

## PERCEPTIONS OF LOCALS TOWARDS NON-MEGA SPORTING EVENTS: A STUDY OF XVII MEDITERRANEAN GAMES IN MERSIN-TURKEY

**Ozan GULER,**

Mersin University, Turkey  
ozanguler17@hotmail.com

**Gürkan AKDAĞ**

Mersin University, Turkey  
gurkanakdag@hotmail.com

**Ali DALGIÇ**

Mersin University, Turkey  
dalgic861@hotmail.com

**Sercan BENLİ**

Mersin University, Turkey  
sercan.benli@hotmail.com

**A. Celil ÇAKICI**

Mersin University, Turkey  
celilcakici@gmail.com

### Abstract

*The aim of this study is to (1) investigate locals' perceptions of the positive and negative impacts of the XVII Mediterranean Games; (2) identify which perceptions of these impacts would predict locals' intention to support future sporting events and (3) discussing locals' support intentions towards future sporting events within the context of altruistic surplus phenomenon. The data was obtained through stratified sampling by gathering one on one questionnaire from 422 respondents, which were then analyzed by exploratory factor analysis, confirmatory factor analysis and multiple regression analysis. The results show that while locals mostly benefit from the XVII Mediterranean Games in the areas of "tourism infrastructure development" and 'image enhancement-consolidation', they are complaining about uncovered economic expectations. As a result of regression analysis "tourism resource development and urban revitalization" and "image enhancement and consolidation" variables have significantly predicted the locals' support intentions for the future sporting events. It is understood that the locals' positive perceptions far outweighed the effects of negative perceptions in terms of intentions to support hosting future sport events. When it comes to local's positive outlooks, effects of negative perceptions on support intention become insignificant which could be explained by the altruistic surplus phenomenon.*

**Key words:** *Sporting events; Mediterranean Games; Tourism and Image development; Altruistic Surplus Phenomenon, Mersin.*

**JEL Classification:** *M 10, M 31, Z 20, Z 30, Z 32*

### I. INTRODUCTION

Sporting events appear to vary in terms of organization and management. However, at times they have been organized by enthusiastic entrepreneurs or by a consortium of public and private groups with the objective of promoting traditional and cultural values (Dolles and Söderman, 2008; Mules, 1998). Major sporting events have the potential to leave a lasting legacy, in addition to creating economic, political and social development opportunities (Deloitte, 2013). A growing number of countries and cities have been competing with each other for the privilege of holding sporting events due to the hosts expectation of socio-economic and cultural benefits owing to a free flow of investments (Balduck, Maes and Buelens, 2011; Candrea and Ispas, 2010; Bull and Lovell, 2007; Malfas, Houlihan and Theodoraki, 2004; Matheson and

Baade, 2004). Countries regard hosting mega sporting events as a way of elevating their global prestige, image, competitiveness and destination marketing as well (Deloitte, 2013; Ruhanen and Whitford, 2011; Candrea and Ispas, 2010; Getz, 2008; Malfas, Houlihan and Theodoraki, 2004; Matheson and Baade, 2004; Essex and Chalkley, 1998).

Major sporting events, far beyond the positive impact on economy and image building effect, have a strong imprint on the standard of living in the host cities as well as the neighboring communities (Deccio and Baloğlu, 2002; Gursoy and Kendall, 2006). Preuss and Solberg (2006) reported the potential impacts of the major sporting events on host communities are basically about "economic, tourism-commercial, physical-environmental, socio-cultural, psychological and political-administrative". In fact, national and local governments are of the mindset that, if events are successful, they will garner extra credit from their

electorates (Bull and Lovell, 2007, 230). Preuss and Solberg (2007) pointed to the fact that politicians need the support of their constituents in order to be elected, therefore, funding event related venues would work in politicians favour in achieving their objective. However, Bull and Lovell (2007, p. 230) pose the question:

*“To what extent do local residents support such events? While they may provide economic and social benefits locally, do they accept this view and how willing will they be in welcoming such activity (ies) or do they simply perceive the negative impacts? Furthermore, to what degree are the local governments successful in convincing the local population that such events are worthy of support?”*

Recognizing the impacts of sport events through the eyes of the locals is as important as measuring and understanding real economic footprint. One of the ways to understand the effects of these events is to analyze locals' perceptions (Ritchie, Shipway and Cleeve, 2009). Gaging levels of support locally for these events is important in order to encourage positive outcomes from the events (Ritchie, Shipway and Cleeve, 2009). In addition, local governments, policy-makers, organizers and sponsors need to have a clear understanding of the main factors behind the local community's support or opposition to particular events (Bull and Lovell, 2007; Gursoy and Kendall, 2006). As Getz (2008) indicated, hosting events requires a goal-driven and value-based approach. Thereby, any expectation of gains or benefits from these sporting events must be determined beforehand in order to be able to measure the value of the sport events. This in turn illustrates that different stakeholders involved in sport events are likely to have different expectations, goals and concerns.

In this context, this study investigated locals' perception of the Mersin XVII Mediterranean Games and their support intentions towards hosting future sporting events. By doing so, this research offers a myriad of contributions to the literature on sporting events which are one of the most popular and consequently fastest-growing event types in the tourism marketing studies (Ma and Rotherham, 2015). Although locals' perceptions of mega and major sporting events have often been discussed in the aforementioned literature, non-mega sporting events such as the Mediterranean Games have rarely been the subject of studies (Djaballah, Hautbois and Desbordes, 2015; Taks, 2013; Ruhanen and Whitford, 2011; Wilson, 2006). Secondly, in this study, unlike the social exchange theory, prospect theory or reasoned action theory, results of the study has been discussed in the context of altruistic surplus phenomenon that could bring a new initiative to understand locals' perceptions and attitudes towards sporting events.

