



## **Impacts of Hosting a Sport Event in Tourism High Season**

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### **Abstract**

The timing of hosting sport tourism events during tourism high season can socially impact the quality of life of the residents living within the host community. Therefore, in order to successfully assess the impact of these types of events on the social well-being of residents, the perceptions of those who reside in close proximity to the event should be taken into consideration. Social impact assessments of sport tourism events, though seemingly important, are often avoided by scholars who give precedence to the perceived economic benefits of hosting a tourism sporting event. Avoidance in measuring the social impact stems from the limited credibility that this type of assessment is believed to have, as the perceptions of residents can change over time. Regardless of this, the manner in which local residents view a particular event is critical to its long-term success. From a social sciences perspective, this paper examines the impacts of hosting a sport event in tourism high season through locally perceived notions. Previous studies assessing local perceptions of social impacts of a small-scale event hosted during tourism high season on a small island are limited, and this paper fills this gap.

**Keywords:** Sport Events, Event timing, Recreation, Marathon, Social Impacts, Tourism Seasonality, Barbados

## Introduction

Tourism to date is one of the largest and fastest growing economic sectors in the world with a contribution of 9% to global GDP and a record of US\$1.075 billion international tourism receipts (World Tourism Organisation, 2013). One major contributor to these statistics is sports tourism (Neirotti, 2003). Sport is regarded as the world's largest social phenomenon, while tourism is predicted to become the world's biggest industry (Kurtzman & Zauhar, 2010). Tourism as an experience-oriented activity and sport as a performance-oriented activity are very much like Siamese twins (Keller, 2002). Therefore, the points of contact between sport and tourism have increased dramatically as their relationships are very compatible. These elements have led to the combination of these two industries creating what is termed today as sport tourism.

Sport tourism, as considered a sociological phenomenon by Peric (2010), has grown in the last decade and is considered the fastest growing sector in the global travel tourism industry (AIPS 2010). This is particularly so due to the growing popularity of tourism sporting events, as many governments actively seek opportunities to host such events (Higham, 2005) due to the perceived economic benefits that can be attained (Chen, 2008). The growth of sport tourism events has occurred due to a change from the traditional sun, sea and sand vacations to that of more experience-based vacations, particularly those that are sport related. Higham (2005) states that sport functions as tourist attraction and may influence seasonal patterns of tourist demands. As such, sport tourism events can be considerably linked to the concept of time through the concept of seasonality.

According to a dictionary definition, time is a non-spatial continuum that is measured in terms of events that succeed one another from past through present to future (Merriam-Webster, 2014). However, the concept and experience of time is not as simple as it appears to be. It has for many centuries been examined in various academic studies; i.e. physics (Mughal, 2009; Maccone, 2009), sport (Martínková & Parry, 2011), psychology (Gozlan, 2009; Wittman *et al.*, 2008; Arzy *et al.*, 2008) and philosophy (Cormick, 2005; Burnham, 2005). Given the diverse incorporation of time in various fields, its amalgamation with tourism, one of the world's most dominating industries, is one of great importance.

One particular aspect of time present in the tourism industry is that of seasonality. Seasonality is known to cause fluctuations in tourist and visitor numbers to a destination (Lee *et al.*, 2008), which significantly affects the tourism sector. . These fluctuations or seasonal variation in tourism phenomena represent a universal challenge in the management of tourist attractions (Higham, 2005). Therefore, many destinations have devised a strategic approach to use sport events to ameliorate patterns of seasonality at tourism destinations (Higham & Hinch, 2002). However, sport tourism events are short-term events with long-term consequences for the host cities that stage them (Roche 1994 in Higham, 2005).

Many sport tourism events are experiences that involve repetition and denote a cyclical expression of time. Johnson (2011) states that perceptions of time as past, present and future are also important for social enquiry and action, while Higham and Hinch (2003) explain that changes to a sport attraction will affect the spatial and temporal tourism impacts and opportunities associated with that sport. As a result, sport tourism events have the power to have impacts of a socio-cultural, economic and environmental nature on their host destination and

