



Article

Estimating the Perceived Socio-Economic Impacts of Hosting Large-Scale Sport Tourism Events

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Abstract: Large-scale sport events help attract a wide range of attendees, resulting in various implications for the host community. This paper is concerned with understanding the legacy of the 13th EHF European Handball Championship, held in Croatia in January 2018, by assessing the event's economic and social benefits and costs. Drawing on the Social Exchange Theory, it also examines if any significant differences exist between host city residents and non-host city residents regarding their perceived impacts of this event on the host cities. The number of impacts was reduced by Exploratory Factor Analysis. Differences between host city and non-host city residents were examined by an independent samples *t*-test. The results suggest that community development and pride, security risks, traffic problems, economic benefits, environmental concerns, and economic costs are the main impact dimensions. Non-host city residents expressed a higher level of agreement with most of the impacts, but significant differences exist primarily within the dimensions of community development and pride, economic benefits, traffic problems, and environmental concerns. These findings could benefit event planners and sport marketers when trying to acquire community-wide support and to better understand how residents perceive both the positive and negative impacts that events generate.

Keywords: sport events; tourism; socio-economic impacts; Croatia; 2018 EHF European Handball Championship

1. Introduction

Sport tourism is an important part of the tourism industry and exists under a variety of forms and names. At the forefront are sport events, and event sports tourism as referred to by (Weed and Bull 2009), or sport-event tourism as referred to by Alexandris and Kaplanidou (2014) and (Getz and Page 2016), is claimed to be the most obvious manifestation and the highest-profile product within the sport tourism portfolio (Deery et al. 2004; Weed 2009). Involvement in any organized sport can generate planned events (Getz 2008), as well as event-related travel (Getz and Patterson 2013). Such events usually gather both active (i.e., competitors and officials) and passive (i.e., spectators) participants, albeit some sports and events are more attractive to spectators than others (Gozalova et al. 2014; Roche et al. 2013; Weed and Bull 2009).

The popularity of sport events can be attributed to the fact that they generate, depending on their size, significant benefits for host communities on the state, county, city or municipality level. The most obvious impact that sport events have is on the economy and tourism. According to (Chalip 2014) and (Fairley et al. 2016), attracting visitors who will stay and spend some money before, during, and after a venue, as well as investors who will enter certain business ventures, are key assumptions for generating economic benefits. Therefore, the synergic effects of hosting sport events and tourism development, such as increased tourism figures, addressing seasonal fluctuations, new employment, increased income generation, and tax revenue from expenses, have been analyzed quite often in previous studies (Daniels et al. 2004; Duglio and Beltramo 2017; Higham 2005; Khodr 2012; Li and Jago 2013; Meurer and Lins 2018; O'Brien 2007; Schnitzer et al. 2017; Solberg and Preuss 2007).

In a similar context, sport events can be used as a media for urban regeneration and development (Gaudette et al. 2017; Richards and Palmer 2010; Smith 2012; Waitt and Gibson 2009; Wise and Perić 2017a), where attempts to redevelop and create new service sector opportunities result in new business opportunities and employment (Hall 2006; Preuss 2006).

In addition to these economic impacts that are relatively easy to measure and are widely assessed, hosting sport events can also generate a broad range of other indirect or non-monetary effects like improvements of country or destination image (Cheung et al. 2016; Hallmann and Breur 2010). Many authors argue, however, that non-economic impacts are underestimated because they are difficult to measure and manage (Deery et al. 2012; Getz and Page 2016; Taks et al. 2015; Wise and Perić 2017a). This is especially true for social and cultural impacts which, as a relatively new emphasis, have only in recent years become the focus of attention. Sport events can increase sport participation; enhance the quality of local life, social cohesion, social capital formation, euphoria, pride, and patriotism of the host community; and generate interest in a foreign country or culture (Gibson et al. 2014; Jamieson 2014; Kim and Petrick 2005; Kim and Walker 2012; Kim et al. 2015; Pranić et al. 2012; Reis et al. 2017). All the impacts mentioned above could contribute to the overall regeneration of a hosting city.

While the above mentioned impacts are all positive, one cannot ignore the fact that, when a multitude of people visit one place at one time, some negative impacts are also likely to occur. When it comes to the size of events, small-scale events, if managed properly, may have significant positive impacts for local communities and corresponding destinations, and much lower negative connotations than their larger counterparts (see Duglio and Beltramo 2017; Gibson et al. 2012; Higham 1999; O'Brien 2007; Pereira et al. 2015; Perić et al. 2016). On the other hand, hosting mega sport events like the Olympics and other international sport championships has become quite disputable (Giampiccoli et al. 2015; Getz and Page 2016; Müller 2017). While large international events are certainly more attractive to international attendees and media than small-scale events, they also generate more visible and invisible negative effects which are, according to Dawson and Jöns (2018), often neglected when planning the legacy of an event. The negative impacts of both small- and large-scale sport events have recently received growing attention and are frequently studied together with positive ones (e.g., Ahmed 2017; Caiazza and Audretsch 2015; Gaudette et al. 2017; Kim and Walker 2012; Kim et al. 2015; Konstantaki and Wickens 2010; Meurer and Lins 2018; Ntloko and Swart 2008; Njoroge et al. 2017; Lesjak et al. 2014; Ritchie et al. 2009; Zhou and Ap 2009). They include both economic costs (e.g., excessive spending on the event, increased taxes, higher prices of products and housing), as well as socio-cultural and psychological impacts (e.g., traffic problems, security risks, crime, disorder, and increased conflicts between visitors and residents). Another group of negative impacts is environmental. New infrastructure can cause environmental damage to a host community and it is also normal to expect that the amount of litter and waste, air pollution, and noise levels will be increased during the event.

