Toronto Host City: Mass Gatherings
Risks and Perception

Applied Research and Innovation Centre

Applied Research Fellowship Project

Survey Results

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PROJECT OVERVIEW

Mass gathering is a phenomenon that arises from the unique interactions of people, places and activities (Weed & Bull, 2004). It has attracted a lot of attention among scholars and practitioners. A number of literature reviews and surveys have been done with regards to event image perceptions, lessons learned, resident perceptions, risk management, risk perception, crowd behaviour, crowd management and public safety.

In view of recent occurrences—ranging from Toronto’s G-20 insurgence to Vancouver’s Stanley Cup riots and the shocking London riots, cities around the world are increasingly falling prey to spontaneous mass gatherings that impact on public safety and crowd behaviour. It has become progressively obvious that the primary factor in assuring a safe and comfortable environment for crowds is planning, understanding the human behaviour dynamic and public perception.

This project will examine the dynamics of playing host to mega events and how it impacts all realms of life. Despite the growing importance accorded to mega event (from sports to mass gatherings), limited research has been carried out to understand and explain host perceptions of the impact of such events.

Ultimately, this study will also engage relevant community partners playing an integral role in preparing for future event hosting, be it the 2015 Pan Am Games or ongoing socio-political, sporting and multicultural annual events that Toronto plays and will play host to, each year.

Initial ground work undertaken in this area by both teams have shown that while several cities have their ‘event risk and emergency management and policies’ in place, research suggested that public concern and perception can be managed through proper safety training and awareness, emergency response planning, and corrective actions after safety review.

INTRODUCTION

According to Festivals and Events Ontario’s “2011 Economic Impacts Fact Sheet”, Toronto hosts approximately 1980 events each year; including the series of ‘special events’ produced by the City of Toronto’s Economic Development & Culture division and several bids that allow one time hosting opportunities, yet significant hallmark events of mass gathering such as the recent IIFA (International Indian Film Academy Awards).

The impact of events is a growing area of interest and study for sports, tourism events stakeholders, organizers, city planners, emergency management and public safety planners (frontline responders), practitioners and academicians. However, with the fast emerging trend of spontaneous human behaviours fuelled by social media (a latent force) and recorded across global cities (Vancouver and Montreal), event crisis and subsequent crowd control has become both a flaming challenge and a matter of public safety and security concern.

Integrated planning and preparedness of mass gatherings provides an opportunity to identify at-risk crowds. Risk assessments within the events industry are an everyday occurrence. From an event organizer’s perspective, risk management is an essential part of event management because risk can directly cause a failed or unsuccessful event. Therefore considerations for risk management could be more important than planning and designing events.
The focus of this study remains on “mass gathering, crowd management and public perception” to host events, in view of recent occurrences, by using past instances as a means to identify gaps and better prepare and coordinate between stakeholders in the future.

OBJECTIVES

Event Management Analysis: examine some of the hallmark events or events of mass gathering Toronto plays host to each year and their multi-dimensional impacts on Toronto.

Create and carry out a structured survey to gauge awareness and perception of public and event organizers on risk and public safety settings as they relate to planning future hosting events.

Research questions addressed
- Define a ‘mass gathering’ with respect to a city like Toronto
- What are the perceived risks, public perceptions, challenges, dynamics or levels or preparedness

METHODOLOGY

Participants
Approximately 3500 participants were approached: including event organizers, tourism practitioners, policy makers, event volunteers, risk, emergency and security forces, emergency management and business continuity practitioners, professional associations, engage community partners and relevant stakeholders, as well as Centennial College faculty and students within respective schools and programs.

Methods and Measures
A second phase of the literature review and studies was undertaken to determine the domain and key factors associated with risk/ resident perceptions to build the study design:

- Systematic approach to explore the dynamics of a host city vis-à-vis event preparedness via secondary literature review and event analysis
- Secondary research, review of published reports, previously conducted surveys or case studies, electronic articles

Survey Design
- A structured survey was customized (from data / information obtained through secondary research) to suit the purpose of this study;
- The survey was carried out online using ‘Survey Monkey’.

Data Processing
A sample size of 380 respondents was considered for this descriptive study designed to understand attitudes, beliefs and perceptions of the key stakeholders (public safety & emergency management forces, event planners, organizers)

All clean survey data was compiled, reviewed and analyzed by the research team with the assistance of a data analyst (data compilation and generating basic reports). Data was analyzed using a combination of Survey Monkey Analytics, Statistical Analysis Software (SAS) and Microsoft Excel.
SURVEY RESULTS

Respondent Summary

Response Rate

The minimum response rate on a given question was 78%, and the average response rate was 81%. Hence, on average, we can be 99% sure that 78-84% of the population would have picked the same answer.

Survey Demographics

Overall, the survey respondents have a relatively even distribution among gender, age, and place of residence.

58% of the populations were Female, and 36% were male. 90% of the survey respondents were between 20 and 60 years old.
The respondents of the survey were equally distributed across the GTA, with 27% of the population residing in Scarborough. This ensures that the survey reflects views of a variety of individuals.

