

## **Taiwanese Residents' Perceived Social, Economic, Recreational and Political Benefits for Hosting the 2017 Universiade Games**

*By Steve Chen<sup>\*</sup>, Yun-kuang Lee<sup>†</sup>, Chieh Der Dongfang<sup>‡</sup>,  
Cao-Yen Chen<sup>+</sup> & Tsung-Chih Chiu<sup>°</sup>*

*Hosting mega sporting events has been viewed as a great method to provide the host city and nation publicity, recognition, pride, and even economic benefits. This study aims to investigate the perceptions of Taiwanese residents on the social, economic, recreational, and political impact for hosting 2017 World University Games. The researchers used a self-created 7-point Likert survey to collect 1,021 responses from February to April of 2017. The survey covered four main constructs: (1) National and Cultural Spirit and Hospitality, (2) Financial and Recreational Factor, (3) Negative Social Consequences, and (4) Support for the Events and Political Concern. The results of the study showed the perceived positive benefits also outweighed the negative concerns associated with the events. Participants' game attending willingness was best predicted by the rating of "national and cultural spirit and hospitality." However, the notion of using this sporting event as a tool to bring peace and to ease the political tension between China and Taiwan was not observed. Finally, recommendations for promoting future large sporting events in Taiwan were offered. Strategies included targeting young individuals under 30 years of age, as well as emphasizing the potential growth of tourism and recreational benefits.*

**Keywords:** *Mega Events, Universiade Games, Taiwan, Benefits.*

### **Introduction**

In 1971, the Chinese government (People's Republic of China) replaced the Taiwanese national government as the official representative to the United Nations (UN). Since that time, Taiwan has lost many international partners and its legitimate political identity on the global stage. During the last forty-some years, Taiwan experienced a unique form of political oppression from the Chinese government under its "one China" policy. Taiwan could not join any official international organizations (i.e., World Health Organization, UNESCO, etc.), sign free trade treaties, or establish foreign diplomacy with other nations as an independent country, because the UN only recognize the People's Republic of China as the solo legitimate representation of "Chinese government". Despite the

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<sup>\*</sup>Professor of Sports Management, Morehead State University, USA.

<sup>†</sup>Associate Professor of Ball Sports, National Taipei City University, Taiwan.

<sup>‡</sup>Associate Professor and Chair of Department of Physical Education, Soochow University, Taiwan.

<sup>+</sup>Associate Professor and Chair of Department of Physical Education, Kaohsiung Medical University, Taiwan.

<sup>°</sup>Associate Professor of Department of Physical Education, Jinwen University, Taiwan.

political oppression by the Chinese government and isolation from allies, Taiwan still survives and operates as an independent sovereignty, and has become quite wealthy (No. 22 ranking in GDP per capita among the world nations). The Taiwanese government has made numerous attempts to become an official member of the UN, World Health Organization, and other major international political organizations. Unfortunately, the effort often falls short, because the Chinese government consistently uses its political and economic influence to block Taiwan's entry into these entities. As of today, Taiwan still remains an "illegitimate" country, which is not recognized by many of the UN affiliated nations.

Taiwan has used various means to gain international support to recognize its existence and legitimacy. Apparently, a fast track for earning the international recognition is through participation in international sporting events. Sage et al. (2018) mentioned a nation's ruling elite often unites its citizens and impresses citizens of other nations through success in international sporting competitions or hosting mega sporting events. Throughout history, we witnessed Nazi Germany (i.e., 1936 Olympic Games), the former Soviet Unions, its Iron Bloc allies, and China (i.e., early Ping-Pong diplomacy and 2008 Beijing Olympics) using sports as a vehicle for propaganda and promotional tools for nationalism (Sage et al. 2018, Wood 2016). After many years of negotiations and struggles, Taiwan was granted participation in international sports and organizations under the name of Chinese Taipei by the International Olympic Committee. Within the last 10 years, Taiwan has hosted three international sporting events (2009 World Games, 2010 Deaflympics, and 2017 Summer Universiade Games) to further advance its international identity. Hosting the 2017 Summer Universiade Games has been considered the epic moment for showcasing Taiwan's democracy, wealth, and competitiveness to all nations (Taipei City Government 2011, Huang 2017).

