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Kostas Karadakis, Kiki Kaplanidou, George Karlis

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Event leveraging of mega sport events: a SWOT analysis approach

Kostas Karadakis and Kiki Kaplanidou

*Department of Tourism, Recreation and Sport Management,
College of Health and Human Performance, University of Florida,
Gainesville, Florida, USA, and*

George Karlis

School of Human Kinetics, University of Ottawa, Ottawa, Canada

Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) that a host city can experience to utilize these for future strategy planning and event leveraging.

Design/methodology/approach – Five phone interviews were conducted with administrators of the Athens Olympic Games. Respondents were asked four questions relating to the SWOT of hosting the Olympic Games. Responses collected were transcribed and analyzed using a content analysis.

Findings – Findings suggest that the strengths lie in having certain infrastructures in place, volunteers, a strong economy and good political standing. Weaknesses stem from a lack of infrastructure, the size of the country, uncertain political and economic stability. Opportunities included the growth of the tourism industry, business developments, increase in the quality of life, the use of legacies post-event, and the improvement and development of infrastructures. Threats included the cost of the event, pollution, relying on the event to rejuvenate the economy and the displacement of residents.

Originality/value – The SWOT analysis conducted in this paper laid the foundation for strategic planning for future host cities' organizers while taking into consideration the weaknesses and problems that have been experienced by the organization of former Olympic Games host cities. Moreover, the SWOT analysis conducted in this paper goes one step further by incorporating Chalip's leveraging model in order to identify what strengths and weaknesses need to be addressed in order for a host city to leverage the opportunities and threats of hosting a sport event.

Keywords Tourism, Sporting events, SWOT analysis, Olympic Games, Strategic planning

Paper type Case study

Introduction

Historically, hosting an event such as the Olympic Games is viewed by the host city as a tourism and economic industries stimulator (Breton, 2003) if the event is properly leveraged. Leveraging mega-events such as the Olympic Games can offer benefits to a host city that relate to the development of collaborations, cultural insights and improved organizational networks (Kellet *et al.*, 2008). In order to properly leverage the event, the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) associated with the hosting of the event can be a valuable exercise and provide knowledge to host cities. The SWOT analysis is a management tool that allows an organization to better address their internal and external environment and prepare for effective strategic planning steps (Johnson and Scholes, 1999). Given sometimes the confidentiality of the work progress of the Olympic Games that are scheduled to happen in the near future,



it is difficult to acquire truthful opinions on mainly the negative issues that a host city may be facing. Moreover, input from organizers of previous Olympic Games can inform future Olympic Games organizers to better plan and leveraging mega-events such as the Olympic Games. As evident in the transfer of knowledge programs that are created and utilized by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) for each host city, the examination of the organization of mega-events by past host cities remains a valuable approach for future planning and management of the event with the aim to better leverage the opportunity of hosting the Olympic Games (IOC, 2010). The aim of this paper is therefore, to utilize the SWOT analysis tool to diagnose the elements of proper leveraging and event capitalization. Implementing a SWOT analysis for a host city can assist with the development of leverage strategies related to strengths and opportunities associated with the event hosting but also assist with minimization or better management of weaknesses and threats associated with hosting an event such as the Olympic Games.

Literature review

In order for an organizing committee to plan for both the short- and long-term event outcomes, event leveraging strategies must be considered (O'Brien and Chalip, 2007). The leveraging perspective is concerned with planning beyond the event so that a host city can maximize positive impacts such as increased tourism, business and social aspects (O'Brien and Chalip, 2007). Chalip (2004, p. 245) suggests that in order to leverage the opportunities from hosting an event a strategic management process and tactics must be formed and implemented. Strategic planning tools such as the SWOT analysis is therefore appropriate for the evaluation of event leveraging strategies. The following section will examine what the nature of the SWOT analysis entails and how it is applied to a strategic management process for the organization of the Olympic Games.

