

# Residents' Perceptions Of The Tangible And Intangible Impacts Of The Rio 2016 Olympic Games & The Implications For Host City Mega-Event Stakeholders

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## Aim of the research

This study aimed to reveal the host city resident's perceptions of the tangible and intangible impacts of the Rio 2016 Olympic Games. This paper specifically identifies these perceptions and discusses the changes in these perceptions from before and during the Games period. The discussion sets these findings in the context of previous mega-event studies, in order to broaden the understanding of resident perceptions to the hosting of mega-events.

## Theoretical background

The focus on both tangible and intangible impacts is particularly relevant in the context of emerging countries, such as Brazil, which are increasingly utilising sport mega-events to promote socio-economic development and image enhancement (Swart & Bob, 2007). Rio's bidding for and hosting of consecutive sport mega-events (namely the 2007 Pan-American Games, the 2014 FIFA World Cup and the 2016 Olympic Games) are viewed as part of a wider government strategy (Santos, 2014) aimed at giving the country "recognition and symbolic power in the international arena" (De Almeida, Júnior, & Pike, 2014, p. 271). At the pre-bid stage, an Olympic Games is 'sold' to residents on the basis of anticipated economic benefits (that is, employment, visitor spending, direct foreign investments, and so on), improved infrastructure and quality of life, and enhanced city image. Sport mega-events are intrusive by their very nature, bringing large numbers of visitors and media in contact with local residents for a relatively short period of time, impacting the host's culture, economy and environment. Yet, residents are often overlooked as event stakeholders.

## Methodology

A quantitative survey was conducted with residents of Rio de Janeiro (face-to-face) during two different periods: one year before the games, from 3 to 28 August, 2015, (n = 404) and during the period of the Olympic Games (n = 391). Surveys were administered in the three specific regions of the city most impacted by the event, namely: the City Centre, Barra da Tijuca and Deodoro. Simple random sampling was used to select respondents.

## Results

Before the event, most respondents believed that tourism would be the major beneficiary (97.8%) and similarly, that the city would gain from tourism promotion during the event (94.3%). However, some tempered this positive sentiment noting that Rio was already well-known internationally and already received many tourists annually. Secondly, most respondents (87.6%) believed that the mega-event would provide business opportunities, generate economic gains (83.9%) and stimulate commercial activity of the city (92.6%). There was some acknowledgement of the urban improvements within the city, although this was noted as limited to certain regions only. Most alarmingly, however, was the perception that these improvements would not lead to a lasting legacy for the city. Respondents noted several factors generating a negative image for the host city, most notably, "security" (87.6%), but also: "corruption scandals" and "pollution". During the event, the positive impacts were noted as: increased tourism; increased promotion for the city; and infrastructure and mobility improvements. They also mentioned impacts relating more to sport, such as broadening and diversifying the city's mix of sports and an increased interest in sport. Negative impacts experienced include: higher costs for goods and services; perceived poor financial management and corruption; unfinished public works; inconvenience in traffic; and a lack of security.

## Discussion and implications

Many of these same responses were highlighted during the 2014 FIFA World Cup period and indeed appear consistent among various mega-event contexts. While there were many positive perceptions, residents' frustration emerged as a result of many promises that remained unfulfilled. The findings also highlighted differences between the consecutive mega-events, with more sport-related positive impacts perceived from the 2016 event. However, respondents' concern over the longer-term distribution of the positive impacts to non-host regions of the city is worrying. The study supports the notion that event stakeholders must be aware of residents' expectations and experiences in order to plan in a way that the mega-event meets the

highest levels of sporting achievement while at the same time offers a wide range of social, cultural and economic benefits to its host city residents (thus extending the work of Poynter, 2006). This is particularly relevant globally where many high profile mega-event bids have been derailed due to negative resident sentiments towards their hosting and is of great significance to Rio as a serial mega-event host city.

## References

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