



The influence of the Olympic Games on Beijing consumers' perceptions of their city tourism development

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to explore the perceptions of the residents of Beijing for the improvement of the tourist infrastructure after the Olympic Games. The study identifies factors affecting the inhabitants' perceptions about the tourist impact of the Olympic Games, and the development of special tourist types.

Design/methodology/approach – A group of 1,000 urban Beijing residents from different districts are personally interviewed on their perceptions about Beijing as a tourist destination. Their perceptions are measured on the basis of infrastructure improvements made for the Olympic Games, and the impact these improvements will have in Beijing as a post Olympic city.

Findings – The Olympic Games improve tourist infrastructure according to Beijing residents. Infrastructure for the Olympic Games affects the economic development of the Olympic city, as well as the touristic development of the city. The above mentioned factors lead to three clusters of residents, namely the eco tourism supporters, the linked tourism supporters, and the mainstream tourism supporters. These three groups with different characteristics are responsible for tourist improvement, additionally to the development of new tourist models mostly related to the Olympic Games infrastructure.

Practical implications – The improvement of tourist infrastructure in an Olympic City will attract different types of tourists who are not attached only to sports. Tourists interested in culture, in eco-tourism, in linked tourism, and in mainstream tourism will also be attracted by an Olympic City. The outcomes of the study can be used by future Olympic cities in order to improve their image as a tourist destination.

Originality value – There is limited research related to the impacts of the Olympic Games into the tourist industry. The present study identifies the impact of the Olympic infrastructure to different types of tourism. Different clusters of residents will provide valuable insights related to tourism stemming from the Olympic infrastructure.

Keywords Tourism, China, Cities, Olympic Games

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

The origins of sports marketing date back to ancient times. Sports marketing became more popular at the early 1970s when the American government banned tobacco advertising on TV and radio. Tennis and auto racing were the beneficiaries from tobacco sponsoring (Dwyer, 2005). As a result, brand names started to parade literally in front of the spectators of these events (Papadimitriou *et al.*, 2008; Roy and Cornwell 2003).

The diverse preparations for different Olympic cities and the whole process of nominating a city as an Olympic one rendered the Olympic Games not only the most famous big event, but also the most branded related one. The Olympic Games are a part not only of the new athletic branded models of shoes or sportswear, but also of an Olympic city. Thus the notion of the branding of places became more and more popular



(Amis, 2003). The branding of places incorporates the distinctive elements of an Olympic city (tradition like Greece, sophistication like London, etc). The main branded elements of each Olympic city need to be developed both by the Olympic communication as a whole mostly to visitors, but also through individual marketing activities mostly related to tourism.

Thus, Olympic cities are building up a strong country image related partly to a short term, but mostly to a long term, marketing strategy in order to attract visitors of all kinds. The more the elements are communicated through Olympic communication, the highest attractiveness Olympic cities are getting. Olympic cities then become unique tourist destinations. Although these elements might exist in other destinations across the globe, the relationship built and the mega event associated with these elements render the tourist destination unique and probably much different from other tourist destinations.

The relationship between the Olympics and tourism is strong (L'Etang, 2006). Olympic cities attract not only thousands of athletes and visitors, but also opinion leaders of every kind (Anderson, 2002). It is generally accepted that the Olympic Games help advance a city in the hierarchy of World Cities (Owen, 2005). Mega sports events such as the Olympics offer the stage on which a city builds its global status. As the last phase of globalization tries to repackage old with new infrastructure, the Olympic Games seem to be the remedy of the tourist advantage of the city (Short *et al.*, 2005). Tourism stands to benefit directly and indirectly from the Olympics through economic and employment's spin-offs. The Olympic facilities when the games are finished will be at the disposal of the organizing city. The greatest opportunities for Beijing lie with the high media exposure as a result of the games. A well organized mega event like the Olympic Games attracts millions of foreign and domestic visitors to a place (L'Etang, 2006). Tourists spend money not only to attend the sport events but also to see the city or the country; in several cases tourists extend their stay for a long time for those visits (Bauer *et al.*, 2005).