Due to their expected positive outcomes and regardless of ever-present negative outcomes, there is still a high level of demand for hosting large-scale sport tourism events (Müller 2017). Consequently, it is no surprise that a disproportionate amount of research has focused on large sport events thus far. Additionally, most research has focused on events in large and developed countries (e.g., USA, Australia, UK, Germany etc.), while events in small countries, due to the infrastructural and organizational restraints and lower overall number of such events organized, remain under-researched. Still, some evidence from small countries/cities suggests that large events such as European or world championships are truly beneficial for their residents. These benefits could be found in terms of socio-cultural exchange, like in the case of the 2013 European Basketball Championship in Slovenia (Lesjak et al. 2014), or positive implications on national identity and country pride, like in the case of the 2009 World Men's Handball Championship in Croatia (Pranić et al. 2012). Further, despite the fact that such events attract a huge number of visitors, there is often a discussion on whether public funds invested in event-related infrastructure could be used for other more needed facilities

(Pranić et al. 2012). For sure, the legacy of sport events is undoubtedly diverse and complex, encompassing economic, socio-cultural, environmental, psychological, and political impacts. In this respect, for a sport event to be successful, it is necessary to maximize its legacy and impact. Since there are many actors involved in the organization and consumption of events, the economic and other social, cultural, and environmental impacts of occurring sport events should be monitored and assessed from the perspective of different stakeholders to get their support (Schulenkorf and Edwards 2012). The local community is recognized and confirmed as a key stakeholder in this process and no form of tourism should be at the expense of the local residents. Event sport tourism should also create opportunities for locals who live in the actual place but, as argued by Wise (2016), much of the focus so far has been on the activities themselves, while a focus on what local residents gain is still missing. Hence, if local residents perceive benefits from a sport event, then they will support the event and this kind of support could be crucial for the event's success (Lee and Krohn 2013; Twynam and Johnston 2004).

The Social Exchange Theory (SET) seems to fit these assertions. The SET describes social change "as a process of negotiated exchanges between individuals or groups" (Hritz and Ross 2010, p. 121). It assumes that a person's engagement in interaction with other people depends on reciprocity, that is, the expected benefits received from the other party (Cropanzano and Mitchell 2005; Gouldner 1960). The SET, when used in tourism, sport management, and hospitality management, is about exchanging resources between hosts and visitors, and could involve both positive and negative attitudes of stakeholders. The more positive the attitudes, the greater the support for the event. Despite the fact that SET has been criticized for its assumptions (e.g., sufficient information for making decisions to all parties, locals welcome tourists for only gaining economic benefits; see McGehee and Andereck 2004) that could lead to results that are not completely accurate, studies have used the SET in different sport contexts, focusing on host communities and how local residents perceive impacts from hosting sport tourism events (Ahmed 2017; Ap 1990; Hritz and Ross 2010; Kim and Petrick 2005; Kim et al. 2006; Kim et al. 2015; Lesjak et al. 2014; Pranić et al. 2012). On the other hand, non-host city residents are another stakeholder whose role is very important for the success of large-scale sport events. They provide a wider environment that supports visitors' experiences during their travel to and stay in the destination. It is argued that non-host communities are sometimes in a favorable position to benefit from events when compared to host city residents because there is no initial investment and they can devote all resources to leveraging (Chien et al. 2017). Therefore, few other studies (whether using the SET framework or not) have focused on non-host city residents' perceptions of sport event impacts on their communities (Chien et al. 2017; Deccio and Baloglu 2002; Karadakis and Kaplanidou 2012; Lovegrove and Fairley 2017; Ritchie et al. 2009) or countries (Liu et al. 2014).

However, while the abovementioned studies examine the attitudes of local residents regarding how a sport event hosted by a city will affect them and their communities (both host city and non-host city communities), how non-host city residents evaluate the impact of a sport event on host cities and their residents is still an under-researched area. To contribute to a new understanding of socio-economic impacts and social regeneration, this study draws on the SET to evaluate how local residents of both host and non-host cities perceive the social impacts for the city hosting a large-scale sport tourism event. In particular, this study is concerned with understanding the legacy of the 13th EHF (European Handball Federation) Men's European Handball Championship (EHF EURO2018), held in Croatia (12–28 January 2018) and, by assessing the event's economic and social benefits and cost, seeks to provide insight into impacts and regeneration opportunities. Two research questions are established: (1) What are the main socio-economic impacts for hosting communities associated with the EHF EURO2018? (2) Are there any significant differences between the perceived socio-economic impacts for the host cities from the perspective of host-city residents and non-host city residents?

The results suggest that community development and pride, security risks, traffic problems, economic benefits, environmental concerns, and economic costs are the main impact dimensions. Non-host city residents expressed a higher level of agreement with most of the impacts, but significant

differences exist, primarily within the dimensions of community development and pride, economic benefits, traffic problems, and environmental concerns.

2. Materials and Methods

To examine the legacy of the EHF EURO2018, empirical research was conducted on residents of both host and non-host cities in Croatia.

