

How to Re-image a City: The Interrelationship Between Sport Event and Destination Image

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Abstract

Most studies are focused on the main benefits of hosting major events. A key element for achieving these benefits is the ability of institutions to support the process of territorial marketing. This paper aims to analyze the impact of “Giro d'Italia” on Naples’ image. Some questionnaire responses by visitors to the “Giro d'Italia” were used to evaluate the image effects of the event. It evidences that hosting a major sport event can change the image of a touristic destination and its perception. The image of Naples as a touristic destination improved in 2013 but the structural and social problem of the city didn’t lead to a huge economic improvement. The paper offers a new perspective on how the urban management can re-image a city.

Keywords

Sport, Geography, Management

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1. Introduction

In the last years sport mega-events have increasingly been positioned in the marketing development of tourism destinations. Most studies on impacts of these events on the hosting city have mainly focused on economic effects (Crompton & McKay, 1994). However hosting this kind of event can also contribute to change city’s image showing natural beauties and efficiency of touristic services or reinforce city’s traditional reputation (Law, 1993; Robertson and Guerrier, 1998; Waitt, 2003; Pine and Gilmore, 1999). For example, hosting the 2006 FIFA World Cup, Germany used the motto ‘time to make friends’ at the aim to reinforce its global reputation of efficiency and precision oriented city (Zhang et al 2009). By the end of the tournament, many visitors were looking at Germany in a whole new light. A major sport event not only boosts the image of the host city but also the image of the government and leaders who help make it happen (Lash and Urry, 1994; Zukin, 1995; Ritzer, 1999;

Bramwell and Rawding, 1996). Brazilian president, for example, has enjoyed a significant surge in popularity and prestige for successfully attracting the 2007 Rio Pan American Games, the 2014 FIFA World Cup, and the 2016 Summer Olympics.

Despite of many cases evidence the relevance of image-effect of sport mega-event on hosting cities, most researchers tend to focus their interest on economic criteria. This is due to the fact that image-effect of sport mega-events is less tangible than economic effect and consequently it is more difficult to calculate (Getz, 1991; Littlejohn et al 2004). Specifically, there is a lack of research focused on tourists’ perceptions of sports mega-events image-effect (Sinclair, 2005). This study try to fill this gap examined tourists’ perceptions of image-effect of 96° edition of “Giro d'Italia”. At this aim we first developed a theoretical background and then presented our empirical analysis to evidence how Naples’ image is

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changed from trash crisis to the “Giro d'Italia”.

2. Literature Review

Since the 90s, some studies in the touristic marketing field of analysis have been also focused on the image-effects of major sport events at national and the international level (Woisetschläger and Michaelis, 2012; Hiller, 1989; Ritchie and Smith, 1991; Foley, 1991; Roche, 1994, 2000; Dann, 1996).

Mega sport events have become to be considerate as a particular valuable in terms of their image effects on the hosting city (Dann, 1996). They can re-image the host city, leading to its favorable perception as a potential travel destination (Hall, 1992). This potential has been a reason for events being used as tool for a reconfiguration of city's image (Law, 1993; Holcomb, 1993; 1999; Sassen and Roost, 1999; Judd and Fainstein, 1999; Selby, 2003). Hosting a mega sport events can destroy, create or reinforce a city's original image (Crompton and Ankomah, 1993).

Table 1. Reconfiguration options.

Previous		
Bad	Reinforce	Create
Good	Destroy	Reinforce
Post	Bad	Good

Sport mega-events can re-image the host city, leading to its favorable perception as a potential travel destination (Hall, 1992; Litvin et al 2006; Korstanje, 2012; Richardson, 2012; Wan, 2013). This potential has been a reason for events being used as tool for a reconfiguration of city's image (Law, 1993; Holcomb, 1993; 1999; Sassen and Roost, 1999; Judd and Fainstein, 1999, Crompton and Ankomah, 1993). However, one of the major problems of researches on reconfiguration options is the difficulty to evaluate city's images and how it changes after the event (Paddison, 1993; Goodrich, 1978; Richardson and Crompton, 1988; Echtner and Ritchie, 1991; Tapachai and Waryszak, 2000).

Image modification has been the focus of various studies which have emphasized the difficulty of identifying attributes to measure its preconception (Pearce, 1982; Chon, 1990 Veres et al, 2008). At the aim to evaluate a possible reconfiguration of existing image is likely to start from city's image before the event (Ridinger et al., 2012; Kaplanidou, Vogt, 2007; Chalip, et al., 2003), highlight the wide range of attributes associated with destination

places and test changes of these attributes after the mega-event (Goodrich, 1978; Pearce, 1982; Gartner and Hunt, 1987; Richardson and Crompton, 1988; Calantone et al., 1989).

Naples is a perfect case-study because of its bad image due to trash crisis offers the unique opportunity to test the direct effect of a sport mega-event on the process of re-imaging the city. Trash crisis created a bad-image of Naples all around the world (Gartner, 1993). The 96° edition of Giro d'Italia on the 4th may 2013 was the event through which the city showed its beauty and efficiency in offering touristic services all around the country. Thus, following the process used in literature (Gartner, 1989) we first realized a desk analysis for evidencing Naples bad-image before of the 96° edition of Giro d'Italia. Then through a focus group we identified the main attribute that contribute to evaluate its image. Finally, based on these attribute we test the new image of Naples after the 96° edition of Giro d'Italia.