## II. WHAT MAKES A SPORTING EVENT “MEGA”

There is considerable ambiguity as to what makes an event as “mega”. Overcoming lack of this clarity is crucial to academicians, organizers, sponsors, federal governments and locals. Mega sporting events differ from other events in terms of registration on an international scale, due to the number of active participants and audiences available via television (VisitScotland, 2012; Horne and Manzenreiter, 2006; Malfas, Theodoraki and Houlihan, 2004; Matheson and Baade, 2004), need for large amounts of public investment (Florek, Breitbarth and Conejo, 2008; Mules, 1998), feature long-term tourism development (Zimbalist, 2010) and develop destination identities for cities (Waite, 2003).

In spite of these characteristics of mega sport events, Müller (2015) suggested that mega-events should comply with some key development criteria. The author emphasized four key dimensions of mega-events as; visitor attraction, mediated reach, cost and transformative impact. Author further proposed a matrix of classification for large sport events based on three classifications: major events, mega-events and giga-events. Müller (2015) then investigated the most recent nine large scale sport events and showed how they differed in terms of size, according to the thresholds within each category. Based on this classification system, an event that was mega sized in the past could turn out to be a giga or major sports events as a result of the number of visitors, mediated reach, cost and impact on the built environment and population (Müller, 2015).

The variables that play a key role in classifying events were examined for 17<sup>th</sup> Mediterranean Games. Overall, the number of tickets sold was 122,000, the value of broadcasting rights was of a complimentary due to state television broadcasting service (i.e. the Turkish Radio and Television Corporation), the total cost was USD 452.5 million and the capital investment was USD 292.5 million. These results show that the XVII Mediterranean Games did not reach any of the designated thresholds in terms of visitor attraction, broadcasting rights, total costs and capital investments. Therefore, according to Müller's (2015) taxonomy, the Mediterranean Games gets zero points, and they cannot be classified as a large scale sport event. Besides, in Getz's (2008) taxonomy, neither the mega nor the hallmark label could be used for the Mediterranean Games. Taks (2013) posit any other type of event that is not mega-sized could potentially be labeled a “non-mega” sporting event which is therefore more suited to the development for host communities compared to global mega sporting events'. Therefore, 17<sup>th</sup> Mediterranean Games was handled as a non-mega or small-medium sized sporting event in the scope of this study.

### III. IMPACTS OF SPORTING EVENTS ON LOCALS: MEGA-EVENTS AND NON-MEGA EVENTS

The way mega-events are perceived by locals has been studied by many academicians. These studies mainly cluster around the expectations of locals before events (Briedenhann, 2011; Candrea and Ispas, 2010; Konstantaki and Wickens, 2010; Ritchie, Shipway and Cleeve, 2009; Preuss and Solberg, 2006), comparisons of expectations and perceived performance (Lorde, Greenidge and Devonish, 2011; Balduck, Maes and Buelens, 2011; Kim, Gursoy and Lee, 2006) and post-event perceptions (Jin, Zhang, Ma and Connaughton, 2011; Li and Luk, 2011; Bull and Lovell, 2007; Ohmann, Jones and Wilkes, 2006; Kim and Petrick, 2005; Deccio and Baloglu, 2002; Jones, 2001). There is no doubt that locals' perceptions of events are shaped and dictated by their expectations. However, in compliance with the scope of the study, solely researches on locals' pre-event expectations were excluded.

In a study by Kim and Petrick (2005), which examined the impact of the 2002 FIFA World Cup on South Koreans, the perceptions of the respondents were analyzed on two separate occasions, immediately after and three months after the event. Findings showed that, while the country's image and recognition – were considered by respondents as the most positive and the economic impact as most negative factors. Kim, Gursoy and Lee (2006), who investigated the locals' perceptions of the South Korea 2002 FIFA World Cup, suggested just as the locals' positive perception (i.e. cultural change, economic benefits and natural and cultural development), decreased over time, negative perceptions diminished by the time as well, similar to Kim and Petrick's (2005) findings. Balduck, Maes and Buelens (2011) studied the 2007 Tour de France and found that the largest gap between expectations and performance were in the form of "economic and tourism development", "price increase" and "excessive spending and mobility problems". In addition, factors such as; "cultural interest and consolidation" and "excessive spending and mobility problems" were identified as significant predictors of the residents' willingness to host events in the future. Lorde, Greenidge and Devonish (2011) investigated to 2007 ICC Cricket World Cup and found out that locals expected great positive benefits and huge negative impacts before the games. However, data consolidated after the games showed that locals perceived lower positive and negative impacts than was expected. The most disappointment in positive benefits resulted from the "benefits of cultural exchange" factor.

Studies conducted post-events, have generally revealed more positive social and cultural returns perceptions by the locals. Ohmann, Jones and Wilkes (2006) investigated the social impact of the 2006 World Cup in Munich. The authors suggested that locals had a

strong positive perception of the social and cultural returns of the event thanks to developments in city structure, security and city atmosphere. Similarly, in the studies by Bull and Lovell (2007) on the 2007 Tour de France and Li and Luk (2011) on the fourth East Asian Games, it was found that locals' negative perceptions derive mainly from reasons such as "noise and environmental pollution", "use of extra financial resources to construct and maintain facilities", "traffic congestion during the games" and "irresponsible use of tourism resources". On the other hand, these three studies commonly revealed that the post-event positive impacts perceived by respondents primarily stemmed from "development of sport culture in the region", "renovation of existing facilities", "development of city images and tourism" and "positive intercultural interactions in addition to economic returns".

Studies on non-mega or medium to small-sized sporting events' impacts on local remain quite limited compared to large sport events labeled as giga, mega or major (Djaballah, Hautbois and Desbordes, 2015; Taks, 2013; Ruhanen and Whitford, 2011; Wilson 2006). Because the economic impacts of mega sport events have dominated the public's interest, non-mega sports events have not been considered worth investigating – even though these sporting events are accessible to a wider variety of host cities and towns (Taks 2013).

