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# **PRE AND POST EVALUATION OF RESIDENTS' PARTICIPATION AND SUPPORT OF THE 2012 LONDON OLYMPICS**

## **ABSTRACT**

Even if the participation of locals is limited in mega-event decision-making, their support is crucial to the event's success. Using Social Exchange Theory, the study examines the extent to which community participation and perceived impacts affect residents' support of mega-events. Implementing a structural model, the examination is based on the combination of two pieces of research undertaken before and after the London Olympics. Findings confirm the importance of perceived benefits and costs in community support. They also reveal the increase in positive perceptions after the event, the strengthening of community participation willingness and residents' support, and provide an understanding of the role of perceived success in perspective formulation. Moreover, the study uses an explanatory model for the visualisation of the findings.

**Keywords:** community participation, perceived impacts, mega-events, residents' attitudes, support model

## INTRODUCTION

The participation of locals in mega-events decision-making strongly influences the host community's support for further development (Gursoy & Kendall, 2006). This support in event related activities extends community participation and increases the willingness of locals to act as hosts in the foreseeable future (Pappas, 2014). Still, the participation of locals in decision-making is often limited due to: instructions for decision-making in governing systems (Eshlinki & Kaboudi, 2012), institutional and cultural constraints, resource property rights arrangements (Li, 2006), coordination problems amongst stakeholders (Grabher & Thiel, 2015), and the outdated incentives given to residents for the realisation of benefits over time (Suich, 2013).

Support of the community in furthering tourism development has a significant influence on tourism planning policies (Yu, Chancellor & Cole, 2011), especially with regard to large-scale events since they heavily influence the life and the power relationships amongst locals (Frawley, 2015). Locals are likely to be positive and enthusiastic about hosting large-scale events such as the Olympics, since they perceive that their quality of life will be improved (Zhou & Ap, 2009). Still, mega-events may engender some participatory initiatives for the local community, but in general, decision-making and planning allow little input from local residents (Lamberti Noci, Guo & Zhu, 2011), whilst the more democratic approach to mega-event planning is surely more difficult to implement (Pappas, 2014). Consequently, the benefit asymmetry produced by mega-events historically hinders the diffusion of collaborative planning and community participation (Matheson, 2006).

In general, locals perceive that the social and psychological aspects of mega-events are positive, whilst the economic impacts usually fall short of expectations (Prayag, Hosany, Nunkoo, & Alders, 2013). Whilst several studies, such as those by Gursoy and Kendall (2006), and Nunkoo and Ramkissoon, (2011), discuss local support and the development of positive and negative impacts, the correlation between community participation and residents' support is unreported. Furthermore, the literature includes relatively few studies (please see: Gibson, Walker, Thapa, Kaplanidou, Geldenhuys & Coetzee, 2014; Kaplanidou, Karadakis, Gibson, Thapa, Walker, Geldenhuys & Coetzee, 2013; Kim & Petrick, 2005) examining variations in community support before and after mega-events. Taking into consideration the perspective that attitudes before, during and after the event could be significantly different (Gursoy & Kendall, 2006), the aim of the paper is to examine the extent to which community participation and perceived impacts affect residents' support of mega-events; more specifically, the London Olympics. Through the creation of a structural model, its objectives focus on (i) the demonstration of the influence of community participation (ii) the impact on community support before and after the Olympics (iii) the evaluation of the effect of the Olympics' success on the perceived impacts, and (iv) the willingness of locals to participate in and support further development. Finally, it proceeds to a visualisation of the community participation and support of mega-events using an explanatory model.

The main theoretical contribution of the study lies in the model's use of the community participation construct, which has, to date, not been included in the investigation of community support related with mega-events, and in general with the tourism field. Through the development of a structural model which includes local

perceptions pre and post-Olympics, this research contributes to studies which focus on understanding the change in locals' willingness to participate in decision-making and community support for further development, depending on the perceived success of a mega-event. The final contribution is an explanatory model of community participation and mega-events; something also not included in the existing literature.

### **THE 2012 LONDON OLYMPICS**

In the case of the 2012 Olympics, DCMS (2011) considered that there were significant opportunities for the promotion of community engagement and participation in community-based activities and decision-making. In October 2004, an outline of a public engagement programme was submitted, to include in the participation process 60,000 community groups and 5,000 social enterprises operating in London (London Civic Forum, 2005). Two other programmes (Inspire and Games Maker) were devised to encourage people to become involved in volunteering and community activity, by linking the Olympics' related events and projects of non-commercial organisations across the UK, and aiming to recruit up to 70,000 volunteers for the Games (DCMS, 2011). This was achieved, since more than 70,000 volunteers participated in the Games (Hamilton, 2013). Still, a reasonably tight window of participation opportunities for the development of the London Olympics was given to locals (Davis & Thornley, 2010).

During Olympics preparation, Londoners faced significant difficulties in achieving fair participation in regeneration planning since the proposed economic development had to be balanced against sustainable social development of neighbourhoods (Barata, Brayford, Hong, Eze-John & Montero, 2013). Prior to the Olympics, locals strongly

supported the event even if they were not optimistic about the economic benefits, the extent of any positive socio-cultural impacts, or the potential traffic congestion (Prayag et al., 2013; Ritchie, Shipway & Cleeve, 2009). However, several financial aspects and considerations marginalised the perspectives of residents and finally their overall engagement (Imrie, Lees & Raco, 2009), and in practice there were many discrepancies in participatory and community-led approach policies (Barata et al., 2013). All of the above indicate the existence of a problematic community participation process with several loose ends, in opposition to Grant's (2004) recommendations for a carefully crafted and reflective planning process. As a result, in the case of the 2012 Olympics, there seem to be considerable grounds for Haxton's (1999) perception that mega-event organisers are likely to adopt democratic procedures in name only.

