



CENTRAL PLACE THEORY AND SPORT TOURISM IMPACTS

Margaret J. Daniels

George Mason University, USA

Abstract: Although sport tourism initiatives can boost a destination's export base, not all communities have an equal likelihood of successfully hosting such an event. The purpose of this study is to use central place theory as a basis for understanding location features that influence the economic outcomes associated with hosting a sport event. The economic impacts generated by a tournament co-hosted by two adjacent counties in different states are analyzed. The smaller county experienced a reverse false excursionist effect, as the majority of the activities took place there, yet the larger location realized nearly double the economic impacts from the event. Local economic regions and cooperative branding are discussed in light of the findings. **Keywords:** sport impacts, central place theory. © 2006 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

Résumé: Théorie de l'emplacement central et impacts du tourisme sportif. Bien que le tourisme sportif puisse accroître la base d'exportation d'une destination, les municipalités n'ont pas une probabilité égale d'accueillir avec succès un tel événement. Le propos de cette étude est d'utiliser la théorie de l'emplacement central comme une base pour comprendre les caractéristiques d'un endroit qui influencent les résultats associés à l'accueil d'un événement sportif. On analyse les impacts économiques générés par un tournoi accueilli par deux endroits limitrophes. Le plus petit a rencontré un faux effet excursionniste inverse, puisque la majorité des événements y ont eu lieu, pourtant le lieu plus grand a réalisé presque le double des impacts économiques de l'événement. On discute des régions économiques locales et du marquage coopératif à la lumière des résultats. **Mots-clés:** impacts du sport, théorie de l'emplacement central. © 2006 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

INTRODUCTION

While sport tourism is not a new phenomenon, it has received increasing attention in recent years as an economic development strategy (Crompton 1999; Daniels, Norman and Henry 2004; Delpy 1998; Gelan 2003; Higham and Hinch 2002; Lee and Taylor 2005). From large metropolitan areas to outlying hinterlands, public and private stakeholders are interested in adding the brand element of sport to their destination marketing profile as they view it as a means of enhancing their local economies (Kim and Chalip 2004). Communities host sport events for entertainment purposes, to enhance community pride, and to stimulate spending; however, the latter is generally considered

Margaret Daniels is Assistant Professor in the School of Recreation, Health and Tourism at George Mason University (Manassas VA 20110-2203, USA. Email <mdaniels@gmu.edu>). Her research interests include tourism planning and policy, economic impact analysis, and event management. She has conducted extensive fieldwork in the areas of amateur sport tourism and destination supply resource promotion as pertaining to local economic development.

the primary motive because economic impacts are used to validate events and determine their continuance, while acting as a focal point when illustrating the vitality of tourism activities as a whole (Yuan 2001).

Although sport tourism can boost export spending in a defined region, not all communities have an equal likelihood of successfully hosting an event, tournament, or team. In terms of mega-events such as the Olympics, the Super Bowl, and the World Cup, site options are quickly narrowed based on the necessity of sophisticated infrastructure and significant public investment that may or may not result in long-term benefits for the host community, as meaningful economic impacts seldom result from events such as these (Gratton, Shibli and Coleman 2005; Gursoy and Kendall 2006; Higham 1999; Mihalik and Simonetta 1998; Porter 1999). Similarly, research reflects that for most communities, little is to be gained from the acquisition of a professional sport team except for an increase in community pride, in particular if a stadium is built and the costs are financed publicly (Gorman and Calhoun 1994; Hendricks 1997). For example, the Washington DC Council went through an interminable series of divisive sessions as they sought to reach agreement on a stadium financing bill to bring a professional baseball team to the district (Nakamura 2004; Nakamura and Heath 2006). The major point of contention was what percentage of the estimated US\$611 million stadium deal would be financed publicly, in particular because the district has pressing needs in its school system, health care, transportation, and public safety and housing (Nakamura 2004; Nakamura and Heath 2006).

Comparatively speaking, hosting amateur events that are “regular” (versus mega) in nature would not seemingly be a cause for concern or significant deliberation. Regular sport events include those that have negligible bidding expenses, little to no infrastructure development costs, a minimal burden on public funds, and a limited impact on local residents (Higham 1999). Yet, these small-scale operations are not necessarily beneficial to the host community. Daniels and Norman (2003) found that the event type, the average participant age, and the presence of complementary activities influenced the overall economic impacts of amateur sport events. The nature of the community’s resources also contributes to the likelihood of success, as some destinations are better suited to tourism initiatives than others (Freshwater 2000).

