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Introduction

Sports tourism is one of the fastest growing and developing segments of the tourism and leisure industry, with sports events contributing significantly to this growth (Ritchie, Mosedale, & King, 2002). Overall, cities and countries expect benefits for the community when hosting a major sports event (Gratton, Shibli, & Coleman, 2005). The support of local residents is crucial, as they are often directly affected by these events and therefore can be seen as key stakeholders in the planning and execution of the event. There is an emerging trend toward researching residents' attitudes toward and support for sports events (e.g. Gursoy, Yolal, Ribeiro, & Netto, 2017; Peters, et al., 2018; Prayag, Hosany, Nunkoo, & Alders, 2013). However, from the existing literature it remains unclear whether the type of sports event has an impact on the locals' attitude and the likelihood of their support; neither does it declare how the perceived fit between a sports event and destination influences the residents' opinion. Currently, only a few scholars investigating this field have tried to analyze and identify this fit component (e.g. Hallmann & Breuer, 2010; Kaplanidou & Vogt, 2007). So far, the link between local residents' image perceptions of sports events and destinations has not been investigated. Thus, the first aim of the present study is to empirically test the destination image and sports event image. Secondly, the study will shed light on the fit between those destination and sports images and its potential influence on the residents' attitude toward and support for the sports event. Thirdly, the subsequent linkage between residents' attitude and event support will be explored. Finally, implications for both destination and sports event managers are provided with a view to increasing residents' support for hosting sports events. To answer the research questions, the case of the 2018 UCI Road World Championships in Innsbruck-Tirol (RWC) was selected.

Literature Review

Studies investigating residents' attitudes and event support often use the social exchange theory (SET) and the theory of reasoned action (TRA) as guiding theories. The SET represents a sociological theory, widely used in residents' attitude studies (e.g. Prayag et al., 2013). The theory proposes that "all human relationships are formed by the use of a subjective cost-benefit analysis and the comparison of alternative" (Kang, Lee, Yoon, & Long, 2008, p. 683). The willingness of individuals or groups to participate in an exchange with another party is higher if the individual or group believes that benefits will arise from such an exchange. In tourism and leisure research, several studies have applied the TRA (e.g. Prayag et al., 2013) This theory is primarily used to explain the connection between attitudes and behavioral intentions. The TRA is a hierarchical model claiming that behavioral intent, which is influenced by attitudes and subjective norms, influences behavior while both behavior and behavioral intent are influenced by beliefs.

Attitude has been studied in the context of the Olympic Games, showing positive effects of hosting the Games on residents' attitude. Residents' support for tourism projects, such as events and festivals, are widely discussed (e.g. Gursoy et al. 2017). There is strong evidence that positive perceptions significantly and positively affect residents' support, whereas perceived

negative impacts significantly and negatively influence the support for mega events (Zhou & Ap, 2009). According to Jurowski and Gursoy (2004), there are several factors, including, but not limited to, community attachment, involvement in community issues, expected personal benefits, distance from the event, and sociodemographic variables, which can influence support levels. Finally, the study by Prayag et al. (2013) highlighted a positive relationship between overall attitudes toward the event impacts and support for the London 2012 Olympic Games. Hence, a first hypothesis is postulated for the study at hand:

Hypothesis 1: The residents' overall attitude (OA) toward a sports event is positively related to their support for the sports event (SUP).

Destination image can be seen as an individual's construct of beliefs, ideas, and impressions about attributes and/or activities available at a specific destination (Wang & Hsu, 2010). Central determinants of the destination image are expressed by affective, cognitive, and conative components (Gartner, 1996). The affective component refers to emotions and feelings an individual has toward a place or destination. Baloglu and McCleary (1999) revealed that the cognitive image potential tourists have of four visited countries positively influences the affective evaluations of these countries. The conative stage comprises the behavioral intention, for example the visitors' choice to visit/revisit a destination or event (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Gartner, 1996). The assumption that sports events positively influence the destination image is supported by various studies, whereas other studies question this prevailing assumption and report inconsistent findings (positive, negative, mixed, or no effects) on the impact of hosting a sports event. This study assumes that the destination image framework can serve as a reference for conceptualizing sports event images and that the cognitive and affective components, i.e. the underlying basis for destination image formation, could be used to measure sports event image. Moreover, these images can influence future behavior. Some studies already suggested that the concepts of destination and sports event images could have common image associations leading to the so-called image fit (Hallmann & Breuer, 2010; Kaplanidou & Vogt, 2007). The image fit concept forms part of the so-called image transfer process. This process states that images of a specific object are transferable to other objects, leading to favorable, strong, unique associations and vice versa (Deng & Li, 2013; Hallmann & Breuer, 2010). According to Hallmann and Breuer (2010), the image fit is understood as the subjective evaluation of the relationship between a destination image and a sports event image. Hallmann and Breuer (2010) were the first to quantify the image fit using a formula to index different variables, measuring the affective and cognitive components. Hosting an event can be seen as a fundamental component of a destination's tourism value chain. Therefore, the destination and sports event will be associated with each other in the consumer mind and function as factors influencing the attitude toward the destination (Deng & Li, 2013). Hence, it can be inferred that the perception will also influence the attitude toward the destination and sports event (Deng & Li, 2013). Thus, the following two hypotheses are proposed:

Hypothesis 2: A positive perceived affective strategic fit (PAF) between destination image and sports event image will positively influence the residents' general attitude (OA) toward the event.