**Respondent Knowledge**

Survey respondents were asked to rate their knowledge level of mass gatherings hosted in Toronto each year. 23% responded that they were directly involved with some of these events. Throughout the detailed analysis, we will look into the responses of the ‘average’ person (Those who know a little, or none) vs. those who are directly involved. It is not surprising that 75% of the respondents between ages 20-29 have knowledge that is influenced by the media.
These 20-29 year olds amount to 34% of all of the respondents who claimed to have knowledge based on what they heard in the media. High knowledge respondents were relatively equally split between all age groups.
Knowledge Level By Age Group (Little Knowledge)

- Little [just what I hear in the media] < 20
- Little [just what I hear in the media] ≥ 60
- Little [just what I hear in the media] 20-29
- Little [just what I hear in the media] 30-39
- Little [just what I hear in the media] 40-49
- Little [just what I hear in the media] 50-59

Knowledge Level By Age Group (High Knowledge)

- A lot [direct contact with these events in some capacity] ≥ 60
- A lot [direct contact with these events in some capacity] 20-29
- A lot [direct contact with these events in some capacity] 30-39
- A lot [direct contact with these events in some capacity] 40-49
General Perceptions
In the following sections, we will take a deeper look into perceptions that exist in the GTA regarding Mass Gatherings in Toronto.

Number of Mass Gatherings Held in Toronto per Year
Overall, the number of Mass Gatherings held each year in Toronto was equally split between the three buckets.

It’s interesting to note that the 50% of individuals who have direct contact to the Mass Gathering industry believe that Toronto has more than 100 events each year. This is completely opposite for the respondents between the ages of 20 & 30, where only 27% of people felt that there were more than 100 respondents.
The Biggest Challenges

Between the 8 options that were provided, it was perceived by 47% of the respondents that the biggest challenge is Safety and Security. When taking the average rating of each potential challenge, with 1 being the most complex, and 8 being the least complex, we saw similar results. Following Safety & Security, Crowd & Group Behaviour came as second both as the biggest challenge, as well as the biggest overall challenge. The others had average ratings of 3.5-5.5, and <10% of the respondents rated it as their perception of a biggest challenge.

Fields to Focus On

74% of the respondents believed that event planning requires the greatest attention when planning for mass gatherings. The other options were Public Health & Health Care. Of the “High Knowledge” population, this percentage moved up to 82%, with only 7% importance placed in Health Care.
Which Field Requires the Greatest Attention

- Public health (preventing disease and threats to health, rapid detection)
- Health care (medical care, hospitals, clinics)
- Event planning and response (planning, preparedness and managing)

Which Field Requires the Greatest Attention
Knowledge-High

- Event planning and response (planning, preparedness and managing)
- Health care (medical care, hospitals, clinics)
- Public health (preventing disease and threats to health, rapid detection)
Public Health Issues

Public Health Issues was rated as the second most important field to focus attention on. Specific public health issues were ranked in order of importance. Respondents were asked to rank the issues in order of importance, with 1 being the most important and 4 being the least important. 57% of respondents ranked Food, Water & Sanitation as #1, followed by a 19% rank of Environmental, physical, and technological hazards. As the “#1 ranking percentage” went down, the average ranking went up proportionally, indicating that what people find ‘most’ important is also reflective of all the other possible ranks (2-4).
Health Services Issues
Health Services Issues were rated as least important. Over 60% of the respondents rated Emergency Medical Services as the most important issue, and this corresponded with the lowest ranking. While only 14% of respondents rated Alcohol & Drug control as the most important issue, the average ranking was the second highest, meaning that on average, this isn’t as important an issue as first aid posts and medical services in the area.

Event Planning & Response Issues
Event Planning & Response was rated as the most important issue by nearly ¾ of the respondents. Of the 10 issues, public safety and security was rated as the ‘most important’ by 30% of the respondents, and this corresponded with the lowest average rating. Based on the average rating, “Risk/thread assessment” came second, followed by “Emergency Response Plan” and “Spectator management”. The remaining issues were in line with the “most important” rating. Public Media & Social Media were rated as the highest issue by only 8 respondents (3%), which is definitely an interesting observation given the current usage of social media to spread awareness of group gatherings.
**Event Planning Deliverables**

Of the event planning deliverables, 47% rated pre event planning as #1. Safety was a close second, with the average score being only 0.3 away from event planning. Public Health, medical care, additional safety all had a rating of <=4%. The psychological dimension, similar to earlier analysis was rated as the least important factor overall.
Factors Influencing Crowd Behaviour

Respondents rated Drugs & Alcohol as the number one influencing factor for big crowds. This was followed closely by unreasonable force by authority. In this case, the highest rating and the average rating were directly correlated.

