



More options do not always create perceived variety in life: Attracting new residents with quality- vs. quantity-oriented event portfolios



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ABSTRACT

Event portfolios are playing an increasingly important role in shaping and influencing city attractiveness. With competition for talented and qualified residents on the rise, cities can use their event portfolio as a strategic tool to attract new residents by providing them with higher levels of perceived variety in life. The aim of this paper is to empirically explore for the first time the impact different event portfolio strategies can have on perceptions of variety in life and on likelihood-to-move to another city. The findings reveal that quality-oriented event portfolios (i.e., portfolios focusing on few, but primarily international top-events) were more promising for attracting new residents than quantity-oriented portfolios (i.e., portfolios focusing on diverse, but primarily local and non-top-events) by offering them higher levels of perceived variety in life. Furthermore, the superior effect of quality-oriented event portfolios is partially stronger for residents living in large cities, but is not moderated by the type of event offered in the portfolio (i.e., sport vs. culture events).

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1. Introduction

Events and their facilities are primarily hosted for economic reasons such as increasing tourism and local resident expenditures as well as attracting investors (e.g. Burgan & Mules, 1992; Feddersen, Grötzinger, & Maennig, 2009). This is intuitively understandable, as their apparent success need to justify the public spending involved (Faulkner et al., 2003). However, events can also reap additional benefits beyond the economic for the host city. More specifically, events can have positive image and branding impacts (e.g. Xing & Chalip, 2006) so that the “sum of beliefs, ideas and impressions a person has of a destination” (Crompton, 1979, p. 18) is improved, a critical component in increasing a city's competitiveness (Ritchie & Crouch, 2000). Residents can also be recipients of positive social impacts (e.g. Arcodia & Whitford, 2006), an important connection in human activity in that events can provide an increase in psychic income – emotional and psychological benefits (Kim & Walker, 2012). Events can also foster political impacts (e.g. Reid, 2006) which result in generating political goodwill and cooperation across multiple levels of government organizations and event organizers (Grieve & Sherry, 2012). In addition, by providing new facilities and venues for events to be hosted, cities can receive positive infrastructure impacts which in turn, can aid the city in leveraging regeneration of

neighborhoods and quality of life for residents (Karadakis, Kaplanidou, & Karlis, 2010). Finally, cities face an increasing amount of competition from one another for not only traditional business-drivers such as companies, investors and tourists, but also for talented and qualified residents (Zenker & Gollan, 2010). Thus, urban planners are using a wide array of strategies to ensure that their cities remain an attractive place to live and work in and a potential location to move to since they have earmarked city attractiveness as a key component for maintaining and strengthening city competitiveness (Ezmaie, 2012). With events having become vital constituents in urban and regional development strategies (Kim & Walker, 2012), this paper seeks to further the understanding of how a city can use events as a strategic tool to attract new residents and to provide them high levels of perceived variety in life.

Much of the literature with regards to events and city attractiveness has been focused on urban (re-)generation (e.g. Bailey, Miles, & Stark, 2004; Eizenberg & Cohen, 2015; Gibson & Homan, 2004) and attracting tourists (e.g. De Carlo, Canali, Pritchard, & Morgan, 2009; Richards & Wilson, 2004). Cities have understood the flexibility events can provide in raising city attractiveness for tourists in that they “often represent a less costly means of distinguishing places and often generate significant media interest” (Richards & Wilson, 2004, p. 1932) and that due to their growing popularity, they generate a significant amount of visitors (Gelder & Robinson, 2009). For urban (re-)generation, events are seen as effective catalysts for city regeneration processes and can boost the confidence of local communities (García, 2004). However, two main limitations exist in the previous literature regarding the impact of events on city attractiveness: First, most of the studies focus either on

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current residents or visitors, while the potential to attract new residents is under-researched. Second, almost all of these studies tend to revolve around the effects of one specific (mega) event in one city. This study therefore offers new insights into urban policy planning by gauging a) the impact of different types of event portfolios for b) attracting new residents and offering them high levels of perceived variety in life.

We thereby distinguish between two types of event portfolios which might affect new residents' perceived variety in life and hence, their likelihood-to-move to the host city of the events: Quality-oriented event portfolios (i.e., portfolios focusing on few, but primarily international top-events) vs. quantity-oriented event portfolios (i.e., portfolios focusing on diverse, but primarily local and non-top-events). Due to budget restrictions, a third option of quality- and quantity-oriented event portfolios (i.e., portfolios focusing on diverse international top-events) seems to be unrealistic for a lot of smaller and mid-sized cities and will hence not be analyzed within this paper. Although large cities can have a mix of the two types of event portfolio strategies, this paper will investigate whether there are any significant contrasting differences between the two in order to better understand their impacts on perceived variety in life and ultimately, city attractiveness and quality of life. Thus, the question which of these two event portfolio options (i.e., quality-oriented vs. quantity-oriented) is more promising for attracting new residents and offering them higher levels of perceived variety in life is challenging and of high managerial relevance for cities and urban policy planners.

