



Case Study

Comparative study on residents' perceptions of follow-up impacts of the 2008 Olympics



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HIGHLIGHTS

- We examine Beijing and Qingdao residents' perceptions of the 2008 Olympics.
- Benefits and interests outweigh the costs.
- The intangible benefits outweigh the physical interests.
- For Qingdao residents, enthusiasts have a higher percentage.
- For Beijing residents, realists and haters have a higher percentage.

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the perceptions of Chinese residents toward the impacts of the 2008 Olympics on their communities and compares the perceptions and attitudes of Beijing and Qingdao residents. These residents believe that the benefits and interests that they have gained from the event outweigh the costs, and that the intangible benefits outweigh the physical economic interests. The residents are divided into enthusiasts, realists, tolerators, and haters. Several differences are observed between the residents of the two cities. Beijing residents focus on environmental interests, whereas Qingdao residents focus on image. Beijing has a lower percentage of enthusiasts, but has a higher percentage of realists and haters than Qingdao. The implications of this study can be used by researchers and organizers of mega-events.

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1. Introduction

Mega-events have become widely regarded research topics in the academic world because of their deep, long-lasting influence on the hosting cities. Getz (1997) believed that the powerful appeal of an event could enhance the reputation of a local community within a short period. Hall (1992) mentioned that the large-scale consumption behaviors of visitors from all over the world could increase the need for urban facilities and infrastructures, which in turn could significantly affect the local community. The Olympics is the most significant event in the world because of its impacts on the economy,

society, and politics of the hosting country or region (Toohey & Veal, 2000; Zhou & Ap, 2009). Many people, including organizers, have asserted that the perceptions and attitudes of local residents toward such events must be considered in the planning process to achieve sustainable development. However, the perceptions and attitudes of residents toward the real outcome of the Olympics have been largely ignored in previous studies (Zhou & Ap, 2009).

The perception of the local community is an effective basis for analyzing the social impacts of an event to the hosting city. The recognition, support, and appeal of the local community have been identified as the success factors of a particular event (Jeong & Faulkner, 1996). Previous mega-events that were studied include the America's Cup held in Australia between 1986 and 1987 (Soutar & McLeod, 1993) and in New Zealand between 1999 and 2000 (Barker, Page, & Meyer, 2002), the FIFA 2002 World Cup in Korea (Kim, Gursoy, & Lee, 2006; Kim & Petrick, 2005), the ICC Cricket

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World Cup 2007 in Barbados (Lorde, Greenidge, & Devonish, 2011), the Tour de France in 2007 (Bull & Lovell, 2007), the 2009 World Games in Kaohsiung (Taiwan) (Ma, Ma, Wu, & Rotherham, 2013), the 2014 Commonwealth Games in Glasgow (Martin & Barth, 2013), and so on. Previous Olympics have also been investigated, such as the 1996 Olympics in Atlanta (Mihalik & Simonetta, 1998; 1999), the 2002 Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City (Gursoy & Kendall, 2006), the 2000 Olympics in Sydney (Lenskyj, 2002; Waitt, 2003), the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi (Müller, 2012), and the 2012 Olympics in London (Prayag, Hosany, Nunkoo, & Alders, 2013) and in its partner cities Weymouth and Portland (Ritchie, Shipway, & Cleeve, 2009). Some researchers (Ritchie & Aitken, 1984, 1985; Ritchie & Lyons, 1987, 1990; Ritchie & Smith, 1991) spent almost 10 years performing a continual follow-up study on the perceptions of local residents toward the 1998 Winter Olympics in Calgary (Canada). Guala and Turco (2009) also examined the perceptions of Torino residents toward the 2006 Winter Olympics from 2002 to 2007. However, most of these studies were conducted in developed countries, and minimal studies were conducted in developing countries (Kasimati, 2003; Lee, Lee, Kang, Lee, & Jeon, 2013; Zhou & Ap, 2009).

Several reasons can explain such imbalance. Developing countries have only begun to host mega-events over the last 20 years (Getz, 1997). Furthermore, these countries are usually inferior to developed countries in terms of their capability to host mega-events, such as the Olympics (Zhou & Ap, 2009). This imbalance is also reflected in the focus of research. Studies have only focused on the major hosting city of a mega-event, and only a few have examined the partner cities. A comparative examination of the perceptions of residents from the host and partner cities has not been extensively performed in Olympic tourism studies. Nevertheless, several researchers (Boo, Wang, & Yu, 2011; Gursoy, Chi, Ai, & Chen, 2011; Lee et al., 2013; Zhou & Ap, 2009) have summarized the perceptions of local Beijing residents toward the impacts of the 2008 Beijing Olympics. Chen (2010) conducted a similar study on Qingdao, the partner city of Beijing during the 2008 Olympics and host of the sailing races.