Still, the debate concerning the 2012 Olympics was not actually focused on community participation and engagement in decision-making, but on its overall economic impacts and job creation (Dugan, 2013). In the UK, the 2012 Olympics are seen by the public as successful (Gibson, 2013), mainly because a year later £9.9 billion in international trade and inward investment had been won because of the Games (with the overall cost not exceeding £8.9 billion), 70,000 jobs for workless Londoners had been created, and they had helped UK tourism to increase by one percent and visitor spend by four percent (HM Government, 2013), whilst they had minimal negative impact on the environment, considerably improved the public transport infrastructure, and significantly encouraged sustainable behaviour by both individuals and organisations (DEFRA, 2012). In addition, 2,818 homes, including 1,379 affordable homes, have provided essential new housing for more than 6,000

Londoners at the Athletes' Village (Olympic Movement, 2013). Despite this, the huge number of temporary jobs created several dead-ends, since the obvious leverage for careers created by the Olympics did not hold for all individuals involved (Grabher & Thiel, 2015).

## **HYPOTHETICAL CONSTRUCTS**

### **Community participation**

Researchers widely support the view that the participation of locals in tourism development is advantageous in terms of sustainability and effectiveness of the implemented developmental policies (Lamberti et al., 2011). This is also the case in event organising, since the participatory process of locals in decision-making increases the effectiveness of event development, acceptance, and support from the community (Pappas, n.d.).

According to Pimbert and Pretty (1997), the four possible forms of community participation are: (i) *Minimal participation*: consultation or information, where external agents define problems and solutions, having no obligation for modification in accordance with people's responses; (ii) *Participation for incentives*: locals participate through the provision of resources (labour, access, etc.), in return for incentives; (iii) *Interactive participation*: locals are engaged in a joint analysis, leading to action plans, an enhancement of social and institutional capacity and increased local control; and (iv) *Self-mobilisation*: locals take initiatives independent of external institutions. Despite suggestions in the literature that residents should be involved in decision-making, some researchers recognise that participation alone is not sufficient since locals need to be empowered in order to make tourism (Boley &

McGehee, 2014) and events (Pappas, 2014) sustainable. In several cases, not only has empowerment not been given to locals, but they have been excluded from planning, decision-making and project management (Eshliki & Kabudi, 2012). According to Tosun (2002), decision-makers need to carefully introduce deliberate measures and create opportunities for indigenous people to participate in decision-making, otherwise the further development may suffer from a gradual lack of support from host communities that will threaten future prospects. That is why development projects should actively involve locals rather than have them only experience the final outcome (Schulenkorf, 2012).

In mega-events, a huge amount of demand for financial and non-financial resources, and the direct and indirect involvement of all community members in their preparation and provision, represent sufficient context in which to encourage stakeholder collaboration in tourism development (Lee, 2013; Pappas, 2014). It is important for community participation to directly involve the stakeholders in decision-making by assessing benefits and costs for all stakeholders during the evaluation of the alternatives (Lamberti et al., 2011). Moreover, mega-events target the international community for a country's branding purposes, whilst they also aim at the internal audience in order to legitimise the ruling leadership (Chen, 2012).

As far as it concerns the stakeholders, they encouraged to cooperate because of the potential impact of mega-events, since their engagement can overcome the asymmetry of beneficial impact distribution in the local community, something that has hindered collaborative planning and community participation (Jamal & Getz, 1999). When communities play an active role and participate in the design and management of

development and planning in their locale, it ensures their support and a favourable attitude towards the implemented activities (Presenza, Del Chiappa & Sheehan, 2013).

Evaluating these findings, the study developed the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1<sub>AB</sub>: *Community participation positively influences community support.*

When the host community encourages people to work with each other and develop a network in which everyone can contribute, it increases its potential to achieve the desired positive outcomes of participatory projects (Ife, 1995). On the other hand, there are always people in a community who do not care about social projects, whilst there are others who do not have time to participate (Creighton, 1995). Moreover, different community actors may expect different types of community participation in order to achieve their own aims, and these may be in conflict with each other (Tosun, 2006; Iorio & Wall, 2012).

However, when locals appropriately interact in joint projects that are planned/developed within the community, the dedication of individuals and groups increases (Kenny, 1999), whilst the support of locals for further development and acceptance of positive impacts is strengthening (Schulenkorf, 2012). Conversely, residents' support is likely to be affected by perceived negative impacts (Kitnuntaviwat & Tang, 2008). The literature suggests that, when residents do not participate in decision-making, then community support decreases, and negative perspectives on further development are consequently increased (Pappas, 2014), something which is of great importance since the success of tourism and events

requires the host community's support (Gursoy & Rutherford, 2004). This discussion led to the development of the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 2<sub>AB</sub>: *Community participation strengthens the perceived positive impacts.*

Hypothesis 3<sub>AB</sub>: *Community participation weakens the perceived negative impacts.*

### **Perceived positive impacts**

Residents' support for further development is influenced by perceived benefits and costs (Gursoy, Chi, Dyer, 2010); they are likely to support mega-events as long as they believe that the benefits outweigh the costs (Gursoy & Kendall, 2006).

According to Nunkoo and Gursoy (2012), the economic impacts are the most valued elements for the host community. In terms of economy, previous studies suggest that locals perceive mega-events as generators for the development of the local economy through tourism (Deng, Li & Shen, n.d.; Gargalianos, Toohey & Stotlar, 2015), since they improve the income and standards of living (Milman & Pizam, 1988), create flexible working patterns (Crompton & Sanderson, 1990), develop local business through booming investments (Dyer, Gursoy, Sharma & Carter, 2007), revitalise deteriorated areas (Kim & Walker, 2012), increase tax revenues for government (Deccio & Baloglu, 2002), and improve the urban infrastructure (Ritchie et al., 2009). Mega-events provide considerable opportunities for the global promotion of products, exploitation of new investments and potential business exports, and the optimisation of events knowledge management, thus they motivate public involvement and corporate investments (Barney, Ween & Martyn, 2002). They draw significant numbers of visitors, attract sponsorship from television and corporations and

showcase the host location (Lee & Taylor, 2005). Moreover, mega-events are “envisaged by policymakers as not only a global platform for place branding, but also an event-based mechanism to accelerate the process of urban renewal” (Deng, 2013, p.108). They increase brand associations (i.e. unique image components) and enhance tourists’ future behaviours (i.e. intention to revisit and recommend), thus they are able to strengthen the destinations’ brand image (Li & Kaplanidou, 2013; Qu, Kim & Im, 2011).

