



SOCIAL IMPACTS OF THE SYDNEY OLYMPICS

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Abstract: This paper, drawing on social exchange theory, examines the changes in enthusiasm between 1998 and 2000 towards Sydney's Olympics among a socially diverse sample of host city residents. In particular, it studies variables that differentiate respondents' altering attitude. Results suggest that for the majority the reaction to Sydney's Olympics intensified from 1998, reaching euphoria in September 2000. Elation was particularly evident among those living in the city's western suburbs, those with dependent children, those from non-English backgrounds, or who perceived the event's wider economic benefits as outweighing personal costs. Implications arising from this project are considered for future researchers and organizers of hallmark events. **Keywords:** Sydney Olympics, hallmark events, social impacts, exchange theory. © 2003 Elsevier Science Ltd. All rights reserved.

Résumé: Impact social des Jeux olympiques de Sydney. Cet article, qui fait appel à la théorie d'échange social, examine les changements dans le niveau d'enthousiasme entre 1998 et 2000 envers les JO de Sydney parmi un échantillon socialement divers des habitants de la ville d'accueil. En particulier, il examine les variables qui différencient les attitudes changeantes des personnes interrogées. Les résultats suggèrent que, pour la majorité, la réaction aux Jeux olympiques s'intensifiait dès 1998 et a atteint l'euphorie en septembre 2000. L'exultation était évidente surtout parmi ceux qui habitaient la banlieue ouest de la ville, ceux qui avaient des enfants à charge, ceux des milieux non anglophones et ceux qui percevaient que les bénéfices économiques plus larges l'emportaient sur les coûts personnels. Les implications suscitées par ce projet sont considérées pour les chercheurs futurs et pour les organisateurs d'événements de marque. **Mots-clés:** Jeux olympiques de Sydney, événements de marque, impacts sociaux, théorie d'échange. © 2003 Elsevier Science Ltd. All rights reserved.

INTRODUCTION

At the turn of the century, cities as sites of tourism spectacle have given hallmark events a new economic role and heightened significance. Global sporting events are perhaps the ultimate example of the city as tourist spectacle, given their million dollar budgets, world markets, and the rapid turn-around of capital. However, relatively little is known about the events' social impacts. Indeed, Fredline and Faulkner (2000) argue that far greater concern has been given to evaluating the

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political, cultural, economic, and environmental consequences. This argument is confirmed by publications about Sydney's Olympics. Such an emphasis may be misplaced on ethical and pragmatic grounds. A planning/management regime sensitive to quality of life and equity outcomes is an essential ingredient of sustainable tourism, since hosts who are positively disposed to special events will enhance the tourists' experience and contribute to the destination's attractiveness (Madrigal 1995). Social impact assessments have often relied upon secondary data including court records and newspaper reports (Hall, Selwood and McKewon 1989), or often a "snapshot" of resident attitudes at a particular time (for an important exception see Ritchie and Aitken 1985). Carpenter (1992) lamented the absence of a temporal dimension in social impact research.

The purpose of this paper is to address such acknowledged limitations in examining the temporal dynamics of the social impacts of Sydney's 2000 Olympics, drawing upon primary data from two telephone surveys conducted 24 months before and then during the games. The study was designed to permit examination of whether a wave of euphoric mass consciousness increasingly captures resident imaginations and, if not, whether enthusiasm is differentiated along spatial, socioeconomic, demographic, or altruistic lines. The temporal analysis presented here provides some insight into these issues. Equally important is to identify how planners and managers of future global sporting events may effectively target strategies aimed at both maximizing positive and minimizing negative social impacts.

RESPONSES TO TOURISM AND EVENTS

Theoretical frameworks examining tourism's social impact have received increasing attention following Ap's (1992) critique. In addition to theorizing the impact of tourism at the level of individual and collective affect, various schools of thought have theorized the subject in terms of frameworks prioritizing self-identity (Wearing and Wearing 1996), social representations (Pearce, Moscardo and Ross 1996) and political economy (Cox and Mair 1988). This paper is positioned within the humanist school, seeking to measure individual affects.

Social exchange theory accounts for divergent resident evaluations of tourism impacts primarily in terms of experiential or psychological outcomes. Feelings or psychological states result from the experiences conveyed "symbolically through the objects exchanged, the functions performed by the exchange, or the meanings attributed to the exchange" (Bagozzi 1975:138). This theory suggests that residents evaluate tourism/events as either positive or negative in terms of the expected benefits or costs deriving from the services they supply.

A positive perception is suggested to occur only when both actors have high levels of social power within the exchange relationship. According to social exchange theory, power derives from having, controlling, or influencing resources that another actor needs and values (Wrong 1979). Negative perceptions, in contrast, are related to low

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