As research pertaining to regular events remains sparse in comparison to that of mega-events (Gibson, Willming and Holdnak 2003), the factors that may influence the economic success of hosting such events warrant exploration. As Richie explains,

Despite the popularity and number of small-scale sporting events, little research has been published concerning the nature or tourism potential of small-scale sport events. . . . Yet the potential marketing and economic development benefits are similar, yet smaller in size and scope than “hallmark” or “mega” events which tend to generate the most interest from researchers, policy makers and planners alike (2004:137;139).

While economic impacts of many small-scale events have been measured and the process is well understood (Crompton 1999), the causes and meanings underlying the results are rarely analyzed. Thus, the purpose of this study is to use central place theory as a basis for understanding host location features that may influence the economic outcomes associated with holding a regular sport tourism event. The economic impacts generated by a week-long amateur tournament that was co-hosted by two adjacent counties in different states (US) are analyzed to illustrate the points raised by this theoretical perspective.

CENTRALITY AND SPORT TOURISM

The importance of theory to inform the practice of economic development is well explained by Malizia and Feser:

Without theory, the economic developer pursues politically expedient strategies with professionally accepted techniques but has no way to build a defensible, independent basis for understanding and action. With theory, the developer can first understand the threats and opportunities facing the local economy and can fashion unique strategies that address its strengths and weaknesses (1999:257).

Successful sport initiatives can result in heightened use of a destination's attractions, resources, and services. Central place theory assists in predicting the type of location that stands to benefit from sport tourism development.

Centrality is concerned with the "importance of economic activities and the related infrastructure found in the area" (Malizia and Feser 1999:253) and provides a rationale for why cities of different sizes exist, their spacing, and the functions they provide (King 1984). An operating premise of central place theory is that, assuming there is a uniformity of consumers and that transportation is ubiquitous, market areas exist to efficiently provide goods and services to a target population. A minimum amount of consumption (demand) must exist to warrant offering a particular good or service. This lower limit, or threshold, is the point that must be achieved to offer the good or service and subsequently maintained to stay in business. The upper limit, or range, is the greatest distance a customer is willing to travel to obtain a particular good or service (Dennis, Marsland and Cockett 2002). The range is affected by the uniqueness and attractiveness of the good or service as well as economic forces such as diseconomies of scale (Derudder and Witlox 2004; Wang 1999). Threshold and range explain why lower order businesses such as gas stations are located in places of all sizes whereas higher order businesses such as upscale retailers and premier hotels are typically only found in large, urban cities.

An increase in city size leads to reinforcing effects as the presence of specialized goods and services attracts an educated labor pool and leads to superior infrastructure development (Barkley, Henry and Kim 1999). Numerous smaller locations surround the larger city to maximize access to higher order goods and services, as needed. The resulting hierarchical outcome is rank-size distribution of cities

predicated on spatial optimization (Chen and Zhou 2004; Derudder and Witlox 2004). In short, central place theory suggests that the location of economic activities is a non-random occurrence and that the highest order places, typically urban centers, offer the greatest diversity in goods and services (Barnes and Ledebur 1998). Metropolitan areas (such as Chicago, London, New York, Paris, Tokyo, and San Francisco) benefit from ample labor supplies and sophisticated transportation and communication systems. This tendency for “economic activities to cluster together in the particular locations occupied by cities or other urban places” (King 1984:12) creates what is known as an agglomeration effect.

The hierarchical structure of central place theory does not always hold when explaining the location of economic activity (Fujita, Krugman and Venables 1999). Other influencing factors include zoning laws, globalization, technological superiority, industry clusters, geographic advantages such as coastal ports, natural resource distribution, and the distinctiveness of the good or service (Dennis et al 2002; Derudder and Witlox 2004; MacDonald and Rudel 2005). Accordingly, industry agglomerations also occur in nonmetropolitan areas (Barkley et al 1999). In terms of tourism activity, destinations such as Hawaii and St. Lucia are successful in spite of remote locations where goods and services are difficult to obtain. Places like these have unique natural resources and community settings that are typically unavailable in urban cores, as most large cities are subject to diseconomies of scale such as pollution, congestion, and crime (Wang 1999).