within the affected community (Swart & Smith-Christensen, 2005). Regardless, events are usually evaluated from an economic perspective and largely driven by the needs of government and tourism agencies to justify the staging of special events based on their economic contribution to the host economy (Hede *et al.*, 2003). Turco (1998) further highlights this by stating that the need to stimulate spending in the host economy is one of the main reasons for hosting sport tourism events. Furthermore, it is seen that through sport tourism there is potential community development, which heightens interest in demonstrating its economic impact (Daniels, Norman & Henry, 2004). Nevertheless, it is recognised that economic measure is not enough to evaluate the impacts of an event (Dwyer *et al.*, 2000; Bowdin *et al.*, 2001). Therefore, the value of a social impact assessment should also be recognised. However, in order to measure social impacts, the perceptions or opinions of persons who are affected by the event should be taken into account. It is argued that this subjective approach limits the credibility of the study as perceptions can change over time (Jönsson, 2013), which has led to the avoidance of assessing social impacts. Nonetheless, the manner in which local residents view a particular event is essential to its success, because an event that has little or no local support can drastically see an increase in the negative aspects related to it.

There is little evidence of previous studies that have assessed local perceptions of social impacts of a small-scale sports event hosted on a small island, and more specifically, its relation to the timing of the event. The purpose of this paper is therefore to gain insight into the impacts of the Run Barbados Series on Barbados, with an emphasis on the timing of the event and its societal impacts as perceived by locals.

### **Review of literature**

Sport has become a major part of the social and cultural livelihood for many individuals around the world. Its popularity has been attributed to hallmark and mega events such as the Olympic Games, FIFA Football World Cup, the Tour de France, the Super Bowl and Wimbledon, attracting the attention of billions through televised broadcast (Coakley, 2004). Not only has it gained interest in sporting fans, but it has also gained the attention of governmental bodies as the association between sports and economic value is matched. With sport being termed the ‘world’s largest social phenomenon’ (Kurtzman & Zauhar, 2003) and tourism considered the ‘world’s largest industry’ (Ottevanger, 2007), the combination of these two entities can reap great economic benefits. Therefore, governmental bodies worldwide have turned their attention to the ‘sports tourism phenomenon’.

### ***Sport tourism events and its impacts***

Kurtzman and Zauhar (2003) state that sport tourism events refer to those sports activities that attract tourist of which a large percentage are spectators, and generate significant and heterogeneous flows of travellers (Higham, 2005). Conversely, sporting events can be spectator or participant led; and furthermore, sport tourism is said to be consisting of all the events in which the primary purpose for travel is the participation in or viewing of sport (Turco *et al.*, 2002). Once a general definition is established, the categorisation of sport tourism events is essential. This will allow further understanding of the subject under review. The most frequently used classifications of sport tourism events are large-scale events, which include hallmark events (Super Bowl and Wimbledon) and mega-events such as the Olympic Games and the FIFA Football World Cup. With a large number of empirical research dedicated to such events, one

may conclude that this is the extent of sport tourism-related events. However, in a study conducted by Ottevanger (2007), a third event category, ‘local events’, was highlighted. This classification is closely linked to Higham’s (1999) small-scale event. This type of event is described as a minor event that is held on an annual basis with the possibility of participants outnumbering the spectators, i.e. participant led. Nonetheless, timing can have a major influence on local or small events, as sporting events that usually start small can successfully grow to become a major event (Tourism BC, 2011), confirming the notion that time is represented through change.

Sport tourism events are hosted to provide local entertainment, to enhance community pride and to stimulate spending in the host economy (Turco, 1998), but whatever the reason, there is always some form of impact on the destination and its residents. It is consequently important to understand the potential impacts of a tourism sporting event and its effects on the quality of life of residents (Fredline, 2000). Emphasis has been placed on researching the economic benefits associated with hosting an event and this has overshadowed the environmental and social impacts that also affect the host community. Social impacts, as defined by Fredline (2006), are “any impacts which potentially have an impact on the quality of life for locals”, while Hall (1992) views social impacts as “the manner in which tourism and travel effect changes in the collective and individual value systems, behaviours patterns, community structure, lifestyle and quality of life”. Table 1 summarises social impacts, reviewing the benefits and cost to the host community.

