

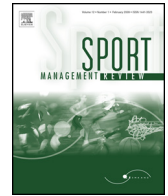


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# Social and charitable impacts of a charity-affiliated sport event: A mixed methods study

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### ABSTRACT

In this mixed methods research, the authors examine a unique type of small-scale event – a charity-affiliated sport event – and define and measure its social and charitable impacts as perceived by residents. Findings from interviews ( $N=37$ ) and surveys ( $N=459$ ) with residents indicated that the event's social impacts can be defined by its capacity to develop social capital, enhance collective identity and pride, and promote sport, health, and well-being. Three types of charitable impacts also emerged, including empathy for cause, informational support, and tangible support. Of them, empathy for cause, which addresses a central social issue in the host community, had the strongest association with residents' perceptions of social impacts. These results provide evidence of a variety of positive impacts that a charity-affiliated sport event has on a community, which can be used to bolster appeals for corporate sponsorship and government support to assist in event delivery.

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## 1. Introduction

Hosting sport events constitutes an important strategy for community development. Public investment in sport events is often justified based on their potential to provide economic benefits to the local economy (Santo, 2007), but researchers have failed to find strong evidence (Baade & Matheson, 2004). In response, the assessment of social impacts – intangible benefits accruing to residents – has increasingly been used as an alternative way to evaluate community development benefits from sponsoring sport events and programs (Inoue & Havard, 2014; Lee, Cornwell, & Babiak, 2013). Recognized "as a core source of potential event value" (Chalip, 2006b, p. 109), social impacts represent the only type of event benefit that focuses on residents (Crompton, 2004). Research has been conducted to understand the social impacts of sport events, with a predominant focus on large-scale spectator sport events, such as the Olympic Games (Waitt, 2003), Super Bowl (Kim & Walker, 2012), and Formula One Grand Prix (Kim, Jun, Walker, & Drane, 2015; Mao & Huang, 2016).

A focus on large-scale spectator sport events is justified by the high visibility and high-profile nature of these events (Kim & Walker, 2012). Despite their potential to produce positive impacts, large-scale spectator events can also cause

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substantial financial burdens, environmental impacts, and resident displacements, which could outweigh the benefits of the events (Gibson, Kaplanidou, & Kang, 2012). In addition, because large-scale events involve major infrastructure projects, only communities with ample resources are able to host these events (Taks, 2013). The problems associated with hosting large-scale spectator sport events have created a growing call to shift focus to small-scale sport events, which can provide substantial benefits to residents, especially when held in a small or medium sized community (Gibson et al., 2012). Small-scale sport events are often held annually, generate limited economic activity and national media interest, and may attract more participants than spectators (Gibson et al., 2012). Most participatory sport events (except for a few large-scale events, such as the New York City Marathon) fall into this category of event.

In the current research, we extend the understanding of social impacts to the context of small-scale sport events by defining and measuring the social impacts of a participatory sport event. Specifically, the Angkor Wat International Half Marathon (AWHM), an annual event held in Siem Reap, Cambodia, served as the setting for this research, and it represents a unique type of participatory sport event, a charity-affiliated sport event (Bennett, Mousley, Kitchin, & Ali-Choudhury, 2007). A large proportion of marathon events incorporate some form of charitable alignment, yet differ by the prominence of the charity. Select events including the AWHM are classified as charity-affiliated sport events, since they feature the charitable cause throughout all event marketing communication and the registration process. In contrast, many other events place minimal emphasis on their charitable aspect within event marketing communication and registration, allocating a limited presence to the charity at the event (Filo, Funk, & O'Brien, 2011). The prominence of the charity can be integrated into the operations and promotion of an event with a strong charitable alignment (Rundio, Heere, & Newland, 2014), which can allow the event and charity to reach new population segments (Woolf, Heere, & Walker, 2013).

Consistent with the scope of a charity-affiliated sport event, providing charity support for local causes has been central to the operations of the AWHM since its inception in 1996. The event has donated over US\$330,000 to organizations addressing important local causes, such as the provision of support for anti-personnel landmine victims affected by the country's civil war (Angkor Wat International Half Marathon, 2015). This central role of the charity makes the AWHM an important setting for understanding the social impacts of a small-scale sport event.

Within this setting, we address two purposes. First, we modify the framework of social impacts proposed by Lee et al. (2013) based on qualitative data obtained from residents, and then subsequently develop and test a survey scale to measure residents' perceptions of social impacts. Although scholars have proposed multiple frameworks to conceptualize and measure the social impacts of sport events (Crompton, 2004; Kim & Walker, 2012; Lee et al., 2013), these frameworks were developed deductively without considering residents' opinions. We are the first to incorporate residents' qualitative descriptions into the conceptualization and measurement of social impacts. Second, we explore community benefits resulting from the charity affiliation of the AWHM and how these benefits may correlate with the event's social impacts. Aligning an event with a charitable cause is an effective strategy for enhancing the event's social impacts (Filo, Funk, & O'Brien, 2009; O'Brien & Chalip, 2008). However, the effects of charity affiliation on social impacts have not been empirically examined. Consequently, we extend existing findings through the empirical examination of charity-based community benefits and their relationship with the social impacts of an event.

## 2. Conceptual background

### 2.1. Social impacts of sport events

Social impacts represent broad intangible benefits that accrue to residents (Inoue & Havard, 2014; Kim & Walker, 2012; Lee et al., 2013). While most researchers conceptualize social impacts in the context of large-scale spectator sport events, Lee et al. (2013) have proposed a related, yet distinct framework for social impacts to assess a range of sport events and programs. Their framework defines social impacts based on five dimensions representing a set of interrelated intangible benefits: (a) social capital, (b) collective identities, (c) health literacy, (d) well-being, and (e) human capital. Social capital is the development of trustworthy social relationships and conditions that are essential to facilitating successful cooperation in the community. Collective identities entail the enhanced sense of belonging to the community that can provide residents with a shared self-concept as community members. Health literacy relates to residents' capability to understand health-related information and make an appropriate health decision using such information. Well-being refers to enhancement in life quality that reflects improved psychological function and development. Lastly, human capital is the acquisition of knowledge, competencies, and skills fundamental to personal development (Lee et al., 2013).

Several of Lee et al.'s (2013) social impact dimensions overlap with those discussed by others in their examination of spectator sport events. For example, collective identities correspond to the two types of community pride (i.e., pride resulting from the enhanced community image and from improved community infrastructure) Kim and Walker (2012) identified in their study of the Super Bowl. Similarly, social capital and well-being relate to Kim and Walker's community attachment and excitement (i.e., excitement experienced by the whole community and by residents), respectively. Nevertheless, Lee et al.'s framework also identifies distinctive dimensions of social impacts – health literacy and human capital – that reflect key characteristics of sport participation (Lawson, 2005). Thus, this framework can provide comprehensive insight into the assessment of social impacts from participatory sport events.

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