In spite of these potential negative influences, metropolitan areas continue to dominate as principal centers of tourism activity. Centrality illustrates why jurisdictions within a region often differ in terms of tourism development potential and, simultaneously, this framework allows planners to pinpoint target destinations with similar characteristics when forming strategic expansion programs (Malizia and Feser 1999). Central places have a competitive advantage in terms of attracting new development and realizing economic benefits from export initiatives (Bergman and Feser 1999; Porter 1990). Thus, it can be hypothesized that when two politically distinct destinations co-host an export-inducing event (such as a sport tourism tournament), the location higher on the central place theory hierarchy stands to realize more economic benefits from the event, unless specific measures are taken to equalize the outcomes.

Study Methods

The United States National Softball Association was founded in 1982 and is the organizing body for numerous state, regional, and national tournaments. The 2001 National Softball Association “B” Girls Fastpitch World Series was held in adjacent counties in two different states, specifically, Mecklenburg County (in south-central North Carolina) and York County (in north-central South Carolina) as shown in

Figure 1. This week-long youth event allowed for expenditure comparisons between the two counties.

Mecklenburg has a population of approximately 650,000 and has a large urban center, Charlotte, as its county seat (Charlotte Chamber of Commerce 2004). York's population is close to 170,000 and its county seat is the considerably smaller city of Rock Hill (York County Convention and Visitors Bureau 2004). When comparing the two, Mecklenburg would be considered the higher-order area in terms of urbanization and central place theory. However, the tournament took place at only one recreation site in Mecklenburg and four sites in York.

Teams competing in the tournament entered into one of five categories: under 11, 13, 15, 17, or 19. All teams had to qualify for entry and were guaranteed a minimum of two games. The tournament continued throughout the week until champions were determined in each category. Participating in the series were 346 teams that represented states along the US east coast and Midwest, with total attendance estimated by event coordinators at 21,386, comprised primarily of close to 4,500 registered players and over 15,000 supporters traveling with the teams. Others in attendance included umpires, coaches, and national tournament directors.

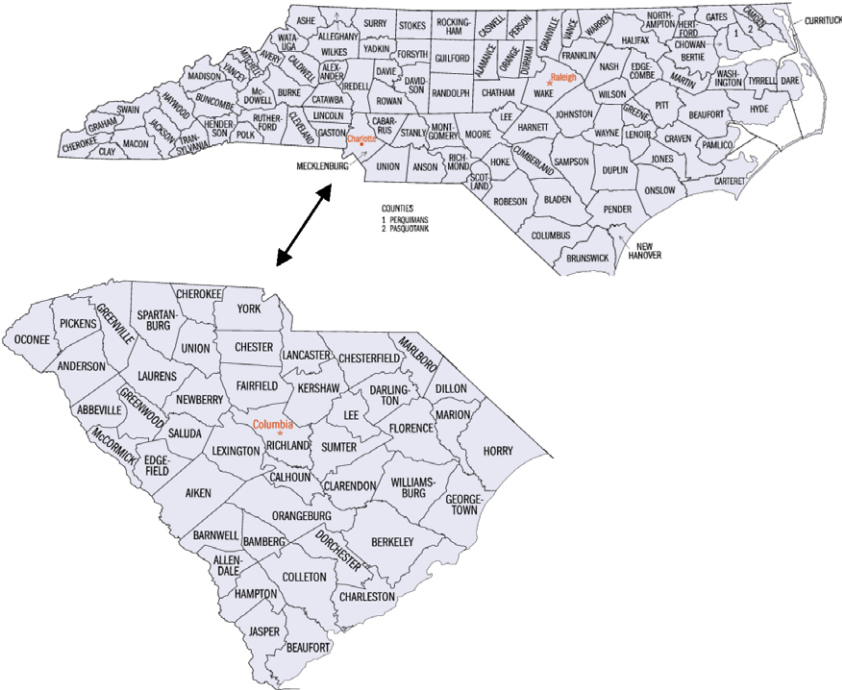


Figure 1. North and South Carolina Counties. (Source: US Census Bureau 2004)

Questionnaire Development. Crompton states that when measuring economic impacts, "it is imperative that the questionnaire should contain only essential questions" (Crompton 1999:35). This parsimonious view was kept in mind when developing the items for the tournament questionnaire. Six variables that were necessary for this study included resident status of the participant, primary purpose for the visit to the host counties, distance traveled to attend the event, number of days and nights spent at the event, number of individuals in the respondent's group for whom s/he was financially responsible, and expenditure patterns.