**Table 1: Social impacts of sport tourism events**

<i>Benefits</i>	<i>Costs</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase in the level of local interest in the activity associated with the event</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social problems:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Crime</li> <li>▪ Prostitution</li> <li>▪ Rowdy behaviour</li> <li>▪ Drinking</li> <li>▪ Drug use</li> <li>▪ Violence</li> <li>▪ Vandalism</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pleasure in experiencing event</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Potential for intercultural misunderstanding</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Influence on community pride and increased involvement of individuals in community activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Changing moral values</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The improvement of regional identity that is seen as being closely related to urban renewal</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dislocation of locals and loss of amenity as a result of noise and crowding</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Entertainment and social opportunities for local residents</li> <li>• Volunteerism – improve local social support networks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commodification and commercialisation of traditional local events</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthen cultural values and traditions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Traffic congestion</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build national identity</li> </ul>	

Sources: Fredline, 2006; Getz ,1991; Hall, 1992; Ritchie, 1984

Unlike economic and environmental impacts, social impacts are less intangible and the measurement deemed more complex (Kim & Petrick, 2005), particularly due to its subjective nature. One way of assessing the social impacts of events is through the attainment of the residents' opinions as they relate to the event. While many scholars are not in favour of this evaluation method, Fredline (2006) enforces the importance of including societal concerns while assessing the general impacts of sport tourism event, as it will continue to contribute significantly to the improved planning and management of events in the future.

Burman (1981) states that time is part of social organisation and it interacts with other components and conditions of social organisation. Human perception of time and measurement has given rise to certain notions such as day and night, week, month, calendar, season, year, religious shrine festivals and non-religious events such as national holidays, different stages of life such as childhood, adolescence, and old age (Mughal, 2014). When assessing the impacts of sport tourism events, especially in tourism-dependent destinations such as Barbados, with a highly seasonal tourism industry, it is imperative to take seasonality into consideration. Through a social sciences perspective, this paper examines the impacts of hosting a sport event in tourism high season by taking into account local perceptions. As an experience that involves repetition, the annual sport event 'Run Barbados' underpins a cyclical time as tourism is marked by seasons, and seasonality is a cyclical expression of time.

### ***Sport tourism events and seasonality***

Tourism is a climate-dependent industry and seasonality is a prominent feature of tourism. Most tourism destinations are distinguished by regular fluctuations in tourism arrivals throughout the year. Specifically, seasonality generally entails a remarkable tourism peak during the high season (Lee *et al.*, 2008) and is said to be caused by public and school holidays as well as weather patterns (Chung, 2009). With particular reference to weather patterns, for example, in Barbados, the tourism high season is during the northern hemisphere winter months (mainly December to April) when tourists to Barbados leave colder climates to enjoy the warm winter months of Barbados. Conversely, in the low season, during the very hot, humid and rainy summers in Barbados, tourists tend to travel to other destinations. However, linking the concept of time to tourism sporting events, Butler (1994) recognised the scheduling of sporting seasons as another cause for seasonality and states that sport's seasons have a direct impact on tourism seasons.

Nonetheless, the fact still stands that seasonality is characterised by severe fluctuations in tourists' arrivals. Such variations in visitors and tourism revenues are seen as a problem by the tourist industry that puts numerous efforts, funds and time into modifying these travel patterns. As a result, strategies are developed and implemented to extend the high season into so-called 'shoulder season' and ultimately creating an 'all season' destination. The use of sports events and the development of niche sport tourism markets are examples of strategies that destinations may pursue in an attempt to manage seasonality. It is therefore important to take into consideration the scale of the sport event to ensure that while mitigating one set of issues, other areas of concerns do not arise.

Not only is tourism seasonality a concern for the destination organisers and tourism boards, but it also poses challenges for the destination's residents who experience various socio-economic

impacts from the drastic fluctuations in tourist numbers. One area that seasonality greatly affects is that of employment. In addressing this, Chung (2009) states that there is not much job demand in an off-peak season and the employment rates decrease. Other studies have generally found negative effects on the destinations and its residents (see Higham & Hinch, 2002; Jang, 2004), such as the ability of tourism enterprises to individually overcome problems associated with large peaks in seasonal demand, the ability of the local destination to provide infrastructure to handle the substantial increases in demand, and the desire for collaboration between tourism enterprises with destination state agencies. However, as noted by for example Butler (1994) it is important to recognise the advantages of seasonality, such as the opportunities for community and ecological recovery provided during the low season.