### **Benefits, Impacts, and Concerns Associated with Mega Sporting Events**

Past research has indicated that hosting mega sporting events such as the Olympics and the FIFA World Championship is a great way to promote national pride and international image (Leeds et al. 2018, Sage et al. 2018, Wood 2006). Although there is no concrete single definition of mega sporting events, whether they occur regularly or infrequently, they generally command a high level of public interest and media attention (Leeds et al. 2018). In addition, these events can attract numerous participants and spectators to visit the host country or city. The success of Beijing Games is a great example of how China utilized the games to earn recognition and spotlight (Chung and Chang 2011). Hosting mega-sporting events provide the host city and nation opportunities to increase publicity and enhance awareness (Jeong and Faulkner 1996, Ritchie et al. 2010). Ritchie and Lyons' study (1990) on the 1988 Calgary Winter Olympics found more than 50% of respondents held positive perceptions about the city hosting the event. More than a third of the respondents also believed that the event helped boost local tourism and economy.

According to Grix (2012), the German government employed a deliberate long-term strategy by instrumentalizing the 2006 FIFA World Cup to promote the country's image or 'brand'. The coordinated effort attempted to create a "feel good" sensation around that tournament that targeted all German fans. The results from the study of Florek et al. (2008) demonstrated the success of the German government's strategy. The interview response of the visiting New Zealand fans showed a significant improvement of the host country's image because of the respondents' direct experience. They perceived Germany as a less expensive, friendlier and multi-cultural country. In another subsequent study, although the British government seemed to be far less concerned about enhancing its international image through its 2012 Olympics, it still focused on the potential economic and social impact which justified its investment for this mega-event (Grix and Houlihan 2014).

Many studies have been conducted to examine the legacy, benefits, and issues of hosting mega sporting events. Preus' study (2007) used the bottom-up approach to identify the event legacy through the evaluation of 'soft' and 'hard' event-related changes in a host city. The identified long-term changes, so called as "event-structures" include meaningful changes in infrastructure, knowledge, image, emotions, networks, and culture. These changes (benefits and costs) through the transformation of the host city are the real legacy of a mega sporting event. While examining the social dimensions of Olympic tourism development, Ritchie et al. (2010) recognized five perceived factors associated with residents' view of the London Olympic Games. They are 'positive social impacts', 'positive economic impacts', and 'three negative impacts' mainly related to traffic congestion, parking issues, and potential increases in the cost of living. In general, the local residents were supportive of hosting the event; however, this supportive feeling is mediated by the perceived socio-cultural and economic impact, but not necessarily the environmental impact (Prayag et al. 2013). The residents were highly sensitive to the impact such as excessive spending and mobility problems. Without surprises, the most significant and important predictors of residents' willingness to host the event in the future are associated with "cultural interest and consolidation" and "excessive spending and mobility problems" (Balduck et al. 2011).

The economic benefits of mega sporting events have been a well-studied topic and traditionally presented in the form of economic impact studies (Atlanta Sport Council 2007, Baade et al. 2008, Baker 2015, Berr 2015, Chen et al. 2010, China Economic Review 2010, Press Trust of India 2010, Schrock 2013, Smith 2010). Interestingly, a lot of controversies had surrounded the conclusions of those economic impact studies due to the criticism of their accuracy and inappropriate methodologies. Numerous studies suggested that hosting these sporting events may even further boost tourism and stimulate the local economy (Cheung et al. 2016, Kim and Petrick 2005, Kim et al. 2006, Madden 2002, Candrea and Ispas 2005). Based on the findings of many past studies, it is not difficult to understand why the rising Chinese and Brazilian governments are eager to host the Olympic Games. Sports supporters' perceptions for the events often go beyond just the pure sports experience. Although the intangible social impact for hosting the events

were often hard to measure (Kim and Petrick 2005), some scholars are favoring the link between mega sporting events and tourism destination promotion (Candrea and Ispas 2005). Other scholars have rejected the notion of economic stimulation brought by the mega sporting events. They indicated the political and economic benefits of these mega events are exaggerated and minuscule (Kasimati 2003, Szymanski 2011). According to Kim and Petrick (2005), more people tend to emphasize the economic benefits associated with the mega-event and care less about the social and cultural implications that these events may bring. The primary reason is because the social benefits are often intangible and difficult to measure.