Olympic tourism assesses a very strong potential role for Beijing. Olympic tourism will build strong tourist infrastructure. The term infrastructure for the Olympic Games defines the improvement of existing hotels, public places, or other installations related to tourism, or the creation of new ones related to: the visitors' profile for the Olympic and post Olympic ones, or to the general infrastructure that will be developed for the needs of the Olympic city, and they are absolutely new, such as snow places in countries or towns that temperature never falls below zero. The Olympic Games with regard to infrastructure are divided into three categories: low-level infrastructure Games, sports facilities infrastructure Games and transformation infrastructure Games.

The eco tourism, the mainstream tourism, and the linked tourism are three tourism dimensions related to the Olympic Games (Ayres, 2000; Yan and Bramwell, 2008). These dimensions can develop a full and concrete image of the tourist destination after the Olympic Games. Each one has a unique contribution to the tourist wheel, as presented in Figure 1.

The term *eco tourism* refers to tourist activities related to the nature, including sports, or other more simple activities like camping by the river, etc (Jamrozy, 2007). Dedicated enthusiastic tourists who enjoy both the glamour of a big city and its environmental friendly character are the supporters of such touristic Olympic destinations. Eco tourists then have the chance to enjoy both rural activities and also the advantages offered by an Olympic city, in which they can watch the Olympic Games and simultaneously be nearby the nature. The latter might be achieved by organized excursions to rural places nearby Beijing before and after the Olympic

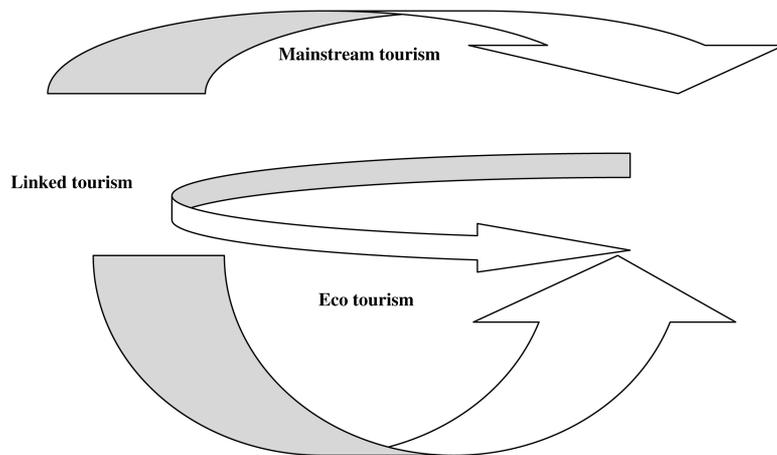


Figure 1.
Tourism dimensions

games. The business model for promoting eco tourism implies a sound marketing program, with the help of the local community (Shannon, 1999). Ecotourism becomes very popular day after day, because of its impact on the environmental degradation. A lot of tourist infrastructures after the Olympic games are trying to market the fact that they protect the environment through the publicizing of their environmental qualifications or through labels of eco tourist process (Buckley *et al.*, 2008). The environmental friendly approach is also adopted by a lot of governments when promoting their city both as an Olympic city and also as a tourist destination (Gladden and Funk, 2002).

Mainstream tourism refers to the development of an Olympic city in line with the needs of the majority of tourists. Large resorts and entertainment places were developed in most of the cities where mainstream tourism succeeded. The most characteristic example is Barcelona with its theme parks. In that case tourism might be recognized as a source of growth and diversification with the right kind of assets base (King, 2003). In some cases, mainstream tourism might be a source of attractiveness also for the Olympic committee, in order to select a host city for the Olympic Games. The Olympic concept is undoubtedly sports related, but the spectators' entertainment is equally important and that is why the Olympic committee might opt for a city which combines both aspects (McGaughey and Liesch, 2002). Mainstream tourism is extremely beneficial also for the country which develops it. A lot of job positions as well as recreational opportunities for the city's residents are created on a daily basis. The resident population receives access to high quality infrastructure, the government builds a better tax base, and the investors have a clear access to their property, serviced land, and financing (Giulianotti, 2002).

