

AFFECTIVE EVENT AND DESTINATION IMAGE: THEIR INFLUENCE ON OLYMPIC TRAVELERS' BEHAVIORAL INTENTIONS

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Despite the growth of academic and business significance of sport tourism, little is known about the direct emotional experiences with sport events and their impacts on travelers' behavioral intentions. The purpose of this article is twofold: a) to examine whether Olympic travelers' trip purpose and characteristics (e.g., age, previous visits, continent of residence) influence their affective event and destination images and b) to test the impact of affective destination and event images on Olympic travelers' intentions to return to the host destination, and to travel to future Olympic Games. The results revealed Olympic travelers from different continents had different affective destination images, and that older travelers felt more positive about the image of the destination. Spectators perceived the event as more cheerful compared to tourists. Finally, the perceived destination's excitement and pleasantness predicted Olympic travelers' intentions to return to Athens in the future. Specific recommendations are provided for destination and event marketers.

Key words: Affective image; Intentions; Mega-events; Previous visits; Spectators

Introduction

Sport event tourism has become one of the major focuses in the field of tourism. In the past 5 years, over 75 million adults attended an organized sporting event (spectators or participants) as part of a trip of 50 miles or more, one-way in the US (Travel Industry Association [TIA], 1999). Jago, Chalip, Brown, Mules, and Shameem (2003) discussed the importance of events on destination branding and the need for a "good strategic and cultural fit" with the destination (p. 7). Ritchie and Smith (1991) showcased the positive impact of hosting the Olympic Games on the host region's aware-

ness levels. The previously discussed stream of research implies that both destinations and events hold their own distinct images. Destination marketers strive to benefit from the event's image, while event marketers welcome positive destination images as these complement the event organization and promotion.

Recently, marketing efforts have focused on more emotionally oriented approaches (Schmitt, 1999). More specifically, the focus is on creating "feel good experiences." In sport tourism little is known about the impact of destinations' and sport events' emotional images on sport tourists' future behavioral intentions regarding repeat visitation. In addition, the influence

of sport tourist characteristics (e.g., age, previous visits, country of origin) on affective/emotional images of the event and destination has not been widely explored.

The main research objectives of this article are: a) to examine the extent to which Olympic travelers' motivations (trip purpose) to attend the Olympic Games and travelers' characteristics (e.g., age, previous visits) influence their primary destination and event affective image perceptions, and b) to test whether affective destination and event images predict Olympic travelers' intentions to return to the host destination and to travel to future Olympic Games. Destination and event marketers will benefit from the results in terms of target market segmentation purposes and marketing communication applications for destinations and events.

Theoretical Framework: Sport Tourism and Image

Affective image perceptions of consumption objects (in this case destinations and events) would be expected to influence consumers' future behavioral intentions. The following literature reviews concepts of destination image, event image, travelers' motivations, travelers' characteristics, their interrelationships, and their impacts. The literature review concludes with the presentation of the study's hypotheses.

Destination Image

Destination image has an important role in tourism development. Hunt (1975) was among the first scholars to demonstrate the influence of image perceptions on a destination's tourism development. But what actually defines image? There are various definitions of image in the tourism and consumer behavior literature. In consumer behavior literature, image has been conceptualized as a perceptual phenomenon formed through a consumer's reasoned and emotional interpretation, which has cognitive (beliefs) and affective (feelings) components (Dobni & Zinkhan, 1990). Image in consumer behavior can also be synonymous with brand image. Brand image is related to how the product brand is perceived by consumers (Aaker, 1996, p. 71). In other words, image is the reputation of the brand in the marketplace (Upshaw, 1995).

Consumer behavior research has shown that direct experiences with products are mainly affective (more emotional) in nature (Bagozzi, Gopinath, & Nyer, 1999; Mattila & Wirtz, 2000; Vittersø, Vorkinn, Vistad, &

Vaagland, 2000). Affective responses to consumable objects influence consumers' postpurchase evaluations (Mano & Oliver, 1993). This study is delimited to the affective dimensions of image. Although many studies have been conducted on destination image (e.g., Baloglu & Brinberg, 1997; Baloglu & Mangalolu, 2001; Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Echtner & Ritchie, 1991; MacKay & Fesenmaier, 1997; MacKay & McVetty, 2002), there is a dearth of studies in the context of sport events and affective destination images and their impact on sport tourists' behavior.

The consumer behavior image concept differs from the tourism image concept in terms of the "object" the image is connected to. In tourism, images are summary impressions of a place (MacKay & McVetty, 2002, p. 12). Crompton (1979) defined destination image as the sum of beliefs, ideas, and impressions people have of a place or destination. Echtner and Ritchie (1991, pp. 4–5) adopted the definition by Dichter (1985): an image is not only individual traits or qualities but also the total impression an entity makes on the minds of others. Echtner and Ritchie (1991) discussed that destination images could be considered in terms of both attribute-based and holistic-based components, directly observable (e.g., attractions, scenery), abstract characteristics (e.g., friendliness, atmosphere), and common and unique features. The directly observable and abstract characteristics were defined as functional and psychological by Echtner and Ritchie (1991), who applied Martineau's (1958) approach to destination images.

