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## Tourism geography: a socio-cultural analysis

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### Abstract

The management of mega-events can affect the development of cities in many ways. The aim of this article is to investigate the effects of hosting mega-events on cities. We investigated the positive and negative managerial aspects of the America's Cup for residents of Naples. Significant differences were highlighted between the perceptions of the first and second race concerning economic, socio-cultural and political benefits.

**Keywords:** Cities, Economy, Geography, Tourism

### 1. Introduction

Sports-events such as FIFA, World Cup, Olympic Games, Formula One and America's Cup have the potential to attract tourists, media, sponsorship, athletes and other people interested in participating. In attracting such stakeholders, they can become catalysts for enhancing the host city's image and charging its economical, socio-cultural and political development. Thus, mega sports-events are becoming an integral part of sustainable strategies for improving tourism and local residents' quality of life. For this reason cities compete for the opportunity to host them despite their huge costs.

Consequently, the increasing effort to understand the different ways in which local residents perceive these events has to be considered in economic geography studies (Morri and Pesaresi, 2007). This research presents a

wider understanding of the management and social impacts of the America's Cup on Naples. It aims to highlight how local residents perceive the sports-event and to assess the current management practices and impacts towards the development of a sports-tourism event. We chose the America's Cup because it is the greatest sailing competition in the world and the oldest active trophy in international sports.

It is a sports competition in which ten or more vessels compete over a period of several months prior to the final race. The winner of each Cup gains the right to decide nearly everything in the following competition. Previous races were hosted by Valencia (Spain, 2007, 2010), Auckland (New Zealand, 2000, 2003), San Diego (California, 1988, 1992, 1995) and Fremantle (Australia, 1983, 1987). From 7 to 15 of April 2012 and from 11 to 19 May 2013 Naples hosted two races of the 34th America's cup.

## 2. Theoretical background

Sports-events are exceptional events hosted in a city with the aim of attracting tourists. The activities and investments required before, during, and after these events have several economic, socio-cultural and political effects on the host city (Figure 1). These effects can be positive on one dimension and negative on another (Fredline and Falkner, 2002).

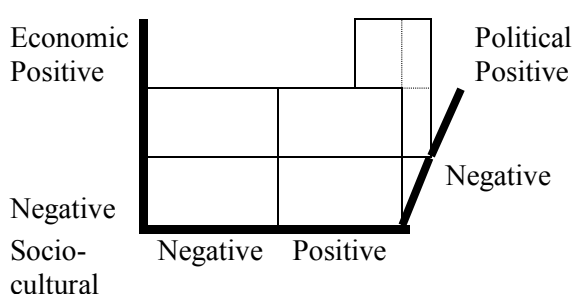


Figure 1. The effects of mega sports-events on the host city.

Several studies have highlighted the economic benefits of hosting a mega sports-event. Providing a showcase for all the natural beauties and interesting activities a city has to offer, it can help a tourist destination to create or improve its image (Alexander et al., 2015). The improved image of the city as a tourist destination can increase commercial activity, attract new businesses and improve trade (Kim, et al., 2006; Werner et al., 2015). Consequently it can increase sales, personal income, employment and quality of services. For example, the 1992 Olympics and 2006 FIFA World Cup affected the economic growth of Barcelona and several other cities of Germany. However, beside the immediate economic effect, a sports event can also have long-term impacts on the host city (Werner et al., 2015). Hosting this event pushes a city to accelerate infrastructure development that would normally have taken much longer to develop. In just a few years, these events drive cities to complete a number of public structures that would otherwise

have taken several years to implement. Moreover, these infrastructure investments have a positive impact on the whole community attracting new companies and enabling people and businesses to operate more efficiently (Murphy and Carmichael, 1991; Ap, 1990). Some infrastructures take the lead in starting a process of city re-development, changing its long-term appeal for business and tourism, affecting the image of cities and creating new business opportunities for companies. For example, the Olympics provided the impetus to build a subway system in Munich, to finish Terminal 3 at the Beijing International Airport in China, to build infrastructures able to turn deprived areas into more attractive parts of the city in Barcelona and London. On a negative side, these investments can lead to the dispersion of public funds with negative consequences on tax and social life (Deccio and Baloglu, 2002; Gursay and Kendall, 2006). Moreover, hosting mega-events may damage or destroy the city's image because of inadequate facilities or improper practices (Fourie and Santana-Gallego, 2011). It can cause economic costs, price inflation of goods and services and tax increases driven by the construction of facilities and the provision of services required to host the event (Kurtzman and Zauhar, 2003).

A mega-event is also likely to improve socio-cultural opportunities for residents. It highlights the beauty of the area, reinforces regional values and focusses on local traditions (Collins et al., 2009). It can bring global attention to natural beauty, physical landscapes, local heritage and cultural traditions of the city. It can provide an incentive for the conservation of natural resources and for the restoration of historical buildings. It can improve people's perception of their tradition and community way of life, reinforce regional values and restructure parts of the city (Mitchell and Greatorex, 1993; Witt, 1988). It can lead residents to be more open to other cultures and more interested in sport (Crompton, 2004). It can be an incentive for cities and countries to address problems of urban decay. Major events can also provide a perfect opportunity to spread new values and new behavior (Gammon and Robinson, 2003). In several major events organizations have focused their attention on making people aware of the

environment and green questions, sustainable development and environmental education such as biodiversity, waste, climate change, pollution control, water conservation and healthy living (Waitt, 2003; Penot, 2003). For example, environmental protection policy and sustainability were chosen in the 1994 Winter Olympic Games of Lillehammer (Norway), in the 2000 Summer Olympic Games of Sydney (USA), in 2008, at the Olympic Games in Beijing (China), in the 2010 Winter Olympics of Vancouver, the 2012 Olympic Games of London and in the 1992 Olympics of Barcelona. On the negative side, a mega sports-event can lead to socio-cultural problems related to diversity, which may be expressed through vandalism and criminal activities. The event is also likely to generate societal disorders such as traffic congestion, law enforcement strain and increased crime or lead to the destruction of the physical and natural environment. Moreover, it can lead to conflicts between the host community and visitors due to different standards of living, economic welfare and purchasing power gaps (Burker et al., 2002).

