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Sport, tourism and mega-event impacts on host cities: A case study of the 2010 FIFA World Cup in Port Elizabeth

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Abstract

Tourism has been identified as a key source of economic growth and diversification for countries. In fact the rapid growth of the industry has, in part been fuelled by the rapid growth in sectors such as sport tourism, and linked specifically to major and mega-event hosting. Successfully hosting mega-events brings economic benefits, increased city visibility, increased tourism revenue and increased pride in the city by the host communities, among other benefits. Subsequently, world tourism patterns have transformed with the hosting of such events putting the spotlight on new tourism destinations, and drawing attention to those that are neglected, particularly developing nations. This study assessed the legacy impacts of mega-events and sport tourism in general on host cities using the 2010 FIFA World Cup in Port Elizabeth, South Africa as a case study. A spatially based systematic sampling method was used to gather 2225 questionnaires in selected areas during the event in Port Elizabeth. The data were captured and analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software. Key findings reveal that the event had positive impacts on the destination in the long-term as many visitors planned to visit the country/city in future and rated key tourism facilities as being of a good standard. The study recommends the maximisation of the marketing momentum garnered through the hosting of the event in order to inform and remind relevant stakeholders of the potential of the region, before focus shifts to alternative destinations.

Keywords: Tourism, sport tourism, mega-events, impacts, FIFA World Cup.

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Introduction

According to Cornelissen, Bob and Swart (2011), countries have been forced to attract and retain visitors due to the ever increasing competition between countries as tourism destinations. One of the strategies in their endeavour has been the hosting of major and mega-events in an attempt to move towards being event-driven economies (Bob & Swart, 2010). This is because events play a critical role in shaping national and local tourism products and have an ability to transform destinations, as mentioned by several authors (Bob & Swart, 2010;

Cornelissen, [Bob & Swart, 2011](#)). Sport tourism has thus received considerable attention as a niche in recent years due to sport's ability to contribute to tourism's role in urban regeneration. Rein and Shields (2007) ascertain that sport tourism has become a central platform for development in many destinations, versus its previous purpose of being used as a complementary concept to already existing development structures. Sport receives widespread free media coverage which generates visibility and as such, attracts visitors and investors to the hosting destination, so sport becomes used as a primary and secondary tool in the tourism destination branding mix ([Rein & Shields, 2007](#); [Yuen, 2008](#)).

Successfully hosting sport tourism events results in increased visitation and tourism revenue, increased pride in the host city by the community as well as increased sport participation and increased city visibility and enhanced city image among others ([Burbank, Andranovich & Heying, 2002](#); [Yuen, 2008](#); [Tichaawa & Swart, 2010](#); [Desai & Vahed, 2010](#)). Developing nations also use such events to support nation-building initiatives, to also meet particular political goals, for image enhancement and to also send a signal or convey a certain message to the international community ([Cornelissen & Swart, 2006](#); [Rogerson, 2009](#)). For the 2010 FIFA World Cup in South Africa for example, one of the key objectives was to maximise tourism value and to ensure maximum benefits from the opportunity of branding the country as a powerful destination and to leave lasting sport tourism legacies for the country (South Africa. Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism [DEAT], 2005; [Kruys, 2007](#); [Donaldson & Ferreira, 2008](#)). This research endeavour assessed the impacts of mega-events and sport tourism in general on host cities, using the 2010 FIFA World Cup in Port Elizabeth as a case study.

Overview of sport tourism and mega-events

First and Third World countries have, in recent times used sport tourism and more specifically, mega-event hosting as a strategy in developing event-driven economies ([Rein & Shields, 2007](#); [Bob & Swart, 2010](#)). This has resulted in the rapid growth of sport tourism, and its use now as a central platform for development, where it was previously viewed as a complementary concept to an existing structure for development. The growth of sport tourism and the increased attention it has received is partially as a result of the recognition given to the role of mega-events in shaping the national and local tourism products and the role sport can play in tourism's role in urban regeneration ([Yuen, 2008](#)).

[Greene \(2003\)](#) defines mega-events as large-scale events that are intended to renew investment in the host cities, particularly in the tourism sector by projecting a positive image of the city. Countries therefore compete to host mega-events due to the associated socio-economic and other tourism benefits that can be accrued through the successful hosting of a mega-event such as the

FIFA World Cup (Fourie & Santana-Gallego, 2011). According to Getz (1997), mega-events can result in extraordinarily high levels of tourism media coverage, prestige, as well as economic impacts for the host. Apart from the tourism and image benefits, they can also serve as catalysts for urban renewal, as well as for the development of new infrastructure. However, the hosting of these prestigious events has largely been reserved for developed nations in the past (Bohlmann & Van Heerden, 2005). In recent times though there has been an argument for the awarding of such events to developing nations on the basis of such countries needing the economic stimulus provided by hosting the events more than the developed countries do (Humphreys & Prokopowicz, 2007). Many developing nations argue that sport tourism, mega-events in particular, present a shortcut by which they can gain the global recognition that well-developed nations already have (Hede, 2005; Humphreys & Prokopowicz, 2007).