SWOT analysis

SWOT analysis is an approach whereby aspects of the external environment are analyzed to identify and develop the most suitable or attractive course of action in terms of strategic decisions to be taken. A SWOT analysis focuses on the strengths and weaknesses that are internal to the organization while taking into consideration threats and opportunities that are external to an organization (Kartakoullis and Karlis, 2002). In the sport context, Shank (2009) found that the strengths and weaknesses are manageable elements within the establishment (in this case a host city) that may influence the objectives of the strategic management process. For example, a large volunteer base is a strength for a host city while lack of trained human resources can be a weakness. The support of local population can also be a strength for the organization of the event as without it, anger, frustration and/or civil unrest can result. Such expressions of non support can be reflected to visitors causing a negative experience and thus damaging the cities' reputation and chances of repeat tourism (Gursoy and Kendall, 2006). On the other hand, the opportunities and threats are uncontrollable factors of the operating environment (e.g. state of the economy and infrastructure) but awareness of such issues and appropriate planning can mitigate unfortunate outcomes. Conducting a SWOT analysis is useful for host cities because it helps event organizers and tourism providers to identify how the strengths of their city can be matched with opportunities that exist in the operating environment (Shank, 2009). Analysis of weaknesses in relation to their

operating environment such as resident support, economic stability and political support (Shank, 2009) can also provide useful insights for event organizers and tourism providers to specifically plan how the host city can leverage the benefits from the sport event (O'Brien and Chalip, 2007).

The use of SWOT analysis in strategic planning studies is not a new approach; however, its application for the evaluation of event leveraging strategies as perceived by previous organizers can be a useful exercise. It is the organizing committee operating within the host city that looks at the strengths and weaknesses that the city has, and how hosting the Olympic Games in the city provides opportunities and threats. In this paper, the SWOT analysis is used in order to provide organizing committees of the Olympic Games the perspectives and experiences from administrators of the Athens Olympic Games in order to identify what these respondents felt are the SWOT associated with hosting the Olympic Games.

"Profiling" of event leveraging strategies through SWOT

The literature on the hosting of Olympic Games has suggested a link between the strengths and opportunities and weaknesses and threats as positive and negative impacts, respectively, (Breton, 2003; Haxton, 2003; Preuss and Solberg, 2006). In other words, strengths and opportunities could be antecedents of positive impacts and thus successful leverage outcomes, while weaknesses and threats could be antecedents of negative impacts and thus guides of proper contingency and mitigation plans for more successful event leveraging. Event leveraging can be associated with social, cultural, environmental, political, economic or sport related impacts (Horne, 2007; Preuss, 2007). Cities are interested in hosting of the Olympics Games as they can accelerate infrastructure projects (Terret, 2008), enhance destination image and awareness levels and offer economic stimulation to the host city (Malfas *et al.*, 2004) and many times these outcomes become event leverage strategy goals (Chalip, 2004). The positive impacts on employment, additional spending in the community hosting the event, visiting tourist/spectator numbers, the "showcase effect" (Hiller, 1989) of media coverage on an event locality, and some impact on the social development of the host community, are the main claims made for hosting mega-events (Horne, 2007) and can be viewed as event leveraging goals.

However, mega-events can be the gateway to debt and under-utilized infrastructure. Jones (2001) argues that economic benefits are often overstated in order to justify the use of public funds. Hosting an event can cause tremendous debt as experienced in Montreal 1976, which cost the city and its residents over CAD\$2 billion in capital and interest costs (Whitson and Horne, 2006). Some other economic costs include price inflation for products and services as resources become scarce, increase of taxes to pay for costs of hosting the event (Gursoy and Kendall, 2006; Solberg and Preuss, 2007). When the host city cannot raise enough funds in order to pay for the Olympic Games, then the government is forced to make cut backs, causing opportunity costs to occur. Money that would have gone towards hospitals, education, less taxes for the residents become evident and may cause civil unrest (Owen, 2005; Roberts and McLeod, 1989; Toohey, 2008). Proper strategic planning can alleviate such outcomes and assist with event leveraging.

Chalip (2006) suggested that strategies can be developed to leverage impacts associated with a mega-event. This applies towards the Olympic Games, and especially

for the pre- and post-games period (Weed, 2007). Chalip (2004) has developed two models for sport event leveraging focusing on tourism and economic development, and leveraging social benefits. The economic leveraging model considers immediate and long-term strategies. Immediate leveraging considers the trade and revenue from events while long-term leveraging focuses on using the event media to improve the host cities' image (O'Brien and Chalip, 2007).