Dealing with culture and society, mega-events increase the morale and pride of locals (Barney, Ween & Martyn, 2002), heighten self-esteem (Stronza & Gordillo, 2008), and bring together community and country by helping to build national identity (Prayag, Hosany, Nunkoo & Alders, 2013). Mega-events promote cultural activities (Dyer et al., 2007), have a societal lasting effect on tourism for residents (Kang & Perdue, 1994), attract considerable attention to the locality (Deccio & Baloglu, 2002), provide considerable opportunities for cultural exchange between hosts and guests (Besculides, Lee & McCormick, 2002; Kang, Lee, Lee & Li, n.d.), strengthen cultural values and traditions (Lorde, Greenidge & Devonish, 2011), improve the perceived quality of policing (Pizam, 1978), create a greater potential to entertain local people (Andereck & Nyaupane, 2011), and motivate individuals to become more active with both, the society and the event itself (Potwarka, 2015).

Environmentally, the impact of mega-events is less well documented (Collins, Jones & Munday, 2009; Prayag et al., 2013). The positive environmental impacts of mega-events include restoration of the destination’s landscape (Kim, Gursoy & Lee, 2006), preservation of the man-made and physical environment (Lorde et al., 2011),

reformation/development of recycling and pollution control (Allen, O'Toole, McDonnell & Harris, 2005), development of policies for the reduction of greenhouse emissions (Collins et al., 2009), implementation of waste avoidance and water-use minimisation measures (London 2012, 2005), enhancement of locals' environmental consciousness (Kim et al., 2006), and the remediation of previously spoiled areas, for use by events (Collins et al., 2009). These findings led to the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 4<sub>AB</sub>: *The perceived positive impacts strengthen community support for organising mega-events.*

### **Perceived negative impacts**

Even if mega-events produce both positive and negative impacts prior to the event, local communities tend to glorify their benefits and underestimate or even ignore their costs (Kim et al., 2006), whilst the actual economic effects are difficult to measure, and their overall contribution to the host society is questionable (Lee & Taylor, 2005). The literature reveals that, locals respond positively to the hosting of mega-events, which they believe contribute to a feeling of national pride (Ohman, Jones & Wilkes, 2006) and improve destination image (Gursoy, Chi, Ai & Chen, 2011), favourably rating their socio-psychological impacts (Zhou & Ap, 2009). After the mega-event, however, the initial enthusiasm fades away and locals focus on the asymmetric distribution of beneficial impacts (Grabher & Thiel, 2015), especially with regard to economics (Kim et al., 2006), whilst feelings of national pride decrease (Kim & Petrick, 2005).

The economic impact assessments of mega-events predominantly focus on direct monetary aspects usually ignoring the intangible impacts on the community (Kim & Walker, 2012). Even if mega-events are perceived as tourism stimulators through their vital role in destination marketing (Getz, 2008; Lee, Reisinger, Kim & Yoon, 2014) the literature lacks to provide evidence for their influence in a mature destination and their actual impact on the destination's regular tourism. The consequences of mega-events which are of prime interest to the economic sphere are increased taxes for the structuring of facilities, and the mismanagement of public funds by organisers (Deccio & Baloglu, 2002), whilst a considerable amount of investment does not justify the benefits created by the event (Holloway, 2009). In addition, empirical results have revealed that the actual economic benefits for the host destination are very little or none at all (Baade & Matheson, 2006), whilst the actual benefits in terms of income and employment generation are also very limited (Coates & Humphreys, 2003). Furthermore, the urban areas that host a mega-event jeopardise their established destination image, especially if the event is not appropriate to the local community's financial strength and capacity (Fredline, 2004).

Concerning society, mega-events can impact negatively to the local community since they "may greatly challenge the traditional family values or give rise to cultural commercialisation" (Chen & Tian, 2015, p.265), and may damage the reputation of locals because of the existence of poor facilities and improper practices (Ritchie, 1984). In addition, they may foster law enforcement problems, increased crime (Ritchie et al., 2009) and prostitution (Lorde et al., 2011), community displacement and disruption, and in sport events, exaggerated fan behaviour (Kim & Walker, 2012). Moreover, the locals' negative experiences of the event may significantly influence

their attitudes and perspectives (Haley, Snaith & Miller, 2005), whilst there is also a danger of conflicts between hosts and guests due to their different economic welfare, gaps in purchasing power, and standards of living (Tosun, 2002).

Focusing on the environment, if urban development is not carefully planned, the negative impacts of events may include over-capacity, functional obsolescence, maintenance difficulties, increased long-term regeneration costs (Deng, 2013), loss of habitats, soil erosion, deforestation (Getz, 1997), traffic congestion (Jones et al., 2015; Prayag et al., 2013), increased noise and pollution (Lenskyj, 2002), and carbon emissions-related climate change (Jones, 2008). Mega-events can also have extended consequences for local ecosystems through utilisation of irreplaceable natural capital reserves (Cantelon & Letters, 2000). In several cases mega-events have also faced criticism for their impact upon sensitive locations (Greenpeace, 2004). Based on the empirical findings in the literature, this study developed the following hypothesis:

*Hypothesis 5<sub>AB</sub>: The perceived negative impacts weaken community support for organising mega-events.*