In environmental psychology literature, places are described as having affective and cognitive meaning (Russell & Pratt, 1980; Russell & Snodgrass, 1987). Affective meaning refers to the appraisal of the emotional quality of environments, while cognitive refers to the appraisal of physical environments (Hanyu, 1993). The concept of affective image has been found to have predominantly two dimensions that are not independent from each other: pleasure and arousal (Russell & Pratt, 1980; Russell & Snodgrass, 1987). Mehrabian and Russell (1974) proposed that the stimuli of the surrounding environment influence pleasure and arousal dimensions, resulting in two behaviors: approach or avoidance: "approach behaviors are represented by the individual's desire to stay, explore, or work in an environment, while avoidance behaviors refer to the opposite" (Mattila & Wirtz, 2000 p. 589). Furthermore, Russell and Snodgrass (1987) discussed that behavior may be directly influenced by the affective qual-

ity of the environment rather than its objective or cognitive properties. Based on this perception, the affective quality of the environment may influence travelers' behavior directly.

In the tourism field, MacKay and McVetty (2002) showed that actual experience with a destination creates "a shift from cognitive to affective image domains" (p. 27). Goossens (2000) indicated that the experiential aspects of consumption play an important role in consumer choice behavior. Consequently, affective destination image is expected to influence travelers' repeat visitation.

Event Image

Communities are attracted to hosting sport events to draw marketing benefits that will contribute to the success of the destination in the long run by creating awareness, improving their image with visitors, and attracting tourism business to generate future inbound travel (Dimanche, 2003). As such, destination images can be influenced by the hosting of a sporting event and the attributes associated with this event. Earlier research has shown the impact of mega-events such as the Olympic Games or the World Cup on the destination is positive (Lee, Lee, & Lee, 2005; Ritchie & Smith, 1991). Sport events can add to the attractiveness of a destination for new markets, first-time, and repeat visitors (Dimanche, 2003).

The definition and measurement of a sport tourism event's image is not evident in the literature. The closest attempt to identify the image of an event was offered by Gwinner (1997), who proposed that an event's image is a function of the type of event (e.g., sports, festival, arts), event characteristics (e.g., size, professional status, history, venue, promotional appearance), and individual factors (e.g., meanings associated with the event, strength of meanings, and past history with the event). However, Gwinner's approach is generic and not customized for sport tourism events that feature elements such as competition, socialization, skill requirement, and knowledge. Recently, Kaplanidou (2006) defined the image of a sport tourism event from the active participant perspective utilizing Keller's (1993) theoretical framework on brand image.

From a spectator's perspective, events may be perceived as attractions in a destination. Based on this assumption, their image could consist of similar components to those of the destination's image. Consequently,

the image of the event is perceived to include affective and cognitive elements, but for the purpose of this article, image is delimited to the affective/emotional component.

Motivation and Image

Motivations to visit a place hosting a mega-sporting event may differ within Olympic traveler markets (e.g., travel to attend the event, travel to primarily take a vacation) and as a result influence their event and destination images (Beerli & Martin, 2004; Trail, Fink, & Anderson, 2003; Um & Crompton, 1990). Standeven and DeKnop (1999) indicated sport tourists can be both active and passive. The active sport tourists can be recreationists participating in a sport of their preference or they can be athletes. The passive sport tourists have been classified as connoisseur and casual observers (Standeven & DeKnop, 1999). Connoisseur observers are "those who have extensive passive involvement and are discriminating in the sports activity they watch as spectators or officiators" (Standeven & DeKnop, 1999, p. 13). Casual observers are those who "simply enjoy watching an event and who usually happen across it rather than plan their visit to attend" (p. 111). In other words, sport tourists are motivated by sport or by travel (Ritchie, Mosedale, & King, 2002).

An initial attempt to understand Olympic spectators' motivations to attend the Olympic Games was conducted by Delpy (1992, 1997). In her research, Delpy revealed that English-speaking Olympic spectators traveled to the Olympics mainly because of the excitement of being there. Furthermore, Neirrotti, Bosetti, and Teed (2001) showed people who attended the 1996 Olympic Games differed in the primary purpose of their trip. For some, the main purpose of their trip was to attend the event, while for others it was to attend the event and experience the destination through touristic activities. These two groups of Olympic travelers can be classified as Olympic spectators (i.e., connoisseurs) and Olympic tourists (i.e., casual observers), respectively. Olympic travelers directly experience the destination and as such, create their own organic (Gartner, 1996) and "complex" images (Fakeye & Crompton, 1991). Furthermore, motivations also directly influence the affective component of the destination image (Baloglu & Brinberg, 1997; Dann, 1996).

Because Olympic travelers may differ in their primary trip purpose (different motivations), the image

they have of the destination hosting the Olympics may also differ (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Um & Crompton, 1990). Olympic spectators are traveling to the destination primarily to experience the event and sense of excitement (Neirotti et al., 2001), which implies that Olympic spectators may score higher in their event affective image perceptions than Olympic tourists. Similarly, Olympic tourists may have different affective event and destination images than spectators because their primary trip purpose is to take a vacation at the destination. Consequently, their (tourists) destination affective image scores may be higher than their event affective image scores.

Intentions

Understanding the influence of affective destination and event images on intentions to travel to the host destination, and other sporting events, is also important. It can provide marketers with increased knowledge concerning how to shape communication strategies to influence the behavior of target markets.