2.1. Research Context

Being a small country situated at the crossroads of Central and Southeast Europe with only 4.3 million residents and modest sport infrastructure, it is almost impossible for Croatia to qualify for hosting mega events like the Olympics or the FIFA (Fédération Internationale de Football Association) World Cup. However, in the last twenty years, Croatia has hosted several European and world championships in other popular sports, for instance, the EHF Men's Handball Championship in 2000, the IHF (International Handball Federation) Women's World Handball Championship in 2003, the IHF Men's World Handball Championship in 2009, the LEN (Ligue Européenne de Natation) Men's European Water Polo Championship in 2010, the EHF Women's World Handball Championship in 2014, and a group of FIBA (International Basketball Federation) Men's Eurobaskets in 2015. In 2018 (12–28 January), Croatia once again hosted the EHF Men's Handball Championship (the first country to host this major European handball contest twice) in four cities: Zagreb, Split, Poreč, and Varaždin. All matches were played in the multipurpose sports halls that were built (and used) for the 2009 World Championships. The sports halls were in good condition, while other infrastructure (e.g., roads, accommodation capacities etc.) was also satisfactory and, therefore, no major capital investments in sport and other infrastructure were needed. However, regular costs of maintenance and specific costs of hosting the event were planned and calculated in host cities' budgets, which came to a total amount of approximately 0.75 million euro.

The EHF EURO2018 became a historic event as being the last European championship with 16 national teams (the next European Championship will gather 24 national teams), as well as the first European championship where judges could use video technology to help decision-making. The Spanish national team won the European Champion's title (gold medal), followed by the Swedish national team in second place (silver) and the French national team in third (bronze). The Croatian national team finished in a somewhat disappointing fifth place, making the European Championship the only big competition in which Croatia did not win a gold medal.

Although handball is less popular than, for instance, football, the EHF EURO2018 was broadcast and reported to 130 media houses in 175 countries around the world. In addition to 500 athletes, there were 1260 journalists and technical staff accredited to the competition, as well as around 500 volunteers. The total number of spectators was 263,209 (i.e., on average 5600 spectators per game), representing a 17% increase when compared with the last championship held in Poland in 2016. Regarding online and social media, the championship was viewed 2.3 million times (2.8 million minutes altogether) on YouTube, while there were 1.3 million views on Snapchat.

It is a challenging task to present any overall financial results of the event because official data do not exist, but according to the Croatian Bureau of Statistics ([Croatian Bureau of Statistics 2018](#)), the number of tourist arrivals reached 211 thousand in January 2018 and tourists realized 532 thousand tourist nights (an increase of 18.7% in arrivals and 20.5% in nights than in January 2017). More precisely, four host cities recorded even better tourist results. Compared to January 2017, there were 46.4% more nights in the cities of Zagreb and Split, 238.7% in Varaždin, and 36.9% in Poreč. In other words, it means around 110,000 new tourists, of which 45% foreign, visited Croatia during January 2018. If the average daily expenditure for tourists in Croatia is around 79 euro ([Institute for Tourism 2018](#)), it could be concluded that the event, only in terms of tourism, directly generated around 8.7 million euro (i.e., more than 10 times what the host cities invested).

2.2. Testing Instrument

Research was conducted using a self-administered questionnaire which consisted of two parts (see Appendix A). First, to measure local residents' perception of socio-economic impacts of hosting large-scale sport tourism events, a number of items were selected from the Scale of Perceived Social Impacts (SPSI) developed by Kim et al. (2015). Besides the 23 items which were validated as key socio-economic impacts within the SPSI, four items regarding environmental impacts were also added because some previous studies found environmental concerns as being crucial for local residents (Ahmed 2017; Konstantaki and Wickens 2010; Ritchie et al. 2009). In total, 27 items were used, of which 13 items measured positive socio-economic impacts in three dimensions (economic benefits, community pride, and community development), while 14 items measured negative socio-economic impacts in four dimensions (economic costs, traffic problems, security risks, and environmental concerns). Slight modifications to these items were made considering the specific context of this research (handball as an indoor sport). The items on socio-economic impacts were operationalized with seven-point direct rating scales, ranging from 1-Strongly disagree to 7-Strongly agree. The second part of the questionnaire captured socio-demographic (age, gender, place of residence, number of years living in the city, employment, education) and behavioral details (whether the respondents visited any games, and if yes, how many).

2.3. Procedure

Like other studies examining legacy (e.g., Ahmed 2017; Liu et al. 2014; Ntloko and Swart 2008), this study examined social impacts perceived after the event was finished, which has guided the development of recommendations suggesting the need to analyze observed, rather than expected, social regeneration initiatives. Data were collected from March 2018 to May 2018 in Zagreb (the Croatian capital and one of the host cities where the majority of games were played) and in a few towns in Zagreb's neighboring area, as well as in the country's third largest city, Rijeka, which did not host EURO2018. The towns around Zagreb, together with Rijeka, represent non-host cities. Unlike some other studies, this study was focused on observed social impacts and therefore examined impacts perceived after the event was finished. Since only local residents were to be surveyed, the printed version of the questionnaire was prepared in the Croatian language. Forward and backward translation by two independent translators was carried out to ensure the content validity of the questionnaire. A spatial-location method was used to collect the data. The sampling procedure included multiple data collections. The trained fieldworkers approached adult participants in various public areas (main promenades, shopping malls, public parks, and other public areas) and asked them if they were willing to participate in the study and to complete the questionnaire onsite. In total, 504 respondents answered the questionnaire, of which 266 were from Zagreb and 238 were from non-host cities.

To ensure a complete data set, only respondents who answered all questions on socio-economic impacts and socio-demographic data were included in the further analysis. The questionnaires with missing values were therefore removed from further analysis. The final number of respondents eligible for further analysis was 476, with a considerable balance between host city respondents (251) and non-host cities respondents (225).