As stated previously, the literature suggests that locals intentionally ignore the costs and overestimate the benefits of mega-events prior to the event (Kim et al., 2006). This perspective needs to be re-examined, since Ye, Scott, Ding and Huang (2012) found that before and during a mega-event (specifically the Shanghai Expo 2010) the perception by locals of the perceived costs and benefits did not actually change, implying that this intentional subjectivity may be affected by other factors. Previous psychological research, such as that by Ross, Lepper and Hubbard (1975), Schul and

Goren (1998), and Guenther and Alicke (2008), reveals that a successful event/performance leads people to evaluate the event/performance more favourably, strengthening already existing perceptions, whilst a failure has exactly the opposite effect. Based on these studies, it is logical to conclude that anticipation (and community support prior to the event) of the event's success and the actual evaluation by locals of the level of success after the event, can strengthen their perceptions of costs and benefits. In addition, since the evaluation of costs and benefits can influence the extent of residents' community participation and support (Schulenkorf, 2012), the extent of a perceived success can influence their willingness to engage in further developmental initiatives. Thus, this study developed the following hypotheses:

*Hypothesis 6: A successful event strengthens the perceived positive impacts.*

*Hypothesis 7: A successful event weakens the perceived negative impacts.*

*Hypothesis 8: A successful event increases the willingness of locals to engage in community participation.*

*Hypothesis 9: A successful event has a direct positive impact upon community support for the organisation of further mega-events.*

### **Community support**

For the success and sustainability of their investments, the importance to the planners of taking into account the perspectives of host communities is widely recognised, since "a lack of coordination and cohesion within the host community can turn the

planning process into a highly charged political and social exercise” (Gursoy & Kendall, 2006, p.605). Since the residents are considered an integral part of the destination product, directly affecting visitor satisfaction and expenditure levels, their support for the development of tourism and mega-events cannot, without consequences, be assumed or taken for granted (Spencer & Nsiah, 2013). It is imperative that the engagement of locals should not be used as a substitute for political and administrative organisation as far as it concerns comprehensive strategies for large-scale development (Selman, 2004).

Several factors, such as attitudes (Lepp, 2008), perceived effects (Dyer et al., 2007), community attachment (Nicholas et al., 2009), and perceived benefits and costs (Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2011) influence community support for further development, underpinning the principle that local support is a crucial factor in ongoing community development (Lee, 2013). The literature suggests that “positive attitudes to tourism are usually accompanied by a higher level of support for the industry, whilst negative attitudes lead to lower support” (Nunkoo & Gursoy, 2012, p.246). In terms of events, the study of Gursoy and Kendall (2006) supports that the locals that generate stronger perceptions for the beneficial event-related impacts also support further event hosting and have a greater sense of community attachment. Thus, organisers and decision-makers should seek the support of several community groups and encourage the involvement of locals, even before submitting a bid to host an event (French & Disher, 1997).

## **THE PROPOSED MODEL**

Social Exchange Theory (SET) is rooted in economic theory (Ward & Berno, 2011), sociology, and anthropology (Cook & Rice, 2003), thus it is similar to economic theories such as rational choice (an individual acts ‘as if’ balancing costs against benefits to arrive at an action that maximises personal advantage), expected-utility (people’s preferences with regard to choices that have uncertain outcomes), and maximum-utility (maximisation of total benefit and reduction of the negatives) (Lee, Capella, Taylor, Luo & Gabler, 2014). It is considered to be the most widely used framework when studying community attitudes (Gursoy, Chi & Dyer, 2010; Lee, 2013). SET is “a general sociological theory concerned with understanding the exchange of resources between individuals and groups in an interaction situation” (Ap, 1992, p.668). It offers a framework able to illustrate the way that individuals are dependent upon rewarding actions from others, and involves interactions that engender social obligations (Emerson, 1976). SET can provide the grounds for the evaluation of community support and explain the formulation of locals’ perspectives (Gursoy & Rutherford, 2004; Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2012; Nunkoo & Smith, 2013). The respondents are examined in terms of the overall satisfaction, which is the perceived reward minus the perceived cost (Lawler & Thye, 1999).

SET is considered appropriate for the study of locals’ perspectives on mega-events, since it is able to explain residents’ motivations and the extent of their support for the event (Deccio & Baloglu, 2002). Thus, SET has been used several times for mega-events, and particularly the Olympics, focusing on residents’ perceptions: from Olympic spillover effects (Deccio & Baloglu, 2002), to constructing an enthusiasm scale for locals (Waite, 2003), to revealing that expressed negative perspectives for the

Games can be perceived as unpatriotic behaviours (Zhou & Ap, 2009), examining locals' support (Boo, Wang & Yu, 2011; Gursoy & Kendall, 2006; Ritchie et al., 2009), exploring the behavioural intentions and level of awareness of the Green Olympic initiatives (Jin, Ziang, Ma & Connaughton, 2011), and examining the legacy outcomes amongst host and non-host city residents (Karadakis & Kaplanidou, 2012). Lately, SET has also been used to examine the impacts of urban Olympic transformations (Muller, 2012), and the overall attitude of residents towards perceived impacts (Prayag et al., 2013).

As with most behavioural studies, SET has faced criticism, focused around the establishment of concepts and definitions (Bagozzi, 1975), the inability to capture every important variable (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005), the examination of an incomplete specified set of ideas (Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2011), the applicability of the context, balance of power, and individual versus group dynamics (Cook, 1977), but mainly the potential irrationality of human assumptions and reactions (Lawler & Thye, 1999) that can alter the entire dynamics of social exchange (Simon, 1991; Lee et al., 2014). Even so, SET is considered an important framework in organisational and behavioural research, able to predict the relationships that can establish trust through satisfaction, cooperation and shared values (Lee et al., 2014).

Figure 1 illustrates the model of the study, which has its theoretical basis in SET and builds on previous research by Gursoy and Kendall (2006), Nunkoo and Ramkissoon (2011), and Reid, Mair and George (2004). Figure 1 presents an implementation of the same model before and after the examined mega-event, exploring its constructs through time. It suggests that mega-event support (with special reference to the

London Olympics) is influenced by the degree of community participation and the perceived positive and negative impacts, whilst the extent of mega-event success influences the formation of the perceived impacts, the willingness of community participation, and community support in the post-event period. The model further indicates that potential costs and benefits can operate as moderators of community participation, and of final support from locals.