Linked tourism or linked tourist activities are a real opportunity for countries to develop their own tourist industries. The linkages that tourism might have are numerous. The term implies different types of activities that can be done in a country or a city (Jeanrenaud, 2006). Linked tourist activities are ideal for Olympic cities as they improve the infrastructure in different levels and industries. Those industries might be linked with special opportunities given to the country, related to the majority of tourist needs. The opportunity to add value depends not only on the development of related tourism but also on the marketing program the country incorporates for linked

tourism, to its final proposition for the Olympic Games (Jamrozy, 2007). Tourism is one of the few industries that can be linked with other activities, markets and people. The discipline inherent in meeting targets and contractual obligations for one-time delivery, quality and price can be powerful stimulants to more productive and expanded production (Jamal and Everett, 2004).

China gave more emphasis on the tourist dimensions that might be endorsed after the Olympic Games. The present study attempts to investigate the opinions of Beijing's residents about the effects of the Olympic Games on their town. The perceptions of the Beijing residents were investigated under:

- the eco tourism model;
- the mainstream tourism model; and
- the linked tourism model.

Hypotheses

Research based on the dimensions mentioned above is limited. The principal intent of this study is to identify the dimensions of the tourist improvement of Beijing. Considering that the literature supports the theory that different countries require different tourist or athletic infrastructure, we expect to find that the choice of an appropriate infrastructure will positively affect the Olympic city. In accordance with these factors, we propose the following two research hypotheses:

- H1.* There are improvements in the infrastructure of the Olympic city improving the tourist image of the Olympic city, according to its residents.
- H2.* The residents of an Olympic city believe that in their city there will be tourist development for eco tourism, linked tourism, and mainstream tourism.

Methodology

Data collection

Data was collected in five Beijing districts after the Olympics (Xicheng, Dongeng, Chaoyomy, Chongwen, Fengthai) representing different residents' types. These districts were chosen to reflect a diverse range of values, religious beliefs, and economic status. The study followed the strategy of matched samples. Instead of trying to draw representative samples from the residents of the districts involved, it was decided to interview well-defined and homogeneous samples which differ in the place of their residence but were similar in as many aspects as possible (Grammatikopoulos *et al.*, 2004). The criteria used to select the 200 residents from each district for the personal interview were random, aged between 28 and 38 years old. A checklist was given to every interviewer to ensure that the selected respondents met the criteria set for every district. The gender split was ensured by instructions to the interviewers to stop interviewing respondents once their quota was met. During the research pilot stage feedback from interviewers suggested that the personal interviews should last 20 min in order to avoid tiring the respondents. Thus we reduced the length of the questionnaire. Personal interviews were most suitable for this study because they allow respondents to reveal their thoughts about the Olympic Games and the tourist infrastructure which will improve. Personal interviews were conducted by MSc students of the collaborating body (Beijing Sports University). The time period was between the 20th of August and the 30th of September 2008. The questions answered in a 1-7 Likert point scale.

Measurement of variables

We examined the perceptions and opinions of Beijing citizens under three different axes:

- (1) the economic (related to economic development);
- (2) the infrastructure (related to the improvements of their everyday lives); and
- (3) and the tourist (related to the tourist activities).

The variables constituting each of the above are the following, and they were gathered through different researches related to the field.

- (1) *Economic axe*: contains variables related with the financial impact of tourism in Beijing. The first aspect examined is the financial contribution to Beijing from new tourist activities coded as “tourist activities”. Second the increase of the everyday life cost for tourist services is coded as “Life Cost”. Finally Beijing’s image improvement as a tourist destination and additional income stemming from that was coded as “National image”.
- (2) *Infrastructure axe*: contains variables related to the infrastructure improvement of Beijing. The first aspect examined is the improvements in infrastructure connected with culture such as museums, theaters, etc coded as “Culture infrastructure”. Second improvements in transformation infrastructure were coded as “City infrastructure”. Finally improvements in environmental infrastructure were coded under term “Environmental infrastructure”.
- (3) *Tourist axe*: contains variables related to eco-tourism, linked tourism and mainstream tourism coded as “New tourism models”.