Increase in Risk of Unlawful behaviour

63% of the respondents agree or strongly agree that mass gatherings increase the risk of unlawful behaviour.
Police Approach

43% of the respondents agree or strongly agree that police should take a zero tolerance approach in crowd management or control. Those who agree & strongly agree are split relatively evenly between the different age groups, but 70% of those who agree & strongly agree fall in the medium knowledge category.
The high knowledge population was relatively even split between the five responses, with 39% leaning towards agree/strongly agree. 43% of Medium Knowledge respondents leaned towards “Agree”
Magnitude of Complexity

76% of the respondents feel that mass gatherings present the most complex management challenges (Agree or Strongly Agree). High knowledge respondents agree with the overall method.
Adequacy of Partnerships

Overall, 65% of the population either Agree or Strongly Agree that the partnerships are adequate.

These ratios remained the same for the ‘average’ population with little or no knowledge.
However, for people with high knowledge, while the ratio of strongly agree & agree remained similar, less people were on the fence (Neither agree nor disagree). There were more respondents in the ‘disagree’ category.

**Impact**

**Professional Impact**

The overall impact professionally was only 35.6%, presumably those who worked in Toronto.
It is interesting to note that for those who aren’t directly involved with mass gatherings (Knowledge level of low or medium), the professional impact was a mere 29%. This is low in comparison to those who are involved (Knowledge level high), where the professional impact was 57%.

The respondents who were impacted professionally by mass gatherings were relatively evenly split between the age groups.
**Personal Impact**

The personal impact from mass gatherings in Toronto was evenly split between “Yes” and “No”.

To those individuals who are involved directly with mass gatherings, the impact to their personal life was 72%.
Of those who were personally impacted, 31% were 20-29 year olds. 100% of these respondents fell in the “little” category, indicating that their involvement with media may be related to their personal impact.
**Personal vs. Professional**

For those who are directly involved, their personal and professional impact is correlated. However, for an ‘average’ person with little or no knowledge, over 50% of the respondents with personal impact didn’t have any professional impact.

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<th>Knowledge- High</th>
<th>Personal Impact</th>
<th>Professional Impact</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<td></td>
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<th>Professional Impact</th>
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<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
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<td></td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>8%</td>
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**How people are Affected**

Lack of security and safety effected 70% of the respondents who were effected personally or professionally by mass gatherings. This was closely followed by lack of access to transportation and traffic density.
The severity of negative impact caused by mass gatherings was rated as "high" only by 5% of the population.

Of the 37% who rated it as "Medium Impact", 70% came from the respondents with little or no knowledge of mass gatherings. This could indicate that those who do have knowledge may be more prepared to deal with potential negative impacts. The age groups that were moderately impacted were relatively evenly split.
Factors that Negatively Impact our Image

Riots were rated as the biggest factor to negatively impact our image by 50% of the respondents. This was also given the overall lowest rating (Where a rating of 1 is highest impact, and 6 is lowest impact). While casualties & injuries and disease & outbreak were nearly tied as the #1 biggest factor, casualties and injuries had a much lower overall rating. It is interesting to note that social media and mob mentality had a low overall rating.

Impact as a Tourist Destination

76% of the respondents believe that a mass gathering raises the profile of the city as a tourist destination. In comparison, only 9% of the people disagree or strongly disagree of the same. This % carried through to the high knowledge population. 83% of respondents feel that hosting mass gatherings would secure bids to host mega events in the future.
Hosting a mass gathering event raises the profile of the city as a tourist destination

- Strongly disagree: 1%
- Disagree: 8%
- Neither agree or disagree: 15%
- Agree: 25%
- Strongly agree: 51%

Total

- High Knowledge Agree: 11%
- High Knowledge Disagree: 42%
- High Knowledge Neither agree or disagree: 12%
- High Knowledge Strongly agree: 33%
- High Knowledge Strongly disagree: 2%
Impact to Citizens of Toronto

66% of respondents agree or strongly agree that mass gatherings have a positive impact to the City of Toronto. This # corresponds to 61% of the high knowledge respondents, and 67% of the medium population. This trend also carried through to the 20-29 year old age group.
Hosting mass gathering events directly benefits Toronto and its citizens

Mass Gathering Directly Benefits Toronto & its Citizens
Mass Gathering Experiences

*Ease of Identifying Public Safety or Event Staff*

57% of the respondents agree or strongly agree that event staff is easily identifiable. However, 69% of the high knowledge population has the same understanding, compared to only 56% of those with little knowledge and 55% of those within the ages of 20-30.
Ease of Identifying Public Safety & Event Staff

- 13% Strongly disagree
- 6% Disagree
- 9% Neither agree or disagree
- 24% Agree
- 48% Strongly agree

Public Staff is Identifyable:

- 58% High Knowledge Agree
- 13% High Knowledge Disagree
- 11% High Knowledge Neither agree or disagree
- 9% High Knowledge Strongly agree
- 9% High Knowledge Strongly disagree
**Presence of Alcohol vs. Safety**

61% of the respondents believe that the presence of alcohol negatively affects event safety. However, 72% of the respondents agree or strongly agree that the alcohol related preventative measures are adequate. Respondents between the ages of 20-29 most believed that alcohol affected event safety (“Agree” or “Strongly Agree”). This age group also most believed that there was sufficient preventative measures are being taken.
Adequacy of Alcohol Related Safety Measures

Agree or Strongly Agree that Alcohol Related Safety Measures are Adequate
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