Descriptive analysis was applied to explore the sample profile of the study and to calculate the means and standard deviations of proposed variables for the overall sample. In order to reduce the number of items, statements regarding local residents' perceived socio-economic impacts of hosting the EHF EURO2018 were subjected to exploratory factor analysis (EFA) in the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). For socio-economic impacts, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measures of sampling adequacy were above 0.845 and Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant ($p < 0.001$), indicating some relationships between the statements; therefore, factor analysis was appropriate for the collected responses (Burns and Burns 2008; Field 2005). The factors were extracted using the principal component method (PCA) with Oblique (Direct Oblimin) rotation. Only factors with eigenvalues greater than 1 were retained, while items with a loading of less than 0.40 were eliminated from the final

factor structure (Kaiser 1974; Burns and Burns 2008). The factor's internal consistency was confirmed by Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient. Finally, an independent-samples *t*-test was conducted to test the hypothesis that statistically significant differences exist between host city and non-host city local residents regarding their perceived socio-economic impacts for the host cities.

3. Results

3.1. Respondents' Demographic and Behavioral Characteristics

Table 1 presents the respondents' profile for both host city and non-host city respondents, as well as the aggregate. Descriptive analysis showed that most of the respondents are male (54.62%), and that the average age of participants is 32. The majority of respondents have a secondary school (50.21%) and university degree (42.23%) and are employed (51.72%). However, around one fourth of the respondents are unemployed, while almost 21 per cent of respondents selected the "other" option answer (they were most likely students). The features of the sample slightly differ from the Croatian population as a whole (according to the 2011 Census, women (51.8%) outnumbered men (48.2%), average age of the population was 41.7, 21.3% completed elementary education and 16.4% graduated from an institution of higher education), but it is expected that these differences will not incur bias in the analysis. In addition, the features of the sample (mostly young and educated male respondents) are similar to some other studies on sport event impacts (e.g., Ahmed 2017; Karadakis and Kaplanidou 2012; Kim et al. 2015). At the aggregate level, one out of five respondents attended at least one of the games, but surprisingly, this is still the case at the disaggregated level. In fact, out of those who attended the games, non-host city residents attended more games on average than host city residents, despite greater distances and less availability of the games.

Table 1. Sample profile.

Variable	Host City (N = 251)		Non-Host Cities (N = 225)		Total (N = 476)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Gender (%)						
Male	135	53.79	125	55.56	260	54.62
Female	116	46.21	100	44.44	216	45.38
Age (in years)	32.17		32.08		32.13	
Education						
No education	3	1.20	0	0.00	3	0.63
Elementary	4	1.59	2	0.89	6	1.26
Secondary	131	52.19	108	48.00	239	50.21
University	103	41.04	98	43.56	201	42.23
Postgraduate	10	3.98	17	7.56	27	5.67
Employment						
Public sector	41	16.33	64	28.44	105	22.06
Private sector	82	32.67	59	26.22	141	29.62
Unemployed	66	26.29	46	20.44	112	23.53
Retired	10	3.98	9	4.00	19	3.99
Other	52	20.72	47	20.89	99	20.80
Games attended						
Yes	54	21.51	43	19.11	97	20.38
No	197	78.49	182	80.89	379	79.62
Average number of games attended	1.63		1.93		1.76	

3.2. Descriptive Statistics on Socio-Economic Impacts

The level of respondents' agreement with particular socio-economic impacts at the aggregate level (i.e., from residents of both host and non-host cities) is presented in Table 2. Respondents expressed more agreement with positive socio-economic impacts (mean 4.96) than negative impacts (4.42). Regarding positive socio-economic impacts, it seems that impacts related to community development (5.17) are more substantial than impacts related to community pride (4.92) and economic benefits

(4.72). The statements that the EHF EURO2018 “increased opportunity to inform hosting community in the world” (mean 5.66) and “enhanced media visibility” (5.60) received by far the highest level of agreement from the respondents. On the other hand, respondents did not perceive that economic conditions in hosting cities had improved to any large extent (4.39) or that the understanding of other cultures had increased considerably (4.35) because of the event. Regarding negative socio-economic impacts, respondents found traffic problems (4.95) and economic costs (4.48) as being more problematic than environmental concerns (4.25) and security issues (4.15) in the host cities. Difficulty in finding parking spaces during the event (5.40) was the most obvious negative impact perceived by respondents, but the overall perception is that the development of the host cities will not be negatively affected in the long-term (2.91).

Table 2. Mean values and standard deviation for socio-economic impacts ($N = 476$).