Despite many of the aforementioned benefits, hosting mega international sporting events (i.e., the Olympic games, the FIFA Championships, and other continental games) can still generate numerous negative criticisms and concerns due to issues such as excessive spending on infrastructure and facility construction, traffic congestion (lack of mobility and parking), pollution, overpopulation, and potential increases in the cost of living (Balduck et al. 2011, Riet 2014, Ritchie et. al. 2010, Tang 2016). Furthermore, officials usually do not like to address any of the negative social impacts associated with the event, since it may defeat the purpose of hosting it (Ritchie et al. 2010).

A unique impact that sporting events and activities may bring to a country or a community is promotion of peace and social unity (The Olympic Museum 2011). As early as the 2000s, scholars had already proposed the idea of fostering world peace through the establishment of global physical education, sports studies, and sport activities (Osada 2000). Former Secretary General of United Nations, Kofi Annan specifically encouraged the campaigns such as Sport-for-development (SFD) and Sport-for-development and peace (SDP) to resolve international conflicts, combat poverty, and improve international community relations (Cunningham 2015). In Klonova's article (2012), she demonstrated the Ukraine government using the 2012 European Football Championship as a platform to create and transform a peaceful national brand and image. Sporting events are viewed as the most effective vehicle to promote dialogue, integration, and peaceful understanding among disparate groups, even when other forms of negotiation have not been successful (Schulenkorf et al. 2011). As Rosenberg (2018) has pointed out, various types of the war conflicts and political tensions were the center of the discussions before the Olympic Games, but when events took place, we often witnessed people ending protests and conflicts to celebrate these festivities. The unification of North and South Korea jointly participating in the 2018 Sochi Winter Olympics can be viewed as the epic illustration of peace via sports (Kim 2018).

### **About the World University Games**

The Universiade Games, also known as the World University Games, is an international sporting and cultural festival that is organized by the International University Sport Federation (FISU). The term, "Universiade" is a combination of the words "University" and "Olympiad." This event is also considered as a huge

cultural festivity that aims to attract young adults and college-age audiences. According to the official website of FISU (International University Sports Federation, n.d.), the games take place every two years in different host cities. It is the second largest multi-sports competition only behind the Olympic Games. The Summer Universiade Games consists of 11 compulsory sports and up to 3 more optional sports chosen by the host country. The Summer Games allow worldwide student-athletes to celebrate with the host city in a true spirit of friendship and sportsmanship in 12 days. Both of the last two Universiade Games prior to 2017 had more than 10,000 participants from more than 140 countries (Gawanju2015 2015). Many volunteers are also students who are generally of the same age as the athletes. The events were broadcasted by more than 100 television stations. The study of Bagautdinova et al. (2015) was a special project that focuses on economic, social and environmental impact brought by the 2013 Kazan Universiade Games (XXVII World Summer Universiade Games). Apparently, the conclusions of that study presented some contradictory effects on development of the city and the surrounding region. Several indicators associated with the environmental development were worsened; however, positive effects were found in increasing the number of residents involved in sports, and the growth of patriotism. Tyler (2015) examined the long-term costs and benefits of the 1991 Sheffield Universiade Games. He found the city experienced continuing economic impact from visitors, and additional investments in sport and leisure facilities subsequently benefited more than 16,000 regular sports participants. It was suggested that concerns related to media management, event planning, and political leadership are important lessons to learn in order to host successful Universiade Games.

The past Taiwanese literature related to the Summer Universiade Games often focused on themes such as management of facilities, strategies for event preparation, marketing and promotions for the events, enhancement of participatory athletes' performance, and use of volunteers (Chen and Chen 2013, Cheng and Chang 2009, Chiu et al. 2014, Hsu 2007, Huang 2015, Hung and Chang 2015, Lee and Hsieh 2015, Lin 2006, Peng 2012, Tseng et al. 2012). A couple of studies have focused on top sport administrators' perceptions on important values and primary factors for conducting a mega sporting event in Taiwan (Chen 2007, Mo 2016). The highly valued benefits were listed in rank order as follows: (1) political and social benefits (49.63%), (2) economic benefits (20.93%), (3) environmental development and infrastructure (20.76%), and (4) safety and legal concerns (8.67%). The political environment and political operation were the most vital factor that dictated the success of the event. According to the telemarketing survey of Chen, Lin, and Hung (2015), 45.5% of the interviewees ( $n=1,073$ ) did not receive information regarding Taipei City hosting the 2017 Universiade Games; however, 77.6% of them supported Taipei City in hosting the event. In general, men are more likely to support the 2017 Universiade Games than women and the age group 18-19 years of age supported it the most.