A study conducted by Bigne and Andreu (2004) revealed that those tourists who experienced greater pleasure and arousal when visiting various attractions showed an increased level of satisfaction and favorable behavioral intentions regarding loyalty and willingness to pay more. This finding suggests that Olympic travelers may be influenced by their affective states to return to the destination. Kim and Chalip (2004) showed that the festive atmosphere offered by the event organizers is one of the key motivations/appeal for attendees. Furthermore, Bigne, Sanchez, and Sanjez (2001) showed the more favorable the image perceptions of the destination are, the higher the probability the traveler will return in the future. Olympic spectators may be influenced to revisit the destination by the destination's connection to the event and because they want to engage in nostalgia sport tourism. Spectators, who travel to attend a sporting event in a destination, also have a primary experience of the place. Kyle, Bricker, Graefe, and Wickham (2004) in their study about recreationists and their attachment with places found that recreationists who organize their lives and relationships around chosen activities are likely to develop emotional bonds to specific recreation settings. As such, the experienced image of the destination may influence them to revisit that destination in the future. Baloglu and Brinberg (1997) indicated future research

should examine the link between affective images and the actual visit or the propensity to visit.

The Role of Previous Visits and Demographics on Image

A final consideration of image formation is that perceptions may be influenced by travelers' characteristics such as previous visits at the destination, previous attendance at the event, and demographic characteristics. Previous visits at a destination or an event make a person more familiar with the two entities (destination and event). Familiarity may also influence the perceptions people hold of a destination or event. Yangzhou and Ritchie (1993) and Milman and Pizam (1995) found that familiarity with a destination positively influences perceptions of destination attractiveness. In other words, people had more positive impressions of destinations they visited.

In terms of demographics, country of residence has been found to influence the affective images of a destination (Beerli & Martin, 2004). Respondents from different countries had significantly different affective image perceptions (Beerli & Martin, 2004). Age was also found to influence destination images (Baloglu, 1997; Seddighi & Theocharous, 2002). Baloglu (1997) found significant differences among age groups in two out of six US image components. These components were the budget and value of the vacation and the active outdoor sport opportunities, but there was no specific pattern with regards to age preferences. More recent studies, however, did not find any significant effect of age on affective destination image (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Beerli & Martin, 2004). Age has also been found to influence intentions to travel to sporting events (Kim & Chalip, 2004). The younger the respondent the more likely he/she is to attend a mega sporting event in the future.

It was previously discussed that motivations to travel to a destination can influence affective image perceptions (Baloglu, 1997; Baloglu & Brinberg, 1997). Because both country of residence and motivations were identified to influence affective destination images, an interaction between primary purpose of a trip and country of residence may be significant in influencing affective destination images. These variables will be included in the conceptual model to test their effects on destination and event images. From the literature review the following hypotheses arise (Fig. 1). Hypotheses 1-7 test whether age, previous visits both at the

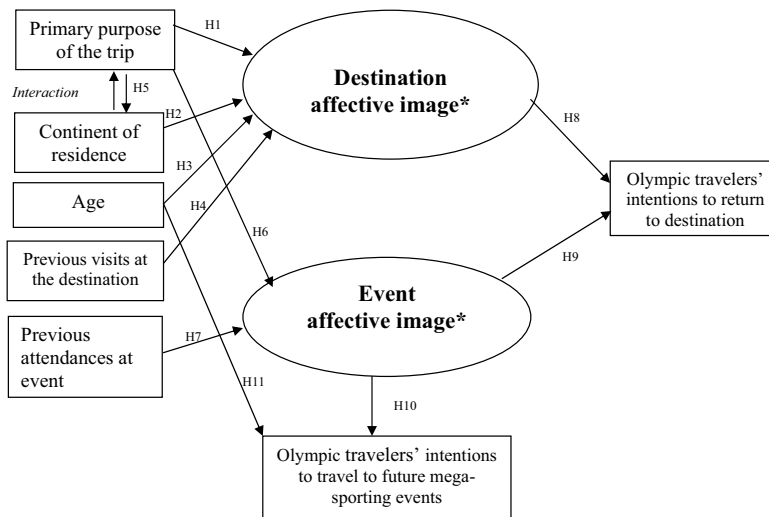


Figure 1. Model of hypothesized relationships between travelers' characteristics, event and destination affective images and future intentions for Olympic travelers. *Each variable consisted of four 7-point semantic differential items: dull–exciting, unpleasant–pleasant, gloomy–cheerful, distressing–relaxing.

destination and event, and continent of residence may produce differences in affective event and destination image perceptions.

- H1:** Purpose of the trip will produce different mean scores in affective destination images.
- H2:** Continent of residence will produce different mean scores in affective destination images.
- H3:** Age will positively influence Olympic travelers' affective destination images.
- H4:** Previous visits at the destination will positively influence affective destination images.
- H5:** The interaction between continent of residence and primary purpose of the trip will produce different mean scores for affective destination images.
- H6:** Purpose of the trip will produce different mean scores in affective event images.
- H7:** Previous experience (number of previous attendances) with Olympics will positively influence affective event images.

Hypotheses 8–11 test the predictors of repeat visits to the destination and event.

- H8:** Affective destination images will positively influence Olympic travelers' intentions to return to the destination.

- H9:** Affective event images will positively influence Olympic travelers' intentions to return to the destination.

- H10:** Affective event images will positively influence Olympic travelers' intentions to attend future Olympic Games.

- H11:** Age will positively influence Olympic travelers' intentions to travel to future Olympic Games.