Variable	Mean	SD
Positive social impact variables	4.96	
Community Development	5.17	
Increased the understanding of the other cultures and societies of visitors	4.35	1.489
Increased interest in international sport events	4.99	1.410
Increased opportunity to inform hosting community in the world	5.66	1.320
Enhanced media visibility	5.60	1.314
Improved the image of hosting cities	5.23	1.335
Community Pride	4.92	
Enhanced the community pride of local residents	5.22	1.459
Enhanced the sense of being a part of community	4.97	1.464
Provided an incentive for the preservation of the local culture	4.55	1.432
Reinforced community spirit	4.95	1.556
Economic Benefits	4.72	
Increased trade for local business	5.10	1.495
Improved economic conditions in hosting cities	4.39	1.549
Increased leisure facilities in hosting cities	4.75	1.507
Increased community development investments	4.65	1.425
Negative social impact variables	4.42	
Traffic Problems	4.95	
Increased road closures/disruption	4.76	1.534
Resulted in traffic congestion	4.68	1.632
Increased hardship for finding parking spaces	5.40	1.428
Security Risks	4.15	
Increased risk of terrorism (e.g., bomb threat, etc.)	4.19	1.789
Attracted interests of terrorists for future events	4.01	1.738
Increased risk of cyber-attack	3.72	1.736
Increased disturbance from visitors (e.g., drunkenness, hooliganism, disorder, and vandalism)	4.68	1.608
Economic Costs	4.48	
Excessive spending on new infrastructure for the event	4.16	1.541
Excessive spending for preparing the sport halls	4.11	1.552
Local residents were not a primary consideration for the event	5.17	1.490
Environmental Concerns	4.25	
Increased the amount of litter and waste	5.08	1.586
Increased air pollution	4.25	1.772
Increased noise levels	4.74	1.585
Urban development will be negatively affected long-term	2.91	1.535

Note: Seven-point Likert-type scale was used (1—strongly disagree, 4—neutral, and 7—strongly agree).

3.3. Factor Analysis Results

Through several steps, factor analysis resulted in 23 items under six factors with eigenvalues greater than 1 (Table 3): factor 1—Community development and pride (eight items), factor 2—Security risks (three items), factor 3—Traffic problems (three items), factor 4—Economic benefits (four items), factor 5—Environmental concerns (three items), and factor 6—Economic costs (two items). Altogether, the factors account for 70.667% of the variance. Four items were discarded (local residents were not a primary consideration for the event, urban development will be negatively affected long-term, reinforced community spirit, and increased disturbance from visitors like drunkenness, hooliganism,

disorder, and vandalism) because their communalities were low and factor loadings were below 0.4 for all factors.

Table 3. Results of exploratory factor analysis.

Variable	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Factor 5	Factor 6
Community Development and Pride						
Increased the understanding of the other cultures and societies of visitors	0.657				−0.111	
Increased interest in international sport events	0.809					
Increased opportunity to inform hosting community in the World	0.798					
Enhanced media visibility	0.750					
Improved the image of hosting cities	0.561			0.191		
Enhanced the community pride of local residents	0.539			0.106	0.174	−0.136
Enhanced the sense of being a part of community	0.528			0.199	0.172	−0.156
Provided an incentive for the preservation of the local culture	0.405			0.324		
Security Risks						
Increased risk of terrorism (e.g., bomb threat, etc.)		0.858				
Attracted interests of terrorists for future events		0.899				
Increased risk of cyber-attack		0.738				0.164
Traffic Problems						
Increased road closures/disruption			−0.759			
Resulted in traffic congestion			−0.976			
Increased hardship for finding parking spaces			−0.618		0.141	
Economic Benefits						
Increased trade for local business	0.197	−0.127	−0.123	0.462	0.183	
Improved economic conditions in hosting cities				0.870		
Increased leisure facilities in hosting cities				0.801		
Increased community development investments				0.666		0.104
Environmental Concerns						
Increased the amount of litter and waste					0.649	
Increased air pollution		0.107			0.704	0.173
Increased noise levels	−0.106				0.840	
Economic Costs						
Excessive spending on new infrastructure for the event						0.891
Excessive spending for preparing the sport halls					0.103	0.802
<i>Eigenvalues</i>	60.820	30.724	10.708	10.529	10.311	10.160
<i>Variance explained (%)</i>	290.653	160.193	70.428	60.649	50.701	50.043
<i>Reliability alpha</i>	0.885	0.898	0.829	0.831	0.825	0.873

Extraction Method: Principal Axis Factoring. Rotation Method: Oblimin with Kaiser Normalization. Rotation converged in 10 iterations.

3.4. Results on the Differences between Perceived Impacts of Host City and Non-Host City Residents

Table 4 suggests that non-host city residents expressed higher mean values for most of the socio-economic impacts in most of the dimensions. Host city residents communicated a higher level of agreement than non-host city residents, with only three variables related to security risks. When these two groups are compared, the mean perceived impact scores of non-host city residents were statistically significantly different (two tailed $p < 0.05$) from those of host city residents for eight variables. Four other variables show a marginally significant difference at the 90% level of confidence.

Table 4. Results of the *t*-test.

Variable	Host City (N = 251)		Non-Host Cities (N = 225)		t	Sig. (2-Tailed)
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Community Development and Pride						
Increased the understanding of the other cultures and societies of visitors	4.15	1.443	4.58	1.510	−3.149	0.002
Increased interest in international sport events	4.96	1.382	5.03	1.444	−0.548	0.584
Increased opportunity to inform hosting community in the World	5.63	1.349	5.69	1.289	−0.523	0.601
Enhanced media visibility	5.50	1.279	5.72	1.346	−1.775	0.777
Improved the image of hosting cities	5.14	1.302	5.33	1.365	−1.548	0.122
Enhanced the community pride of local residents ¹	5.08	1.393	5.36	1.518	−2.094	0.037
Enhanced the sense of being a part of community	4.78	1.424	5.18	1.483	−2.977	0.003
Provided an incentive for the preservation of the local culture	4.42	1.373	4.70	1.484	−2.103	0.036
Security Risks						
Increased risk of terrorism (e.g., bomb threat, etc.)	4.20	1.774	4.18	1.809	0.155	0.877
Attracted interests of terrorists for future events	4.12	1.745	3.88	1.726	1.450	0.148
Increased risk of cyber-attack	3.79	1.740	3.64	1.732	0.959	0.338
Traffic Problems						
Increased road closures/disruption ¹	4.69	1.590	4.83	1.469	−1.012	0.312
Resulted in traffic congestion	4.55	1.673	4.82	1.577	−1.796	0.073
Increased hardship for finding parking spaces	5.27	1.493	5.55	1.339	−2.176	0.030
Economic Benefits						
Increased trade for local business	4.95	1.522	5.26	1.450	−2.236	0.026
Improved economic conditions in hosting cities	4.27	1.517	4.53	1.575	−1.850	0.065
Increased leisure facilities in hosting cities	4.64	1.464	4.88	1.548	−1.696	0.091
Increased community development investments	4.55	1.368	4.76	1.481	−1.545	0.123
Environmental Concerns						
Increased the amount of litter and waste ¹	4.85	1.654	5.34	1.467	−3.419	0.001
Increased air pollution ¹	4.14	1.700	4.37	1.845	−1.408	0.160
Increased noise levels	4.58	1.604	4.93	1.545	−2.426	0.016
Economic Costs						
Excessive spending on new infrastructure for the event	4.04	1.542	4.28	1.534	−1.672	0.095
Excessive spending for preparing the sport halls	4.05	1.541	4.18	1.565	−0.912	0.362