3. Methods

Material for this paper was collected over an extended period, the methodology comprising participant observation and face-to-face key actor interviews. Initially, a analysis of 100 articles on the international journal such as New York Times, Times and BBC was used to define the pre-event global image of the Naples. Then, 10 key personnel involved in Giro d'Italia organization were interviewed for define the most important attributes associated with destination places. These interview let us to define the survey through which we interviewed the tourists. An on-site survey was conducted on 80 peoples in Naples during the 96° edition of Giro d'Italia. Naples is a medium-sized city famous for its natural, historical and cultural beauties. However, before the event the garbage crisis and some problems of security created an image of a not clean and not sure touristic destination. The on-site survey is believed to be an appropriate method to evaluate if the event changed the tourists perception of the city. It is a real-time measure, which means measurement occurs during the experience and provides better quality information about respondents' perspectives than a post-event survey. The respondents were requested to complete the paper questionnaire and put forward practical suggestions or any other perspectives they would like to share about the event and the host destination.

Analysis of Naples' image from trash crisis to the 96° edition of Giro d'Italia

The information about Naples' image before of the event were collected through a content analysis of main international journal. This review has evidenced that since the 2007 the trash crisis has damaged the image of Naples that have driven tourists away from Naples and with them the southern Italian city's biggest source of income. The rubbish dumps of Naples forced the government to appoint a trash tsar to take control of a crisis blamed on years of weak governance and organized crime. The trash crisis compounded problems for Naples, which was already fighting a reputation of rampant street and Mafia crime. Some journal evidenced that regional and national policy makers supported the 96° edition of Giro d'Italia at the aim put under the reflectors Naples' beauties and to re-style its image in the world.

A focus group for developing the attributes' list

A focus group with 10 key personnel involved in 96° edition of Giro d'Italia were used to develop the attributes' list regarding Naples's image as a tourist destination. A focus group session with local tourism practitioners was used to examine the list applicability and to refine the wording. This procedure led to the development of a item, multi-attribute destination inventory for assessing visitor perceptions of Naples's image. The questionnaire included demographic information and Likert-type questions related to the attributes. Respondents were given the list of attributes in order to measure the performance of each attribute. The survey asked respondents to assess the performance of the attributes during the visit at Naples using a five-point Likert scale from 1 = very poor performance to 5 = very good performance. Revisit intention was operationalized by asking respondents if he/she would like to revisit Naples just for travelling.

4. Results

A sample of 91% national tourists and 9% non-national tourists were considered. Across both groups, males (62% and 57%) outnumbered females (58% and 43%). A total of 90% of non-national tourists were less than 50 years of age and 80% of national tourists were less than 50 years of age. The age group most represented in both groups was 20–29 years. The majority of non-national (96%) and national tourists (93%) had achieved an education at university level or above. The majority of respondents had a bad image of Naples before come and visit it: non-national tourists (71%) and national tourists (62%). The majority of all respondents (81% and 72%) declared to have had a good image of Naples after being there.

We used a one-sample t-test to evaluate the relevance of

each attribute in the process of evaluation of Naples image. The mean scores for all attributes were significantly higher than the scale's midpoint, which means that Naples performed well in all the attributes.

Table 2. Socio-demographic variables.

	National tourists	Non-national tourists
	Percent (91%)	Percent (9%)
Gender		
Male	62.0	57.0
Female	58.0	43.0
Age		
20-29	44.0	41.0
30-39	29.0	33.0
40-49	16.0	16.0
50 and above	20.0	10.0
Educational level		
Primary	2.0	1.0
Secondary	5.0	3.0
University	53.0	44.0
Graduate/postgraduate	40.0	52.0
Have you had a bad image of Naples before being there		
Yes	62	71
No	38	29
Have you had a good image of Naples after being there		
Yes	81	72
No	19	28

The performance of all the attributes evidenced that 96° edition of Giro d'Italia contributed to create a positive image of Naples as touristic destination for both national and non-national visitors that declared to have changed their bad opinion about Naples' image. After the 96° edition of Giro d'Italia the majority of respondents declared to have a good image of Naples for its natural beauties, clean and security. Despite previous research support for the idea that good image of the city appears to be a key factor in generating a more positive destination image and vice versa this association was not supported in this study. In conclusion, when events are the point of attraction to a destination, it can directly influence destination image. The results of this study suggest that after an event is completed, destination image may play a significant role in the way the hosting city's image is

formed in the consumers' mind.

Table 3. Means and Standard Deviations of Performance Ratings by Respondents.

	M (SD) All Respondents	M (SD) National Tourist	M (SD) Non-national Tourist
Personal safety	4.21* (0.77)	4.30 (0.82)	4.14 (0.72)
Food quality	3.92* (0.82)	3.94 (0.85)	3.91 (0.83)
Accommodation facilities	3.82* (0.86)	3.88 (0.85)	3.77 (0.88)
Local prices	4.07* (0.74)	4.09 (0.80)	4.05 (0.77)
Local information	4.04* (0.92)	4.35 (0.81)	3.74 (0.91)
Friendliness of the locals	4.27* (0.76)	4.26 (0.82)	4.27 (0.71)
Natural attractions	3.84* (0.85)	4.27 (0.84)	3.67 (0.82)

*Means significantly above the 3.0 mid-point $P < 0.05$
 Notes: Rating obtained from a five-point Likert scale of 1 = very poor performance, 5 = very good performance

5. Conclusion and Discussions

Results of this study can be used by governments in planning and implementing future editions of Giro d'Italia. On the basis of this information, planners can establish strategies to effectively minimize the positive impacts of the event on the image of Naples. Policy-makers are encouraged to project the event's able to improve destination image. Both theoretical approaches and empirical results suggest that synergy in promotional and organizational efforts should be a necessary component of sport tourism planning and destination development. Sport events can be the major attraction for sport tourists to visit a destination. Destination marketers and suppliers of the tourism experience can capitalize on the visitors' exposure to the destination by offering and promoting quality products and services in association with the event's image. The image of these tourism products could be in conjunction with visitor destination image perceptions and event images.

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Biography



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