Mega-event legacy and the 2010 FIFA World Cup

According to Bob and Swart (2010) mega-events have become highly sought-after commodities in many countries because they can serve as a catalyst for long-term outcomes for their localities. Mega-events have major social, cultural, economic and political implications. Subsequently, governments have been investing heavily in the bidding for, and staging of, mega-events because mega-event legacies have developed to such an extent that they are now considered a crucial part of the bid phase, with long-term emphasis being placed upon the benefits that will result from hosting the event (Thomson, Leopkey, Schlekler&Schulenkorf, 2010). The argument with such legacy proclaiming however, is that it is often a public relations exercise by authorities in order to gain public sector support (Chalip & McGuirty, 2004), and governing authorities often overstate the economic benefits of mega-events as a strategy for justifying their exorbitant spending on the hosting of such events and to garner support from other stakeholders (Tichaawa & Swart, 2010).

In the context of the 2010 FIFA World Cup, one of the main overall objectives of the event was to maximise tourism value and to ensure the highest benefits from the opportunity of branding South Africa as a powerful tourism destination (Pillay & Bass, 2008). The event was envisaged as an opportunity to create a meaningful legacy in reversing the image of South Africa to other countries, particularly regarding safety and security concerns (Nyikana & Tichaawa, 2010). Moreover, the 2010 FIFA World Cup was aimed at enabling other African countries to benefit through the African Legacy Programme (ALP), while fast-tracking and ensuring the development of the social and economic infrastructure in the South Africa (Pillay & Bass, 2008).

The monitoring of the legacies envisaged by South Africa in the hosting of the 2010 FIFA World Cup will be vital moving forward in order to see out government intentions in the implementation of the legacies.

Methodology

Research design and sampling technique

The research design for this study made use of both qualitative as well as quantitative approaches. The use of the mixed-method approach is said to increase the validity of the study by examining the same phenomenon in different ways ([Johnson, Onwuegbuzie & Turner, 2007](#)). In terms of the population of the study, visitors (non-locals) to Port Elizabeth during the 2010 FIFA World Cup made up the population. A total of two thousand, two hundred and twenty five ($n=2225$) respondents were interviewed through a questionnaire using a spatially based systematic sampling technique. The questionnaire for the study was developed on the basis of a similar study that was conducted regarding the 2006 FIFA World Cup held in Germany. Key variables in the survey included visitor socio-demographic information, consumer spending behaviours, previous attendance/ visits, and perceptions of the host destination. 21 trained fieldworkers were placed in different locations in order to ensure geographical distribution. The first respondent was randomly chosen by the fieldworker. Thereafter, every 20th attendee who passed the fieldworker was approached to participate in the study. The respondents were intercepted at the Nelson Mandela Bay Stadium precinct and the official FIFA fan park at St. Georges Cricket Stadium in Port Elizabeth on all match days.

Data analysis

The quantitative data were captured and analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software which allows for the generation of tables, bar and pie charts as well as cross-tabulations where necessary to illustrate the findings as clearly as possible. The qualitative data on the other hand were classified into conceptual categories and analysed, based on the use of the constant comparative method.

Results and Discussion

In terms of the demographic profile, a majority of respondents (34.2%) were from other parts of South Africa. Many of the international visitors came from South Africa's key tourism source markets: the United Kingdom (30.5%); Germany (8.5%); and the United States of America (8%). Expectedly, an overwhelming majority of the respondents (78.6%) were men, although the study noted the increase in the involvement of women in sport. The respondents were

fairly young with an average age calculated at thirty three (33) years. The respondents were well educated (with a majority having a minimum of college education and above) and had an average monthly income which was calculated at R55 122.39.

Regarding the travel arrangements for the international visitors ($n=1435$), few (8.4%) of the respondents had purchased tour packages for their visit as a majority of them preferred to make their own arrangements. A majority of those who bought tour packages ($n=187$) came from the United Kingdom (28.3%), Brazil (11.8%) and Chile (10.2%). The main components included in the tour packages included accommodation, air travel, World Cup tickets and coach tours.