Please input Figure 1

## **METHOD**

### **Participants**

The research focused on adult London residents who had lived in the city for at least the last three years, thus ensuring their experience of the event's impacts and also the potential for their involvement in community participation processes. The first stage of the research (pre-evaluation) was conducted in May-June 2012, and the second stage in May-June 2013. The respondents were selected through a purposive sampling method at eight major train stations in London. According to The Independent (2012), the busiest train stations for 2010/2011 in the UK were all in London. These were Waterloo, Victoria, London Liverpool Street, London Bridge, Charing Cross, Euston, Paddington, and King's Cross. The train stations are located in different areas of London, all having an obvious significance for transporting the tourists and attendants of the 2012 Olympics. The recruitment of participants in communal areas such as traffic sites (Gursoy & Kendall, 2006), parks (Prayag et al., 2013), and train stations (Hamilton & Alexander, 2013) is a usual practice for researchers in order to reduce the survey bias, as long as the dispersion of sites is sufficient to analogically cover the

examined population. The research was conducted during different days and times on weekdays and weekends. All these train stations are also connected with the London underground, thus including people in the sample who travel from one part of the city to another.

### **Sample determination and collection**

Appropriate representation was a fundamental criterion for determining the sample size. According to Sevgin, Peristianis and Warner (1996), when there are unknown population proportions, the researcher should choose a conservative response format of 50/50 (assuming that 50 percent of the respondents have negative perceptions, and 50 percent do not) to determine the sample size. The author selected at least 95 percent confidence and 5 percent sampling error. The sample size was:

$$N = \frac{(t - table)^2 (hypothesis)}{S^2} \Rightarrow N = \frac{(1.96)^2 (0.5)(0.5)}{(0.5)^2} \Rightarrow N = 384.16 \text{ Rounded to}$$

**400**

The calculation of the sampling size is independent of the total population size, hence the sampling size determines the error (Aaker & Day, 1990). Due to the significant amount of data points (respondents) the research had to examine, it was not possible to have the same sample of individuals in both, pre and post evaluation. Following the studies of Gibson et al. (2014), Kaplanidou et al. (2013), and Kim et al. (2006) the research has implemented a trend design where different respondents from similarly representative demographic backgrounds (adults; permanent residents of London; examination on the same communal areas) completed the pre- and post-event questionnaires. One hundred residents were approached in each train station in each

stage of the research. Of the 800 approached residents, in the first stage (pre-evaluation) 447 completed the questionnaire (response rate: 55.88 percent), and in the second one (post-evaluation) 412 filled in the questionnaire (response rate: 51.15 percent). The statistical errors for the sample population were 4.6 and 4.8 percent respectively.

### **Measures**

The questionnaire was based on prior research, and consisted of 19 Likert Scale (1 strongly disagree/7 strongly agree) statements. The reliability and validity of this selection rationale is supported by studies such as Kyle, Graefe, Manning and Bacon (2003), and Gross and Brown (2008). Moreover, one question in each research was included to examine the intended or actual participation (before the Olympics), and the actual participation of the respondents (after the Olympics), in decision-making, whilst the respondents' socio-demographics (gender, age and area of residence) were also collected for comparison of the two samples (Table 1).

Please input Table 1

The community participation constructs were adopted from research by Reid et al. (2004). The seven statements focused on: the clarity of the problem solving process, the perspective of further tourism development through the Olympics, the agreement of locals with the event, willingness to participate in further decision-making, community meeting attendance, the necessity to be involved in future local community development, and willingness on the part of locals to give further assistance. Eight statements taken from the study by Gursoy & Kendall (2006) were

adopted to explore the perceived impacts of the event, and the implementation of Social Exchange Theory in the examined model. These eight statements were equally divided between positive and negative impacts and examined the influence of the Olympics on the economy, society, culture and the environment. For community support, research by Gursoy and Kendall (2006) and Nunkoo and Ramkissoon (2011) was used. Four statements were adopted, this time concerning community support. These statements examined the importance of the Olympics for the development of visitor services, the provision of information, the promotion of London as a mega-event destination, and finally the degree of self-esteem produced by the organisation of the Olympics.

### **Data analysis**

The collected data were analysed using descriptive statistics (means, standard deviation, kurtosis, skewness), factor analysis, and regression. The research and components' validity and reliability were examined using KMO-Bartlett, factor loadings and Cronbach A, whilst an autoregressive (simplex) Structural Equation Model (SEM) was implemented. The findings were significant at the 0.05 level of confidence.

### **SEM analysis**

Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) using MPlus was employed due to the multivariate nature of the proposed model and the examination of the relationships with regard to the model constructs, since the main advantage of SEM "is its capacity to estimate and test the relationships among constructs" (Weston and Gore, 2006, p.723). As Gross and Brown (2008) suggest, the multivariate statistical analysis of

SEM is capable of measuring the concepts and the paths of hypothesised relationships between concepts. According to Wang and Wang (2012), when using MPlus it is best to measure the grouping variables as continuous, and also to measure those assessed through a five-point (or more) Likert Scale in this way, although they are in fact ordered categorical measures. Thus, the study measured the variables as continuous. As suggested by Anderson and Gerbing (1992) a two-step approach was adopted. The first part dealt with the assessment of the factor structure of each of the measurement models through Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA). First, CFA was implemented for the pre-determination of factors' number, and the measurement of each item's loading, as indicated by Thompson (2004). The factor analysis is presented in Tables 2 and 3. It was then used for the evaluation of model value and fit (as presented in the "Model fit" section). The examined constructs for the determination of model fit were: community participation, perceived positive and negative impacts, and community support. Then, the complete structural model was examined for the identification of causal relationships among the constructs (including the comparison of the two stages of research), and the determination of structural model fit.