Research findings

Of the 1,000 respondents about 76 percent considered the tourist improvements as a need for Beijing improvement as a tourist destination. The rest of the sample was a little dubious about the improvement of Beijing as a tourist destination (14 percent), and the remaining 10 percent considered the improvements not of major importance. The results of the correlation analysis indicated that the infrastructure of the Olympic Games was positively related with the improvement of the tourist infrastructure. The results are shown in Table I.

The results of the correlations indicated that the environment and new tourism models are the most significant factors in the development of Beijing after the Olympic Games ($r = 0.622$) while, not surprisingly, most respondents were satisfied with the improvement of the Olympic city. They generally agreed that the new city was well developed regarding the infrastructure built. The respondents also considered tourism as their national product since the Olympic Games and after the end of the Games. The correlation of the above elements shows that none of the variables can stand alone. The Olympics are capable of creating a sum of improvements in different axes. The correlation between national image and the city’s image seems to be important both for the Olympic city and for the country itself. Thus we could say that *HI* can be supported. An Olympic city can gain prestige and attraction by the improvements it makes for the Olympics. The communication of these elements relies mostly on the efforts of the organizers of the Olympics.

The resulting groups of items were submitted to separate reliability analyses in order to determine their usefulness as scales. Cronbach’s alpha for the impact on

tourism construct was 0.78. The alpha for the possible impact of the Olympics in tourist infrastructure was 0.87, and the possible impact of the Olympics in town the alpha was 0.80. All alphas are above the minimum standard of 0.70. Results of reliability analysis are presented in Table II.

<i>r</i> -value	Life cost	Culture	City	Tourist activities	Environment	New tourism models	National image
Culture	0.192 (0.019)	0.111 (0.000)	0.256 (0.174)	0.310 (0.111)	0.420 (0.123)	0.074 (0.012)	0.020 (0.021)
City	0.107 (0.000)	0.123 (0.002)	0.280 (0.123)	0.210 (0.123)	0.452 (0.149)	0.090 (0.167)	0.026 (0.011)
Tourist activities	0.321 (0.001)	0.125 (0.019)	0.210 (0.125)	0.222 (0.045)	0.345 (0.052)	0.069 (0.057)	0.187 (0.036)
Environment	0.123 (0.065)	0.102 (0.012)	0.312 (0.156)	0.345 (0.466)	0.589 (0.187)	0.622 (0.019)	0.012 (0.034)
New tourism models	0.116 (0.039)	0.156 (0.016)	0.567 (0.129)	0.221 (0.089)	0.490 (0.030)	0.056 (0.321)	0.198 (0.009)
National image	0.111 (0.002)	0.190 (0.013)	0.442 (0.134)	0.111 (0.012)	0.190 (0.023)	0.462 (0.014)	0.178 (0.094)

Table I.
Correlation matrix

Scales	F1
<i>General impact city</i>	
G.IMP.CITY	0.89
G.IMP.CITY	0.81
G.IMP.CITY	0.70
G.IMP.CITY	0.68
G.IMP.CITY	0.75
G.IMP.CITY	0.69
G.IMP.CITY	0.77
<i>Impact on tourism</i>	
IMPACT TOURISM	0.75
IMPACT TOURISM	0.71
IMPACT TOURISM	0.85
IMPACT TOURISM	0.81
IMPACT TOURISM	0.90
IMPACT TOURISM	0.67
IMPACT TOURISM	0.88
IMPACT TOURISM	0.94
IMPACT TOURISM	0.79
<i>Possible impact tourism</i>	
POS.IMP.TOURISM	0.80
POS.IMP.TOURISM	0.76
POS.IMP.TOURISM	0.84
POS.IMP.TOURISM	0.82
POS.IMP.TOURISM	0.91
POS.IMP.TOURISM	0.71
Eigenvalue	4.50
% variance	44.10
Cum.variance	43.18

Table II.
Exploratory factor analysis

In order to demonstrate convergent and discriminant validity it is necessary to show that the items in the Olympic tourist infrastructure scale consistently measure the construct of tourist Olympic infrastructure, without overlapping with similar but conceptually different constructs as shown in the factor loadings in Table III.