In relation to previous attendance at FIFA World Cups, the majority of the respondents (74.2%) indicated that they had not attended any previous FIFA World Cup compared to those who had previously attended a FIFA World Cup before (25.8%). These findings gave an opportunity for those who had been to previous tournament to rate the South African event in comparison to previous ones, while for the first time attendees, it afforded the country an opportunity to create a lasting impression with regard to its ability to host such high profile events. Of the total international visitors ($n=1435$) a few (24.6%) had visited South Africa before the trip for the 2010 FIFA World Cup and would have had an idea of what the country could offer as a tourist destination. However an overwhelming majority (75.4%) were first time visitors to the country. The findings also reveal that only 14.8% of the total visitors had expressed an intention to visit other African countries during their stay for the 2010 event, which is rather disappointing given the highly propagated tourism benefits for other countries due to the event. Despite this, 30% of the international visitors indicated that the event had assisted in opening up their eyes to other alternative African destinations which they would potentially consider visiting in the future.

Many of the visitors (35.2%) felt that the event exposed them to more tourism facilities in the Nelson Mandela Bay area. Of concern though is that despite the event being hailed as a crime-free event, a notable percentage (48%) perceived the event as having contributed to the increase in crime in the local area.

The findings also reveal that the international visitors felt that the event had raised their awareness of other alternative tourism destinations within South Africa rather than the usual areas of tourism activity. In Port Elizabeth, the most popular tourist activities amongst the attendees were; adventure (64.1%), theme parks (48.4%), wildlife (43.5%) and the beach (37%). Such activities are the strong points of the region as it widely markets itself as the only city to view the "Big 7" which includes the usual Big 5 plus the humpback whales and great white shark viewing. The area is also known for its over 40km long coast which

consists of a few Blue Flag beaches. When requested to rate the city in terms of various tourism aspects, the majority of items (friendliness, transport, safety, and entertainment) received positive ratings. However, the visitors felt that Port Elizabeth was not a good “value-for-money” destination.

When visitors have had an outstanding experience in a certain destination, they have a high propensity not only to return to that particular destination, but are also likely to recommend the destination to friends, colleagues and family. In this study, 98.8% of the respondents were likely to recommend or to advise friends and relatives to visit Port Elizabeth. This implies that, all things considered, the city had made a reasonable impression on the visitors and the potential for repeat visits exists.

Conclusion and implications

In this study, it was found that the international visitors exhibited long-haul travel patterns, and largely preferred to make their own travel arrangements when compared to the option of buying tour packages. The challenge for destination marketers for future events is to engage the relevant event organisers prior to the hosting of the events in ensuring sufficient tourism activity marketing to the potential event tourists. This alliance will allow the marketer the opportunity to bundle tourism activities with event registrations and travel arrangements, which will ultimately guarantee tourism activity engagement, in addition to the event participation.

When considering the fact that the visitors to the 2010 event were fairly young (average age of 33 years) and were well-educated, the marketing efforts of South Africa generally, and Port Elizabeth specifically, should target such information sources as the internet, e-mails and social networks, as these were noted to be prominent forms of information for the majority of the visitors. Furthermore, the 2010 FIFA World Cup was attended by many first-time visitors to the country, and Port Elizabeth specifically, who indicated that they would visit the city again in future based on their 2010 experience. It is critical going forward that Nelson Mandela Bay Tourism aggressively continue with the marketing momentum garnered through the hosting of the 2010 FIFA World Cup, in order to inform and constantly remind of the tourism potential of the region, before the focus is largely shifted to alternative destinations.

Given that it is well documented in literature that mega-event legacy measurements are only effective over time, it is recommended that a continuous legacy measurement of the 2010 FIFA World Cup be implemented, in order to monitor the impacts of the event over a long-term by undertaking frequent researches. This will reveal trends and critical information which should equip the Port Elizabeth region with the required information in mapping out a way

forward, in terms of maximising the positive tangible and intangible legacies left behind by the event. Legacy monitoring and evaluation in destinations that host sport mega-events is valuable as it provides insights on lessons mainly linked to cost-benefit analysis in a systematic manner. As Bob and Kassens-Noor (2012) observe, the long-term monitoring of legacy impacts is critically important since the effects of mega-events are increasingly being questioned in relation to how sustainable they are.

Since previous successful legacies associated with mega-events have emerged due to the event being incorporated into the overall long-term development agenda of the host destination, the opportunities/exposure presented to Port Elizabeth by the event could be embedded the key objectives of the provincial government. For example, more specific programmes could be developed around improving the competitiveness of the tourism sector in the Eastern Cape. This could help to ensure the long-term survival of tourism and the maximisation of the benefits to be gained therefrom.

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