.4</b>	20.1	11.7	3.4	2.37	1.00
Commercial opportunities	28.1	<b>54.9</b>	11.7	4.2	1.0	1.95	0.81
Infrastructure improvement	9.6	<b>30.7</b>	26.0	25.8	7.8	2.91	1.12
Recreational facilities improvement	19.0	<b>32.8</b>	22.7	16.7	8.9	2.64	1.21
Education and health services improvement	9.9	21.9	20.3	<b>31.8</b>	16.1	3.22	1.23
Tourism promotion of the city	31.3	<b>48.2</b>	13.8	4.9	1.8	1.98	0.90
Sport activities promotion	17.4	<b>49.0</b>	19.8	9.9	3.9	2.34	1.00
Community pride	18.2	<b>35.7</b>	25.8	13.5	6.8	2.55	1.13

1= Totally agree, 2= Agree, 3= Neither agree nor disagree, 4= Disagree, 5= Totally disagree, M= Mean, SD= Standard deviation

This indicates that the increase of trade opportunities in the locality is the most perceived impact of the 2011 Pan American Games on the destination community.

Furthermore, the effects of the 2011 Pan American Games on the tourism promotion of the city, sport activity promotion and community pride were also perceived. Seventy-nine percent reported that the tourism promotion of Guadalajara will be benefitted from the event. It should be noted that together with government and private investment and commercial opportunities, this indicator presented the lowest dispersion (*Std Dev*= 0.93, 0.81 and 0.90, respectively). Over sixty-six percent considered that sport activities will be enhanced within the local population as an effect. Finally, 53.9% agreed with the idea that the community pride will increase for hosting the event. The improvement of infrastructure, recreational facilities and educational and health services did not show a clear trend, for the three of them showed the highest dispersion. Regarding the possible costs of the event as perceived by local residents, there were four aspects highly identified, namely crowding, traffic congestion, litter and noise increase holding a very similar Mean score and, except for the indicator of litter (*Std Dev*= 1.03), the lowest variability. In each item, it is relevant to note that over 80% of respondents identified an increase (see Table 2). In the case of litter increase, for example, the number of people agreeing was 83.6%; this figure widely differs from that of previous studies in which the decrease of the cleanliness of the city was perceived only by 11% of respondents (Twynam & Johnston, 2004).

**Table 2** Social costs of the 2011 Pan American Games as perceived by Guadalajara local residents

Indicator	1	2	3	4	5	M	SD
	%						
Goods and services price increase	19.8	<b>35.9</b>	21.9	15.4	7.0	2.54	1.17
Crime increase	12.5	27.6	<b>28.4</b>	23.2	8.3	2.87	1.15
Drug use increase	10.7	21.4	<b>30.2</b>	27.9	9.9	3.05	1.14
Use of natural spaces	22.1	<b>32.8</b>	20.1	15.4	9.6	2.58	1.25
Crowding	32.3	<b>50.3</b>	10.7	4.2	2.6	1.95	0.91
Traffic congestion	<b>44.6</b>	39.7	7.0	5.7	2.9	1.83	0.98
Litter increase	<b>43.0</b>	40.6	7.3	4.7	4.4	1.87	1.03
Noise increase	<b>47.1</b>	38.8	7.3	3.4	3.4	1.77	0.96

1= Totally agree, 2= Agree, 3= Neither agree nor disagree, 4= Disagree, 5= Totally disagree, M= Mean, SD= Standard deviation

Furthermore, over half of the people (55.7%) considered that the price of goods and services will increase in the community as a consequence of the event. Finally, a possible increase of crime and drug use was not frequently perceived by the surveyed residents.

## Conclusions

This paper identified the attitudes of local people towards the social impacts of a sport tourism event in Mexico. It was found that while residents identify benefits, they also acknowledge unfavourable consequences in the locality. From a theoretical perspective, the findings suggest that, as in developed countries, sport events also have specific effects on social indicators within receiving communities in developing countries. This investigation also provides evidence to support the idea that, as Fredline (2004) notes, the perceived benefits of sport events may outweigh the costs in host communities also in third world destinations. Regarding practical implications, these results suggest that the consideration of such perceptions should be taken into account for the design of management and planning policies. Special attention should be paid to

ensure that benefits outweigh the costs and to minimise such costs both at the collective and individual levels. By considering such perceptions, social problems can be minimised and therefore the development of the sporting tourism event may be sustainable. Although some of the impacts identified in this study are consistent with those of previous investigations (Fredline & Faulkner, 2002a), it needs to be recognised that the nature and intensity depend on the specific conditions of the event and the community. Finally, this study suggests some avenues for further research. Efforts should be made to undertake the impacts of specific events through comparative and longitudinal studies. This may help identify the effects belonging to the specific features of the event rather than to the conditions of the local community.

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