Trade and revenue impacts associated with hosting the Olympic Games include increased employment, increased spending within the community and increased tourism (Chalip, 2002; Horne, 2007; Owen, 2005; Whitson and Horne, 2006). Hosting the Olympic Games can act as a catalyst for urban regeneration, tax revenues, development of infrastructure such as transportation, housing, hotels, sports venues, facilities, parks and recreation, media centers, tourist attractions and airports (Chappelet, 2008; Hiller, 2006; Jones, 2001; Solberg and Preuss, 2007). Additional sources of income for local residents and job creation that can improve the working skills of the local population can also lead to enhanced quality of life (Gursoy and Kendall, 2006; Whitson and Horne, 2006) and certainly can form a strategy goal for the social leveraging of the event.

As for the long-term leveraging opportunity, hosting the Olympic Games means a valuable promotion opportunity because of the media attention the city receives throughout the Olympic Games. This means that the city can show off its tourist attractions and the infrastructure that has been generated (Chalip, 2002; Owen, 2005; Whitson and Horne, 2006). Awareness of the region is also positively impacted which again brings in domestic and international tourists and potential investors (Gursoy and Kendall, 2006; Solberg and Preuss, 2007).

Although public awareness and tourism do see an increase during the year of the Olympics, it was found that this impact declines drastically two years after the event (Whitson and Horne, 2006). Other things that can negatively impact the image and tourist industry of a host city include war, economic crises, pandemics, terrorist attacks and other similar types of events (Hiller, 2006; Solberg and Preuss, 2007). Terrorism and crime could damage the image of a city and cause tourists to avoid the country altogether causing the cost of security to sky rocket (Hiller, 2006; Solberg and Preuss, 2007).

In order to leverage the social impacts of a sport event, O'Brien and Chalip (2007) suggest the existence of event liminality in the host city. Liminality "refers to a sense of the sacred that can emerge, in this case, from a sport event" (O'Brien and Chalip, 2007, p. 299). This liminality provides a host city with two opportunities for social leverage. First, the *communitas* produced in the host city. The second is similar to the economic leverage strategy, which is that hosting a sport event attracts media attention and sponsors (O'Brien and Chalip, 2007). Therefore, such practices can be embedded in early planning to achieve any long-term event leveraging goals.

Social impacts mentioned in the literature that organizers need to consider for social leveraging include community pride, cohesion, involvement and interaction, strengthened image and awareness (Bull and Lovell, 2007; Solberg and Preuss, 2007). There is the benefit of social interaction, increasing cultural understanding, strengthen values and traditions, improving residents' identity, self-esteem, quality of life and the image of the city, the host city receives the opportunity to promote the city, and even bring attention to environmental concerns (Bull and Lovell, 2007; Cegielski and Mules, 2002; Gursoy and Kendall, 2006). Studies on hosting the Olympics show that the local residents take on the identity of citizens of the world (Horne, 2007;

Whitson and Horne, 2006). Gursoy and Kendall (2006) found that the community pride and the international recognition were just as important as the economic impacts of the Olympic Games. An important benefit of hosting the Olympic Games is the knowledge and skills that the citizens gain and this can be done in three ways:

- (1) skills and knowledge in the service industry through hospitality training for volunteers;
- (2) knowledge and skills needed to win future bids to attract congresses, fairs and cultural and sport events can be enhanced; and
- (3) the skills that are needed in order to create a safe environment are improved (Solberg and Preuss, 2007).

Social impacts can also be negative and include anti-social behavior, crime, congestion, crowding, disruption of community life, community alienation and displacement, administrative problems, security breaches and over-commercialization (Bull and Lovell, 2007; Gursoy and Kendall, 2006; Jones, 2001; Owen, 2005). Other negative impacts include capacity constraints, financial costs, the displacement and physical removal of host residents and political activism (Higham, 1999). Gursoy and Kendall (2006) found that hosting the Olympic Games may be perceived by residents as having a negative impact on the physical and natural environment, causing problems such as pollution and the deterioration of natural, cultural and historical property. O'Brien and Chalip (2007, p. 299) suggest that in order to leverage social impacts "enabling sociability, creating event-related social events, facilitating informal social opportunities, producing ancillary events and theming" are strategies that organizers should implement.

In summary and as Bohlmann (2006) suggested, sport event leveraging can be successful when keeping the long-term development of the city in mind. Therefore, by conducting a SWOT analysis, organizers can evaluate the axis of a sport event leveraging plan that will assist to the short- and long-term development of the community and the overall quality of life of the residents.