When compared to mega sporting events, non-mega and small to medium-sized sporting events are seen primarily as a way to create benefits that are deemed intangible to host communities (Taks, Green, Misener and Chalip, 2014). Notably, Preuss and Solberg (2006) stated that, "even though the ability to create economic impacts is the primary purpose, it should not be kept in mind that achieving economic benefits was never meant to be the primary reason for hosting mega sport events". The authors have emphasized that, thanks to hosting sporting events, local residents and spectators alike are provided with the opportunity to witness high quality sport competitions; watch the most popular athletes – once in a life time opportunity- and enjoy the special atmosphere offered by host city. Hence, economic analyses alone cannot reflect the true value of sporting events (Preuss and Solberg 2006, p. 392). From this point of view, locals' perception of the impacts of non-mega sporting events could be especially conducive because these events offer mainly indirect economic gains rather than direct as others. In addition, it should not be forgotten that the staging of every small or medium-scale sporting events could prove to be a giant step towards hosting another well-known or mega sporting event in the future.

Wilson (2006) researched the additional expenditure generated by four small-scale swimming events based on the data obtained from a sample of 857 competitors, spectators and officials in the UK. The findings revealed that local swimming events have the potential to generate distinct economic benefits for their host communities. While commercial

accommodations were responsible for the majority of expenditures, food and drink, shopping and souvenirs also played a significant role. McCabe (2006) studied the community identity-making role of events in the case of the Ashbourne Royal Shrovedite Football event in Derbyshire, England. It has been found out that while the locals are quite happy to welcome outsiders, the majority of visitors to these events remain local. The honor of staging the event derives from the community relationship and the collective memories. Thanks to the influx of tourists, the locals have the opportunity to demonstrate the characteristics that make people of Ashbourne unique.

Ruhanen and Whitford (2011) conducted a study of locals' perceptions of the impacts of the fourteenth Annual First Contact Sports and Cultural Festival in Brisbane, Australia. The outcome demonstrated that social benefits arising from this sport event included the development of a positive leisure activity for respondents. Other benefits are contributions to different objectives such as alleviation and/or prevention of boredom, delinquency and drug and alcohol abuse in tandem with the creation and strengthening of relationships and networks within the immediate and broader community. Güçer and Silik (2014) examined locals' perceptions of economic benefits and costs for the XVII Mediterranean Games, using data acquired from a sample of 452 locals. More specifically, the authors looked at whether demographic variables would make a difference in locals' perceptions. The results revealed that locals showed ambivalence both about economic gains and costs. While the most positive perceptions of the locals were of new investments and urban planning development, new job opportunities however, painted the most negative perception of the locals.

Ma and Rotherham (2015) conducted a study on residents' changed perception of the 2012 Tour de Taiwan bicycle-racing event and the host community's support intention for future sporting events. The research methods were designed to juxtapose the residents' pre and post event perceptions. An increase in all categories was found in post-event perceptions as compared to pre-event. "General benefits" were about "recognition of local area", "personal honor", "quality of life of the locals", "tourism development" and "new hosting opportunities for sports events". Djaballah, Hautbois and Desbordes (2015) conducted a study of the social impacts of non-mega sport events with data obtained from semi-structured interviews of 25 local sports officials who were in charge of 25 sport events held in as many cities in France. Most of the officials held the belief that non-mega (i.e. medium or small-scale sports) events provide social capital for communities, such as benefits for youth and disadvantaged groups. However, the officials made their concern about the crowding, traffic congestion and security issues as well.

#### IV. RESIDENTS' SUPPORT INTENTIONS REGARDING FUTURE SPORTS EVENTS

A review of research on residents' support intentions regarding future sporting events revealed that the most studies have been carried out based on social exchange theory (Prayag, Hosany, Nunkoo and Alders, 2013; Ritchie, Shipway and Cleeve, 2009; Kim and Petrick, 2005; Deccio and Baloglu, 2002; Waitt, 2003). However, the theory of reasoned action (Prayag, Hosany, Nunkoo and Alders, 2013; Jin, Zhang, Ma and Connaughton, 2011), prospect theory (Lorde, Greenidge and Devonish, 2011; Kim, Gursoy and Lee, 2006), altruistic surplus concept, and social justice theory (Waitt, 2003) made for other essential theories that researchers have observed in order to understand and explain the trade-off attitude of the locals. While some studies revealed that the perceived concerns did not have a significant influence on residents' support in turn residents' support was significantly influenced by the perceived benefits (Deccio and Baloglu, 2002; Gursoy and Kendall, 2006), others posed that both positive and negative perceptions were significant predictors of residents' willingness to host future sporting events (Balduck, Maes and Buelens, 2011; Ma and Rotherham, 2015; Prayag, Hosany, Nunkoo and Alders, 2013).

Kim, Gursoy and Lee (2006) and Lorde, Greenidge and Devonish, (2011) try to explain the findings of their study conducted based on the prospect theory of Kahneman and Tversky (1979). With reference to the value formula of prospect theory, Kim, Gursoy and Lee (2006) state that the expectations prior to the event create the "reference point" of the local people, and express that if the perceptions after the event are lower than expected, the event will be seen as a loss, future events will be considered risky and the tendency to support such events will be reduced. Another theoretical argument initiated by Faulkner and Tideswell (1997), which is based on altruistic surplus phenomenon claims unlike the social exchange and prospect theories, that the locals will be able to tolerate and ignore the tourism-induced negativities due to the benefits to be gained by society. That is, while individuals identify a positive or a negative reference point in prospect theory and compare their results with these reference points, in the altruistic surplus phenomenon the locals do not make a comparison of individual benefit, but ignore the negativities for the benefits to be acquired by society. In short, unlike the social exchange and the prospect theories, altruistic surplus phenomenon focuses on the nature of positive returns rather than those of negative effects. From this perspective, it can be expected that the magnitude of the positive effects originating from mega sport events can negate the negative effects and the benefits will be more effective in influencing local support for the hosting of future sport events. In light of these findings, hypotheses developed in this study for testing are as

follows:

**H1:** Positive perceptions of events have a positive effect on support for hosting mega-events.

**H2:** Negative perceptions of events have a negative effect on support for hosting mega-events.

**H3:** When the negative and positive perceptions are taken into consideration together, negative impacts become insignificant for the support for hosting mega events.