## Chinese Taipei' Past Experience in Hosting Events

In 2009, the City of Kaohsiung hosted the World Games. It was the highest level of international sporting events that Taiwan had ever sponsored up to that time. During the ten-day time frame, the total event attendance of World Games Exposition reached 0.91M (Joloveho 2009). The article of Chen, Dick, McNabb, and Tseng, (2010) is a rare piece that addresses the financial and economic aspect of the Kaohsiung World Games, the first International Olympic Committee sanctioned sporting events that took place in Taiwan. Approximately, 30,000-50,000 foreign tourists visited Kaohsiung during the 2009 World Games. The ticket sales for the competitions had exceeded \$2-million United States Dollars (USDs) (Sun 2010). Information of the economic impact studies for sporting events in Taiwan are hard to find, because the island nation rarely hosts these events.

## Purpose and Significance of the Study

Past studies in Taiwan related to Universiade Games often focused on athletic performance, facility management, recruitment of volunteers, and marketing aspects of the games. The political concerns also seemed to dominate the potential chances and success for Taiwan to host any international sporting competitions. When the City of Taipei decided to bid for hosting the 2017 Universiade Games, it probably believed that hosting this event would catapult Taiwan's political image. In addition, building many sport facilities and infrastructure would increase tourism, stimulate economic growth, and promote citizens' participation in recreational activities and sports. However, certain identified issues and concerns may suggest the organizing committee was way too optimistic about the potential benefits of hosting this event. Some suggested hosting the event actually escalated the political tension between Taiwan and China, since China did not recognize Taiwan as a true nation (Chen C.C. 2017, Wang 2017). In addition, the local fans' game-attending willingness was low in a pre-game survey. Around three months prior to the opening ceremony, 70% did not expect to attend (Yu 2017). Others even questioned the need for spending so much money to host the Universiade Games.

For a rare opportunity, this study investigated the perceptions of young Taiwanese residents on the social, financial, and political impact of hosting the 2017 Universiade Games prior to the event. The researchers attempted to address and examine how young voters and college-age spectators perceived the impact of the highest level of mega sporting event that would take place in Taiwan. More specifically, what types of political, economic and social benefits were perceived to impact the city for hosting the 2017 Universiade Games? Would hosting this special mega sporting event help Taiwan improve its international image and soften the political tension between Taiwan and China? In addition, the researchers also focused on the level of local residents' support for the games and the influence of the event on local residents' leisure and recreational life.

## Methodology

### *Participants and Procedure*

In order to examine young Taiwanese residents' perceptions about hosting the 2017 Summer Universiade Games, the authors conducted a series of field surveys from mid-February to late April of 2017 in five different major cities (Taipei, New Taipei, Kaohsiung, Tainan, and Changhua) in Taiwan. The authors adopted the convenience sampling method to collect 1,021 respondents' responses (546 males, 53.5%; 463 females: 45.3%) in public areas such as parks, basketball courts, bus and train stations, libraries and six different university campuses. Data were collected on seven selected days within the aforementioned timeframe. Each survey session of the day lasted about five hours. With the help of the four volunteering interviewers, we randomly approached 1,200 individuals and invited them to voluntarily complete the survey after being given the instructions and their rights for participation. All the volunteering survey administrators (student volunteers) went through a training on research ethical conduct prior to physically administer the survey to participants.

The researchers specifically targeted the college-age respondents based on two rationales. First, the Games were genuinely promoted to target young adults and university students. The slogan of the event, "For You, For Youth", clearly illustrated this promotional approach. And secondly, the researchers were interested in knowing the young generation's views on the political implication of this mega sporting event that may impact the future relationship between China and Taiwan. Of those 1,021 responses, only about 15% were completed by the individuals who were older than 24-year-old. However, all the respondents were at least 18 years old. About 36.5% of the respondents claim to be the residents of Taipei City.