First, resident status was provided through the participant's zip code. This information was important, as it is a commonly accepted principle that expenditures by local residents are not counted as new money brought into a defined economic region (Daniels et al 2004). Similarly, only expenditures from those who indicated that the sport tournament was the primary purpose for their visit were included in the analyses. The third variable, distance traveled, is an indicator of overnight stay that was requested to assist local coordinators in long-term planning and event selection. Fourth, the specific number of days and nights spent in the defined area allowed for the estimation of average per day spent on food, retail goods, and the like, as well as per night expenditures on hotel stays. Fifth, information regarding the number of individuals in a respondent's group for whom s/he was financially responsible allowed for the calculation of average amount spent per person. Finally, specific spending patterns that were measured for this study pertained to lodging, eating and drinking places, retail shopping, sports (other than the tournament fees), entertainment, automobile gas and services, other services (such as laundry), and other. For the final input-output model, sports and entertainment were combined into a single sector, recreation services. The questionnaire stated that the respondents should separate their expenditure information by county. As familiarity with the county names could not be assumed, the associated cities (county seats) where the majority of the tournament activities took place were also indicated to facilitate the separation process.

Data Collection and Analysis. Interaction with the tournament participants was kept to a minimum at the host sites so as not to interfere with the event experience. Potential respondents, typically parents of the players, were selected through systematic, stratified sampling. A framework was developed to account for the number of teams playing in each age group. Trained survey-team members from a large, southern university were placed at pre-determined spots at the five tournament sites, with a minimum of two individuals at each. Every fifth adult crossing an imaginary line was approached and given an explanation of the study. The adult's home address was then requested so that a survey packet could be mailed. Using this method, 841 usable addresses resulted. Data were collected using a self-administered mail survey. Potential respondents were sent a cover letter, a questionnaire, and a postage-paid return envelope. The initial letter and

questionnaire were mailed one week after the completion of the tournament. Using a modified Dillman (2000) technique, one week after the survey packet was mailed, a postcard reminder was sent. The postcard provided contact information if a replacement packet was needed.

These primary data collection techniques were used to determine average per person per day expenditures at the host sites. Total direct effects were then computed by considering the total number of non-resident individuals who indicated that the sport event was the primary purpose for the visit to the host area (impact group), the length of stay, and the application of margins to the retail and auto sectors, as only the markup on these goods directly affects a defined economy (Leeworthy, Wiley, English and Kriesel 2001). An additional 21 sectors, as adapted from Stynes and Propst (2002) to fit this study, were included with zero spending to complete the expenditures vector. These 21 sectors were incorporated to capture indirect and induced effects, as calculated by using commonly accepted input-output modeling techniques (Miller 1998; Miller and Blair 1985); therefore, the final model included 28 industry sectors.

The general premise of an input-output model is to capture market transactions for consumption over a given time period in order to “examine the effects of a change in one or several economic activities on an entire economy” (Minnesota IMPLAN Group 1999:95). The purpose of a given economic impact study will determine if this technique is appropriate or a different method should be selected. Input-output analysis includes three documented limitations (Daniels et al 2004; Dwyer, Forsyth and Spurr 2004). First, income data constraints do not allow impacts to be readily allocated to household groups by industry sector. Second, employment data constraints can result in gross overestimations of employment impacts. Third, the assumption of an unrestricted flow of resources discounts any negative influences on a defined economy. For the current study, neither household personal income effects nor employment effects were variables of concern. Overestimates due to the assumption of unrestricted flow were assumed to affect both counties equally. Input-output analysis allowed for a two-county direct comparison of total output by industry that resulted from a short-term event, with the magnitude of difference used to reflect upon economic theory.

Study Findings

The sampling procedure yielded a response rate of 42.8%. Of these, 95.7% indicated a residence outside of the two counties. All the non-resident respondents indicated that the tournament was the primary purpose for their visit. Therefore, based on the estimated total attendance of 21,386, the impact population used for the remainder of the analyses was 20,466. The respondents had driven an average of 490 miles to attend the event and stayed in the area for an average of 6.0 days and 5.3 nights. Of those tourists who paid for lodging, 71.6% stayed in Mecklenburg and 28.4% stayed in York.