Previously mentioned was the use of sport tourism events to aid in mitigating the negative effects of seasonality. Additionally, it is noted that one of the social impacts of tourism sport events is the creation of employment and volunteerism. As such, it is seen that while seasonality can cause fluctuations in employment rates, the strategic incorporation of tourism sporting events can reduce the disadvantages and augment the advantages of seasonality. Due to this, appropriate timing and season placement of such events are critical. However, the relevance of the cyclical expression of time in sport tourism events and tourism seasonality has yet to receive sufficient attention in empirical studies.

### ***Resident perception***

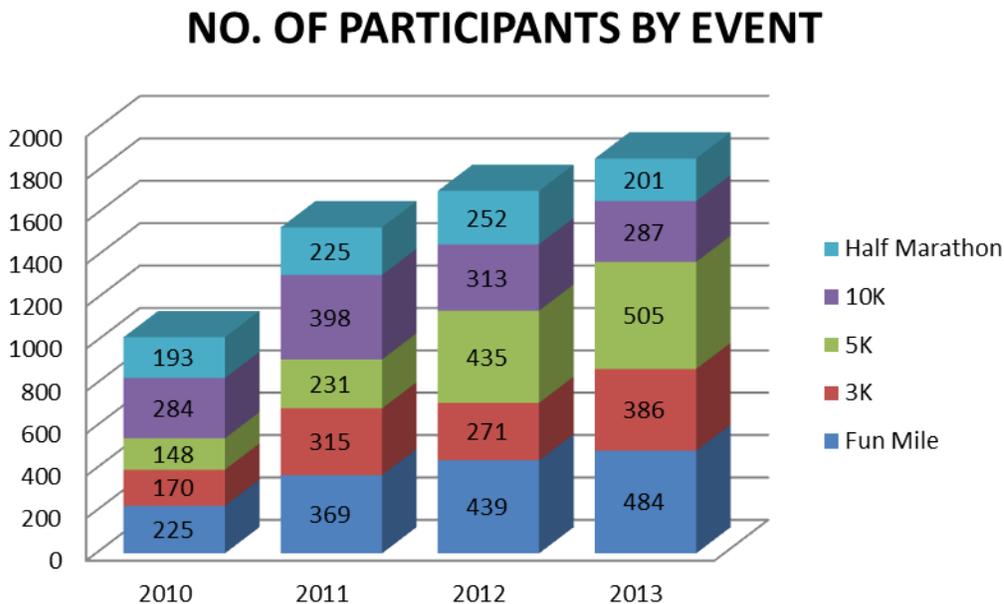
Local residents are an essential part of the success of a sport tourism event. However there is some degree of disagreement with the use of resident perception to measure event impacts due to the fact that there is often a lack of credibility and objectivity because of the subjective characteristics of residents views (Kim & Petrick, 2005; Kim *et al.*, 2006; Ohmann *et al.*, 2006). Another perspective from Jönsson (2013) as it relates to the credibility of locals opinions to evaluate social impacts is that perceptions can change overtime. However, the execution of a longitudinal study would allow for an assessment over a period of time thereby capturing any changes of perception by respondents. As stated by Bynner (1996), longitudinal data is needed to study the transition process involved, the effects of societal change, and policy impact. Nonetheless, drawing reference to the intrinsic studies of Faulkner and Tideswell (1997), it is seen that the perceptions of community members are important and, furthermore, obtaining responses from a diverse group of residents is essential in representing the varied perceptions due to differing value systems. Many authors (e.g. Faulkner & Tideswell, 1997; Perdue *et al.*, 1990; Ap, 1992) have continuously drawn on the social exchange theory (SET) to analyse the perceptions of residents. This theory, coined by Homans (1961), has been applied to various disciplines, including tourism, to understand the views of local residents with regard to tourism. Harrill (2004) states that SET involves the trading and sharing of resources between individuals and groups; however, a more prominent explanation by Ap (1992) not only highlights the exchange of resources, but was also further expanded to include the mutual benefits to be derived by all those active within the exchange. In applying this to tourism, a study by Teye *et al.* (2002) showed that perceived benefits associated with host community improvement led to residents' support. It also found that residents' enthusiasm and support varied according to how tourism events were perceived, either positively according to the benefits derived, or negatively with respect to any costs incurred from what they supplied (Waite, 2003). It is therefore essential that event organisers and affiliates take into account the local voices about the sport tourism event.