### *Instrumentation*

The research framework and survey contents were developed based on the concepts and works provided by Balduck et al. (2011), Baker (2015), Candrea and Ispas (2005), Chen et al. (2015), Florek et al. (2008), Hsu (2007), Prayag et al. (2013), Ritchie et al. (2010), and Swan (2012). The researchers created a 25-item survey questionnaire to solicit the opinions of young citizens of host city (Taipei) and country (Taiwan) about the social, economic, recreational, and political impact that the 2017 Summer Universiade Games might bring to the society. Among 21 of those 25 items, the participants rated their level of agreement to the statements by using a seven-point Likert-scale (ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree). Those 21 Likert-scale items covered issues related to general perceptions about the events social and cultural factor; (nine items), political factor (three items), economic factor (three items), promotion of recreation and health (three items), and willingness for supporting the events (two items). In addition, three demographic questions were included to identify a participant's gender, age, willingness for attending the events, and residency. After the content of the survey

questionnaire were finalized, the researchers obtain the approval from the Institutional Review Board of all involved institutions (both in Taiwan and United States) before starting the data collection process. The original survey items were composed in English. The primary author translated the contents of the survey into Chinese and allowed it to be reviewed by a panel of Taiwanese sport management faculty ( $n = 4$ ) to further address the content validity. A pilot test was conducted in mid-January of 2017 with 40 Taiwanese college students completing the test-and-re-test trial for the instrument. The reliability test yielded a very strong result of internal consistency among the participants' Likert-scale responses ( $n = 1,021$ ; Cronbach  $\alpha = .915$ ). Readers can further find the four main constructs (factors) of all 21 Likert-scale items based on the factor analysis in the "Results" section of the paper (see Table 1).

## Results

About 61.5% of participants expressed their willingness to purchase tickets and attend the 2017 Summer Universiade Games. The results of the factor analysis yielded an extremely high value of Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure (0.920), and good correlation among all items, which indicated the validity of our survey instrument was strong. Four specific constructs (factors) were identified, which included: (1) national and cultural spirit and hospitality, (2) economic and recreational factor, (3) negative social consequences, and (4) support for the events and political concerns. Table 1 listed the ratings of identified factors and their sub-categorical items. In general, the participants gave the highest ratings on the financial and recreational benefits brought by the 2017 Summer Universiade Games among other factors ( $M = 5.38$ ). They also agreed that local residents would welcome the events and visitors with a high spirit and open arms. This notion could be reflected by the moderately high value in "National and Cultural Spirit and Hospitality" ( $M = 5.03$ ). Although the participants were concerned about the amount of trashes produced due to the events and large crowd ( $M = 5.61$ ), the overall perceptions of negative social impact associated with the events were slightly lower than the two aforementioned factors ( $M = 4.96$ ). The participants seem to hold a neutral position on the issue of whether the 2017 Universiade Games helps ease the political tension between Chinese and Taiwanese government ( $M = 3.98$ ).



**Table 1.** Factors of Perceived Impact Brought by the 2017 Summer Universiade (KMO: .920; loading: 62.971%)

Factor and items (% of Variance)	Mean
<b>(1) National and Cultural Spirit and Hospitality (18.767)</b>	<b>5.03</b>
The 2017 Universiade will enhance local residents' spirit of hospitality.	5.04
The 2017 Universiade will draw local residents more friendly to the foreign visitors	5.21
The 2017 Universiade will bring the community together through cultural activities.	4.88
Local residents will be proud to host the 2017 Universiade.	5.24
The 2017 Universiade will promote the local residents' nationalism.	4.78
<b>(2) Financial and Recreational Factor (18.143)</b>	<b>5.38</b>
The 2017 Universiade will help enhance local tourism.	5.70
The 2017 Universiade will help local residents increase opportunities for sales and trading.	5.44
The 2017 Universiade will promote employment opportunities.	4.78
The local residents will gain profits due to the increase of tourists.	5.46
The facilities used for the 2017 Universiade will be well utilized by the local residents to engage physical activities	5.29
Watching the 2017 Universiade will inspire local residents' interest and passion for sport activities.	5.30
<b>(3) Negative Social Consequences (14.007)</b>	<b>4.96</b>
Prices of every product for living costs will rise due to the event.	4.33
Rental cost around the stadium or arena will be rise.	4.76
A lot of trashes will be created due to the events and large crowd.	5.61
The 2017 Universiade will disrupt the lives of the locals in terms of peace and tranquility.	4.95
The 2017 Universiade will cause serious traffic congestion.	5.12
<b>(4) Support for the Events and Political Concern (12.054)</b>	<b>4.21</b>
I will be interested in attending the Universiade event physically.	4.83
I will be interested in purchasing the Universiade licensed merchandises or souvenirs.	3.83
The 2017 Universiade will help ease the political tension between Chinese and Taiwanese government.	3.98