Method and Measurement

In order to examine the impact of images on behavioral intentions, data were collected during the 2004 Olympic Games in Athens, Greece using an on-site survey at the Athens Olympic Sport Complex, where the opening and closing ceremonies and eight other major sporting events (e.g., track and field, swimming) occurred. In situ research methodology was used because “the direct and interactive effects of environmental factors on behavior and psychological processes” (Stewart, 1996, p. 4) were to be captured. Otto and Ritchie (1996, p. 173) recommended that research on service experiences should be done as close to the consumption of an actual service as possible, so the evaluation remains fresh and it is not replaced with more cognitively accessible functional benefits. The Olym-

pic Games were held from August 13 through August 29, 2004. The primary investigator and another trained interviewer collected data during 9 out of the 15 day duration of the Olympic Games. Olympic travelers were randomly intercepted every 20 minutes between noon and 6 in the evening.

The questionnaire was in English and used adapted destination image scales from Baloglu and McCleary (1999), who studied the image of Greece as one of the researched destinations. The affective image scales were measured on 7-point scales with the lower end of the scale being the negative evaluation and the higher end the positive. Before arriving at the study site and the final implementation of the research instrument, the questionnaire was pilot tested with a convenience sample of 15 respondents. The necessary changes were performed and the following items were included in the final version. The affective destination (Athens) image was measured using four semantic differential scales (dull–exciting, unpleasant–pleasant, gloomy–cheerful, distressing–relaxing). The same anchors were used to measure the affective event’s (Olympic Games) image. The trip purpose variable was categorical, asking people to check one of the following categories as their primary trip purpose: vacation in Greece and Europe, attend the Olympics as a spectator, see a friend or family member in the Olympics, visit family and friends in Greece, business trip, or other. Questions on previous visits to Athens and previous event attendances were open-ended, asking respondents to indicate how many times they visited Athens or attended the Olympics in the past. The questionnaire also included behavioral questions measured on a 7-point scale (1 = totally disagree, 7 = totally agree). The behavioral questions asked about Olympic travelers’ intentions to return to Athens, Greece in the future and their intentions to travel to the 2008 Summer Olympic Games in Beijing. Demographic questions were included on age (open-ended) and country of residence. In total, 310 English-speaking Olympic travelers were intercepted from which 238 agreed to participate in the research, yielding a response rate of 77%. Fourteen questionnaires were partially completed and were not included in the analysis, resulting in a sample of 224 respondents. Data from Greek spectators were also collected through a questionnaire in Greek, but only for questions regarding the image of the Olympics. As such, they were not included in this study because these people were primarily residents of Athens and they didn’t travel to attend the Games.

Data Analysis and Results

Data were analyzed with SPSS 12 using MANCOVA and multiple regression functions. For the purpose of the analysis the variable “primary purpose of trip” that initially consisted of six categories was recoded into two categories. The respondents who selected “attend the Olympics as a spectator” formed one category (Olympic spectators) and the rest of the selections formed the second category (Olympic tourists).

Due to the large number of countries of residence stated by the respondents, a new variable was computed that classified the respondents based on continents. Four groups (EU, North America, Asia, Australia) were formed in order to have adequate number of respondents in each group. A fifth group of respondents could have been formed consisting of Latin America ($n = 4$), Africa ($n = 4$), and the Middle East ($n = 3$). However, due to the small number of cases in each of these categories and due to the geographic and potential cultural differences, their classification as a group would not make a meaningful contribution to the analysis or the discussion of the results. As such, a decision was made to exclude these respondents from further analysis. For a summary of the measures used in this study see Table 1.

Designs Tested

In order to test H1, H2, H3, H4, H5, H6, and H7, two MANCOVAs were used for each set of dependent variables. The two sets of dependent variables were the four semantic differential items for the affective destination image (Athens) and another four for the affective event image (Olympic Games). The independent variables were two fixed factors and two covariates. The fixed factors were purpose of the trip (Olympic spectators and Olympic tourists) and continent of residence (four groups), while the covariates were previous visits at the destination and age. Age and previous visits were used as covariates because both were continuous variables. In MANCOVA designs, covariates can only be continuous variables. Main effects and interactions were tested between the two factors (trip purpose and continent of residence). Planned comparisons were requested between spectators and tourists and continents of residence to identify specific significant differences between groups. The first MANCOVA tested H1, H2, H3, H4, and H5.

Table 1
Measurement of Variables Included in the MANCOVAs and Regression Analysis

Variable	Measurement
Primary purpose of the trip	Categorical: spectators and tourists
Continent of residence	Categorical: European Union, North America, Asia, Australia
Age	Open-ended (14–77)
Previous visits to destination	Open-ended (0–40)
Previous attendances to Olympic Games	Open-ended (0–9)
Destination affective image	Four 7-point semantic differential items
Event affective image	Four 7-point semantic differential items
Intentions to return to Athens	One 7-point scale item
Intentions to travel to 2008 Olympics	One 7-point scale item

In the second MANCOVA, the independent variables were purpose of trip (i.e., Olympic Spectators and Olympic tourists) as a fixed factor, while the number of previous attendances at Olympic Games was a covariate. Main effects and planned comparisons were estimated to test for differences in event affective images between spectators and tourists. The second MANCOVA tested H6 and H7.

To test H8 and H9, stepwise multiple regression was used to examine the individual contribution of each independent variable (Hair, Anderson, & Tatham, 1998). The dependent variable was intentions to return to the destination in the future and it was measured on a 7-point scale. The independent variables were the four items of the affective destination image and the four items of the affective event image. To test H10 and H11, the same type of multiple regression was used. The dependent variable was Olympic travelers' intentions to attend the 2008 Summer Olympic Games. Independent variables were age and the four items comprising the affective event image.