### The case of Run Barbados

Run Barbados is an annual road-running event held during the first weekend of December. It was initiated in 1983 and has been a fixture in the Barbados sporting calendar every year since. Over the span of three days, the event encompasses races of a half marathon, 10km, 5km, 3km and fun mile. The first Run Barbados event first emerged as part of the tourism sports programme initiative of the Barbados Tourism Authority (BTA) aimed at providing a sport entertainment package to attract tourists to the island. This goal was accomplished as world-renowned road runners such as Rob de Castella, Catherine Ndereba and Kim Goff converged into Barbados to “Come for the Run! Stay for the Fun!” From its inception, the event not only appealed to international participants, but also captured the attention of local and regional road runners alike. Today, this interest still remains prominent on the calendars of local and overseas runners, as total participant numbers have been steadily increasing between 2010 and 2013 (see Graph 1). In recent years, new races have been added to the series, increasing the event’s popularity among all its participants.

Traditionally, the event included only two events, the marathon and the 10km, although the half marathon was added shortly after. The route for the 10km and half marathon was centralised in Bridgetown, the capital of Barbados; and the marathon followed a course that ran through the four historical towns of Oistins, Bridgetown, Holetown and Speightstown, allowing the viewing of historical and cultural landmarks.

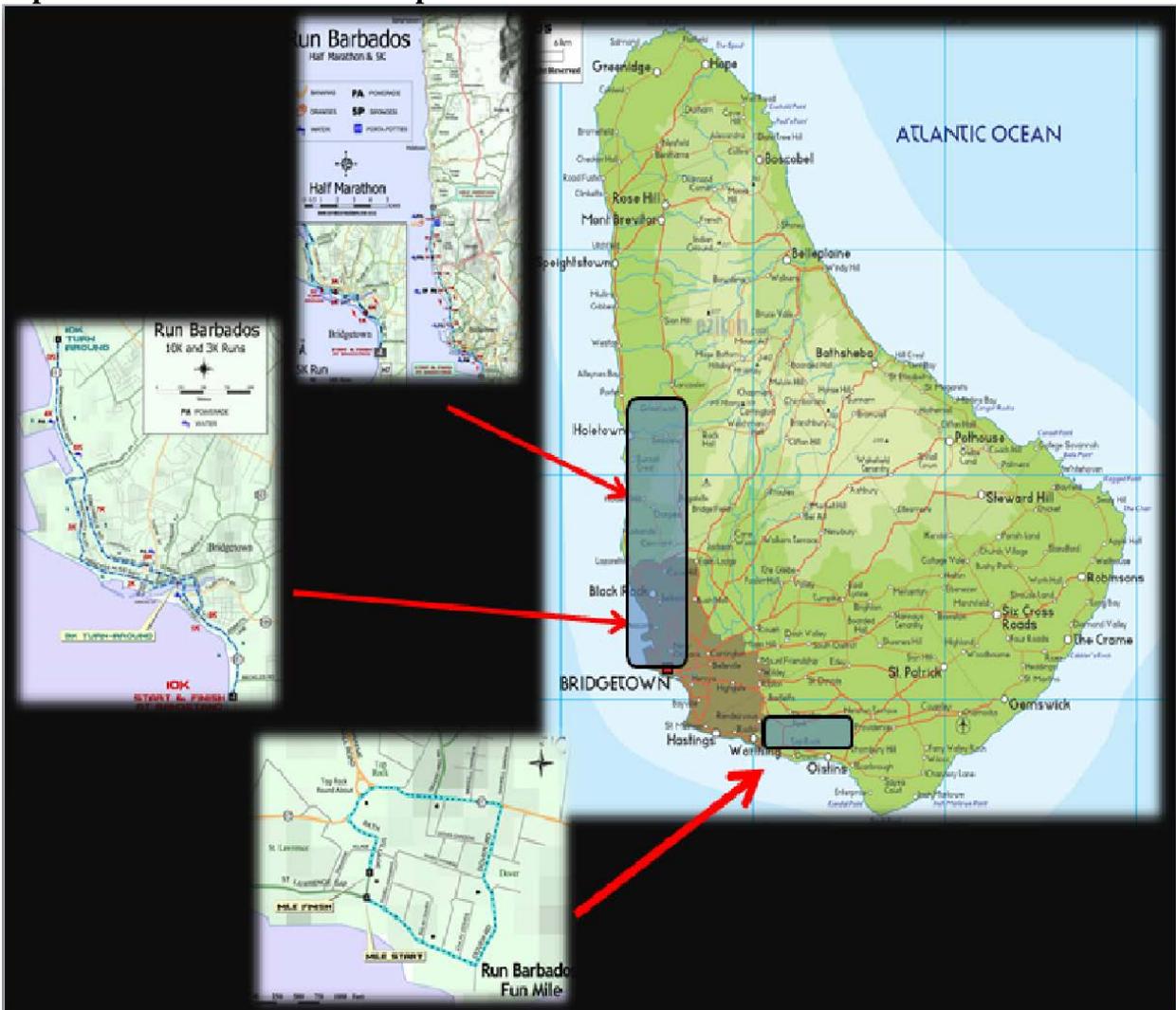
**Graph 1: Number of participants of Run Barbados Event**