Based on the results of the stepwise regression analysis, both "National spirit and hospitality" and "Economic and recreational factor" are good predictors of participants' overall "support for the events and political concern." "National spirit and hospitality" is a stronger predictor among the two according to the two models illustrated in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Predictors of Overall Support for the Events and Political Concern

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t
		B	Std. Error	Beta	
1	(Constant)	.632	.151		4.184**
	National and Cultural Spirit and Hospitality	.712	.029	.611	24.337**
2	(Constant)	-.042	.178		-.238
	National and Cultural Spirit and Hospitality	.500	.042	.429	11.863**
	Financial and Recreational Factor	.323	.047	.247	6.832**

Dependent Variable: Support for the Events and Political Concern

\*\*  $P < .01$

The participants' perceptions on various identified factors showed significant variations based on their certain demographic characteristics. For examples, individuals who were willing to attend the game physically had a significant higher rating on "National spirit and hospitality," "Economic & recreational factor", and "Support for the events and political concern" ( $p < .05$ ). Those who did not wish to attend the events had a lower rating among all three factors. In general, male participants showed a significant higher rating on "Support for the events and political concern" than those of female respondents ( $p < .05$ ). Despite the number being relatively small, participants who were 25 and older showed a lower rating on "Economic and recreational factor" and "Support for the events and political concern" ( $p < .05$ ).

The researchers also followed and monitored the news releases and reports concerning the 2017 Summer Universiade Games from early June to late October of 2017, a period that lasted from two-month prior and two-month after the events. It was surprising and encouraging to see the 2017 Universiade Games had record-high ticket sales and total attendance. Eighty-seven percent of tickets were sold prior to the events (Taipei2017 2017). About three months prior to the opening ceremony of the 2017 Summer Universiade Games, the mayor and many officials were anxiously worried about the low turnout of the attendance. A report provided by Taipei City Council indicated only about 33% of survey participants might be willing to attend the event physically. As some scholars and reporters had predicted, hosting the 2017 Universiade Games indeed stirred up some controversies and political tension. Many legislators criticized publicly about the use of Chinese Taipei as the official name of Taiwan (Chen C.H. 2017, Wang 2017). Additional concerns were about whether Taipei had spent too much to get ready for the events (Lee 2016, Lee 2017). The Chinese government was not very friendly about letting Taiwan host the 2017 Summer Universiade Games. It set numerous conditions on allowing the torch to pass the mainland (Now News 2016). When the opening ceremony took place, China eventually boycotted the event by restricting all its team-sports members to compete in Taipei. A political demonstration also took place that caused a two-hour delay of the opening ceremony.

## Discussion and Conclusions

This study found over 61.5% of the young participants showed interest in physically attending the games. On average 2.61 friends or family members would accompany these respondents. Male respondents showed a greater interest in attending the games than females ( $p < .05$ ). This finding drastically differed from the previous informal survey done by the city council that found less than 33% of people willing to attend the games. In fact, some scholars were quite positive that the 2017 Universiade Games would set a record-high number of participants and had a strong attendance according to the growing trend of events and past success reported by South Korea (2015 Gwangju Games) (Chen et al. 2015, Chen C. L. 2017).

For this reason, the City of Taipei certainly anticipates another record-high number of participatory countries and student-athletes in 2017. With more than 30,000 foreign visitors attending the Summer Universiade Games, it would certainly promote tourism and stimulate local economy. However, the political conflict between Taiwan and China is the issue that might considerably affect the outcome of the events. Nevertheless, the report of record-setting attendance contradicted the pessimistic thoughts and worries about the low turnout at the event.

