

# **The Impact of the 2007 Arrival of a Stage of the Tour de France on the City of Ghent: Comparisons of Residents Pre- and Post-Event**

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## **Abstract**

### **Introduction**

There is an extensive amount of literature that studied the impact of hosting sporting events on tourism and economic development. Besides the expected, often positive, economic impact of hosting sporting events, there is an emerging amount of literature that focused on non-economic, positive and negative, impacts [1,2]. Kim and Petrick [3] stated that there is limited research on residents' perceptions of the city or community where the sporting event will be hosted. This study investigated the perceptions of residents of Ghent of the impacts of the arrival of a stage of the 2007 Tour de France (TDF).

### **Methodology**

#### **Research Design**

The population of interest in this study were residents of Ghent who lived along or near by the route of the TDF. A convenience sampling method was used. Questionnaires were distributed to residents who passed in the streets and questionnaires were collected from door to door. Data were collected one week before and one week after the arrival of the stage of the TDF in Ghent and aimed to measure expected and perceived benefits and costs. A total of 421 questionnaires were collected from the first survey. Follow-up data were obtained from 250 residents who participated in the first survey.

In this study, a total of 33 items were selected from previous studies on the impacts of events [1,3]. The 33 items included 12 negative and 21 positive impact items. Residents were asked to evaluate the statements on a 7-point Likert scale.

#### **Data Analysis**

Exploratory factor analysis was conducted to reveal the underlying dimensions. Reliability analysis was conducted to confirm the internal consistency of the resulting factors. Paired t-test was used to examine significant differences in residents' perceptions between the pre- and post-data.

## Results

**Factor analysis** The 21 positive impact items yielded three factors that explained 52.29% of the variance and were labeled: ‘economic and tourism development’ (9 items,  $\alpha = .84$ ), ‘cultural development and consolidation’ (6 items,  $\alpha = .79$ ) and ‘external image enhancement’ (3 items,  $\alpha = .80$ ). Factor analysis of the 12 items for the negative impact items produced three factors that accounted for 58.37% of the variance and were labeled: ‘traffic problems and inconveniences’ (4 items,  $\alpha = .66$ ), ‘price increase’ (3 items,  $\alpha = .68$ ) and ‘disorder and conflicts’ (3 items,  $\alpha = .66$ ). Five items were omitted due to bad loadings or bad internal consistency.

Comparison of the residents’ perceptions of impacts before and after the TDF

The mean age of the residents who participated in the pre- and post-test was  $42.72 \pm 17.43$ . Just over one half (53.00%) were female and 47.00% were men. Results of the paired t-tests are reported in table 1.

Table 1.

*Paired t-test for comparison of residents perceptions on positive and negative impacts before and after the event (N= 250)*

Impact factors	Pretest		Posttest		<i>t</i> -value	<i>p</i>
	M	SD	M	SD		
Positive impact factors						
Economic and tourism development	3.92	0.99	3.78	0.99	2.65	.009
Cultural development and consolidation	4.51	1.12	4.50	1.05	.047	.963
External image enhancement	5.30	1.13	5.09	1.29	2.64	.009
Negative impact factors						
Traffic problems and inconveniences	5.59	0.96	4.78	1.14	10.14	.000
Price increase	2.75	1.12	2.84	1.18	-1.24	.218
Disorder and conflicts	4.26	1.19	3.56	1.24	8.72	.000

Significant differences were found on the ‘economic and tourism development’ factor, on the ‘external image enhancement’ factor, on the ‘traffic problems and inconveniences’ factor and on the ‘disorder and conflicts’ factor. The expected impacts (measured before the event) had higher means than perceived impacts (measured after the event).

## Discussion

Local communities often ignore the negative impacts prior to hosting the event while they stress the positive impacts. However, if residents' perceptions of hosting events is disregarded, a hostile attitude towards hosting sporting events may be produced. Thus, measuring the social impacts of hosting sporting events should not be neglected. Overall, both benefits and costs of the hosting the arrival of the TDF were significantly lower than residents expected. Residents were most likely to consider 'external image enhancement' to be the most positive impact as a result of hosting the arrival of the TDF. They considered 'traffic problems and inconveniences' as the most negative impact of hosting the event. Policy makers should understand that residents are concerned on the personal impacts of hosting events. Besides glorifying the positive impacts, policy makers should establish strategies to minimize the negative impacts in order to maintain residents' support.

## References

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