In summary, the items have been shown to reliably measure tendency to the impact the Olympic Games might have to the tourist infrastructure.

Factor analysis was employed in order to identify the factors affecting the perceptions of the residents of Beijing. The exploratory factor analysis was followed by Varimax rotation. The results of the analysis are portrayed in Table IV.

Table IV shows that the respondents expect major alterations in their everyday lives. They also consider that they need to be more extroverts in terms of cultural dimensions and international exchanges. The Olympic Games gave them the impression of a new welfare city and of a new area of living similar to the eastern one. New tourist infrastructures and the personal development of the residents will be the factors that will improve their lives in Beijing.

The factor analysis revealed three main factors for the improvement of Beijing as an Olympic and tourist city. The factors are: the general improvement of the city, the impact on tourism and the possible impact of the Olympic Games in town. The categorization of the respondents was necessary to be done. Cluster analysis was used

Item	Alpha	mean	SD
<i>General impact city</i>			
G.IMPCITY	0.89	4.01	1.17
G.IMPCITY	0.81	3.17	1.23
G.IMPCITY	0.70	3.56	1.32
G.IMPCITY	0.68	4.12	1.29
G.IMPCITY	0.75	3.83	1.21
G.IMPCITY	0.69	3.28	1.27
G.IMPCITY	0.77	3.21	1.10
Alpha	0.87	3.86	1.19
<i>Impact on tourism</i>			
IMPACTTOURISM	0.75	4.23	1.22
IMPACTTOURISM	0.71	4.56	1.19
IMPACTTOURISM	0.85	3.70	1.12
IMPACTTOURISM	0.81	3.10	1.28
IMPACTTOURISM	0.90	4.20	1.31
IMPACTTOURISM	0.67	4.41	1.11
IMPACTTOURISM	0.88	3.67	1.45
IMPACTTOURISM	0.94	3.80	1.29
IMPACTTOURISM	0.79	3.90	1.15
Alpha	0.81	3.19	1.23
<i>Possible impact tourism</i>			
POS.IMP.TOURISM	0.80	4.10	1.17
POS.IMP.TOURISM	0.76	3.86	1.23
POS.IMP.TOURISM	0.84	4.54	1.21
POS.IMP.TOURISM	0.82	3.89	1.15
POS.IMP.TOURISM	0.91	4.41	1.21
POS.IMP.TOURISM	0.71	3.67	1.11
Alpha	0.77	4.21	1.37

Table III.
Reliability analysis

F1	F1	F2	F3
<i>General improvement of the city</i>			
	Olympic Games will improve the overall condition of the city	0.78	
	Olympic Games will bring money to the city	0.80	
	Olympic Games will increase the cost of living	0.76	
	Olympic Games will lead to cultural exchanges between the residents of Beijing and tourists	0.67	
	Olympic Games will change the way we leave	0.77	
	Olympic Games will alternate our civilization	0.89	
	Olympic Games will increase the impact of our cultural heritage	0.73	
F2			
<i>Impact on tourism</i>			
	Touristic improvement after the Olympics will destroy the environment	0.87	
	Touristic improvement for the Olympics is necessary for our town	0.83	
	I will invite more often friends from abroad if the touristic installations are better here after the Olympics	0.90	
	Tourism has to be part of our national products after the Olympics	0.81	
	Tourism industry will bring us nearby other populations and cultures after the Olympics	0.88	
	Tourism will improve our economic status after the Olympics	0.72	
	Tourism after the Olympics will create new types of tourists in china	0.76	
	Tourism will bring us close to new types of tourism after the Olympics	0.82	
	Tourism after the Olympics will improve our position to the world	0.92	
F3			
<i>Possible impact of the Olympics in town</i>			
	Olympics will increase criminality		0.69
	Olympics will increase pollution		0.87
	Olympics will improve our town's basic infrastructure		0.91
	Olympics will increase social problems		0.77
	Olympics will decrease unemployment		0.81
	Olympics will increase residents satisfaction		0.74
Notes: GFI = 0.881, AGFI = 0.801, K.M.O. = 0.90			

Table IV.
Factor loadings for the
factor structure of the
Beijing tourist
improvement

in order to categorize respondents into different clusters. The adopted solution with the Dunkan test is presented Table V.