The events ultimately received huge support from the local residents, and many foreign visitors and athletes passionately expressed their love and appreciation for the hosting country and events that dramatically changed the Taiwanese people's perspective toward their hosting role as well.

According to the participants' responses, they agreed several benefits potentially brought by the 2017 Summer Universiade Games. These benefits are common examples that mega sporting events often claim to bring according to many past literature (Bagautdinova et al. 2015, Balduck et al. 2011, Ritchie and Lyons 1990, Tyler 2015, Wood 2006). The participants' game attending interest was also at a moderate level ( $M = 4.83$  on a 7-point scale). They also agreed that local residents would be proud to host the event as well ( $M = 5.24$ ). The rating of two specific factors, "national and cultural spirit and hospitality" and "financial and recreational factor," were slightly higher than the rating of "negative social consequences." This finding implied ratings of positively-perceived benefits outweigh the negative consequences. In general, the participants expressed their welcome to the foreign visitors and athletes and were proud to host the 2017 Universiade Games. In fact, past literature revealed that most international sporting events were likely to be positively supported and well attended by the residents of host city and country (Ritchie and Lyons 1990, Chen et al. 2015). Thus, the researchers concluded the participants' responses accurately predicted the public's apparent approval and support toward the Universiade Games after comparing the findings with the news reports afterward. Participants also perceived that the games would generate a sense of national pride, cultural awareness, and spirit for offering hospitality. These elements are commonly identified as the intangible benefits for the hosting countries or cities while operating sporting events (Burton and O'Reilly 2009, Kubo 2014, Swan 2012,

Wood 2006). All the aforementioned discussions probably help explain why the willingness of game attendance was best predicted by the participants' rating of "national pride and spirit of hospitality."

Although, the participants still recognized some of the general negative consequences suggested by many studies such as, rise in the cost of living and rental costs and increase of large, crowd, noise, and traffic congestion (Kim and Petrick 2005, Leeds et al. 2018); overall, the ratings of those issues were at relatively moderate level. The researchers suspected that the young participants were probably over-optimistic about the issues of crowding and traffic congestion or they just got used to that type of living condition in the metro area.

The results of the study also reflected relatively strong rating of the "economic and recreational benefits" ( $M = 5.38$ ). However, older participants (age 45 and above) showed a lower rating in this factor and game attending interest ( $p < .01$ ) as well. The researchers were surprised that the benefits of creating a sense of national pride and enhancing international exposure did not outweigh any perceived economic benefits. Studies often showed the economic gains via direct spending via visitors and induced tourism are the most visible and heavily anticipated positive impact for hosting international sporting events (Florek et al. 2008, Kim et al. 2006, Leeds et al. 2018, Ritchie et al. 2010).

Although tracking the economic impact generated by the mega sporting events is usually a challenging and time-consuming task, event administrators and officials often do not hesitate to brag about their event success by quoting revenues and impact figures, because they are a key tangible benefit that people can grasp and understand. Economists had warned the danger of over-trusting the results of economic impact studies for several past Olympic Games (Chen W.C. 2017). Evidently, most Olympics Games outside of the United States had reported huge revenue losses and left great amount of debts for the local or central government (Tang 2017). According to the financial reports of last five Universiade Games, none of the host countries reported any loss of money (see Table 3). Through the researchers really questioned the integrity of these financial figures, it was not surprised to see why officials were so optimistic about the economic benefits that the Universiade Games could bring (Chinese Taipei University Sports Federation 2015).