Source: [www.runbarbados.org](http://www.runbarbados.org)

In 2010, the midnight fun mile, the 3km and 5km races were added to the series along with three challenges: Gold, Silver and Bronze. The fun mile is the only event held at night and has attracted many contestants and spectators since the route was set in the entertainment hub of Barbados (St. Lawrence/Dover and Maxwell area). The end of the event is marked by entertainment for participants, spectators and the general public. The inclusion of the 3km and 5km increased the level of participation from schools as it brought greater awareness of the event among school teams and other athletic teams. The challenges involved combinations of three events, ran over a three-day period and afforded the participants the opportunity to either enter their own single specialty event or challenge themselves to compete in a series of events for an overall challenge medal.

**Map 1: Run Barbados course maps**



**Source:** [www.runbarbados.org](http://www.runbarbados.org)

The addition of these events was an attempt to revamp the event and to increase the number of locals who participated in the various races. 2010 saw the removal of the marathon as logistical factors hindered the continuity of the event. However, the year 2013, which represented the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the annual Run Barbados Series, was also marked by the addition of the aquathon. This event included a 500m swim, followed by a 3km run in an attempt to reach 2 000 total participants.

### **Methodology**

A qualitative methodology was adopted for this study, incorporating a case study design, due to the need to capture the opinions of the local residents with regard to the social impacts of the Run Barbados event. Initially, there was no set number of interviews to be conducted for the purpose of this study; therefore, data was continuously collected until the information was deemed substantial. At the end of the data collection process, a total of sixteen interviews were completed. Respondents included event participants, spectators and organisers along with small business operators that reside within the competition area. The sample was selected using two forms of non-probability sampling: purposive and snowballing. The combined use of these three methods was useful in ensuring that the maximum number of respondents was captured.

The interview schedule contained three sections with the following headings. Section A: Event knowledge and involvement (the role of each respondent with regard to the Run Barbados series as well as the knowledge he/she possesses of the event); Section B: The event (societal issues and impacts that arise from the event); and Section C: Sport tourism product (evaluating Run Barbados and tourism and its use as a sport tourism product). In Section B, the event, specific focus was placed on variables that were used to measure the societal impacts that Run Barbados has on the host community. These variables included:

- Disruption: The extent to which the event prohibited the residents and business operators within the event location from carrying on their day-to-day functions;
- Traffic: Including road blocks and traffic diversion;
- Social Problems – this included vandalism, crime, delinquent and rowdy behaviour
- Pride and cultural identity: This encompasses the sense of satisfaction and belonging owed to national achievement;
- Social interaction: This variable includes the element of entertainment such as Zumba instructors, Mother Sally, stilt walkers and musical performances for the general public. There is also a focus on the relationships and bonds built between participants; and
- Safety and security: This deals with the issue of safety and security measures put in place to ensure that everyone who is actively involved (participants, spectators and volunteers) in the event will be protected from harm inflicted through acts of violence or medical conditions.

A thematic analysis was used to analyse the data in this study and the process began with the alignment of the responses to the questions asked in the interview with the objectives of the research. Once this first step was accomplished, codes were generated based on similarities in responses per question. These codes gathered from every question aligned with a specific objective were then grouped and themes constructed, by giving a distinctive name to codes that were similar.

## **Results and discussion**

This study focused specifically on gathering locals' perceptions of a sport tourism event evaluating the extent to which it has affected local people's lives from a cyclical expression of time and whether the event is socially beneficial to the community. The results show few impacts from a cyclical perspective of time and the discussion below corresponds with the themes that emerged upon analysis.