According Table V, a dynamic group is the one of linked tourism supporters. That group strongly supports the activities related to the Olympic Games; mainly sport tourism, but also cultural tourism or other types of tourism. That group believes that the Olympics will bring many benefits to the city and also to the residents of Beijing. New types of tourism like conference tourism or leisure tourism will be developed after the infrastructure for the Olympic Games. That group is prompt of being involved in activities or entrepreneurial efforts related to tourism activities. They are the silent defenders of every activity related to Olympic spirit. They are strong supporters of the Olympic Games as they believe that the Olympic Games market both tourism and sports. The eco tourism supporters are supporting the Olympics because of their environmental contribution. They seem to develop green activities related to tourism; they make also associations of green Olympic tourists. Eco tourism supporters try to identify the green elements of the tourist infrastructure and they enhance it both in

Table V.
Cluster analysis

Variables	Eco-tourism supporters	Mainstream supporters	Linked tourism supporters	Significance	F
Olympic Games have big financial contribution	5.388	4.121	6.345	6.234	0.000
Olympic Games bring cultural exchanges	4.321	4210	5.623	12.609	0.000
Olympic Games enhance cultural heritage activities	4.710	5.765	6.301	44.321	0.001
Olympic Games will definitely improve the city	4.678	5.801	6.777	34.687	0.002
Olympic Games bring new types of tourism in China	5.678	5.334	6.851	43.111	0.000
Olympic Games will improve the position of China in the world	6.023	6.001	6.756	35.213	0.000

terms of formal and informal communication. They are a booming group in Olympic cities, supporting the environmental friendly approach of Olympic tourism. The mainstream tourism supporters develop new types of tourism such as adventure tourism or alternative tourism. Tourism for them is very important and strongly related with the Olympics. They know that the Olympics are not only a mega sports event, but also a great opportunity to develop different tourism types and to develop their city in a more sophisticated, urban and global way that is universally accepted.

Conclusions

The Olympic Games improve the tourist infrastructure of an Olympic city. The improvement of the infrastructure leads to the increase of incoming tourism and also to the elaboration of three different tourist types. The eco tourism, the mainstream tourism, and the linked tourism are aspects of the tourist development after the Olympic Games. There are also factors affecting the tourism development of an Olympic city. These factors are: the general improvement of the city, the impact on tourism, and the overall impact on the city. These factors lead to three different groups, which are strongly related to tourist development of Beijing as an ex Olympic city. The eco tourism supporters are the ones who will develop the environmental friendly tourism in Beijing. The mainstream tourism supporters will develop new tourism ways. Finally, linked tourism supporters will create packages for Chinese, and foreign tourists with different tourist activities, and also they will combine the Olympic infrastructure with different tourist needs inside and outside China. Tourism is strongly related with the Olympics perceptions and opinions of the Olympic city residents. The perceptions that the residents will develop might categorize them into different groups. It is quite important to know that the development of these groups not only will support the tourist dimensions of the Olympics, but also the tourist improvement, and the development of the tourist industry in the Olympic city, but also to the Olympic country.

Limitations of the study

The research reported in this paper has several limitations that should be noted. First of all, sample constraints need to be mentioned. A future study should be conducted in

other Chinese cities, close to or far from Beijing, in order to explore the opinions of the residents about the Olympic Games. These clusters need to be identified in a country basis and not only in the Olympic city. The same research needs to be carried out both before and after the Olympics to discover possible variations of the residents' perceptions. Also a cross cultural survey to see the differences among different Olympic cities might be necessary.

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