## V. METHODOLOGY

### Study Population and Sample Selection

Although two cities (i.e. Mersin and Adana) hosted the VXII Mediterranean Games, 28 of the 31 competitive events took place in Mersin's city center and its surrounding districts. Therefore, this study was conducted entirely among the local populace of Mersin, making the scope of the study Mersin citizenry. According to a 2012 report by the Turkish Statistical Institute - TUIK (2012), the population of Mersin, at the time, was 1,682,848. Of these, 49.80% of the population was women, and 51.20% were men. In addition, the numbers of people in different age groups were quite similar. Based on these figures, it was decided to collect data using a quota sampling method to select the target sample. The sample's male-female distribution was uniform and at least 100 units from each of the 20–29, 30–39, 40–49 and 50+ age categories were included in the sample.

### Instrument

The data was collected through a questionnaire consisting of 44 items in three sections. The first part included questions to determine the respondents' demographic characteristics. The second section, measuring the positive and negative perceptions of residents, consisted of 31 items developed by Kim and Petrick (2005). Before a decision was made to use these items, the internal consistency and construct validity statistics of the items were evaluated and found to be reliable. The third group of survey questions consisted of statements about the residents' support for future sports events. This section consisted of five items that had been compiled from studies describing the kind of behavior locals display if they have positive perceptions about an event (Zimbalist, 2010; Getz, 2008; Preuss, 2005; Mihalik and Simonetta, 1999). The responses given for the second and third parts of the questionnaire were measured on a five-point Likert-type scale with a range of 1= "strongly disagree" and 5= "strongly agree".

### Data Collection

Data for the study was collected at about seven months after the end of the XVII Mediterranean Games. The literature review revealed that, in most previous studies, data collection was performed towards the end of the event, immediately after it and or three months

post event. However, in order for a more accurate measurement of perceptions to be formed over time by some statements in the questionnaire, it was decided that a certain period of time was required to pass (Kim, Gursoy and Lee, 2006). The data was therefore collected between 3-17 February, 2014, by four different interviewers, via personally administered questionnaires. This method offers advantages when it comes to rapid data collection within a local area (Sekeran, 1992). On 10 February, a pre-test was carried out, when 110 surveys were collected. Reliability analysis of the items contained in the surveys determined these to be adequate, and it was found that no items caused a distortion in the reliability of the data. However, scale items were partially problematic in terms of dimensional classification. This situation was detected in a relatively small number of respondents' answers. Therefore, data collection was continued without any adjustment made to the original survey. A total of 448 questionnaires were collected by the end of the collection process on 17 February, 2014. After elimination of surveys that incomplete or incorrectly filled out analysis was performed with the remaining 422 valid questionnaires.

## VI. FINDINGS

When the demographic characteristics of the respondents examined it is seen that a significant proportion of respondents were married (62.8%). In terms of income levels, the majority had an income of 2,000 TL and below (76.7%). With regards to education levels, the majorities were high school graduates (42.1%) or bachelor's-master's level graduates (29.2%). The average residency in Mersin was for the most part 21 years and above (63.8%), and the majority of respondents were employees (43.9%). In addition, the majority of respondents had not worked at the Mediterranean Games (97.8%), and the percentage of those who had not watched any sport competitions was about 52.4%.

### Understanding Locals' Perception of the Impacts

First, the internal and construct validity of the scales were analyzed. To test internal validity, reliability analysis was first conducted. The Cronbach's alpha values, which are the indicators of reliability, suggest that the items are quite reliable. According to the results of the analysis, the reliability score of the scale investigating "perception of positive impacts" was 0.912, the reliability score of the scale investigating "perception of negative impacts" was 0.802 and the reliability score of the scale investigating "support for future sporting events" was 0.885. As noted by Hair, Black, Babin and Anderson (2010), items with values above 0.70 show good reliability.

Following the reliability analysis, an explanatory factor analysis was applied to the three scales in order to reveal the interrelated data constructs

and commonly perceived constructs and variables (Hair, Black, Babin and Anderson, 2010). Factor analysis was first applied to the scale of the perceived positive impacts of sporting events. As a result, the following item, “the city is much cleaner” was removed from this scale, as it was loaded on to more than one factor and the item, “social bonds are strengthened” was removed from the scale due to its incorrect placement and the factor analysis was then repeated. Consequently, the final version of the positive impacts scale consisted of 21 items that were collected under five factors, explaining 66.35% of the emerging total

variance. Considering contribution to the explained variance, the main factors measured by the scale are “image enhancement and consolidation” (15.55%) and “tourism resource development and urban revitalization” (15.11%). The factors with the highest mean scores are “tourism infrastructure development” ( $\bar{x}$  = 3.55) and “image enhancement and consolidation” ( $\bar{x}$  = 3.43), whereas, the factor with the lowest mean score is “economic benefits” ( $\bar{x}$  = 2.80). This scale’s mean score is 3.2457. The other statistics of the scale are shown in Table 1 below.