Results

Demographics

Most of the respondents were male (57%), their average age was 35, and the majority were European (61%) followed by North American (27%), Australian (6%), and Asian (6%).

Destination Image MANCOVA

Descriptive statistics regarding the mean differences of the main effects in the MANCOVA model are presented in Table 2.

The results of the first MANCOVA supported two of the six tested hypotheses. Table 3 shows these results. The interaction between primary purpose of the trip and continent of residence was not significant, which allowed for the inspection of the main effects. The continent of residence factor produced different mean scores in affective destination images (Wilk's $\Lambda = 0.82$, $p = 0.001$). The age covariate was a significant predictor (Wilk's $\Lambda = 0.91$, $p = 0.003$) of affective destination images. The primary trip purpose and previous visits to Athens did not influence the affective/emotional image perceptions of the destination.

The examination of the between-subjects statistics for the continent of residence supported significant differences for all four items of the affective destination image, indicating that Olympic travelers from diverse continents differ in their emotional perceptions of Athens. In addition, the between-subjects statistics for age showed significant differences for only two items (pleasant, $F = 4.89$, $p = 0.02$, and cheerful, $F = 12.39$, $p = 0.001$) of the affective destination image. The requested planned comparisons revealed where the significant differences among respondents from different continents of residence existed. European respondents found Athens less exciting, pleasant, cheerful, and relaxing than the North American and Asian respondents. Furthermore, Europeans found Athens less cheerful than Australians, while Asians found Athens more exciting than Australians. In conclusion, H2 and H3 were supported while H1, H4, and H5 were not supported.

Event Image MANCOVA

The results for the event image MANCOVA showed no support for the model. The multivariate results

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics of the Affective *Destination Image* Variables Among Continents of Origin and Types of Olympic Travelers

	Spectators				Tourists			
	EU	NA	Asia	Australia	EU	NA	Asia	Australia
Dull–exciting								
Mean	5.07	5.29	6.14	4.40	4.81	5.75	6.33	5.60
SD	1.45	1.21	1.21	1.34	1.71	1.37	1.15	1.52
N	81	28	7	5	32	20	3	5
Unpleasant–pleasant								
Mean	5.14	5.64	6.00	5.20	4.81	5.80	5.67	5.40
SD	1.27	0.91	1.15	0.45	1.42	1.28	1.53	1.14
N	81	28	7	5	32	20	3	5
Gloomy–cheerful								
Mean	5.01	5.25	6.00	5.40	4.38	6.05	6.00	5.80
SD	1.33	1.43	1.00	0.55	1.34	1.15	1.00	1.10
N	81	28	7	5	32	20	3	5
Distressing–relaxing								
Mean	4.36	4.79	4.86	3.80	4.06	5.10	6.00	5.60
SD	1.49	1.47	2.27	1.48	1.64	1.48	1.00	1.14
N	81	28	7	5	32	20	3	5

Items were measured on a 7-point scale, with 1 = low end of the scale and 7 = high end of the scale. EU: European Union; NA: North America.

showed no differences in perceptions between the two types of Olympic travelers. The between-subjects results, however, showed that spectators and tourists differ in their emotional perceptions of how cheerful the event was (see Table 4 for mean differences). Spectators had significantly higher mean scores on this item than tourists. Previous experience with the event (number of previous attendance) was not a significant covariate. Based on these results, H6 was supported

for one of the four items comprising the dependent variable while H7 was not supported. The results for the event image MANCOVA are presented in Table 5.

Predicting Repeat Visitation

Stepwise multiple regression was used to test H8 and H9 and the results showed support for a two-predictor model of intentions to return to Athens in the future

Table 3

MANCOVA Results for the Four-Item Affective *Destination Image* (Athens) Dependent Variable

Variables	Between Subjects Effects									
	Multivariate		Exciting		Pleasant		Cheerful		Relaxing	
	Wilk's Λ	F	MS	F	MS	F	MS	F	MS	F
Primary purpose of the trip*										
Continent of residence (interaction)	0.89	1.57	2.29	1.11	0.67	0.46	5.99	3.88*	4.70	1.99
Primary purpose of the trip	0.96	1.55	1.96	0.95	0.25	0.17	0.20	0.12	6.92	2.93
Continent of residence	0.82	2.75*	7.09	3.43*	6.75	4.62*	13.23	8.58*	8.08	3.43*
Age ^a	0.91	4.09*	4.05	1.96	7.14	4.89*	19.11	12.39*	2.03	0.86
Previous visits at destination ^b	0.97	0.96	2.92	1.41	4.30	2.94	2.68	1.73	4.24	1.80

^aAge covariate = 35.05.

^bCovariate number of previous visits at destination = 1.54.

* $p < 0.05$.