Hypothesis 3: A positive perceived cognitive strategic fit (PCF) between destination image and sports event image will positively influence the residents' general attitude (OA) toward the event.

Prayag et al. (2013) underline the importance of distinguishing between attitudes and support. Therefore, the study at hand postulates attitude and support toward mega events as different constructs. Kwon and Vogt (2010) found a positive relationship between the residents' overall attitude and place marketing, and support for marketing activities and future tourism development. Furthermore, Prayag et al. (2013) identified a positive relationship between the overall attitude toward and support for the London 2012 Olympic Games. The SET and TRA posit that residents' perceptions of impacts are antecedents to overall attitudes; support is the consequence of attitudes, equivalent to factual intentional behavior (Prayag et al., 2013). Several studies investigating residents' attitudes (Prayag et al., 2013; Yoon, Gursoy, & Chen, 2001) postulate that overall attitude is a mediator between the relationship of perceived impacts and support. Research streams examining the image fit between destination image and sports event image noted that the fit predicts the behavioral intention for revisiting a destination (Hallmann & Breuer, 2010). Assuming the image fit is a predictor of future intentional behavior and based on the findings of the literature, two final hypotheses are stated as follows:

Hypothesis 4: There is an indirect relationship between the perceived affective fit (PAF) of destination image and sports event image and support (SUP) for the event, mediated by the overall attitude (OA).

Hypothesis 5: There is an indirect relationship between the perceived cognitive fit (PCF) of destination image and sports event image and support (SUP) for the event, mediated by the overall attitude (OA).

Methodology

The UCI Road World Championships in Innsbruck-Tirol, Austria were chosen as an appropriate case for testing the hypotheses. Tyrol (Austria) is an historical region in the Alps that is famous for its landscapes and mountains and known as an attractive winter tourism destination. However, the destination is attempting to achieve an image change to fuel demand for summer tourism.

A quantitative study was developed, in which a questionnaire survey was conducted among residents of Tyrol. For the purpose of this research, a multi-attributive approach was chosen for the items because it represents the multidimensionality of the image concept. The cognitive image factors were measured by means of three five-point semantic differentials using the vectors international-regional and natural-artificial, which have already been applied in previous studies (e.g. Hallmann & Breuer, 2010). The affective image components were adopted from Russell and Pratt (1980). To measure the residents' attitude and support, this study used the approach of Prayag et al. (2013) and operationalized residents' attitude toward and support for the event as additive overall measures. Finally, the support and attitude were measured based on items used in the literature (e.g. Prayag et al., 2013).

The survey was conducted six months before the RWC took place from September 22nd-30th 2018. After eliminating invalid or incomplete records, a total of 2,265 usable online questionnaires amongst the population of Tyrol were collected. Out of 2,265 respondents, 51.4 % (n = 1,156) were male, corresponding to slightly more than half, while 48.6 % (n = 1,093) were female. The average age was 40.33 (SD = 18.826) years with a minimum of 12 and a maximum of 92 years.

Results

The items ‘sports event and destination image’ were factor-analyzed (EFA) using principal component analysis (PCA) with varimax rotation. Regarding the additional constructs, EFA has been applied by prior research to explore the underlying structures (e.g., Prayag et al., 2013; Hallmann & Breuer, 2010). The underlying study tested these factors and introduced a new item to each construct. To determine the suitability of the data, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test as a measure of sampling adequacy, and Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity were included. For further details please consult the following table:

Components	A	ITTC	FL	CR	AVE
Sport Event Image Affective (<i>sei_aff</i>)	0.842			0.802	0.629
“Cheerful-Gloomy” (<i>sei_aff_1</i>)		0.675	0.775		
“Exciting-Dull” (<i>sei_aff_2</i>)		0.721	0.799		
“Pleasant-Unpleasant” (<i>sei_aff_3</i>)		0.793	0.846		
“Relaxing-Distressing” (<i>sei_aff_4</i>)		0.543	0.749		
Sports Event Image Cognitive (<i>sei_cog</i>)	0.761			0.866	0.765
“Modern-Traditional” (<i>sei_cog_1</i>)		0.615	0.88		
“International-Regional” (<i>sei_cog_2</i>)		0.615	0.869		
Destination Image Affective (<i>di_saff</i>)	0.799			0.8	0.626
“Cheerful-Gloomy” (<i>di_aff_1</i>)		0.611	0.798		
“Exciting-Dull” (<i>di_aff_2</i>)		0.58	0.722		
“Pleasant-Unpleasant” (<i>di_aff_3</i>)		0.725	0.842		
“Relaxing-Distressing” (<i>di_aff_4</i>)		0.546	0.798		
Destination Image Cognitive (<i>di_cog</i>)	0.731			0.862	0.757
“Modern-Traditional” (<i>di_cog_1</i>)		0.576	0.863		
“International-Regional” (<i>di_cog_2</i>)		0.576	0.877		
Overall Attitude (<i>OA</i>)	0.904			0.942	0.844
“I am excited about the hosting”		0.772	0.895		
“Positive will outweigh negative impacts”		0.829	0.928		
“I personally like the hosting”		0.838	0.933		
Support (<i>SUP</i>)	0.782			0.874	0.7
“I personally support the event”		0.711	0.886		
“Tyrol should bid for more events”		0.542	0.781		
“I am going to watch the event”		0.627	0.84		