Method

In order to examine the internal and external characteristics necessary to successfully leverage a mega sport event, interviews were used to understand what aspects of a host city can be strengths, weaknesses and what environmental aspects can form opportunities and threats for successful event leveraging. Interviews with individuals who have worked on the management and delivery of the Olympic Games can provide an insider's perspective to event leveraging (Leedy and Ormrod, 2005). A semi-structured phone interview format was followed. Adequate sample sizes can consist of five to 25 people, who have direct experience with the phenomenon being studied (Creswell, 1998). The following section describes the procedures in more detail.

Sample and description of procedures

The sample consisted of 30 administrators from the Athens 2004 Olympic Games in various administrative positions who were all contacted to participate in the study. Of this sample, five agreed to participate in the study (three males and two females), the minimum number needed to carry out a qualitative study (Leedy and Ormrod, 2005). These individuals served as middle to high management positions for the Athens

Olympic Games, and one respondent served in a management capacity for the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games. In-depth telephone interviews were conducted and the qualitative data were analyzed through content analysis (Bryman, 2008). The interviews took place from May 10th to 20th 2007 and lasted between 30 and 45 minutes. The discussions were recorded using a tape recorder and the interviewer took notes and transcribed each interview verbatim after all interviews were completed.

Four questions were introduced to each respondent. The first question inquired about the strengths needed for a host city to successfully stage the Olympic Games. The second question focused on the weaknesses that could cause a host city to lose the bid to host, or cause the host city to unsuccessfully host the Olympic Games. The third question inquired about respondent's perceptions on the opportunities of hosting the Olympic Games in terms of financial, residential, economic, social and community aspects. The last question asked respondents to comment on the threats that a host city faces when hosting the Olympic Games in terms of financial, residential, environmental and economic and social/community threats. The intent of introducing these questions was to lay a consistent basis from respondent to respondent while also making it possible for an informal dialogue to develop between researcher and respondent.

By conducting a content analysis, the researcher is able to gain a richer understanding of a phenomenon (Bryman, 2008). The main theme behind data analysis is to recognize shared themes described through the respondents experiences (Barritt, 1986). After transcribing data, the following steps were adapted to analyze the data (Creswell, 1998). First, statements were identified that related to the topic (SWOT). The researcher separated relevant from irrelevant information in the interview and then broke the relevant information into small segments (e.g. phrases or sentences) that each reflect a single, specific thought. Second, group statements were turned into "meaning units;" the researcher grouped the segments into categories (common themes within SWOT) that reflect the various aspects ("meanings") of the phenomenon as approached in this paper. Third, divergent perspectives were sought; the researcher looked through the data and considered the various ways in which different people experience the phenomenon. Finally, a composite meaning was constructed; the researcher used the various meanings identified to develop an overall description of the SWOT related to the Olympic Games as the study participants typically experienced it.

Results

The following section describes the themes that derived from the data analysis. The results are presented for each of the components of the SWOT analysis and the themes identified within each component are presented.

Strengths

All five of the respondents identified that the city needed to have in place certain infrastructures. Two respondents mentioned that the city needed to have security to deal with the threat of terrorism, and security infrastructures to deal with emergency situations such as an earthquake. Three respondents talked about the need to have a huge movement of volunteers. All five respondents talked about the city needing a sports history in order to have some experience in hosting events, and to have recognizable athletes within the sport. Experience in hosting events was also identified by all the respondents. Three respondents felt that a strong economy was needed.

Finally, two mentioned a good political standing being important. As one of the respondents indicated:

Infrastructures need to be in place in order to accommodate the people. You need to be proactive; you need to have trained volunteers, and human resources. Need to have experience in event management, and have experience in hosting events in order to properly plan for the Games, and to plan for the management of the venues after the Games as well as have the experience for coverage. Security is also very important, because now you must consider the threat of terrorism. Political standing of the country is important as well as having a good standing in sport history (Respondent 5).