**Table 3.** *The Financial Reports of Last Five Universiade Games Prior to 2017*

Game	Income	Expenses
2007 Bangkok	\$49.2M (EU): \$38.91 from the government	\$49.2M: \$35.46M on game operation
2009 Belgrade	N/A	\$42.0M (Euro)
2011 Shenzen	No data available	No data available
2013 Kazan	\$959117000	\$604293000
2015 Gwangju	\$242.1M (EU)	\$242.1M (EU)

Despite the economic impact of the sporting events often being inflated and over-promising, scholars still remind us to consider all the intangibles (i.e., cultural and social impact) closely while weighing host city's benefits for mega sporting events (Burton and O'Reilly 2009). The participants tended to agree that local

residents' interest and passion for sporting activities would be inspired by the 2017 Summer Universiade Games. In fact, we had witnessed the officials addressing the view of using sporting events to propel Taiwan's global visibility (Cheng 2017). The nation also has planned several large domestic and small regional international sporting events for the next three years and expects to rack up some tourism incomes (Cheng 2017). However, there were still scholars who believed the 2017 Summer Universiade Games would create more debts than actual economic profits for Taipei City (Buzz Orange 2015). Numerous studies revealed that mega sporting events often brought memorable and positive legacies to the host cities and countries (Grix 2012, Preu 2007). For this reason, governments often do not hesitate to take the initiative to engage in organizing and executing those types of events. Several news reports suggested the effort and support given by the Taipei City had paid off. The President of the International University Sport Federation even praised that the 2017 Summer Universiade Games were the most successful summer games ever (Cheng 2017). Numerous articles highlighted the high levels of satisfaction and recognition for the 2017 Summer Universiade Games by foreign visitors and athletes (Chen C.C. 2017, Cheng 2017, Tso 2017). Officials also claimed the events had made Taiwan "visible" in the global world.

A unique contribution of this study is examining the political impact created by the 2017 Summer Universiade Games for the host country. Many pictures showed that foreign athletes carried Taiwan's national flags to the closing ceremony to support Taiwan as an "autonomous" nation. Reporters of *The Nikkei Asian Review* and *The New York Times* captured the image of thousands of Taiwanese audiences in "Republic of China" afro wigs cheering the arrival of team Chinese Taipei. Chris Horton of the *New York Times* further explained why reporting on Taiwan is not easy, due to its sensitive political conflict with China and its unique international identity (Chen C.H. 2017). Although the notion of sports as a great tool for unifying everyone and bringing peace was well received (Schulenkorf et al. 2011), the participants did not optimistically believe the Universiade Games would help ease the political tension between Chinese and Taiwanese government. Evidently, the passive boycott from certain Chinese representatives and protests of retired police and soldiers in Taipei clearly demonstrated that people used the sporting events as a means to launch political causes. Three months prior to the opening ceremony of the Universiade Games, Taiwanese congressmen debated fiercely about why there was the need to use the name of Chinese Taipei instead of Taiwan (Wang 2017).

We witnessed a drastic different political strategy utilized by the Chinese Government from the one embraced by North and South Korea towards the 2018 Winter Olympics. The Pyngchong Winter Olympics was a highly anticipated event, as the world all waited to see how North Korea would react to the event (Wolff 2015). Surprisingly, North and South Korea joined hands and used this special mega sporting event as a platform to negotiate peace treaties and execute collaborative activities (i.e., sending a unified team to compete for ice hockey). The 2018 Pyngchong Winter Games became a catalyst that helped two nations work toward unification. History has shown us that there were a lot of political and environmental disasters that might explode during the Olympic Games, in reality

the shows still went on and things for the most part turned out better than people had expected (Rosenberg 2018). Although there was no contentious conflict that occurred during the 2017 Summer Universiade Games, the relationship between Taiwan and China did not develop further as seen in the 2018 Winter Olympics demonstrated by both sides of Korea.

Finally, the researchers would like to offer a few recommendations for planning and hosting future international sporting events. Those strategies include: (1) targeting young individuals under the age of 30, since they are the most likely to be the core attendees for the sporting events, (2) emphasizing the potential growth of tourism and recreational benefits to gain more governmental support, and (3) launching social media campaigns to highlight the cultural activities and multicultural elements. A big limitation of the study is that the survey was disseminated prior to the games. Due to employment in another country, the primary researcher did not get the chance to conduct another post-event survey to track how residents' sentiments changed after the games. Fortunately, the researchers could still examine the accuracy and predictability of participants' pre-event perceptions by comparing the results with several post-event news reports. Hopefully, Taiwan will be able to land more opportunities to host international sporting events, so more studies can be conducted and repeated to reaffirm the various benefits mentioned by the study. It will also be interesting to study how China would react politically, if Taiwan gets more opportunities to showcase itself in a global scene.

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