Note: Variables were measured on a 5-point rating scale and with a 5-point semantic differential (1 strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree); α = Cronbach’s alpha; *ITTC* = item-to-total correlation; *FL* = factor loading; *CR* = composite reliability; *AVE* = average variance extracted.

For hypothesis 1 a simple linear regression analysis was conducted. To find out how the perceived strategic fit variables (hypotheses 2 and 3) impact the overall attitude toward a sports event, a multiple regression analysis was used. For each of the hypotheses 4 and 5, an independent mediation analysis was executed. The detailed results of the regression and mediation analyses are provided in the following table:

Hypotheses	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficient	t-statistic	Support of Hypotheses
	RC B	SE	Beta (β)		
H1: $OA \rightarrow SUP$	0.823	0.013	0.82	65.8 **	supported
H2: $PCF \rightarrow OA$	-0.115	0.021	-0.118	-5.573 **	supported
H3: $PAF \rightarrow OA$	-0.433	0.027	-0.345	16.311 **	supported
			95 % BC CI		
	Coefficient	Boot SE	Lower	Upper	
H4: $PAF \rightarrow OA \rightarrow SUP$	-0.3484	0.0264	-0.4	-0.296 **	supported
H5: $PCF \rightarrow OA \rightarrow SUP$	-0.0817	0.0197	-0.119	0.0431 **	supported

Note: *OA* = overall attitude; *SUP* = support; *PAF* = perceived affective fit; *PCF* = perceived cognitive fit. * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$

Discussion and Conclusion

Generally, it can be stated that treating images as a more dimensional concept is useful for determining the destination image and sports event image (Hallmann & Breuer, 2010). The major finding from this study was that both the perceived affective (-.433**) and the perceived cognitive (-.115**) fit between the sports event image and the destination image significantly and directly affect the overall attitude. Data exposing a higher gap and therefore a weak fit between the images result in a negative impact on the attitude construct. Thus, it can be stated that the higher the fit between the images, the lower the net effect between the images, and thus, the more positive the attitude. These results support the utility of SET and TRA in explaining residents' attitude toward and support for sports events. In this study a higher fit between the event and destination images results in a more supportive attitude toward the event.

Consistent with the TRA and following the recommendations of Prayag et al. (2013), this study treats the overall attitude and support toward events as conceptually different constructs. It confirms that residents' attitudes are positively related to residents' support for events (+.823**). Consequently, these results support previous studies on tourism development such as Yoon et al. (2001) and researchers such as Kwon and Vogt (2010), who investigated residents' attitudes toward place marketing. Additionally, the results are similar to Prayag et al. (2013) (+0.79**) and support the imperative to treat overall attitude and support as different constructs.

The study also investigates the mediating effects of the overall attitude on the relationship between perceived cognitive and affective fit and residents' support. The findings confirm that the overall attitude mediates the relationship between perceived affective fit and event support,

whereas indirectly-only mediation is found for the relationship between perceived cognitive fit and support for the event. The direct effect between perceived cognitive fit and support was not statistically significant. This indicates that if the mediator (overall attitude) was not on that path, support would not be significantly influenced.

Under the supposition that support for the event is the residents' behavioral component, the findings confirm Hallmann and Breuer (2010), who noted that the image fit predicts the behavioral intention. Nevertheless, in the last-named study the revisiting of a destination was the behavioral outcome; therefore, comparisons should be treated carefully.

The results of this study contribute to literature by revealing the importance of image congruence as an important influencing factor for residents' attitudes toward and support for events. Furthermore, this study suggests separating cognitive and affective image perceptions. Researchers used affective images deconstructed to individual affective components and investigated their potential influence. Therefore, further research streams should investigate in greater detail the influence of affective and cognitive image perceptions as well as their relationship with each other. To do so, they should either apply the discrete components or, if applicable, include new appropriate measures.

The findings offer practical implications for various event stakeholders. Understanding that favorable and unfavorable matches or mismatches between destinations and sports events exist, is vital for event organizers and destination or city brand managers. In general, the results of this study indicate that a more favorable match between the destination and sports event results in a higher support for the event in the local community.

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