**Table 1. Dimensions of Perceived Positive Impacts of Sports Activities**

Positive Impact Items	Factor loading	Mean	Std. Deviation	Eigenvalue	Explained Variance %	Alpha
<b>F1: Image enhancement and consolidation (IEC)</b>		<b>3.4365</b>		3.266	15.553	0.877
10. Enhanced recognition of Mersin internationally	0.909	3.3389	1.14976			
11. Improved image of Mersin internationally	0.900	3.2362	1.17537			
9. Increased opportunity to bring Mersin to the attention of the world	0.853	3.4500	1.15533			
12. Enhanced pride of Mersin residents as hosts	0.574	3.7208	1.11599			
<b>F 2: Tourism resource development and urban revitalisation (TRDUR)</b>		<b>3.2595</b>		3.174	15.114	0.825
3. Increase in shopping facilities	0.711	3.0808	1.32691			
2. Enhanced efforts to preserve heritage for tourism resources	0.699	3.1378	1.25965			
1. Enhanced the city’s beauty	0.669	3.3610	1.28126			
5. Facilities that could be landmarks built	0.658	3.3191	1.20888			
6. Increased number of cultural events	0.602	3.2631	1.16475			
7. Enhanced sanitation facilities	0.557	2.7357	1.33975			
4. Increase in leisure facilities	0.492	3.9192	1.13804			
<b>F3: Economic benefits (EB)</b>		<b>2.8006</b>		2.829	13.472	0.832
16. Accelerated growth of Mersin	0.817	3.0096	1.26713			
14. Increase in job opportunities	0.767	2.6675	1.30664			
15. Improved economic conditions	0.720	2.3017	1.07298			
17. Increased investment in Mersin	0.683	3.2238	1.21839			
<b>F4: Interest in foreign countries or their cultures (IFCC)</b>		<b>3.1763</b>		2.361	11.242	0.839
19. Increased interest in foreign languages	0.864	3.1595	1.13706			
18. Increased interest in foreign cultures	0.789	3.0829	1.15343			
20. Increased interest in international events	0.546	3.2864	1.04260			
<b>F5: Tourism infrastructure development (TID)</b>		<b>3.5560</b>		2.303	10.969	0.782
22. Accelerated development of tourism infrastructure	0.811	3.4643	1.09681			
21. Increased number of hotel rooms	0.733	3.5871	1.06507			
23. Improved conditions of city road system	0.687	3.6167	1.22647			
Principal components factor analysis with varimax rotation: The total variance explained = 66.351% Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy = 0.872 or 87.2% Bartlett’s test of sphericity: $X^2 = 4841.835$ , $df = 210$ , $p < 0.001$ Scale’s overall mean: 3.2457						

Factor analysis was repeated for the items expressing the negative impacts of sporting events. As a result of the first analysis, the item, “I think more money than required was spent on preparations for the Mediterranean Games” was removed from this scale as

it was loaded onto multiple factors, subsequently, the factor analysis was repeated. The final structure consisted of seven items collected under three conditions and explained the 84.65% of the total variance that emerged. An assessment of the factors’

contribution to the explained variance showed that the most important element was “negative economic perspective” ( $\bar{x} = 3.68$ , 32.79%). The mean score of the scale is 3.04. The other statistics for the scale are shown in Table 2.

**Table 2. Dimensions of Perceived Negative Effects of Sports Activities**

Negative Impact Items	Factor Loading	Mean	Std. Deviation	Eigenvalue	Explained Variance %	Alpha
<b>F1: Negative economic perspective (NEP)</b>		<b>3.6860</b>		2.296	32.798	0.847
24. Increase in real estate prices	0.900	3.7867	1.11224			
25. Increased speculation in real estate	0.890	3.5802	1.10992			
26. Increase in product prices	0.789	3.6910	1.15174			
<b>F2: Disorder and conflicts (DC)</b>		<b>2.1961</b>		1.820	26.006	0.890
28. Conflicts and antagonism between foreign tourists and residents	0.943	2.2406	1.20352			
29. Disturbances by hooligans or disorder caused by foreign tourists	0.912	2.1517	1.19609			
<b>F3: Traffic problems and congestion (TPC)</b>		<b>3.2488</b>		1.810	25.852	0.880
30. Increase in traffic problems	0.926	3.2796	1.32669			
31. Congestion in Mersin’s inner city	0.893	3.2180	1.32035			
Principal components factor analysis with varimax rotation: The total variance explained = 84.656% Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy = 690 or 69.0% Bartlett’s test of sphericity: $X^2 = 1551.835$ , $df = 21$ , $p < 0.001$ Scale’s overall mean: 3.0436						

### Locals’ Support Intentions for Future Sporting Events

After analyzing the positive and negative effects of the Mediterranean Games on the respondents’ perceptions, the second stage of this research scrutinized their support intentions for future sports events. As a result of a factor analysis, a structure emerged that consisted of five items collected under a single factor, explaining 68.76% of the total variance. The assessment of the agreement scores given by respondents to the statements showed that respondents mostly agree with the statement “I

would like Mersin to be a city mentioned in sports events” ( $\bar{x} = 3.99$ ). In contrast, the statement “the building of the facilities for sports events with the taxes I pay does not bother me” has the lowest average score ( $\bar{x} = 3.5095$ ). Considering the overall average of the support intention scale ( $\bar{x} = 3.70$ ), it can be said that local residents tend to support sporting events being hosted in the future when mentioning personal interests such as volunteering and tax payment, but not as strong as when collective interests are mentioned. The other statistics of the scale are shown in Table 3 below.