Table 4

Descriptive Statistics of the Affective *Event* Image Variables Among Continents of Residence and Types of Olympic Travelers

	Spectators				Tourists			
	EU	NA	Asia	Australia	EU	NA	Asia	Australia
Dull–exciting								
Mean	5.07	5.29	6.14	4.40	4.81	5.75	6.33	5.60
SD	1.45	1.21	1.21	1.34	1.71	1.37	1.15	1.52
N	81	28	7	5	32	20	3	5
Unpleasant–pleasant								
Mean	5.14	5.64	6.00	5.20	4.81	5.80	5.67	5.40
SD	1.27	0.91	1.15	0.45	1.42	1.28	1.53	1.14
N	81	28	7	5	32	20	3	5
Gloomy–cheerful								
Mean	5.01	5.25	6.00	5.40	4.38	6.05	6.00	5.80
SD	1.33	1.43	1.00	0.55	1.34	1.15	1.00	1.10
N	81	28	7	5	32	20	3	5
Distressing–relaxing								
Mean	4.36	4.79	4.86	3.80	4.06	5.10	6.00	5.60
SD	1.49	1.47	2.27	1.48	1.64	1.48	1.00	1.14
N	81	28	7	5	32	20	3	5

Items were measured on a 7-point scale, with 1 = low end of the scale and 7 = high end of the scale. EU: European Union; NA: North America.

($F = 23.20, p < 0.001, R^2 = 0.19$). The destination image items “exciting” ($\beta = 0.30, p < 0.001$) and “pleasant” ($\beta = 0.18, p = 0.02$) were the only significant predictors of intentions to return to the destination in the future. Table 6 shows these results. The other two items of the destination image and all four items of the event image were not significant predictors of intentions to return and as such they were not included in the stepwise regression model. Tests of multicollinearity (Tolerance and VIF) showed no high correlations between the independent variables. Consequently, H8 was supported only for the two out of four items comprising the affective destination image while H9 was not supported.

The results from the stepwise multiple regression regarding testing H10 and H11 did not support the regression model ($F = 1.02, p = 0.40$). More specifically, none of the standardized betas reached significance, indicating that the four affective event image items and age were not significant predictors of intentions to travel to future Olympic Games.

Discussion

The results of this research can benefit destination marketers and event organizers alike, and can be used for planning purposes before, during, and after the or-

Table 5

MANCOVA Results for the Four-Item Affective *Event* (Olympic Games) Image Dependent Variable

Variables	Between Subjects Effects									
	Multivariate		Exciting		Pleasant		Cheerful		Relaxing	
	Wilk’s A	F	MS	F	MS	F	MS	F	MS	F
Number of attendances in previous Olympics ^a	0.98	0.63	0.12	0.08	0.43	0.26	1.66	0.80	0.23	0.09
Primary purpose of the trip	0.97	1.39	1.56	0.97	5.54	3.24	10.64	5.11*	0.03	0.01

^aCovariate number of attendances in previous Olympics = 0.62.

* $p < 0.05$.

Table 6
Multiple Regression Analysis: Predicting Repeat Visitation to Athens, Greece

Athens Destination Image Predictors	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficient: Beta	<i>t</i>	Sig.
	B	SE			
(Constant)	2.21	0.45		4.89	0.000
Dull–exciting	0.33	0.08	0.30	3.90	0.000*
Unpleasant–pleasant	0.22	0.09	0.18	2.32	0.021*

* $p < 0.05$.

ganization of a mega-sporting event such as the Olympic Games. Sport tourists are big spenders based on a recent research by Ritchie et al. (2002), who found that “casual” sport tourists (in this case Olympic tourists) spent two to three times more money on attractions and activities than the “connoisseur” sport tourist (in this case Olympic spectator) who spends more on the sporting event’s entry fees. The Olympic Games, however, is different from other sporting events in terms of duration, size, resources, and worldwide attention.

Destination Affective Image

The data collected at the 2004 Summer Olympic Games supported some of the hypotheses regarding destination, event image, and repeat visitation. More specifically, affective destination images were influenced by age and differed among respondents from diverse continents. European respondents had lower emotional image perceptions of Athens than North Americans, Asians, and Australians. These results imply that the closer the respondents resided to the destination that hosted the Olympics, the lower their emotional perceptions of the destination were. This finding agrees with previous literature on the impact of distance on destination image perceptions (Ahmed, 1991; Hsu, Wolfe, & Kang, 2004; Hui & Wan, 2003). It should be mentioned, however, that the results of previous studies regarding the impact of distance on destination image perceptions do not have a clear positive or negative pattern (e.g., Fakeye & Crompton, 1991). Telisman-Kosuta (1989) found a positive correlation between distance of travel and image. The farther distance the destination, the more likely the image is favorable (Crompton 1979). The study by Hsu et al. (2004) revealed that people from regions

closer to the destination under study had more specific and detailed destination images. Detailed and specific perceptions can lead to a disconfirmation of expectations. For Europeans, the Olympic Games were returning to Europe after 12 years and potentially the expectations were really high for both the event and the host city services. For North Americans, however, the expectations were potentially low, because the North American media were not supportive of Athens hosting the Olympics before the opening ceremony. The role of media communications is very important in image and expectation formation. Destination marketers should monitor the levels of destination image and expectations before the event and offer visitors what they promise. They should stay true to their advertising and promotional material to avoid creating disconfirmation of emotions that may lead to lower evaluations (Beerli & Martin, 2004). In addition, different communication strategies should be used in each target market (i.e., different continents) to account for different emotional image perceptions. For example, different messages and events related to pleasant, exciting, cheerful, and relaxing concepts should be used in communication material targeting more Europeans than North Americans, Asians, and Australians. On-site services should follow up with the promoted experience and should aim to intensify the emotional perceptions of the destination to all visitors. Recently, Getz and Fairley (2004) provided actions for event and destination marketers indicating the importance of the synergy between event organizers and destination marketing organizations and the importance of media relations in the promotions of the event and destination. More specifically, destination marketers should build an integrated branding campaign around major sport events and they should develop events that reinforce the im-

age with which the destination would like to be identified (Getz & Fairley, 2004).