Partner cities have become a focus of interest. The large number of Olympic events prompted the host cities to impose extremely strict requirements for their facilities. Some of these cities even imposed special conditions (i.e., the sailboat event must be held in coastal cities). Therefore, the organizers of mega-events, such as the Olympics, select qualified partner cities where they can conduct such special events. For example, although London served as the hosting city of the 2012 Olympics, the sailboat event was held in Weymouth and Portland. The same situation was observed in the 1908 London Olympics, 1988 Seoul Olympics, and 2008 Beijing Olympics. Despite this focus of interest, only two previous research have investigated the perception of residents in partner cities (Chen, 2010; Ritchie et al., 2009).

Furthermore, the abovementioned perception research on the Olympics focused on the residents of the host community (Boo et al., 2011; Guala & Turco, 2009; Gursoy et al., 2011; Gursoy & Kendall, 2006; Lee et al., 2013; Mihalik & Simonetta, 1998; 1999; Prayag et al., 2013; Ritchie & Aitken, 1984, 1985; Ritchie & Lyons, 1987, 1990; Waitt, 2003). Only a small number focused on the partner cities (Chen, 2010; Ritchie et al., 2009) or non-host cities (Deccio & Baloglu, 2002). A comparative research on the perception of the residents of different cities toward the same events is lacking. In terms of research method, two approaches are applicable, namely, the cross-sectional study and longitudinal study. However, the cross-sectional method is insufficient in the post effect study of the time section set of the questionnaire because it explores the time section before (Gursoy & Kendall, 2006; Mihalik & Simonetta, 1999; Müller, 2012; Zhou & Ap, 2009) or during the events (Boo et al., 2011). By contrast, the longitudinal approach does not only focus on the comparison before (Mihalik & Simonetta, 1998; Ritchie

& Aitken, 1984, 1985; Ritchie & Lyons, 1987), at the pre-event, and during (Waitt, 2003) the Olympics, but also on the influence of the event after it has transpired (Chen, 2010; Guala & Turco, 2009; Gursoy et al., 2011; Lee et al., 2013; Ritchie & Lyons, 1990). The research on the 2008 Olympics illustrates these observations. Gursoy et al. (2011) chose the time section during the event and two months lag, Lee et al. (2013) selected the time section of two months lead and three months lag, and Chen (2010) selected the time section during the event and 12 months lead and lag. In their research on the 1988 Winter Olympics, Ritchie and Lyons (1990) selected the time section before the event (1983, 1984, 1985, 1986, 1987) and two weeks lag. Guala and Turco (2009) focused on the four-poll lead (2002, 2003, 2004, 2005) and two-poll lag in March 2006 and January 2007 to February 2007, or approximately one month and 12 months post-Games, when researching on the 2006 Torino Olympics. However, none of the above mentioned research considered the influence within a substantial period of time after the Games. The longest time lag was 12 months (Chen, 2010; Guala & Turco, 2009). The same is true in the long-term research on other events. For instance, Kim and Petrick (2005) selected the last week and three-month post-event period in their study of the 2002 FIFA World Cup. By contrast, Kim et al. (2006) selected three months lead and lag in their study of the same event, Ma et al. (2013) selected a one month lead and three months lag in their research of the 2009 World Games in Kaohsiung (Taiwan), and Lorde et al. (2011) conducted a research only on the six months lead and lag of the 2007 ICC Cricket World Cup.

Given the long-term influence, a short-time lag may be considered insufficient because in most cases, mega-events usually have long-term rather than short-term effects on their host country (Lorde et al., 2011). Generally, two or three years are needed before residents' perception of the costs and benefits will be identified; thus, collecting data two or three years after the event is the better approach (Gursoy et al., 2011).

Therefore, the perceptions of residents from the host and partner cities toward the same event must be examined and compared by conducting integrated comparative research vertically and horizontally. The comparison results will allow mega-event managers to acknowledge the differences in the perceptions and the reasons behind the differences, summarize their experiences in hosting mega-events, and review the social and economic values of these events. Mega-events generate extended impacts on their host countries or regions before and after these occur (Ritchie & Aitken, 1985; Roche, 1994). Based on the comparatively short time lag of the early research stage (12 months or less), the data for the present study were collected at a relatively long period after the event, within which all the actual costs and benefits would have been perceived by the residents (Gursoy et al., 2011). Given that many of the studies have been conducted on the perceptions of residents toward the impacts of the Olympics in developed countries, a developing country must be selected for a case study. For example, when examining the 2008 Olympics, the host country (China) must be selected as the case study, and the hosting (Beijing) and partner (Qingdao) cities must be selected as the study objectives. This research must be conducted 41 months after the Games to help city managers extensively and objectively summarize their experiences and provide useful recommendations to other cities willing to host such events.

2. Literature review

2.1. Resident perceptions and attitudes toward hosting mega-events

The existing studies on mega-events are divided into two major categories. Studies in the first category (e.g., Gursoy et al., 2011; Kim et al., 2006; Lee et al., 2013; Lorde et al., 2011; Ritchie et al., 2009;

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