This kind of event not only influences the economy and culture of the host city but also has some effects on its political aspects (Hiller, 2006). A major event provides an opportunity for collaboration between policy-makers at both national and regional level, private actors and community (Jeong, 1998). It breaks down barriers between various levels of government and improves politicians' efficiency. The rigid requirements and deadlines associated with major events force governments to take decisive action in addressing the city's problems (Konstantaki and Wickens, 2010). Moreover, the improvement of structural facilities that can be used by residents even after the event creates a favorable political image. Thus, the politicians' choices affect the quality of residents' lives and the international image of the host community. Major events create a platform for unification and cooperation across political and government boundaries, and provide an opportunity for collaboration between the public and private sectors. These collaborations are pushed by the need to take decisive action and operate more efficiently to achieve the rigid requirements and deadlines associated with the event. Politicians

are also pushed to harmonize their individual actions in order to achieve a unified result. In this way, a major sports event not only affects the economy and social development of the host city but also the image of the leaders who organize the event. Good cases of collaboration between the organizing committee, public, businesses, and government agencies at the national, regional, and local level were seen in the 2000 Sydney Olympics, the 2012 London Olympics, 1992 Barcelona Olympics, 2007 Brazil Pan American Games and in the 2014 FIFA World Cup.

On the negative side, mega-events can highlight political inefficiencies in management disorders and traffic problems as well as spending money on long-term problems. If there is mismanagement of public funds, this is likely to intensify the negative perceptions of hosting the mega-event (Deccio and Baloglu, 2002). Finally the political decision to allocate large amounts of government assistance and local finance to this event can damage existing enterprises.

Despite the fact that most studies highlight the mega-event's positive impact on the host city, other analyses emphasize that the negative effects may offset these benefits. Moreover, some studies show that the balance of positive and negative economic, socio-cultural and political effects can only be evaluated in the long term. However, many authors point out that the immediate success of a mega sports event can also be evident through its perception by local residents.

Specifically, to analyze the perceptions of residents, some authors compare the residents' expectation of an event based on their past experience of it and residents' perception after the event (Long et al., 1990). However, in repeated events the residents' perception of a first event creates an expectation for a second one based on their knowledge and value system. The first perception can also influence marketing activities of local actors (i.e. media, government agencies and policy makers) that change the second event and thus its perception by residents (Soutar and McLeod, 1993; Ritchie, et al., 2009).

Consequently, the first experience serves as a reference point for both the improvement and evaluation of a second event. Marketing activities and political management of tourist destinations can affect the disparity between first and second event perceptions, modifying residents' perceptions of repeated mega-events. If outcomes fall below the reference points of residents, then the mega-event will generate negative perceptions, while outcomes above the reference points of residents generate positive perceptions. Thus, the purpose of this study is to investigate residents' positive and negative perception of the 34th America's Cup in Naples.

### 3. Empirical analysis

Naples opened the World Series of the America's Cup in 2012 and closed it in 2013 with two races from 7 to 15 of April 2012 and from 11 to 19 May 2013. This last event led to identifying the winning team for the last race of San Francisco for the Louis Vuitton Cup.

People were interviewed during the two races of America's Cup. A pool of positive and negative impact items evidenced their perceptions of economical, socio-cultural and political impacts on Naples of the 34th America's Cup. The demographic profile of the respondents showed that most of them were male (71% and 69%), aged 19–29 (35% and 39%) and students (35% and 40%) (Table 1).

Our analysis suggests that among the positive items, people perceived the increased activity of restaurants, the diffusion of local food and political investment in tourist events as being more interesting.

Among the negative items, people perceived as less interesting the increase of prices, the traffic and the interest of some political figures in enhancing their personal image.

Socio-demographic variables	1st race	2nd race
Gender		
Male	71.0	69.0
Female	29.0	31.0
Age		
19-29	35.0	39.0
30-39	35.0	30.0
40-49	22.0	23.0
50 and above	18.0	8.0
Occupation		
Student	35.0	40.0
Company employee	16.0	10.0
Professional	29.0	34.0
Others	20.0	16.0
Educational level		
Primary	1.0	1.0
Secondary	3.0	2.0
University	31.0	34.0
Graduate/postgraduate	65.0	63.0

Table 1. Description of survey respondents.

### 4. Conclusions

This article has several implications. Policy-makers can use the results of this study in planning and implementing future mega-events. Lessons and behaviors learned along the way can help the government to improve how it operates in the future. On the basis of this information, planners or managers of future international events can establish strategies to effectively minimize the negative and maximize the positive factors. Moreover, this study suggests investigating the residents' perceptions at two different times because these results provide a better picture of the dynamics of residents' perceptions and attitudes toward tourism development. More specifically, the investigation of the residents' perceptions in two times can help event organizers and authorities identify concerns and expectations so that the problems can be promptly and properly addressed.

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