
RESIDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE SOCIAL IMPACT OF INTERNATIONAL SPORTING EVENTS: AN ANALYSIS OF THE SAITAMA CRITERIUM BY LE TOUR DE FRANCE

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Abstract

Background

Following the successful bid to host the 2020 Tokyo Olympics, attention to the impact of sporting events has increased in Japan. Generally, sporting events exert three kinds of impact: economic, social, and cultural. Economic impact is often emphasized by politicians and event organizers to validate sporting event bids (Gursoy & Kendall, 2006). Understanding residents' perceptions of social impact is essential for ensuring that events are successful and sustainable (Balduck et al., 2011; Bull & Lovell, 2007; Ma et al., 2013), but empirical studies in Japan that have examined residents' perceptions of social impact are scant. This study elucidates residents' perceptions regarding the social impact before and after the Saitama Criterium by le Tour de France and clarifies the kind and intensity of the social impact as perceived by them. Furthermore, the study investigates the influence of the social impact on residents' willingness to host the event next year.

Theoretical Background

Fredline (2005) indicated that the "Triple Bottom Line," comprising economic, social, and environmental success, is essential to ensuring successful and sustainable sporting events. However, studies focusing on social and environmental impact have appeared only in recent decades (Getz, 2008), and few social impact studies have been empirical (Gursoy & Kendall, 2006), explored residents' perceptions (Bull & Lovell, 2007), or investigated a variety of events and places. Further investigation was warranted. Bulduck et al. (2011) empirically investigated the social impact of the Tour de France, focusing on resident's perceptions before and after the event. In addition, they identified the kinds of social impact that predict residents' willingness to host the Tour de France in future. This study was conducted on a

comprehensive scale, enabling the researchers to measure residents' perceptions of economic, social, and environmental impacts. Therefore, we constructed our research design based on their research.

Method

With the cooperation of the Saitama City government, 2000 mail-in questionnaire surveys were administered to randomly selected residents of Saitama City during the Saitama Criterium by le Tour de France in October 2013. The data were collected by mail one month before and after the event; 670 usable questionnaires were obtained before the event (for a return rate of 33.5%) and 328 questionnaires were obtained after the event (for a return rate of 49.0%). Each of the 28 adopted items was derived from previous studies (Balduck et al., 2011) and rated using a seven-point Likert scale; the content validity of the items was confirmed in a pilot test with two event organizers. Exploratory factor analysis using the principal factor method of promax rotation was conducted to discover relationship patterns among the variables in the pre-event samples. Subsequently, repeated measures MANOVA and a paired-sample t-test were performed to verify whether residents' perceptions of social impact changed significantly after the event. Multiple regression analysis was conducted to predict residents' willingness to host the Saitama Criterium by le Tour de France next year.

Results and Discussion

The social impact items yielded four factors with eigenvalues greater than one and factor loadings higher than .45, and these factors explained 61.52% of the variance. After excluding four items that did not satisfy the criteria, four factors were labeled: increased disorder and excessive spending (8 items), economic enhancement (5 items), development of an interest in foreign culture and new opportunities (6 items), and strengthening the image and recognition of the city (4 items). The Cronbach alpha scores, which ranged from .88 to .92, were adequate. Repeated measures MANOVA verified a significant change in residents' perceptions before and after the event ($Wilks\lambda=.79$, $F(4, 616) = 40.38$, $p < .001$). A paired-sample t-test was conducted. All four factors significantly differed before and after the event ($p < .001$), and pre-event scores were higher than post-event scores for each factor. These results exhibited a similar tendency to those of previous studies (Balduck et al., 2011; Ma et al., 2013) and indicated that residents living near event sites tend to overestimate the social impact of sporting events prior to those events. The multiple regression results indicated that three types of positive impact (economic enhancement, development of an interest in foreign culture and new opportunities, strengthening the image and recognition of the city) had a significant positive association with a willingness to host the Saitama Criterium by le Tour de France next year, and negative impact (e.g. increased disorder and excessive spending) were negatively associated with a willingness to host the event both before ($R^2=.51$) and after ($R^2=.55$) the event. Interestingly, economic

enhancement was the strongest factor ($\beta=.30$) before the event, and the development of an interest in foreign culture and new opportunities was the strongest variable ($\beta=.38$) after the event. These results indicated that event organizers and city governments should emphasize both economic factors and other factors (e.g., the development of an interest in foreign culture) to residents before and after sporting event, and should minimize negative impact. In summary, our results showed that recognizing the economic, social, and environmental aspects of residents' perceptions are important to hosting a sustainable event and that these aspects follow the "Triple Bottom Line" (Fredline, 2005) concept. This study was limited by its analysis of only one event. In future research, multiple events should be studied using larger samples, more comprehensive scales should be used.

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