**Table 3. Dimensions of Support Intention for Future Sporting Events**

Factors	Factor Loading	Mean	Std. Deviation	Eigenvalue	Explained Variance %	Alpha
<b>F1: Support intention for future sports events</b>				3.438	68.763	0.885
1. The city of Mersin should continue to be a candidate for hosting sports events.	0.883	3.8595	1.22204			
2. I would like Mersin to be a city mentioned with sports events.	0.865	3.9976	1.14402			
3. I would volunteer to take on responsibilities in future sports events.	0.746	3.5227	1.29179			
4. Maintaining the facilities built for sports events does not bother me.	0.789	3.5095	1.37371			
5. I believe that the facilities built for sports events will turn out to be Mersin landmarks.	0.856	3.6540	1.22409			
Principal components factor analysis with varimax rotation: The total variance explained = 68.763% Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy = 0.849 or 84.9% Bartlett’s test of sphericity: $X^2 = 1186.774$ , $df = 10$ , $p < 0.001$ Scale’s overall mean: 3.7087						

In addition to the above explanatory factor analysis, a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was also applied to this scale. As stated by Hair, Black, Babin

and Anderson (2010), CFA is a method that tests the ability of the variables developed to adhere to a certain theory measuring a construct (Hair, Black, Babin and

Anderson, 2010, 693). An examination of the critical t-statistics of the observed variables revealed that all the variables appear to exceed the critical t-value of 1.96 at a 5% significance level. Regarding the model's basic goodness of fit, the chi-square fit index ( $\chi^2/df$ ) is 452.94/130:3.48, and the RMSEA goodness of fit is 0.082. Other goodness of fit values for the model are calculated as NFI = 0.99, NNFI = 0.98, CFI = 0.99, IFI = 0.99, RFI = 0.99, RMR = 0.024, SRMR = 0.016, GFI = 0.98 and AGFI = 0.92. Considering these goodness of fit values, it could be said that the model has a good degree of fit as a whole (Hair, Tatham, Anderson and Black 2006, p. 746–751).

### Impact of Locals' Perceptions on Their Support Intentions for Future Sports Events

Prior to regression analysis, the relationships between the variables were examined by correlation analysis. According to the results showed in Table 4, a significant ( $p \leq 0.01$ ) and positive ( $r=0.409$ ) relationship exists between the variables of positive perceptions of the sporting event and support for future events. However, significant correlation was not found between negative perceptions and support intentions for future sporting events.

**Table 4. Correlation Analysis between Variables**

Factors	Mean	Std. Deviation	Alpha	Positive Factors	Negative Factors
Positive factors	3.2458	0.69252	0.903	1	
Negative factors	3.0436	0.83225	0.800	0.082	1
Support intention	3.7087	1.03368	0.885	0.409**	-0.28
Significance level: $p < 0.01$					

After conducting the correlation analysis, regression analysis was performed to test the effects of the locals' perceptions on their support intentions for future sporting events. The effect of the independent variables (positive and negative perceptions) on the dependent variable was analyzed to test study's first two hypotheses. Since the model is valid as a whole ( $F: 35.936$ ,  $p \leq 0.001$ ), locals' support intentions for future events could be explained through relevant independent variables ( $p \leq 0.05$ ). Moreover, no autocorrelations or multi-link problems were detected (Hair, Black, Babin

and Anderson, 2010, p. 197–200). Firstly, the effect of the positive elements was examined. The model of positive perceptions explains 29% of the locals' support intention for future sporting events. Based on these findings, the first hypothesis of the study is supported in addition to correlation analysis result. However, only two of the positive perception dimensions that have significant effects on locals' support intentions are "tourism resource development and urban revitalization" ( $\beta: .532$ ,  $\beta: .148$ ;  $p \leq 0.05$ ).

**Table 5. Effect of Positive Perceptions on Locals' Support Intentions for Future Events**

Factors	Non-standardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T-value	Sig. Level	Multi-link Statistics		
	$\beta$	Std. error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF	CI
(Constant)	1.520	0.209		7.266	0.000			
F1: Image enhancement and consolidation	0.156	0.051	0.148	3.066	0.002	0.716	1.397	8.440
F2: Tourism resource development and urban revitalization	0.632	0.065	0.532	9.745	0.000	0.563	1.776	11.072
F3: Economic benefits	-0.16	0.056	-0.015	-0.282	0.778	0.588	1.701	11.443
F4: Interest in foreign countries or their cultures	-0.027	0.055	-0.026	-0.496	0.620	0.623	1.606	13.843
F5: Tourism infrastructure development	-0.077	0.056	-0.071	-1.379	0.169	0.641	1.560	14.819
Support intention for the following sports events: $R = 0.549$ ; $R^2 = 0.302$ ; adjusted $R^2 = 0.293$								

A second regression analysis was performed to investigate the effects of the assumed negative impacts of the events on support intention for future events. Negative perceptions, as well as positive perceptions, appear to be valid in explaining support intention ( $F: 6.962$ ;  $p \leq 0.0001$ ). Further, autocorrelation and multi-link problems were not detected in the model (see Table 6 below). However, the model of negative perceptions

shows a marginal level 4% in explaining the residents' support intentions. These findings indicate that the study's second hypothesis is supported, but this effect appears to be quite minor. Only one dimension of the negative perceptions, "disorder and conflicts caused by tourists", consisting of three sub-dimensions, is shown to have effect on support for future events ( $\beta: -.225$ ,  $p \leq 0.05$ ).