## **RESULTS**

This research set out to examine the extent of respondents' participation in the London Olympics. Thus, before presenting the findings it is important to clarify the extent of community participation and engagement. Most of the time, locals want to participate in decision making but the opportunity is rarely provided in an effective manner (Zhao & Ritchie, 2008). Decision-makers overcome this by legislating for community participation within the management process of the destination (Van Niekerk, 2014). Even so, in several studies, the interpretation of locals' participation

is given by their engagement on the event itself, either having an active role (i.e. volunteering) or participating as attendants, declaring their support through their presence (Stokes, 2008). Thus, the examination of community participation needs to take into consideration all the aspects presented above. During the first stage of research (pre-evaluation) only 51 out of 447 (11.4 percent) respondents had participated or intended to participate in decision-making processes concerning the Olympics. This percentage slightly decreased in the second stage (post-evaluation), whilst 42 out of 412 (10.2 percent) stated that they had finally participated in the event's decision-making process.

The descriptive statistics (Table 2) reveal that Londoners support the perspective of further tourism development through the Olympics (CP2: 5.48; 6.01), and they are willing to contribute to their success in both, pre (CP7: 6.02) and post-event (CP7: 6.7) periods. In addition they appear more than willing to participate in decision-making processes (CP4: 5.34; 6.28), and attend relevant community meetings (CP5: 4.87; 6.35), whilst they perceive their involvement in further tourism development through the Olympics as necessary (CP6: 5.65; 6.42). Another aspect illustrated is the increase in agreements on positive impacts (except the environmental aspect) from pre (PB1: 5.07; PB2: 5.03; PB3: 5.43; PB4: 4.84) to post-evaluation (PB1: 6.78; PB2: 5.35; PB3: 5.55; PB4: 4.72), and the parallel decrease (Pre-evaluation means= PC1: 3.10; PC2: 3.73; PC3: 4.07; PC4: 4.58 / Post-evaluation means= PC1: 2.72; PC2: 3.73; PC3: 3.10; PC4: 3.51) in negative impacts (in only the social aspect, the perspectives seem stabilised at 3.73). Finally, the overall agreements increased in all community support statements across the two stages of research (Pre-evaluation

means= SO1: 5.52; SO2: 5.16; SO3: 5.87; SO4: 5.65 / Post-evaluation means= SO1: 6.32; SO2: 5.65; SO3: 6.43; SO4: 6.01).

Please input Table 2

### **Model fit**

In an effort to ensure that the data support the relationships amongst the observed variables and their respective factors, the model had to examine the individual factors. The most common measure of SEM fit is the probability of the  $\chi^2$  statistic (Materns, 2005), which should be non-significant in a good fitting model (Hallak, Brown & Lindsay, 2012). Since the research samples in both stages could be perceived as large (pre-evaluation N = 447; post-evaluation N=412), the ratio of  $\chi^2$  divided by the degrees of freedom ( $\chi^2/df$ ) has been considered as a better goodness-of-fit than  $\chi^2$  (Chen and Chai, 2007). According to Schermelleh-Engel, Moosbrugger and Müller (2003), a good model fit is provided if  $0 \leq \chi^2/df \leq 2$ , whilst an acceptable fit is  $2 < \chi^2/df \leq 3$ . Other model fit indices were also used in the analysis. These were:

- The Comparative Fit Index (CFI), which specifies no relationships among variables. It indicates a better fit when closer to 1.0 (Weston & Gore, 2006).
- A Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) of .05 or less reflects a model of close fit (Browne & Cudeck, 1993).
- The Standardised Root-Mean-Square Residual (SRMR) is the square root of the discrepancy between the sample covariance matrix and the model covariance matrix and should be less than .08 (Hu & Bentler, 1999).

As recommended by Kline (2010) from several options, these four ( $\chi^2$ , CFI, RMSEA, and SRMR) are the most appropriate for the examination and evaluation of model fit. The CFA results show that the  $\chi^2$  model value for the first stage was 247.3 with 141 degrees of freedom ( $p < .01$ ), and for the second stage  $\chi^2 = 194.8$  with 107 degrees of freedom. Consequently, the  $\chi^2/df$  ratios were 1.75 and 1.82 providing a good fit. For stage one, the remaining model fit indicators were CFI=.914, RMSEA=.042, and SRMR=.074 ( $p < .01$ ). For the second stage of research the remaining model fit indicators were CFI=.905, RMSEA=.048, and SRMR=.069 ( $p < .01$ ). In both pieces of research the results indicated good model fit.

Concerning factor analysis, there was an effort to focus on the important components of the research (Tables 3 and 4). Thus, for higher coefficients, absolute values of less than .4 were suppressed. The correlation matrix revealed numbers larger than .4 over numerous statements. The KMO of Sampling Adequacy for the first sample was .753 and .742 for the second one (higher than the minimum requested .6 for further analysis), whilst statistical significance also existed ( $p < .01$ ). In order to examine whether several items that propose to measure the same general construct produce similar scores (internal consistency), the research also applied Cronbach's Alpha, where the overall reliabilities were .767 and .736 respectively, and all variables scored over 8 (minimum value 7; Nunnally, 1978). Almost all variable loadings scored over .4, which is the minimum acceptable value (Norman & Streiner, 2008).

Please input Table 3

Please input Table 4

The research models explain the endogenous variables of the study (Figure 2). In terms of community participation in the first research  $R^2=.226$ , and  $R^2=.251$  for the second one. Focusing on the perceived impacts, for the positive ones  $R^2=.247$  (pre-evaluation) and  $R^2=.304$  (post-evaluation), whilst for the negative ones  $R^2=.230$  and  $R^2=.186$  respectively. Finally, for community support in the first stage of research  $R^2=.292$ , and for the second one  $R^2=.371$ . The results suggest that this model is able to evaluate the importance of the examined factors.