Weaknesses

All five of the respondents commented again on infrastructure being a weakness of a host city. Four out of the five respondents identified that the size of the country, its economic and political state could be a weakness, because if the economy is too small then the city would not be able to sustain the Olympic Games. Sport history was viewed as a weakness because without a sport history the city would lack the knowledge to plan for the event and to motivate residents to get involved. Three respondents talked about the people, while only two identified weaknesses in the bid itself. As indicated in the following quote:

If the city does not have the infrastructure to accept tourism, lack of income and an unstable economy, then the city will not be able to sustain the Games. Other countries do not have the infrastructure to accept tourists, either the hotels, monuments or something to go to these cities to see is missing. You cannot just go to a city because they have the Games and stadiums. A city lacking sport history or background cannot plan or organize the event, and it is difficult to motivate the people to help organize the Games because their own athletes do not do anything important within the Games. Lacking transportation infrastructure is a weakness because you need to have easy access to the country, the city and the venues themselves for the athletes. Again the size of the country is important, you must consider its economic state and the history. Security is also a big weakness because you can never have 100% security (Respondent 4).

Opportunities

Looking at the opportunities that the Olympic Games offer to the host city, the respondents agreed on a number of opportunities the Olympic Games brought on. All five of the respondents commented on the opportunities for the tourism industry, business developments and relationships and the increase in the quality of life. Four mentioned the opportunities for culture and the promotion of sport. One of the respondents commented:

Financial opportunities include national sponsors come to the city and place money, this money is used for several things: to build stadiums, pay worker, organizer and office wages. There is also the tourist development; the world gets a chance to see the city, drawing tourists. For the residents, there is an opportunity for good education, an opportunity lesson for the citizens to learn how to deal with a lot of tourists, to show their best behaviors and improve habits that aren't very good like driving around and showing tourists how to get to places, being more hospitable. The quality of life gets improved for everyone. Another thing, was that during the Games the people learned about recycling and keeping pollution down, this makes a difference. Economic opportunities involve the further development of the tourist industry,

bringing money to the country through international sponsors. As for the social and community opportunities, again improving the quality of life, getting to know other cultures, broaden knowledge of the world and reducing ignorance. The Games helps create social consciousness. Learn how to interact with other culture, etc. Also, people get together around the world and bind them for the same cause, the Games (Respondent 2).

Threats

The respondents identified a number of threats related to the Olympic Games organization. All five out of the respondents identified the costs and the environment being damaged through traffic and pollution as threats that must be considered. Four of the respondents commented on security, while three respondents mentioned the threat of over reliance on the Olympic Games to rejuvenate the economy and displacing people. As indicated by the respondents:

There are always threats when taking on a project like the Olympics with the building costs, damage to the environment, changing the lives of local communities because you have to displace to put in facilities. This leads to damaging networks, community links and people's way of life. Also, hosting the Games means you will create a lot of traffic, pollution, environmental problems. Security is hard to predict, and the cost of security has been spiraling over the years making it one of the major costs of the Games. This is usually one of the financial burdens that come with hosting the Games. Basically, the final threat is that the Games attract a huge amount of investment inwards, but again if there are shortfalls, you have to cut in other programs (Respondent 3).

The threat that can occur is over relying on the Games to rejuvenate the economy. This is not a good thing, and this ties into residential threats, because if this happens, when the Games are over, jobs that were created for the Games no longer exist, this will result in a loss of jobs, the increases wages for workers, etc. (Respondent 5).

The results provide an overall description of the situation being studied as experienced by those involved in the organization of the Olympic Games. Common themes were identified across individuals. Regarding strengths, the results suggest that both the strengths and weaknesses related to the presence or absence of certain characteristics (e.g. infrastructure, economic and political stability, history in sports and the support of the people). Strengths such as support and volunteers, history in hosting mega-events and political/economic stability were also identified as weaknesses that would cause a host city to fail at hosting the Olympic Games. Opportunity themes focused on the creation and improvement of infrastructures, increase in tourism, increase in the quality of life, the development of business relationships and the legacies after the Olympic Games have passed. The threats on the other hand focused on areas such as security, environmental impacts and the costs of the Olympic Games. Table I summarizes the results of this paper and presents the common themes identified across the respondents.

Discussion

Literature suggests that the strengths a host city require to successfully stage the Olympic Games or the weaknesses that could lead to the host city failing to successfully implement the Olympic Games tend to be the same. Furthermore, considering Chalip's leveraging models (O'Brien and Chalip, 2007), certain strengths and weaknesses identified by the respondents need to be considered in order for a host city to leverage the opportunities and threats of the Olympic Games.