¹ Because the variances for the two groups were significantly unequal ($p < 0.05$), the output lines for unequal variances were used.

4. Discussion and Future Directions

In an attempt to identify the main socio-economic impacts and social regeneration opportunities for hosting communities associated with the EHF EURO2018 (first research question), the resolved factor structure did not represent complete consistency with the conceptual model contained in the questionnaire because two theoretical factors, 'community development' and 'community pride', merged into one. The literature evidences different approaches and conclusions regarding these two factors and items related to them. For instance, [Liu et al. \(2014\)](#) investigated the legacy of the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games from a non-host city perspective and statements that this Olympics promoted a positive national image and civic pride were factored under the common factor named 'psychic income and social capital'. [Kim and Uysal \(2003\)](#) did not investigate within a sport event environment, but their study on perceived socio-economic impacts among festival organizers in the Commonwealth of Virginia provided the factor 'community cohesiveness', loaded with six items, two of which are building community pride and enhanced community image. On the other hand, in the study by [Twynam and Johnston \(2004\)](#) on host community reactions to 1995 Nordic World Ski Championships, improved community spirit was loaded under the factor named 'community development', but increased media attention was part of a separate factor named 'event support'. Similarly, [Kim et al. \(2015\)](#) obtained a conceptually clear factor structure with 'community development' and 'community pride' as two separate factors, each loaded with several specific items. To summarize, in this study, the first two theoretical factors were combined to form the factor called 'community development and pride', which could be explained by the fact that the pride of local residents is the result of enhanced image dimension, as stated in the study of [Kim and Walker \(2012\)](#).

Other proposed dimensions were confirmed by EFA, revealing an additional five factors: 'security risks', 'traffic problems', 'economic benefits', 'environmental concerns', and 'economic costs'. When compared with [Kim et al. \(2015\)](#), who called for future studies that would examine their conceptual framework, the results of this study justified the inclusion of the environmental impact dimension in the questionnaire. Although some previous studies did not consider environmental impacts (e.g., [Kim and Petrick 2005](#); [Kim et al. 2006](#)), these are recognized as an important legacy of major events ([Ahmed 2017](#); [Karadakis and Kaplanidou 2012](#); [Konstantaki and Wickens 2010](#)) and this study came to the same conclusion. Due to the rigorous criteria of exclusion of items with loading below 0.40, factor 6 ('economic costs') was loaded with only two items that reflect economic costs in terms of excessive spending for new infrastructure and overall event preparation.

Regarding the mean values of particular factors and items, the results are consistent with the extant literature in many ways. At the aggregate level, respondents generally perceived more positive socio-economic impacts than negative ones. As the most significant positive impacts, they highlighted the improved image of the hosting community, as well as increased media visibility and the opportunity to inform the hosting community in the world. Greater visibility and recognition of the hosting community in the worldwide media is indeed a very important benefit for hosting communities, as found in some previous studies on large-scale sport events (see: [Kim and Petrick 2005](#); [Kim and Walker 2012](#); [Twynam and Johnston 2004](#)). There could be other direct and indirect effects, foremost in tourism, like attracting more visitors to host cities. On the other hand, it seems that hosting the EHF EURO2018 did not increase social relations and cultural exchange with visitors since the understanding of people from other countries was not recognized as a major benefit. This is opposed to the findings of [Ahmed \(2017\)](#) in the case of the Hail International Rally in Saudi Arabia, [Kim et al. \(2006\)](#) in the case of the 2002 World Cup in South Korea, [Lesjak et al. \(2014\)](#) in the case of the 2013 European Basketball Championship in Slovenia, and [Zhou and Ap \(2009\)](#) in the case of the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games, but could be explained by the insufficient involvement of local residents since they perceived that they were not a primary consideration when planning and managing the event. Other impacts with above-average means, which are directly related to local residents, included reinforced community spirit, enhanced community pride, and a sense of being a part of the community. This fits with other studies (e.g., [Konstantaki and Wickens 2010](#); [Njoroge et al. 2017](#); [Ntloko and Swart](#)

2008; Pranić et al. 2012; Zhou and Ap 2009) and, as suggested by Liu et al. (2014), these intangible benefits could even outweigh the economic benefits. This is likewise true for this study since the results imply that improved economic conditions and infrastructure development were not perceived as the main event impacts. The exception within economic benefits is increased trade for local business, which is a strong economic impact also recognized by Hritz and Ross (2010), Njoroge et al. (2017), and Ritchie et al. (2009), but sometimes of a short-term nature (Twynam and Johnston 2004).