Existing literature suggests that the majority of people want to reside in big cities with a wide range of opportunities such as cultural events or shopping activities (Zenker et al., 2013b). This is in line with existing research findings on consumer variety seeking which claims that consumers seek diversity in their choice of services and goods (Kahn, 1995). Based on this research evidence, quantity-oriented event portfolios should be more promising since these portfolios are focusing on the offering of diverse events for cities' residents. At the same time, existing literature has also shown that sports mega-events, as well as large scale culture festivals might improve residents' quality of life (Cecil, Fu, Wang, & Avgoustis, 2010; Kaplanidou et al., 2013). Based on this evidence, it can also be assumed that events might positively impact residents' and visitors' perceived variety in life primarily if these events show a high level of quality, that is, they are internationally visible and hence provide residents feelings such as civic pride and top-level entertainment. Following this argumentation, quality-oriented event portfolios should be more promising since these portfolios are focusing on the offering of international top-events for cities' residents and only these top-events are able to positively affect consumers' perceived variety in life.

Overall, both portfolio options might be promising for attracting new residents by offering them higher levels of perceived variety in life. Thus, empirical research is needed to reveal a) which of these two event portfolio strategies can be more promising for cities and urban policy planners and b) under which circumstances this superiority of either quality-oriented or quantity-oriented event portfolios exists.

In this context, this paper is first to analyze which event portfolio strategy, a quality-oriented event portfolio (i.e., portfolios focusing on few, but primarily international top-events) or a quantity-oriented event portfolio (i.e., portfolios focusing on diverse, but primarily local and non-top events), is actually more promising for attracting new residents by offering them higher levels of perceived variety in life. Furthermore, two relevant moderators are analyzed: First, we analyze whether a superior effect of quality-oriented over quantity-oriented event portfolios (or vice-versa) is influenced by the size of the current home city of the potential event host destination residents. Second, we further analyze whether such a superior effect of quality-oriented over quantity-oriented event portfolios (or vice-versa) holds for different event types, that is, for sports as well as cultural events.

2. Theoretical background

Research exists on gauging residents' quality-of-life for a city's competitiveness (e.g. Ballas, 2013; Begg, 1999; Rogerson, 1999), finding that redevelopment, consumer attractions and cultural innovation are important elements in capturing and retaining a critical capital element of cities, namely talented residents (Harvey, 1989). Yet it was Richard Florida (2005) who prominently brought to the forefront urban (human) amenities and their subsequent positive impacts on the attraction of residents, especially that of talented residents. Florida argued that conventional wisdom of regional development was that firms and industries spurred innovation and city growth, and thereby research had focused on industrial clusters. This was challenged by reasoning that research should incorporate the social functions of cities, in particular focusing on human capital, consumption as well as entertainment and lifestyle, implying that these values could lead to gentrification and growth of cities.

Extensive research has since then encompassed the overlying theme of Florida's "creative city", such as neighborhood residential preferences (e.g. Lawton, Murphy, & Redmond, 2013), place branding by means of a city (e.g. Vanolo, 2008) and even as a nation (e.g. Ooi, 2008), and preference differences (i.e., urbanity and diversity, nature and recreation, job chances and cost-efficiency) between the segments of the "creative class" and the "non-creative class" (e.g. Zenker, 2009, p. 25). Despite its prominence in practice, Florida's concept of the creative city has been subject to much criticism (e.g. Peck, 2005) as research has argued that career opportunities can take precedence over quality of place (Darchen & Tremblay, 2010), that the causality of the production of amenities and attracting residents has been inverted (Shearmur, 2006), and that human capital predicts growth and not the creative class (Glaeser, 2005). Some even maintain that "there is little evidence supporting the relationship between creative clusters and actual economic indicators" (Hoyman & Faricy, 2008, p. 315–316). Nonetheless, the importance of cultural and leisure opportunities for quality of life and resident satisfaction has been highlighted in research (Biel, 1993; Ezmale, 2012; Kaplanidou et al., 2013; Zenker et al., 2013b), as well as having a positive impact on population growth (Kahsai, Gebremedhin, & Schaeffer, 2011). What remains a far more under-researched area is what types of leisure opportunities would provide the most perceived variety in life and diversity for (potential) residents, abetting in heightening the quality of life. In this study, we define perceived variety in life as residents' perceptions and beliefs of a city's ability to bring additional value and special experiences into their lives (see Ezmale, 2012; Insch, 2010). Moreover, specifying which types of event portfolios could provide the most perceived variety in life and thereby, quality of life, would be of utmost importance for urban policy planners since research has shown that urbanity and diversity (i.e., a wide range of cultural activities) was the most important factor in citizen attraction (Zenker, 2009).

The need for variety seeking and diversity is well documented in consumer behavior literature (e.g. Kahn, 1995; McAlister & Pessemier, 1982), yet much focus has been placed on material goods and "studies in the service industry are still scarce, and quite recent" (Bigné, Sánchez, & Andreu, 2009, p. 104). This is an important distinction as consumers perceive goods differently than services (Murray & Schlacter, 1990). This is especially the case for services (i.e., events) which have been identified as experiential purchases, where their contribution to the experiential profile of a consumer may better provide happiness to consumers than materialistic purchases (Agrusa, Maples, Kitterlin, & Tanner, 2007). Moreover, Van Boven (2000) indicated that the novelty of experiences is a significant contributor to the value bestowed onto experiential purchases. This intuitively makes sense, as new experiences have shown to convey more value than repeat experiences (Schweizer, 2006). Equally important, this novelty experience can further be augmented by the intensity of stimulation, also known as "sensation seeking" (Agrusa et al., 2007; Zuckerman, 2006), which events can provide.

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