Age was also a significant covariate in the model of affective destination images. The older the respondent, the more cheerful and pleasant the emotional image perception of the destination. This result implies that destination marketers can utilize promotions and offer services with pleasant and cheerful features to create positive impressions and attract younger target markets that were not predisposed as positively as older markets. Another goal with the younger market but also the older market should be to further increase or sustain emotional perceptions of the destination image. Promotional material should correspond to reality in order to avoid disconfirmations of emotions, which may result to lower emotional perceptions of destination images. Destination marketers should collaborate more closely with media and try to control through pertinent communication strategies the images they portray in order to stay true to the messages about the tourism product. Advertising campaigns should be designed to showcase the places, services, and products that create higher emotional image perceptions. Advertising campaigns should also reveal the “best kept secrets” of a place to capture the attention of target markets, older or younger, first-time or repeat visitors.

The primary purpose of the trip did not influence the affective destination image perceptions. In other words, Olympic travelers did not perceive the destination differently despite their motivation [i.e. to vacation (tourists) or to attend the sport event (spectators)]. The expectation would be for tourists to have higher emotional destination image perceptions than the spectators because they chose that destination primarily for vacation. Potentially, the image of the destination during the Olympics created equal emotional image momentum for both tourists and spectators. This result is an example of the power of sport events on destination images and the impact positive emotional image perceptions may have on word of mouth and satisfaction (Bigne, Andreu, & Gnoth, 2001). Consequently, destination marketers should collaborate closely with the event organizers on promotional material and employee training to create and deliver the pertinent atmosphere and service during the event. Both destinations and event marketers should offer similar emotional experiences to all visitors (spectators and tourists) alike.

Another surprising finding was that previous visits at the destination did not produce different evaluations

in destination affective images. This finding contradicts previous research such as Yangzhou and Ritchie (1993) and Milman and Pizam (1995), who found people had more positive impressions of destinations they visited. Potentially in this case, the variable of previous visits to Athens did not predict destination affective image perceptions because the city of Athens presented a new “face” due to the hosting of the Olympics. This result implies that previous experience with the destination does not influence the level of emotional destination image perceptions during the staging of a mega-event such as the Olympics. Based on this finding, destination marketers should develop similar communication messages for first-time and repeat visitors to reap benefit from the feelings events such as the Olympics create for a city’s image. These messages should promote the ambience of the destination before and after the event. During the event, the destination should stay true to delivering the level of tourism products and services it promised through the marketing campaigns.

Event Affective Image

Previous attendance at Olympic Games and the respondents’ trip purpose did not influence the event’s affective image. The only difference between spectators and tourists was found in perceptions of the event’s cheerfulness with spectators having higher image perceptions than the tourists. This result makes intuitive sense because motivations influence the affective component of image (Baloglu & Brinberg, 1997; Dann, 1996). Spectators are more probable to perceive the event more cheerfully than tourists because their primary purpose of the trip is to attend the Olympics. Consequently, event marketers should collaborate with destination marketers to improve tourists’ affective image of the sport event through the creation and promotion of more cheerful messages and happenings. For example, utilizing athlete celebrities with a positive appeal in events organized by the destination can boost perceptions of cheerfulness. These promotional efforts can materialize before, during, and after the event.

The insignificant influence of previous attendances in Olympic Games on the emotional image of the event implies that each mega-sporting event is unique in terms of where it is held and how it is staged. Therefore, experience with previous attendance in a mega-sporting event does not influence how Olympic travelers feel about the event. First-time and repeat visitors to the

event will perceive similarly the emotional image of the event. Based on this result, event marketers do not need to differentiate between first-time and repeat Olympic travelers in the offering of the Olympic Games experience.

Event marketers should stay true to the brand promise of the event organization and offer to spectators and participants the experiences associated with the brand image of the event (Getz & Fairley, 2004). Theodora Mantzaris, the Athens 2004 Olympic Games Design Director said, "Every aspect of our design was driven by our vision—Unique Games on a Human Scale—and our values: heritage, participation, human scale and celebration. They both reflect a Greek philosophy of life and a universal human experience. We've created a design programme that is very focused on the human being" (International Olympic Committee, 2005, p. 15). The image for the venues that hosted the events was designed to create a vibrant and celebratory atmosphere for the Olympic Games (International Olympic Committee, 2005). This vibrant and celebratory atmosphere was potentially one of the reasons spectators perceived the event as more cheerful than did tourists.

Intentions to Revisit the Destination and Attend Future Sporting Events

Olympic travelers' intentions to return to the destination were influenced by how exciting and pleasant Athens was perceived. The more pleasant and exciting Athens' image the higher the intent to return to the destination. Bigne et al. (2005) showed the positive effects of pleasure on intentions to return to a destination. Specifically, they reported pleasure influences loyalty to a destination directly and through satisfaction. Athens featured the Olympic Games, which potentially added more pleasurable and exciting aspects to the image of the destination. Furthermore, an improvement in destination image perceptions "increases the propensity to make a positive assessment of the stay and to perceive a higher quality" (Bigne et al., 2001, p. 613).