Table 1. Comparison of Average per Person Expenditures by Category

Category	Average per Person Expenditure (\$) Mecklenburg	Average per Person Expenditure (\$) York
Lodging Expenses	19.91	6.85
Eating and Drinking Places	8.91	6.80
Retail Shopping	3.72 ^a	2.91 ^a
Sports	0.99 ^b	1.26 ^b
Entertainment	2.67 ^b	2.25 ^b
Automobile Expenses	2.18 ^a	2.40 ^a
Other Services	0.21	0.15
Other	0.43	0.18

^aPrior to the application of margins; ^bIn the final model, sports and entertainment were combined into a single sector, recreation services.

Table 1 summarizes average expenditures per person per day (per night for lodging) in both counties, prior to the application of margins, across the eight impact categories. In Mecklenburg, spending was highest for hotels (\$19.91), followed by eating and drinking places (\$8.91), retail shopping (\$3.72), entertainment (\$2.67), auto expenses (\$2.18), sports (\$0.99), other (\$0.43), and other services (\$0.21). York followed a similar pattern, with expenditures highest for hotels (\$6.85), followed by eating and drinking places (\$6.80), retail shopping (\$2.91), auto expenses (\$2.40), entertainment (\$2.25), sports (\$1.26), other (\$0.18), and other services (\$0.15). The average amount spent in each category may be perceived as low, but this is due to the fact that for many respondents, the amount spent in one county or the other may have been zero dollars.

The expenditures, by category, were applied to the estimated impact population with consideration of the average length of stay. The appropriate margins were then applied to complete the input-output vector Y of final demand to estimate total tourist direct effects. Total industry output, which includes indirect and induced effects, was estimated using IMPLAN computer software. Table 2 summarizes the direct tourist expenditures and total industry output as generated by the input-output model, in 2001 dollars. For Mecklenburg, total direct effects were estimated at \$4.2 million and total industry output at \$7.0 million, while in York total direct effects were \$2.4 million and total industry output \$4.1 million.

Outcomes of Centrality

Although the vast majority of the tournament games were held in York, Mecklenburg realized nearly double the economic impacts from the event. The primary differences in expenditure patterns pertained to the lodging and eating/drinking sectors, and are reflective of the concentration of these services in the two counties. For example,

Table 2. Comparison of Total Direct Tourist Spending and Total Output

Sector	Tourist Spending Mecklenburg	Total Output Mecklenburg	Tourist Spending York	Total Output York
Agriculture	0	17,060	0	21,718
Mining	0	237	0	99
Construction	0	93,505	0	50,971
Manufacturing	0	630,467	0	314,471
Local, Interurban Passenger Transit	0	4,975	0	354
Trans., Comm., Public Utilities	0	322,136	0	223,003
Retail Trade	231,653 ^a	392,483	181,213 ^a	258,701
Building Materials, Gardening	0	13,339	0	8,678
General Merchandise	0	26,478	0	9,716
Food Stores	0	28,888	0	18,205
Automotive Dealers, Service Stations	139,775 ^b	179,281	153,881 ^b	180,139
Apparel and Accessory Furniture,	0	13,911	0	4,286
Home Furnishing Stores	0	14,315	0	9,369
Eating and Drinking Places	1,099,207	1,189,916	838,901	899,184
Miscellaneous Retail	0	46,610	0	28,851
Finance, Insurance, and Real Estate	0	507,399	0	305,464
Hotels and Lodging Places	2,171,115	2,199,249	746,968	766,898
Laundry, Cleaning, Shoe Repair Services	0	14,299	0	8,035
Beauty and Barber Shops	25,907	478,340	18,505	298,196
Photofinishing, Comm. Photography	0	5,747	0	1,014
Equipment Rental and Leasing	0	7,783	0	935
Automobile Parking	0	5,532	0	2,350
Automobile Repair and Services	0	3,519	0	926
Recreation Services	0	20,990	0	11,013
Doctors and Dentists	451,526 ^b	569,128	433,020 ^c	531,656
Government	0	83,843	0	55,295
Other	0	32,041	0	20,342
Total	53,048	95,512	22,206	51,929
Total	4,172,231	6,996,983	2,394,694	4,081,798

^aMargin of .5048 applied prior to computation of Trade tourist spending; ^bMargin of .5107 applied prior to computation of Automotive Services tourist spending; ^cRecreation services reflects the combined expenditures of sports and entertainment.

mecklenburg has 209 hotels with over 23,000 available rooms (Charlotte Chamber of Commerce 2004) whereas York has only 27 hotels with approximately 2,500 available rooms (York County Convention and Visitors Bureau 2004). As the counties have a similar magnitude of disparity in terms of dining establishments, the impact gap widened.