Questions	Themes across participants
Strengths needed to host	Having certain infrastructures in place Proper security Ability to gather volunteers A history in sports and experience in hosting mega-events Strong economy Good political standing within the country
Weaknesses causing unsuccessful hosting	Not having or being able to develop necessary infrastructures Size of the country Economic and political stability History in sports Support from the people The bid itself lacking details
Opportunities associated with hosting	Opportunity for tourism industry to grow Business developments and relationships established Increase in the quality of life for local citizens Experiencing different cultures Promotion of sport nationwide Infrastructures that are created and improved upon The use of legacies post Olympic Games The development of personnel Experiencing the Olympic Games Motivation to get involved and become active Networking
Threats cities are faced with when hosting	Huge cost to stage the Olympic Games Environmental threats such as pollution and traffic congestion Security (threat of terrorism) Over-reliance for Olympic Games to create the tourism market and rejuvenate economy Displacement of local citizens

Table I.
Results regarding SWOT
points as perceived by
past Olympic Games
administrators

Strengths and weaknesses

Respondents indicated the importance for the existence or lack of infrastructure was considered a strength/weakness because the city needs to have a developed economy and tourism industry in order to sustain the demands a sport event poses on the host city's services and economy (Daniels, 2007; Higham, 1999). Therefore, the host city should ensure that hotels are renovated and are modern to meet tourist expectations and the host city should develop Olympic-related tourism packages. This ties into Chalip's (2004) immediate economic leveraging to entice visitor spending and lengthen their stay. Also, by working with local tourism agencies business relationships are enhanced which can also lead to retaining event expenditures. Existing infrastructures such as security systems can assist the efficient management of emergency situations such as terrorism, earthquakes and other natural disasters (Toohey and Taylor, 2008). This ties into what Chalip (2004) describes as long-term leveraging by enhancing the host city's image. If proper measures are not taken, and an incident occurs, the host city will be remembered for that particular incident. For example, at the Atlanta Olympic Games, people remember the pipe bomb incident and athletes showing up late for their events.

Another strength/weakness relates to the existence of a critical mass of volunteers because it is indicative of local support for the event. The role of volunteers cannot be overlooked in the success of hosting the Olympic Games (Baum and Lockstone, 2007; Kemp, 2002). A lack of sport history can also lead to people becoming a weakness themselves because the host city may not be able to generate support and volunteers (Baum and Lockstone, 2007). Without volunteers and local support liminality cannot be generated and the host city will lose the opportunity to leverage any social benefits. By engaging and including the local population organizers are able to target issues within the community or even bring about change. For example, at the Vancouver Olympic Games programs were developed and implemented with sport programs to target literacy, education and the needs of aboriginal people (Kaplanidou and Karadakis, 2010). Having past experience in hosting a sport event is important for the host city because it allows for better preparation, planning, organizing and managing of the event. By having this past experience, networks and collaborations that have been established can be utilized to enhance business relationships. Finally, a stable economy and political standing is important because these two areas are the key for the city being able to support and sustain the sport event and avoid any shortfalls afterwards such as those experienced in Montreal and Munich (Jones, 2001).

Opportunities

There are various opportunities that are associated with hosting mega sport events that a host city can capitalize on. Regarding the tourism industry, the respondents identified that hosting a mega sport event will cause an increase to tourism. Infrastructures in various areas and sectors are improved and created that can increase the quality of life, improve the local economy and clean up the city which are also desirable tourism "products." The respondents also believed that if no profits were generated by the host city, the event could be paid off through the increase of tourism in the long-run. For example, Gazel and Schwer (1997) estimated that return visits to Las Vegas from spectators of a grateful dead concert in the city would gross \$5-\$10 million. Business developments and relationships were discussed as being created with the presence of many chief executive officers (CEOs) and presidents of different companies. Interest is raised in expanding and establishing headquarters in host cities, while networking takes place in order to set up these contracts and provide sponsorships which in turn help boost the local economy. Breton (2003) also identified networking among different companies as an opportunity associated with hosting the Olympic Games. This opportunity of networking and business development ties into Chalip's (2004) leveraging strategy of using the Olympic Games to enhance business developments. This can be achieved through inviting CEOs to attend events and during the event contracts and relationships are established.