Please input Figure 2

### **Hypothesis testing**

As shown in Figure 2, all hypotheses have been confirmed. More specifically,  $H1_{AB}$  (Community participation positively influences community support) was confirmed ( $\beta_A=.135$ ,  $p<.05$ ;  $\beta_B=.291$ ,  $p<.05$ ) showing that in both researches (pre and post evaluation) there is a considerable direct influence of community participation on the locals' support of mega-events.  $H2_{AB}$ , that community participation strengthens perceived positive impacts, was confirmed ( $\beta_A=.248$ ,  $p<.01$ ;  $\beta_B=.345$ ,  $p<.01$ ). The relationship between community participation and negative impacts, as expressed in  $H3_{AB}$ , was confirmed ( $\beta_A=.163$ ,  $p<.01$ ;  $\beta_B=.098$ ,  $p<.01$ ), supporting the view that the greater the engagement of the host community in decision-making, the less locals are likely to express negative views about the impacts of the mega-event.  $H4_{AB}$ , dealing with the positive influence of the perceived positive impacts of community support, was confirmed ( $\beta_A=.287$ ,  $p<.01$ ;  $\beta_B=.354$ ,  $p<.01$ ), since the results indicate that the perceived positive impacts strengthen community support for mega-events, whilst

H5<sub>AB</sub>, concerning the negative influence of the perceived negative impacts of community support was also confirmed ( $\beta_A=.253$ ,  $p<.01$ ;  $\beta_B=.162$ ,  $p<.05$ ), where the perceived negative impacts weaken community support for mega-events. The hypotheses focusing on the influence of a successful event on the perceived (positive and negative) impacts were confirmed (H6:  $\beta=.322$ ,  $p<.01$ ; H7:  $\beta=.127$ ,  $p<.05$ ). In this case, the results indicate that when the organisation of a mega-event is perceived as successful, after the event the locals tend to find additional grounds for believing in its beneficial impacts, whilst their scepticism and criticism for its negative effects are reduced. The impact of a successful event on the willingness of locals with regard to community participation, as examined in H8, was confirmed ( $\beta=.217$ ,  $p<.05$ ), since the findings suggest that event success encourages willingness amongst the host community to participate in decision making for forthcoming events. Finally, H9 (a successful event has a direct positive impact upon community support for further development of mega-events) was also confirmed ( $\beta=.274$ ,  $p<.01$ ), showing that initial support can be further strengthened where locals perceive that the mega-event which they have experienced was successful.

## **DISCUSSION**

As previously stated, there is a widespread feeling amongst UK residents (and Londoners) that the 2012 Olympics were successfully hosted (Dugan, 2013; Gibson, 2013). Thus, the interpretation of findings has taken into consideration these positive views. The results indicate that the intended and/or actual participation of locals in decision-making has an impact upon the perspectives expressed for the community participation construct. Furthermore, before the Olympics, even if Londoners provided great support (CP2; CP7), community participation's direct influence on

final support was not high (H1<sub>A</sub>). This result somehow justifies the scarcity of opportunities given to locals by planners to engage in decision-making. As Matheson (2006) suggests, the asymmetry of mega-events' beneficial impacts hinders the degree of community participation and collaborative planning, whilst Pappas (2014) indicates that residents' decision-making engagement in mega-events is limited. The current research results confirm the findings of previous studies.

Still, community participation's influential extent through the mega-event's perceived benefits and costs is crucial to the determination of the final output of community perceptions (H2<sub>A</sub>; H3<sub>A</sub>). Furthermore, since community participation had a positive stance and locals greatly appreciate this opportunity, the influence on the perceived benefits (PB1-PB4; H4<sub>A</sub>) is much higher than that of the perceived costs (PC1-PC4; H5<sub>A</sub>). As also indicated by previous studies, such as those of Kitnuntaviwat and Tang (2008), Nunkoo and Gursoy (2012), Prayag et al. (2013), and Reid et al. (2004), locals tend to support the organisation of mega-events when the perceived positive impacts outweigh the negative ones.

After the Olympics, the analysis revealed a considerable direct influence of community participation on the support of mega events (H1<sub>B</sub>), whilst community participation increased its overall influence on the positive impacts (PB1-PB4; H2<sub>B</sub>) with a parallel reduction on the negative ones (PC1-PC4; H3<sub>B</sub>). Accordingly, the perceived benefits have increased their output in community support (H4<sub>B</sub>) in comparison with perceived costs (H5<sub>B</sub>). These findings support those of previous psychological studies (Guenther & Alicke, 2008; Ross et al., 1975; Schul & Goren, 1998) discussing the impact of success in events and performance. They also give

grounds to the research of Ye et al. (2012) with regard to the sustained beliefs of locals, whilst they partially contradict the study of Kim et al. (2006) revealing that a success story is able not only to sustain but also strengthen the residents' perspectives on mega-event impacts after the event. Thus, this study contributes to our understanding of the formation, after the event, of positive and negative perspectives, taking into consideration the extent of the mega-event's perceived successfulness and illustrating its impact on residents' views. This autoregressive analysis (pre and post-evaluation) has illustrated the influence of perceived success on impacts (H6; H7), whilst it has also revealed increased willingness in community participation (H8) and empowerment of community support (H9). The link between willingness of community engagement and the empowerment of residents' support has also been mentioned by Schulenkorf (2012). Still, this research further advances our understanding of residents' perspective formulation in post-event periods.

The results also provide evidence that the participation of locals in decision-making (CP1-CP7) strengthens their overall support (SO1-SO3), since they take a favourable stance towards the implemented activities. As Gursoy and Rutherford (2004), and Presenza et al. (2013) previously suggested, local communities form a favourable attitude toward developmental activities when they play an active role and participate in decision-making processes. The findings contribute to the recognition of the critical importance of community participation in fostering social capital, something also indicated by Schulenkorf (2012). These findings have led to the development of an explanatory model (Figure 3), visualising the influence of community participation in the formation of the perceived impacts of mega-events. It also presents the influence

of success on the empowerment of community support through the redefinition of perceived benefits and costs.