**Table 6. Impact of Negative Perceptions on Residents' Support Intentions for Future Events**

Independent Variables	Non-standardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T-value	Sig. Level	Multi-link Statistics		
	$\beta$	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF	CI
(Constant)	3.588	0.207		17.357	0.000			
F1: Negative economic perspective	0.075	0.054	0.071	1.391	0.165	0.875	1.143	5.114
F2: Disorder and conflicts	-0.204	0.047	-0.225	-4.332	0.000	0.844	1.185	7.097
F3: Traffic problem and congestion	0.091	0.045	-0.110	2.017	0.052	0.772	1.295	10.566

Support intention for the following sports events: R = 0.218; R<sup>2</sup> = 0.048; adjusted R<sup>2</sup> = 0.041

To test the study's third hypothesis, a stepwise regression analysis was applied. The perceptions whose impacts were analyzed separately in the other two regression analyses were gathered in this analysis. Starting with the variable having the highest correlation with the dependent variable, eight variables were included into models. The results demonstrate that the two models resulting from the analysis are significant as a whole (F: 166,383/88,079;  $p \leq 0.0001$ ) and that both models have no autocorrelation and multi-link problems (see Table 7). According to the analysis, only two of the eight independent variables included in the model could significantly explain the dependent

variable. These variables are the dimensions of "tourism resource development and urban revitalization" and "image enhancement and consolidation", which form the positive perceptions of the sporting event under study. These two variables explain 29% of support intention for future sporting events. All three dimensions of the respondents' perceived negative impacts are shown to have no significant effect on the respondents' support intentions for future sporting events. Based on these finding, it can be said that the last hypothesis in the study can be supported.

**Table 7. Impact of Positive and Negative Perceptions on Residents' Support Intentions for Future Events**

Independent Variables	Non-standardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T-value	Sig. Level	Multi-link Statistics		
	$\beta$	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF	CI
<i>Model 1 (Constant)</i>	1.647	0.165		9.954	0			1
F2: Tourism resource development and urban revitalization	0.633	0.049	0.533	12.899	0	1	1	7.629
<i>Model 2 (Constant)</i>	1.374	0.193		7.122	0			1
F2: Tourism resource development and urban revitalization	0.586	0.052	0.494	11.367	0	0.890	1.123	7.799
F1: Image enhancement and consolidation	0.123	0.046	0.117	2.699	0.007	0.890	1.123	9.572

Dependent variable model 1: R = 0.533; R<sup>2</sup> = 0.284; adjusted R<sup>2</sup> = 0.282  
Support intention for the following sports events: Model 2: R = 0.544; R<sup>2</sup> = 0.296; adjusted R<sup>2</sup> = 0.293

## VII. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The results show that those respondents in the study reaped benefits from the XVII Mediterranean Games in the following areas such as; "tourism infrastructure development" and "image enhancement & consolidation". Residents mentioned that increase in the number of hotel rooms, an accelerated growth in tourism infrastructure, increase in leisure facilities, improved condition in the city's road systems and enhanced sense of community pride resulted from a part of host city are the major factors that affect their positive perceptions. These findings are in line with the

results of the prior studies of sport events. The residents' positive perceptions demonstrate apparent parallels in the findings of Li and Luk (2011), Bull and Lovell (2007), Ohmann et al. (2006), Kim and Petrick (2005) and Waitt (2003). These offer more security, improved atmosphere, tourism development, image enhancement, greater global exposure, an infrastructure build up, improved regional sports culture, rejuvenation of the existing facilities and positive intercultural interactions.

Looking at the negative statements regarding the perceptions of the respondents, the key negative factor is the "negative impact of event on the economy". The most important elements in the creation of this perception appear to be the "increase in the price of real

estate” and “increase in the price of products and services”. The studies conducted by Balduck et al. (2011), Lorde et al. (2011), Kim et al. (2006) and, Kim and Petrick (2005) revealed that the economic benefits perceived by the respondents after the events were lower than those expected prior to the aforementioned events. Respondents’ views on economic benefits indicate that locals tend to be more skeptical about the returns in the form of “job opportunities” and “economic gains” than about “higher taxes paid for the construction of facilities and their maintenance” in addition to the “use of extra funds in order to construct new facilities and their maintenance” (Briedenhann, 2011).

In the present study, it is understood that the problems fomented by traffic, conflicts and disputes between locals and tourists are viewed as less important than the negative economic factors. These findings echo those of Li and Luk (2011) and, Konstantaki and Wickens (2010) in relation to traffic problems, as well as the studies by Lorde et al. (2011) and Kim et al. (2006) in the context of resident-tourist conflicts.

When residents’ perceptions of the XVII Mediterranean Games are compared with the outcomes of previous research on non-mega sporting events, both similarities and discrepancies have been revealed. The prevailing positive perceptions stemmed from studies on non-mega sporting events are ‘regional recognition’, ‘honor of staging’, ‘locals standard of living’ (i.e. social capital), ‘tourism development’, ‘new investments’, ‘new hosting opportunities for sports events’ and ‘strengthened community attachments’ (Djaballah et al., 2015; Ma and Rotherham, 2015; Güçer and Silik, 2014; Ruhanen and Whitford, 2011; McCabe, 2006). These findings in large correspond with the results of this study. Locals in this study revealed their disappointment about inadequate economic benefits and unexpected negative economic effects, such as increases in the price of real estate and daily goods and services. Whereas, these findings conflict with Wilson’s (2006) study, which claimed that swimming events generate a distinct economic benefits for their host communities, the results resemble the findings of Güçer and Silik (2014) and Ma and Rotherham (2015), who revealed that residents’ expectations of economic benefits were not met as requested. Furthermore, these findings support Task et al.’s suggestions (2014) that small, medium and non-mega sized sporting events are viewed primarily as a way to produce intangible benefits for host communities.

As previously established, locals’ perceptions are the main factor for their support intentions to hosting future sport events. The mean score of the support intention scale is over average and close to favorable ( $\bar{x}$ = 3.70). Respondents are inclined to support the future candidacy of Mersin to host sports events ( $\bar{x}$ = 3.85) and the retention of the title “sport city” ( $\bar{x}$ = 3.99). When the perceptions of the residents were examined in terms of their effect on intentions to support future sporting events, negative

perceptions were significantly outweighed by the effects of positive perceptions. Based on the correlation analysis performed, it was observed that negative perceptions, in general, do not have a significant relationship with support intention, though. Similar to the results of the correlation analysis, of the three negative dimensions analyzed, solely the “disorder and conflicts” is able to explain away the dependent variable ( $\beta$  = -0.225), which accounts for 4.8%. However, two of the five positive dimensions are able to explain the dependent variable, which accounts for 29.3% as shown in the results of the regression analysis.