Respondents felt that hosting a mega sport event also brings the potential for cultural exchange between different nations and cultures. This allows people to experience different cultures, exchange ideas, meet people from various parts of the world with similar interest which in turn creates social and cultural consciousness. Research supports respondents' beliefs that cultural exchange can be experienced through festivals, wildlife sites, museums, galleries and historic buildings (Higham and Hinch, 2003). Finally, with the promotion of sports, people get excited and motivated to participate and try new things that they normally would not have access to if it

were not for the event (Jones, 2001). Being so close to the athletes and the sports, excitement and motivation is created to become more involved in sport and physical activity as is evident in Gratton *et al.*'s (2006) research in Belfast that created excitement, activity and interest among the local citizens. By providing visitors and residents with these opportunities, motivation, energy, a sense of community and excitement are generated, which are key components to liminality (O'Brien and Chalip, 2007) leading to social leveraging.

Opportunities associated with hosting the Olympic Games are the building of new and the renovation of infrastructure as well as the improvement of existing facilities and venues. This helps improve the quality of life for individuals because they receive stimulation in certain areas of the economy, mainly construction and tourism through improvements, but also this gives the city the opportunity to get much needed infrastructure in place. For instance, the transportation systems created for the Athens and Barcelona Olympic Games helped address traffic congestion problems. Other opportunities include urban and economic rejuvenation or stimulation, place marketing benefits that also improve on the city's image and other local business opportunities and investments that otherwise would not be considered without the Olympic Games (Cegielski and Mules, 2002; Daniels, 2007; Gratton *et al.*, 2006). Through these opportunities, organizers are in a better position to leverage the immediate impacts in order to lengthen visitor stays and entice spending by having the proper infrastructure in place (e.g. hotels and tourist attractions). With the city gaining a favorable image, long-term leveraging can occur through the media exposure advertising the tourist attractions and reporting on the image of the host city. Organizers should work with local advertising and promotion companies by providing them with information to attract domestic as well as international tourists.

Our study also found that economic benefits include the additional construction activity experienced by the city and the increase in the number of service industries like tourism, sales, accommodations and restaurants. The Olympic Games provide a platform for increased economic and tourist activities. Also, local citizens can benefit from the exposure to training in new management and technology approaches. This human resource skills development could help in future projects and hosting of a sport event. These economic benefits tie into Chalip's (2004) third means of leveraging the economic impacts, retaining event expenditure. By employing local residents and purchasing from local suppliers and using local services, the host city is able to retain expenditures that occur.

Threats

There are different kinds of threats that the host city faces by undertaking a mega sport event project. The main one is cost. Since mega sport events cost so much to stage, if there is no profit made, then the debt that falls on the local citizens' shoulders can be significant (Higham, 1999; Jones, 2001). This debt must be paid usually through increasing taxes and diverting funds from other much needed areas. With all the new venues, facilities and construction, and the increase of people coming to the city there are environmental threats such as overcrowding, traffic congestion and pollution (Higham, 1999) that occur if these projects are not planned properly. Being aware of these threats, organizers can leverage the Olympic Games to bring about change and attention to certain social issues. For instance, knowing about the environmental threats, organizers can take action to educate residence on the importance of recycling

and other environmental issues using the event to create issue-related publicity (O'Brien and Chalip, 2007).

Another threat mentioned by the respondents and supported by literature was the over reliance by some countries investing into the wrong industries and relying on the event to create the tourism industry and the local economy (Higham, 1999). This threat ties in with the city relying on the event to rejuvenate the economy (Jones, 2001). This is a threat because the majority of jobs and wages created for the event are limited and only last as long as the events do (Jones, 2001). It is important to note that these jobs can be created from the time the host city bids for the event lasting up to eight years, unless a proper plan or infrastructure is developed to sustain these jobs they will be limited to the duration of the event. It is important for local businesses to engage and promote in order to leverage the economic opportunities of the event. Just because the city is hosting the Olympic Games does not guarantee visitors will spend money in their businesses. Promotional efforts to attract patronage are necessary. Chalip and Leyns (2002) study indicated that businesses that were aggressive in their leveraging efforts felt these efforts lead to substantial dividends as opposed to businesses that did nothing to attract patronage because they felt being in the host city this would automatically occur.