Besides these positive impacts perceived by the respondents, a number of negative impacts emerged too. Similar to other recent studies (e.g., Ahmed 2017; Hritz and Ross 2010; Kim et al. 2006; Lesjak et al. (2014); Njoroge et al. 2017), traffic problems, especially hardship for finding parking spaces, seem to be the most obvious negative impacts. Considering environmental legacy, the means of particular items are divergent. While the impact on the amount of waste and noise levels in the host cities is considerable, air pollution does not pretend to be a problem. The findings on waste and noise levels are consistent with Ahmed (2017) and Njoroge et al. (2017), but contradict Hritz and Ross (2010), Ntloko and Swart (2008), and Twynam and Johnston (2004), who stated that no major environmental impacts appeared as the consequence of the sport event. When only considering the items that loaded factor 6 'economic costs', the general opinion is that spending on new infrastructure and EHF EURO2018 preparation was not excessive. This is contrary to the results of studies examining the impacts of the Hail International Rally (Ahmed 2017) and 2002 World Cup (Kim and Petrick 2005), which suggest that an extremely high amount of money was spent on the organization of these two events. However, an opposite result also exists regarding the 2002 World Cup, as Kim et al. (2006) noted that spending on construction costs was not a problem from the perspective of local residents. For this study, an appropriate explanation could be found in the overall context of the event because all matches of the EHF EURO2018 were played in sports halls that had been built for a related large-scale event that Croatia hosted in 2009 (for more detail see Pranić et al. 2012). As only nine years have passed since then, the sport halls are in good condition and no major investments were needed. Finally, this study did not determine security risks related to the event as being a critical problem. Despite recent news regarding terrorism from around the world (i.e., Germany, France, United Kingdom, United States etc.), the perceived threat from terrorism is low. Although some studies have recorded that local residents did not perceive an increase in crime levels at the Red Bull Big Wave Africa in Hout Bay, Cape Town (Ntloko and Swart 2008), and at the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games (Zhou and Ap 2009), a lack of confidence that security would be ensured at the large-scale events is also noted (Konstantaki and Wickens 2010). Therefore, although the item referring to visitors who could cause increased disturbance to local residents through deviant behavior like drunkenness or vandalism did not load into factor 2 'security risks', its mean is higher than other items within this particular factor, and this issue should be taken into consideration when planning future events.

Further, when it comes to examining the impacts of large-scale sports events on hosting communities simultaneously from the perspective of host city and non-host city residents, such studies are scarce, making the comparison of the results of this particular study very difficult. Yet, interesting results of this study refer to the differences between host city and non-host city residents' perceptions of socio-economic impacts (i.e., the second research question). In general, non-host city residents perceived greater socio-economic impacts for host cities (both positive and negative) than host city residents, except for three variables belonging to the factor 'security risks'. More precisely, non-host city residents perceived that the EHF EURO2018 contributed to host city community development and pride, as well as the economy, to a greater extent than was perceived by host city residents. Statistically significant differences between the perceptions of the two groups exist regarding cultural issues (i.e., the event increased the understanding of the other cultures and societies of visitors and provided an incentive for the preservation of the local culture), the community attachment aspect of the hosting community (i.e., the event enhanced community pride and the sense of being a part of community), and increased trade for local business as a main economic benefit. Both host city and non-host city residents highly assessed a set of variables focused on destination visibility, recognition,

and image, but no significant differences between the two groups exist, thus confirming these benefits as strong constants when hosting large-scale events (see again: [Kim and Walker 2012](#); [Twynam and Johnston 2004](#)). Regarding negative impacts, non-host city residents perceived host city residents to be suffering more from traffic problems (traffic congestion and availability of parking spaces) and environmental concerns (increased noise levels and amount of litter and waste) than was the case in reality. Concerning economic costs, a marginally significant difference exists in the perception of spending on new infrastructure for the event. On the other hand, it seems that non-host city residents underestimated security risks for hosting communities. Although the means of the two groups regarding security issues were not high, that is, were approximately around the neutral value of the measurement scale (4), and there are no statistically significant differences, the fact is that host city residents were somewhat more afraid of possible terrorist attacks during and after the event.

Building on the above, the novelty of this paper is that it has emphasized the need to include and compare host and non-host city residents' perceptions within a 'triple bottom line' approach encompassing the broad spectrum of socio-economic impacts for hosting cities. By measuring the impacts of large-scale sporting events, the EHF EURO2018 in particular, this paper is consistent with [Kim and Walker \(2012\)](#) assertion that hosting sport events serves in the present, and will serve in the future, as a catalyst for community development in the broadest sense. However, drawing lessons from other studies, the potential event outcomes should not be overestimated since intangible benefits such as community pride on one hand, or negative environmental legacies on the other, could outweigh the economic benefits in the long run ([Liu et al. 2014](#)). Although it is difficult to compare the results with previous studies conducted in similar contexts (e.g., [Lesjak et al. 2014](#); [Pranić et al. 2012](#)) due to the different variables and measuring scales used, the findings suggest that local residents perceived socio-cultural benefits as more influential than economic. What is more, similar to [Kim et al. \(2006\)](#), this study found somewhat disappointing results regarding stimulating economic conditions and infrastructure development, and there is a potential danger that the evaluation of economic legacy performance outcomes could decrease even more in the future ([Karadakis and Kaplanidou 2012](#)). Indeed, the true worth of legacies (i.e., whether legacies have been sustained) can be valued only in a long-term timeframe after an event ([Matheson 2010](#)). This is true for both developed countries and smaller and less developed countries, whose infrastructure and financial capacities do not allow the organization of mega sport events. As far as Croatia and other similar countries are concerned, large international sport events in popular sports could be used for building a country image and encouraging community coherence. Economic benefits should be additionally stimulated, especially if all necessary infrastructure already exists. Therefore, it would be interesting for future studies to repeat the same (or similar) investigation after a certain time lag and to compare whether the perceived impacts of the EHF EURO2018 have changed over time. Moreover, since it goes beyond the scope of this paper, future studies could examine whether the attitudes towards event impacts depend on some other socio-demographic and behavioral variables, such as gender, type of involvement, or number of games attended.