When residents’ perceptions were evaluated, it became evident that the only dimensions that affect support for future sporting events are the positive perceptions “tourism resource development and urban revitalization” and “image enhancement & consolidation”, which explain 29.3% of residents’ support intentions. These comprehensive results both harmonize and contrast with findings of previous studies. Deccio and Baloglu (2002) and Gursoy and Kendall (2006), in their research which was based on social exchange theory, found that negative perceptions have no statistical effect on support for sport events and that no relationship exists between negative perceptions (i.e. incurred costs) and support intentions for future sporting events. In the present study, despite the effect of ‘disorder and conflicts’, which accounts for 4.8% of support intentions ( $\beta$  = -0.225), when positive perceptions were added to the mix with stepwise regression model, the marginal effect caused by negative perceptions disappeared entirely. These findings echo with the findings of Deccio and Baloglu (2002) and Gursoy and Kendall (2006). However, it runs counter to Balduck et al. (2011) and Prayag et al.’s (2013) conclusions, in which the effect of negative perceptions on willingness to host future events were combined with the effect of positive perceptions.

The findings of this study and of Deccio and Baloglu (2002) and Gursoy and Kendall (2006) are unable to explain residents’ intentions to support future sporting event in the context of social exchange theory solely, since negative perceptions did not prove to be a viable predictor of residents’ support intentions. Studies based on the social exchange theory, make inferences out of the difference between the acquisitions and costs perceived by locals. Prospect theory, on the other hand, compares the actual results and the expectations, which the locals consider reference points, in the context of positive and negative impacts. In this research, the dimensions effective on support intention were determined through the stepwise regression analysis. When negative perceptions are solely included in the model apart from positive perceptions show little effect on the support for sporting events. However, when the positive and negative perceptions of the residents are evaluated together in the second model, it is understood that the only dimension effective on the support for sporting events is positive perceptions and it explains nearly

30% of the locals' support intention. This result could be evaluated as that the spillover effects created by the events overcome locals' negative perceptions, and, therefore, another conceptual approach such as; altruistic surplus concept, proposed by Faulkner and Tideswell (1997) and applied in Waitt's (2003) study is indeed needed. Faulkner and Tideswell (1997) claim that locals could tolerate and at the same time ignore the negative issues arising from tourism because of the benefits that their society stands to gain. According to this study, the factors affecting support intentions are primarily issues pertaining tourism resource development, urban revitalization and image enhancement & consolidation. These results indicate that residents are able to ignore negative impacts and individual economic expectations in favor of support intentions. These findings mean that the amount of positive impacts stemming from sport events could counteract possible negative effect, and, unlike negative perceptions, positive perceptions in the context of tourism development and urbanization would have a greater impact on locals' support for hosting future sporting events. For this reason, spillover impacts created by the sport events could be assessable with different approaches such as altruistic surplus phenomenon. Thus, studies looking into locals' perceptions of sport events or tourism development need to keep altruistic surplus phenomenon in mind.

In addition to these theoretical implications, the present study's findings offer some useful suggestions to local authorities, national governments, candidate countries, private sector entities, sponsors and so on and so forth. Firstly, those in charge of organizing sports events should provide information independent of political expectations. As Preuss and Solberg (2006) indicated, locals in low-income nations show a strong interest in hosting sport events. Therefore, local and national authorities need to realistically reflect on the advantages offered by hosting sporting events. Deceiving the local populace, business people and non-governmental organizations regarding the effects of sports events will most likely merely bring about short-term benefits. Secondly, although the results suggest that residents view benefits mostly in the context of cultural, social and environmental development; image building, urban planning and tourism development could also be presented as long-term benefits. Therefore, countries intending to host future sporting events need to pay particular attention to these issues in the planning process and focus on returns such as; country's image, urban and tourism development, rather than focusing solely on economic gains. Any events that fail at improving locals quality of daily life would

be the reason for being opposed to future events. Sporting events could be the good way of leaving lasting legacy for the public through sport and tourism (Lastly, local and national authorities need to keep the results of this study forefront in their mind in order to gain the desired level of support from residents. The authorities should keep in mind that they cannot reach expected success without residents' support and volunteerism, independent of the size of the sports events in question. Sport events rely heavily on residents' volunteer force, and the feelings associated with volunteerism have a strong impact on the general satisfaction of both athletes and organizers (Koşan and Güneş, 2009). In particular, authorities organizing the XVIII Mediterranean Games, which will be held in Tarragona, Spain, in 2017, would be better off talking about and considering long-term benefits, local pride, global recognition, urban revolution and tourism development, rather than the more elusive benefits namely increased cash flow and employment.

#### VIII.LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

The first limitation to this study was the sample size consisting of only 422 respondents. Due to the fact that local elections were taking place, residents were continuously being asked to fill out questionnaires at the same time that the survey was being administered, which in turn made filling out the questionnaire for this study rather difficult. Another issue may have been the timing of the survey. The fact that the questionnaires were collected from residents seven months after the Mediterranean Games could have posed a dilemma because locals may have had difficulty recollecting the events that far back.

Given that the decision to host major sports events is a condition closely tied to the domestic policies of the countries involved, residents' political perspectives do play an important part in their propensity to support mega sporting events such as the Olympic Games. The most recent examples of this were the Turkish citizens' reactions living in Turkey to the nomination of Istanbul as the host of the 2020 Olympic Games and Brazilian citizens' reactions to Brazil's hosting the 2014 World Cup. Therefore, future studies could seek to determine whether individuals' political point of views would have a significant effect on their support intentions for future sport events. Finally, the underlying causes of behavior of the individuals who are not inclined to support hosting sports events could also be studied using a qualitative research design.

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