The event's image dimensions did not influence directly intentions to return to the destination. Potentially, the feelings Olympic travelers experienced about the event were confined in the boundaries of the event's organization and services and did not spill over to the image of Athens. However, there is also the chance that the image of the destination is mediating the impact of the event image on destination image as shown in a

recent study (Kaplanidou, 2006). Consequently, the impact of the event's image can be indirect and, in that case, event organizers and destination marketers should work together to benefit the host city by stimulating its tourism demand. One approach to stimulate future tourism is during and after the hosting of an event. Event organizers in cooperation with destination marketers can promote future event happenings to stimulate interest and build anticipation for the nostalgia sport tourism market. These events can take place in "shoulder" tourist seasons (winter) as well as peak tourist seasons (summer). The promotions of these events can take place during and after the staging of the event to capitalize on the successful staging of the event. If the event is not successful, destination marketers should probably avoid emphasizing or linking their promotional efforts to those of the event.

Destination marketers can develop tourism products to attract visitors in the future from the promotional image material used during the Olympics. Each Olympic city is decorated with specific color schemes using banners, flags, and other decorative material. This decoration is a responsibility of the Organizing Committee. Some of these materials in combination with video exhibitions and other interactive media can be reused in re-creating some of the environmental stimuli present at the Olympic Games or as part of Museum exhibitions to attract "nostalgia" sport tourists in the future. Furthermore, one of the obligations of the Organizing Committee is to organize test events before the Olympics to prepare for the event's final stage phase. Destination marketers can use these events and the popularity of the participating athletes to induce interest and visitation to the country before the Olympics. The organizers should create and promote an atmosphere parallel to that of the actual event focusing on providing pleasant and exciting experiences.

Positive emotional image perceptions about the Athens' Olympics did not influence travelers' intentions to travel to the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games. This result implies that the event organizers should create more emotionally appealing programs for the spectators and tourists visiting the Games leading to theirs. Each Olympic Organizing Committee should aggressively promote their event during the conclusion of the Olympics leading to theirs. One great opportunity to do that is the closing ceremony and the passing of the Olympic flag to the next organizing city. Both destination and event marketers, due to the world TV coverage, can market

worldwide the event's and destination's brand image in a way that creates anticipation and emotional engagement. Emotional engagement could potentially influence behavioral intentions to visit the following Olympic Games. Also, the next Olympic Games organizers, in cooperation with destination marketers, could create an "Olympic visitation club" offering discounts on accommodations and other destination attractions to potential travelers or loyal Olympic Games travelers. The International Olympic Committee in synergy with the destination and event organizers could create and support repeat visitation marketing efforts (e.g., free tickets to events) to encourage spectators to visit future Olympics. This can be done through the Internet or through onsite promotional efforts by collecting potential travelers' contact information and developing relationship marketing programs. Finally, the event image, although insignificant as a direct predictor of intentions to visit the 2008 Olympic Games, should not be discounted as unimportant. Given the sample's geographic origin, distance could have played a role in the formation of positive intentions to travel to China. Another explanation for this outcome may be the long time intervals between the hosting of each Olympic Games. Olympic Games take place every 4 years, which can influence respondents' certainty of their intentions to attend such an event.

Age was not found to be a significant predictor of intentions to travel to future Olympic Games, which is in disagreement with the results of Kim and Chalip (2004), who found age to be a significant predictor of intentions to attend a mega sporting event (Korea World Cup soccer). Consequently, event marketers should not differentiate their target market marketing with regards to different age groups.

Theoretical Implications

This study revealed that some of the sport tourist characteristics, such as continent of origin and age, can influence the emotional perception of the hosting destination's image. Furthermore, a destination's perceived excitement and pleasantness influenced positively Olympic travelers' intentions to return to Athens in the future. These results contribute to the theory of destination image formation by revealing the importance of the excitement and pleasantness experienced at the destination and its positive impact on intentions to return to the destination. Previous studies used af-

fective images without breaking it down to its individual affective components. By identifying the excitement and pleasantness as important image items in predicting intentions, future research can utilize them in predicting other dependent variables, such as word-of-mouth actions and sport tourist satisfaction.

A model of sport tourist behavior can be developed to include not only affective images of destination and event but also cognitive aspects as predictors. As Gartner (1996) suggests, there may be a hierarchy in the relationship of cognitive and affective images that needs to be explored in order to establish a model between image and sport tourist behavior. Finally, due to the data collection phase (during trip), quality of services offered at the event and destination as well as satisfaction with these services and the atmosphere could be predictors of behavioral intentions (Bigne et al., 2001). A theoretical model could be developed for the posttrip phase to include affective event and destination images, satisfaction, and motivational characteristics to predict repeat visitation intentions of sport tourists.

Limitations

Several limitations of this study should be taken into consideration. The questionnaire of this study was administered in English, which means that only those respondents who could read and speak English could participate. Future research could address this limitation by creating questionnaires in multiple languages. In addition, respondents from European countries were clustered in one group for the purpose of this study. Potentially differences may exist at the country level but the purpose of this study was to compare continents. However, attention should be paid to the generalization of the results. These findings apply to differences between continents. Finally, the sampling frame was not representative of all Olympic travelers, all venues, and intercept time frames due to financial constraints. Although the researcher observed that spectators were rotating through the various venues (participants' oral comments during the completion of the questionnaire provided that information), future research should follow a representative sampling technique including all venues, days, and time frames.

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