The displacement of people in order to create venues and stadiums for the events has always been a threat present in all host cities (Higham, 1999; Jones, 2001). This leads to interrupting and changing people's lives because there are restrictions to transportation and traveling among other things which causes damages to social, community and business networks (Cegielski and Mules, 2002). These threats tie back into both of what Chalip (2004) suggests are economic and social leveraging. Specifically, by damaging networks, business relationships are affected that can lead to loss of income and retaining event expenditure. Displacing residents and changing the way of life for some individuals can lead to the city's image being damaged. As opposed to using the event to leverage social change, social issues are created that are given public attention affecting the city's image. Finally, looking at security and terrorism are always a constant threat which has caused the cost of security to skyrocket over the years making it one of the major costs of hosting sport events (Toohey and Taylor, 2008). This threat ties back into the image of the city. Organizers need to work closely with media representatives to advertise and report on initiatives that are being taken to ensure safety and security for the event. Furthermore, organizers should use the event to advertise and promote the security measures that are being taken in order to draw those tourists to the host city that are uncertain about traveling because of security concerns.

Implications for future administrators and conclusions

Given the multiple themes that arose from the interviews, a number of implications can be discussed. There is a trend to overemphasize economic and social benefits and consequently event organizers and city hosts should use caution when such economic and social benefits are used in promotional efforts. Therefore, organizers should engage resident participation and increase awareness of the various Olympic Games-related initiatives through community meetings and updated bulletins and provide access to economic forecasts and impact assessments for high, medium and low scenarios. There are huge and unexpected costs associated with staging a sport event which poses a high risk and a probable chance that the city will lose money alluding to the need for careful short- and long-term planning. Detailed plans of how

any profits will be distributed should be made during the bid for the Games as well as setting up contingency funds that account for potential organizational shortcomings. Administrators should recognize that tourism is one of the main opportunities for financial growth resulting from the staging of a sport event. Therefore, organizers, tourism agencies, and local businesses should collaborate in order to appropriately leverage economic and social impacts. Furthermore, administrators should recognize that the quality of the promotion and staging of the sport event will most likely have a positive impact on the future of tourism for the host city and country. Tourism and government organizations should collaborate pre- and post-games in order to leverage the event and determine a course of action for community oriented tourism planning. These implications can be used as a transfer of knowledge among administrators who are considering bidding or have just been awarded the Olympic Games and are in need of an evaluation of their resources through strategic planning.

To ascertain growth in its tourism industry, future Olympic Games host cities need to address weaknesses and problems that have been identified in this paper. These include, post 9/11 security measures, transportation infrastructure, lower wages in the tourism industry and high costs of air travel (Young and Ni, 2004) as well as the cost of the Olympic Games, resident displacement, environmental damage such as traffic congestion and pollution, the absence of infrastructure and a stable economy and political system. One way to address these issues is through the use of the media exposure, specifically providing the media with background information about the host city and the initiatives organizers have taken. Chalip (2004, p. 241) suggests this can be achieved through public relations strategies and cites the Sydney example, where the Australian Tourist Commission (ATC) collaborated with the media pre-games, presenting them with introductions to showcase Sydney. pre-, during, and post-games, the ATC supplied event broadcasters with video postcards (short visuals of Australian icons) that could be inserted into telecasts.

The SWOT analysis conducted in this paper laid the foundation for strategic planning for future host cities and other key players of the tourism industry while taking into consideration the weaknesses and problems that have been experienced by host cities. Moreover, the SWOT analysis conducted in this paper goes one step further to expand beyond the obvious weaknesses and problems that host nations have become accustomed to while bringing to the forefront other strengths and opportunities the Olympic Games has to offer in order to provide a leverage framework for event bidding and hosting.

Identifying the SWOT of organizing the Olympic Games can be incorporated in bidding and hosting requirements by the IOC. It can also assist all stakeholders involved in the bidding, preparation, delivery and post-games management to target and prepare much more efficiently with the long-term needs of the host city.

Limitations and future research

The main limitations of the paper include its sample size and the nature of the jobs of the interviewed administrators as it varied from middle to high management positions of one respondent. The sample size is somewhat small but the results from this paper can be used as a base to guide Olympic Games organizing committees' future research. The results do provide some direction for future administrators of a sport event within the transfer of knowledge framework, given the insight of past administrators a sport event.

Future research may benefit from an increased sample size with a greater representation of administrators from the various Olympic Games.

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Corresponding author

Kostas Karadakis can be contacted at: kkaradakis@ufl.edu