Considering social regeneration as a holistic concept in the social science and management studies, sporting event-led urban regeneration and development (see [Gaudette et al. 2017](#); [Wise and Perić 2017a](#)) should probably focus more on social legacies or 'softer' impacts ([Clark and Kearns 2015](#)), at least to the same extent as there is a focus on economic benefits like building new infrastructure, creating new business and job opportunities, or income generation. However, social impacts are sometimes limited and critical assessment will depend on the specific context where physical regeneration takes place. For future incentives, as argued by [Wise and Perić \(2017b\)](#), it is important that local residents should be able to get involved in the event. Host governments should therefore develop appropriate long-term managerial and marketing strategies which will engage the community, that is, all relevant stakeholders. For instance, the engagement of host (and non-host) residents as volunteers is a common practice when hosting an event and can provide these individuals with a feeling of inclusion, attachment, and community unity, adding to the socio-cultural legacy ([Karadakis and Kaplanidou 2012](#)). This is

the only way that a wide range of legacies for all stakeholders, including social regeneration, will be achieved and some serious negative perceptions, like perceived traffic problems, leveraged.

Finally, one of this study's limitations arises from the sampling method and it is possible that a sample from other host and non-host cities in Croatia would bring different results and conclusions. Further, although it is sometimes criticized that the results based on the SET may not be completely accurate (McGehee and Andereck 2004), the use of SET in this paper was highly advantageous. The fact that all six socio-economic dimensions received above mid-point scores suggests, according to Liu et al. (2014), the dynamic nature of this theoretical framework. This has both theoretical and practical implications in the field of event management and sport tourism. A dual focus on both social and economic impacts in understanding the added value of hosting large-scale sport tourism events would benefit event planners by enabling them to better understand how residents regard the wide spectrum of impacts that events generate. In addition, the SET assumes an exchange of resources between stakeholders, in this case, hosts and visitors. Consequently, it is claimed that residents' predisposition to support hosting in the future depends on the recognition of real outcomes from the event (Ahmed 2017; Lee and Krohn 2013; Lovegrove and Fairley 2017). If residents recognize actual benefits from the event, they could be (more) supportive of hosting similar events in the future, providing there are social regeneration policies and strategies in place based on assessed evidence. In this regard, the results of this study would also benefit event planners and sport marketers when trying to acquire community-wide support. Such a positive attitude toward hosting could have critical implications for the overall success of the future projects.

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Appendix A

Survey on the socio-economic impacts of hosting a sport event

In responding to the following statements, think of the impacts that **European Handball Championship 2018** had for host cities and their residents. Please indicate how much you agree with the following statements (1—Strongly disagree; 7—Strongly agree).

	European Handball Championship 2018 ...	1—Strongly Disagree; 7—Strongly Agree							
1	Increased the understanding of the other cultures and societies of visitors	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
2	Increased interest in international sport events	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
3	Increased opportunity to inform hosting community in the World	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
4	Enhanced media visibility of hosting cities	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
5	Improved the image of hosting cities	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
6	Enhanced the community pride of local residents	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
7	Enhanced the sense of being a part of community	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
8	Provided an incentive for the preservation of the local culture	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
9	Reinforced community spirit	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
10	Increased trade for local business	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
11	Improved economic conditions in hosting cities	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
12	Increased leisure facilities in hosting cities	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
13	Increased community development investments	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
14	Increased road closures/disruption	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
15	Resulted in traffic congestion	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
16	Increased hardship for finding parking spaces	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
17	Increased risk of terrorism (e.g., bomb threat, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
18	Attracted interests of terrorists for future events	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
19	Increased risk of cyber-attack	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
20	Increased disturbance from visitors (e.g., drunkenness, hooliganism, disorder, and vandalism)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
21	Excessive spending on new infrastructure for the event	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
22	Excessive spending for preparing the sport halls	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
23	Local residents were not a primary consideration for the event	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
24	Increased the amount of litter and waste in hosting cities	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
25	Increased air pollution in hosting cities	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
26	Increased noise levels in hosting cities	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
27	Urban development will be negatively affected long-term	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

Gender: ☐F ☐M **Year of birth:** _____ **Place of residence (city/municipality):** _____

In my city/municipality (place of residence) I live for: _____ year(s)

Education:

☐No education ☐Elementary ☐Secondary ☐University ☐Postgraduate

Employment:

☐In public sector ☐In private sector ☐Unemployed ☐Retired ☐Other

Did you attend the European Handball Championship 2018 matches?? ☐YES ☐NO

If the answer to the previous question is YES, please indicate how many matches you have attended: _____ matches

Thank you for completing this questionnaire!

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