

---

# LEVERAGING NON-MEGA SPORT EVENTS TO CREATE TOURISM RELATED BENEFITS FOR THE HOST CITY AND LOCAL BUSINESSES

Submitting author: Dr Ryan Snelgrove  
University of Windsor, Kinesiology  
Windsor, N9B 3P4  
Canada

All authors: Laura Wood (corresp), Ryan Snelgrove, Marijke Taks, Julie Legg

Type: Scientific

Category: 13: Tourism and Leisure Sport Management

## **Abstract**

### Aim and Theoretical Background

Hosting events can provide communities with the opportunity for social and tourism related benefits if the event is strategically leveraged (O'Brien & Chalip, 2008). However, few communities are engaging in the necessary strategic management of these events to maximize these positive benefits (Chalip & Leyns, 2002). Research on the leveraging potential of smaller scale events is underexplored (O'Brien, 2007; Taks, 2013). However, smaller scale, non-mega sport events attract visitors from outside of the host area, providing communities opportunities to showcase their destination and realize spending at local businesses.

Central to the strategic planning process involved in leveraging is an understanding of the factors that influence event visitors' tourist related behaviours, as well as the actions or inactions undertaken by city officials, local businesses, and event organizers to maximize the impact of the event. Building upon Chalip's (2004) model of event leveraging, this study identifies factors that facilitate and constrain the adoption of leveraging approaches taken by a variety of stakeholders in the context of non-mega sport events. Furthermore, the roles of event experience and tourism related activities are examined to explore their predictive power in event attendees' potential to change their image of the host destination and their willingness to speak positively about the destination to others (e.g., Kaplanidou & Vogt, 2007).

### Method

Data were collected using a mixed method approach. In total, 15 semi-structured interviews were conducted with the managers of local

businesses (i.e., restaurants, hotels, retail locations, a casino and wineries; n=10), city officials (n=3), and event organizers (n=2). Interviews focused on experiences and perspectives about leveraging in the context of three smaller scale, multi-sport events hosted in two consecutive summers in a medium sized city in Canada (i.e., 2013 International Children's Games [ICG]; 2014 Ontario Summer Games, and the 2014 55+ Games). Businesses were selected based on the following criteria: providing a service; proximity to the venues; reasonable possibility of leveraging the event; and an expected appeal for the event's target market. In addition, survey data were collected from visitors at one of the events (ICG). Based on scales developed and tested in previous research, spectators were asked about their image of the host city before and after the event, their likelihood of speaking positively about the city, their perception of the innovativeness of the event experience, and their involvement in tourism activities (Beerli & Martin, 2004; Kaplanidou & Vogt, 2007; Yoshida, James, & Cronin, 2013).

## Results and Discussion

In evaluating the factors that explained local businesses willingness to engage in leveraging tactics, five themes emerged from the interviews, including the businesses' proximity to the event, the event's connection to the target market of the business, their autonomy in making decisions about leveraging, whether the leveraging opportunity was consistent with the businesses' current strategic approaches, and the businesses' ability to plan for leveraging. Interviews with city officials and event organizers are ongoing and findings from these groups will be reported during the presentation.

Regarding the image visitors had of the host city, an analysis was conducted to determine if destination image prior to and during the event was different among first time visitors and repeat visitors. Results indicate that first time visitors (M=5.31, SD=1.45) reported a lower previous image of the destination than repeat visitors (M=5.74, SD=1.22). Following the event, both segments reported an increase in their destination image (First time: M=6.3; Repeat: M=6.4). Results of the regression analyses indicate that image change for both segments were positively predicted by tourism activity frequency ( $R^2=.187$ ,  $p<.05$ ). Non-predictive factors included satisfaction with tourism or the event, and perceptions of event and facility innovativeness ( $p>.05$ ). These results suggest that smaller scale sport events can help change destination image. To facilitate such a change, opportunities for attendees to experience numerous and multiple forms of activities in the destination should be directly provided. Conversely, the event itself may have little effect on visitors' changes in destination image, a finding that differs from previous research.

The predictors of the visitors' willingness to speak positively about the

---

host city were also examined. Tourism satisfaction, event satisfaction, and frequency of participating in tourism activities explained 49% of the variance ( $p < .001$ ). The perceptions of the innovativeness of the event and facility elements were not predictive. This result highlights the importance of providing opportunities for event visitors to participate in destination activities and also the value of creating an event that stands out from other sport events when attempting to encourage attendees to speak positively about your city.

### **References**

Chalip, L. (2004). Beyond impact: A general model for host community event leverage. In B. W. Ritchie, & D. Adair (Eds.), *Sport tourism: Interrelationships, impacts and issues*. Clevedon: Channel View.

Chalip, L., & Leyns, A. (2002). Local business leveraging of a sport event: Managing an event for economic benefit. *Journal of Sport Management*, 16, 132-159.

Kaplanidou, K. & Vogt, C. (2007). The interrelationship between sport event and destination image and sport tourists' behaviours. *Journal of Sport & Tourism*, 12, 183-206.

Taks, M. (2013). Social sustainability of non-mega sport events in a global world. *European Journal for Sport and Society*, 10, 121-141.

Yoshida, M., James, J. D., & Cronin, J. J. (2013). Sport event innovativeness: Conceptualization, measurement, and its impact on consumer behavior. *Sport Management Review*, 16, 68-84.