Specific sports and sporting competitions are characterised by their own patterns of seasonality (Higham, 2005). The Run Barbados series is held during the first weekend of December on an annual basis, which is also the beginning of the tourism high season. The timing of this event coincides with the opening of Barbados' tourism season. As a result, the road race is seen by respondents as the official sport tourism event to open Barbados' tourism season, which runs from December to April. However, this decision by the Barbados Tourism Association (BTA) to host Run Barbados at this time of the year with a view to attract more visitors to Barbados during high season contradicts the notion of using sport tourism events as a strategy to combat seasonality. However, the event is held at a time of the year when the weather is more favourable for a marathon event. This is in line with weather being highlighted in Hylleberg's (1992) classification of causes for seasonality. Taking this into consideration, as well as the tropical climate of Barbados, the hosting of the Run Barbados series is more aligned with the event being held during the period when temperatures on the Island of Barbados are cooler and less humid as opposed to the summer months when Barbados is in need of a tourist arrival boost.

### ***Social interaction and entertainment***

The Run Barbados series is seen as an avenue for entertainment provided for the local community. Persons who take part in observing the various races are provided with the opportunity of diversion from their regular routines, as well as amusement as one local recalls "last year there was a Santa Claus." With musical trucks along the half marathon and 10km route, Zumba instructors and cultural character demonstrations, entertainment is further extended outside the realm of event spectatorship to entertainment for the general public and for the participants before and at the end of the races. However, some respondents believe that more can be done to enhance the entertainment aspects of the event as one respondent stated "the mile has a lot of potential for social activities" and another said "add culture to the event." It is also a great opportunity to promote social interaction between locals and tourists. During the tourism season, Greenidge and Greenidge (2011) state that there is a ratio of more than 4 to 1, with tourists outnumbering Barbadian locals. Following the theory of Doxley's Irridex, when tourists begin to outnumber locals, there is a sense of antagonism that occurs. To minimise this negative emotion, the positive interaction between locals and visitors is highly supported by all event attendees. As such, results show that respondents favour initiatives that boost social interaction and entertainment, while the tourism influx has no negative impact on the respondents. Making reference to Doxley's Irridex, one can further understand the interrelationship with time and tourism impacts. Over time, as tourist destinations become more developed, the perception that the destination's residents have of tourists gradually evolves.

### ***Social cost***

The results also showed that social costs such as delinquent behaviour, crime and vandalism were somewhat non-existent, not only throughout the series of 2012, but also in the last 30 years.

Traffic diversions, another variable used to examine the impact of the event on locals, were perceived to have very little effect on the daily activities of locals, as the media provided 'ample notice' about traffic alterations and 'the inconvenience is very short lived.' Therefore, it can be said that the locals perceive the Run Barbados series in a positive manner and the levels of negative impacts due to its timing are few. This finding aligns itself with the notion of Ottenvanger (2007), who suggests that local events generally have a low-scale impact as opposed to hallmark or mega events. There was no mention of crowding due to the event being held in the tourist high season, which is often a reason for antagonistic feelings among locals toward tourists. This suggests that the fact that the event runs early in the tourism season when the tourist influx is in its early stages is one of the reasons for the high local tolerance of Run Barbados; once again demonstrating the manner in which the time of the Run Barbados series and the tourism season, though interrelated, has no major contribution to negative social impacts.

### ***Pride and cultural identity***

Results show that there is a lowered sense of pride and cultural identity experienced by several respondents within the sample group as well as the lack of inclusion in the planning process of the event. Therefore, it is necessary to involve the public in the planning of the event in order to establish a sense of pride and community identity. The factors can mitigate the negative impacts and can be linked to the social exchange theory, which "suggests that residents' evaluations of tourism are reliant upon the 'relationship form' between the residents and the event's organizers" (Waitt, 2003). As such, it is essential that the residents of the host community be invited to play an active participatory role in the planning process in order to ensure their support (Brida *et al.*, 2011).