Please input Figure 3

Based on previously-built knowledge that perceived benefits should exceed costs to achieve community support (Gursoy & Kendall, 2006; Nunkoo & Gursoy, 2012; Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2011), the model indicates that in the pre-event period, increased community participation leads to increased positive impact perception, and finally to greater community support. Synthesising the relevant psychology literature (Guenther & Alicke, 2008; Ross et al., 1975; Schul & Goren, 1998) with the research findings, the model explains that in the post-event period, an event which is perceived as successful has the ability to further improve perceptions of the gained benefits, with parallel reduction of costs. Moreover, combined with the increased willingness for community participation, it redefines community support at a higher level.

The model contribution deals with: (i) the recognition that a successful mega-event can considerably increase the positive beneficial impacts of the event itself and in parallel minimise scepticism and negative perceptions about the event. Ultimately, this transformation of perspectives leads locals to support the hosting of future mega-events. (ii) The positive influence of community engagement and willingness to participate in further mega-event decisions, especially when previous organisation of mega-events has been perceived as successful. (iii) The combination of community participation and event successfulness, illustrating the necessity for decision-makers

to include locals in the planning and development process, and the fundamental rationale that this inclusion can be achieved.

### **Practical implications**

Community engagement could become an integral part of the success of destinations in hosting mega-events. Even if the literature suggests that the participation of locals in mega-event decision-making is difficult due to their varying interests in social projects (Creighton, 1995), and the contradictory interests of different community actors (Tosun, 2006; Iorio & Wall, 2012), this research provides evidence on the crucial role of community participation in event support, and the necessity for mega-event planners to establish the necessary conditions and opportunities for locals to engage. Moreover, the model (presented on Figure 3) helps decision-makers to understand the process of locals' cost/benefit perception, it involves the dynamic nature of community participation in perceived impacts, and explains the importance of the success factor in fostering support. Thus, a practical outcome of the model is that it explains to stakeholder the contribution of residents' participation in the decision-making process; i.e. that it increases locals' support and engagement in future developments.

If planners actively include locals in decision-making, they can build relationships based on trust and cooperation, increase the willingness of further participation, and finally empower the support of mega-events. Thus, a second outcome is that the model presents grounds for creating a process of community involvement, and engagement in decision-making. This should not only be based upon community participation prior to the event, but also on the evaluation of locals' perspectives in

the post event period and the further community engagement in a virtuous circle of developmental process.

One more practical outcome is that decision-makers should not only measure the actual success of a mega-event (monetary, socio-cultural, environmental), but should also evaluate its perceived success from the locals' point of view. This feeling of success can be used as a motivational factor to engage residents in development plans for their locality, and also decrease any scepticism or even criticism concerning further mega-event development.

## **CONCLUSION**

The findings indicate that local support (SO1-SO3) for further mega-event development strengthened in the periods before and after the Olympics, whilst the perceived success of the Games has increased willingness towards community participation (H8), and support (H9) for undertaking the organisation of mega-events in the future. The implementation of SET and the autoregressive analysis have revealed the importance of community participation in supporting mega-events, even if the opportunities given to locals for actual participation in such planning processes are minimal (Lamberti et al., 2011; Matheson, 2006). As Gallant, Arai and Smale (2013) also suggest, community engagement can strengthen social ties and further build community identity through empowerment at both individual and community levels. This engagement will ultimately define the extent of social capital and utility, since it will define the framework for interaction amongst locals (Brunie, 2009), and create “trust, norms, and networks that can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated action” (Puthnam, 1993, p.167).

The research findings also support the view of Chalip (2006), that in sporting events the organisers and planners who work together with the host community should focus on fostering social interaction, increasing the social value within the host community. Moreover, the findings clearly suggest that a sporting event's success can lead to further community participation and empowerment of a community's social capital, as also mentioned in the study by Schulenkorf (2012). Agreeing with the research of Smith and Holmes (2012), this participation can lead to further community engagement not only in decision-making but also in volunteerism initiatives, that can further strengthen social utility. As a result, mega-sport events give a substantial opportunity to local communities to build their social capital (Chalip, 2006; Gibson et al., 2014; Misener & Mason, 2006), and this study provides additional information concerning the linkage between social capital, community engagement in decision-making, and locals' perception of mega-event success.

The study has contributed to the understanding of locals' perceptions in pre and post-event periods, and the role of an event's success in the strengthening of locals' willingness to partake in community participation and support for further development. Furthermore, using an explanatory model it visualised the process of changing perceptions depending on community participation, and the readjustment of community support.

Despite the research contribution, some limitations need to be highlighted. First, if this study is repeated for a different locality or mega-event the results may vary, since some aspects, such as the destination brand name (London is a globally famous

destination), national economic and business environment, and the local community's societal and cultural background, can produce different outcomes. For this reason, any research implementation should be made carefully. Second, further research into visitor perceptions, and different stakeholder groups (i.e. local enterprises, the hospitality industry, tour operators, game makers etc.) may produce different outcomes. Thus, the interpretation of findings should be made with caution. Third, the inclusion of the respondents' personal characteristics (nationality, citizenship etc.) and socio-demographics (gender, age, marital status etc.) in the analysis could provide an interesting evaluation of perception variations. Such an analysis could give a better understanding of the formulation of locals' perspectives regarding mega-events. Fourth, further research could also include the 'feel good' factor for the respondents, aiming to evaluate the extent to which they are willing to engage in participatory initiatives, as well as to explore their way of thinking with regard to the success evaluation of mega-events. Finally, it would also be advisable to use a different sampling approach. The current study selected its respondents in communal areas (train stations), but other permanent adult London residents may not use the train or underground as a means of transportation. Thus, further research is suggested using other sampling methods (i.e. cluster sampling).

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