The tourist flow found in this study suggests that York was a victim of reverse false excursionists. In a typical false excursionist scenario,

These would-be tourists, facing high prices and the limited capacity of central facilities, choose a peripheral site for their visit to the main destination. A regional scale conflict arises between the center—which still bears the costs of tourism activity despite retaining a decreasing share of the benefits—and the neighboring communities (Russo 2002:167).

This explanation clarifies the spatial distribution of costs and benefits in a region. Using the example of heritage tourism in Venice, Russo argues that growth of the core can become a vicious circle, where the concentration of activities is there, yet tourists select lodging on the periphery for a cheaper stay; therefore, the core realizes the costs of congestion and supply degradation imposed by “free-riders” (167) while the periphery benefits from acting as lodging host to these same individuals.

In the case of the current study, an opposite scenario occurred, resulting in a reverse false excursionist outcome. York had to bear the majority of the environmental and opportunity costs of the event. However, the lodging facilities were limited in this peripheral area; accordingly, Mecklenburg as core became the free-rider, profiting from its proximity to the primary sport tourism event destination. As the seats of these two counties are only 27 miles apart, the upper limit was not such that it would deter travel from York to seek lodging and dining facilities in Mecklenburg.

Stoeckl, Greiner and Mayocchi explain that “the value of resources consumed by tourists *may—in some circumstances—be* of greater value to local communities than the extra income they generate” (Stoeckl, Greiner and Mayocchi 2006:98). While one event is not likely to lead to any long-term detrimental impacts for York, a consistent sport tourism strategy could ultimately lead to a negative net outcome if Mecklenburg is consistently reaping the rewards York maintains the costs. In cases where the net welfare effect of tourism is predicted to be negative, alternative development strategies should be sought unless a viable compensation plan is identified and followed (Lindberg, Andersson and Dellaert 2001). Smith (2005) explains that while many cities are using sport as a re-imaging strategy, such initiatives do not necessarily enhance the credibility of a destination and can even obstruct the reputation development process.

This study illustrates the viability of a local economic region framework for tourism planning. Barnes and Ledebur contend that economic development strategists “must not only look at what is happening within a locality’s political boundaries but also at the larger regional economy as well” (Barnes and Ledebur 1998:136). They argue that because economic systems spill across boundaries in “politically untidy ways” (Barnes and Ledebur 1998:77), it is most beneficial to nurture the entire system while simultaneously strengthening its individual building blocks.

While Mecklenburg edges South Carolina, its regional tourism partnership boundaries do not cross the border (North Carolina Department of Commerce 2003). Similarly, the planning region in which York is housed does not cross into North Carolina (South Carolina

Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism 2005). While planners may be rigid in their delineation of boundaries, tourists are not so particular when making attraction and service decisions. From the local economic region perspective, Charlotte is the central business district and Rock Hill is an edge city to this district, even though these cities are in different states. The closest urban center in South Carolina that could compete with Charlotte in terms of centrality is Greenville, located approximately 100 miles west of York (Figure 1). Therefore, tourists looking for higher order goods and services not available in York would naturally cross the state border rather than traveling three times as far to access similar goods. The local economic region approach suggests that York planners should work with their Mecklenburg counterparts to develop strategies where each county shoulders an equitable burden of the costs associated with large sport events.

While pragmatic and in many ways ideal in principle for lower order destinations, the establishment of cooperative arrangements across political boundaries that are critical to local economic region formation may not be an attainable goal. Accordingly, one way that York can feasibly compete with Mecklenburg, should coordination be undesirable or unfeasible, would be to adopt an aggressive cooperative sport tourism branding strategy with other geographically close counties in South Carolina. Practitioners have been found to brand destinations “to build a desirable image that can attract tourists; to differentiate one’s destination from competitors and position it to attract higher spending tourists; to manage image; and to make one’s destination a better place to live by increasing the economic contribution of tourism” (Park and Petrick 2006:263). Cai contends that cooperative branding as a marketing strategy “removes the restriction of geographic names associated with individual cities and towns and provides a rare opportunity to give the newly defined regional destination a unique name and to build a unique identity as a result” (Cai 2002:738). York is part of the Olde English District, which is a planning region comprised of seven counties (South Carolina Department of Parks Recreation and Tourism 2005). Together, they have ample lodging and dining facilities as well as a unique array of attractions that could cater to large sport groups.