### ***Strategic planning***

All respondents in this study were in support of the continuation of the Run Barbados series in future years as the event is seen to bring tourists to the island and, in turn, acts as a foreign exchange earner. This is supported by Deccio and Baloglu (2002) and Gursoy *et al.*, (2002) who, through their studies, have shown a positive correlation between perceived benefits and support for events and the negative correlation between perceived costs and support. This concept is reinforced by Müller's (2011) study that demonstrated the validity of the perception of positive impacts as a predictor of support, while the perception of negative impacts is less associated with support. Seasonality and its impacts are of little concern to the respondents. This might be because Barbados is financially dependent on tourism and locals depend on it for their living.

The Barbados Tourism Authority (BTA) has marketed Run Barbados from its inception and the event has seen many changes from the introduction through to the growth stage to the current stage where it is heading into maturity. This collaboration between the BTA (a state agency) and tourism enterprises is an important aspect in minimising the negative impacts of seasonality. Recognising that a product is anything that can be offered to satisfy a need, one must recognise that an event is a product, as it satisfies the needs of several stakeholders: the participants, organisers, sponsors, spectators and local communities. Run Barbados has reached maturity, i.e. growth is no longer being observed totally, but given the refocus, more local athletes are participating. However, a decline has been seen in the participation of overseas athletes, which will have a negative impact on the overall participation numbers in the event.

This study shows that the success of this event has had various impacts, both positive and negative, with the positive outweighing the negative impacts. Seasonality and the timing of the event are not perceived by the locals as a negative impact, since tourism is major part of the Barbadian economy. While the positive impacts dominate, the decline in overseas participation has been impacted negatively by the problem of vehicular traffic along the roads comprising the routes. If the event is allowed to continue on its present trend, the negative will overtake the positive and the product will see further decline, as not only the international runners but also the local and regional participation would experience a decline. Seasonality and the fact that the event runs during the tourism high season have minor impacts on the local residents. Congestion and an influx of people are not seen as negative impacts by the respondents of this study, since it is too early in the high season for locals to feel the negative impacts of the influx of tourists to Barbados due to Run Barbados.

### **Conclusion**

This study was aimed at assessing the social impacts of the Run Barbados series through the evaluation of the locals' perception of this road racing event. The seasonality issue of the event along with the manner in which locals perceive the impact of an event is critical to its future, as local support is an essential element of successfully hosting any event and appropriate time for hosting the event is critical for tourist participation. If the impacts of an event are seen to be more detrimental than constructive for the host community, local support is withdrawn. Therefore, sporting event organisers should analyse the impacts of the event on the surrounding communities, and in the case of a small island, the country at large.

The results of the research were aligned with the varying themes that emerged during the data analysis process. Locals' overall perception of Run Barbados was generally positive with social interaction the keys benefits of the event. One cost was identified, which dealt specifically with traffic diversions. However, it was summarised to be a minor implication as they are aware beforehand of the event and can easily adjust to accommodate any alteration to the regular flow of traffic.

There is also general local support of Run Barbados; however, it is recommended that there is a need to nationalise the event and include locals in the organisation process. These steps can lead to an increase in cultural pride and identity, which is a critical sentiment that is currently absent in locals as it relates to the Run Barbados race series. With these efforts made, the future support of Run Barbados by the locals will greatly increase.

All parties currently involved in the organisational process must have common goals established as it was realised that personal goals of the individual organisation members are hampering the full potential of the event. While one set of organisers are highly motivated to target the local market and increase local participant numbers, another set of organisers are more focused on capturing the international market. The conflict of interest within the organisational body is reflected in the perception of the respondents, as some interview participants see the need to get more locals involved, while others believe that more tourists should be present. This lack of a general goal will, in turn, impact upon effectively marketing the event.

Although this study adds to the body of knowledge of social impacts, research and locals' perceptions, future research is needed to further assess whether the concerns of residents are adhered to and that improvements to Run Barbados occurs; as well as how these adjustments, by extension, affect the residents and alter the perception of the event. Furthermore, it is deemed necessary to assess the residents' perceptions on the timing of the event. This would allow for an improved evaluation of the relationship between the timing of the competition and the social impacts that occur during the event.

Additionally, given scholastic opinions that measuring social impacts lacks credibility due to perceptions changing over time, it is recommended that a longitudinal study be conducted on the Run Barbados series to ensure that the social impact assessment through the cyclical time framework is viable. The environmental and economic impacts of this event should also be assessed, which will allow for a holistic measurement of the event and examine the opportunities for community and ecological recovery provided during the low season.

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