In order for cooperative branding to be successful, the commitment of brand champions is essential (Morgan and Pritchard 2004). As explained by Reese, “For leadership structures and arrangements to ‘matter’ in local economic development, it must first be concluded that local units and leaders can, in fact, affect their environment” (Reese 1997:225). Political leaders and planners from the Olde English District would need to collectively strategize in order to influence sport tourist flow so as to contain spending within the district to the extent possible. Specifically, for future sport events to be held primarily in York, local tournament coordinators should create a lodging package that employs discounts to encourage participants to stay within the district rather than crossing the state border for lodging. In terms of dining, the event can include onsite catered meals provided by local restaurants. Time for complementary activities should be embedded

in the schedule and highlight the special features of the district that would appeal to the age range of the participants.

CONCLUSION

The application of central place theory and regional economic development concepts pushes this paper beyond the typical economic impact study. Central place theory offers a means for understanding why some destinations are better suited to tourism development than others. In particular, areas rich in natural amenities yet lacking in infrastructure may receive an inequitable share of the regional economic change brought on by development (Marcouiller, Kim and Deller 2004). Further research assessing the economic outcomes of sport tourism, such as analyses of defined spread and backwash effects, is needed and can shed additional light on the influence of location factors. Specifically, external economies of scale inherent to central places, such as specialized suppliers and superior social overhead capital, over time may lead to a cumulative causation cycle that reinforces large cities to the expense or decline of smaller cities (Barkley, Henry, Bao and Brooks 1995). Backwash effects occur if a surrounding area suffers due to the growth of a central place while spread processes take place if nearby locations benefit due to growth in the area's core (Henry, Barkley and Bao 1997). McKercher and Fu (2006) contend that in general, peripheral areas tend to be marginalized by the core and suffer from relative remoteness, political isolation, economic decline, depopulation, and seasonality. Combined, these backwash effects result in subsistence level tourism.

The findings of this study suggest that should Mecklenburg, the core, initiate a sport tourism development campaign, then York is likely to experience backwash, as their resources would be either under-utilized if recreation services are developed in the core to accommodate increased demand or over-utilized without appropriate compensation. However, this study is limited in that it focused only on the flow of spending for goods and services over a short period of time. Other spatial elements that can be analyzed longitudinally to determine the impact of sport tourism development include flows of investment funds, people, knowledge, technology, and government spending (Barkley et al 1995).

Therefore, determining the potential that a destination has to develop a certain type of tourism requires that experts evaluate the area's resources as well as those of the its competitors (Melián-González and García-Falcón 2003). Sport tourism in particular encompasses a myriad of activities that take place in equally diverse destinations. Regardless, they must have both sport-related resources and associated tourism services. For example, in studying deep sea sports fishing, Melián-González and García-Falcón (2003) found that tourism and fishing experts, as well as tourists rated "suitable accommodation" as being a more important resource than sport-specific features such as "marinas in good condition" and "proximity of the fishing ground

to the marina.” Simultaneously, “suitable accommodation” was perceived as less important than “abundant fishing resources” for these same groups. Central place theory builds on these findings by suggesting the economic implications of not having the service amenities to support the natural resources so often critical to sport tourism development.

While this study focused on one geographic location, the issues raised are relevant to any hinterland destination in close proximity to a central place. Rushed actions and policies regarding sport tourism development have led to regional imbalances across the globe (Standeven and DeKnop 1999). Further, the blurring of political boundaries is becoming increasingly relevant when predicting or assessing economic impacts and when devising development strategies. Webb argues for the viability of forming strategic partnerships when developing sport tourism. He contends that “partnership networks can stimulate the necessary collaboration between public and private sectors and provide value-added benefits” (Webb 2005:139) by pooling resources, pooling talent, forming common goals and priorities, focusing investment, raising the status and profile of tourism, and having clear output targets. These strategic arrangements are particularly important for non-centralized destinations with limited development capital.

In order for hinterland places to successfully host sport tourism events, they must band together and cooperatively market their goods, attractions, and services. Local planners should work closely with sport organizing agencies to develop itineraries with complementary activities that showcase the best of what the host area has to offer (Daniels and Norman 2003). Alternatively and minimally, prior to pursuing sport tourism as a development strategy, planners from edge cities with abundant natural resources should work assertively with those from urban centers, irrespective of political boundaries, to ensure that all affected areas realize an equitable share of an event’s costs and benefits. **A**

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