

what we know...



Background

In May 2015, the Speed River Inferno attracted athletes from 20 countries and brought more than 1,000 attendees to Guelph. Researchers collected data from observers and athletes regarding their information sources, primary purposes, motivation, cost, satisfaction and future intention for this event, and demographic information. 100 surveys were collected from 365 athletes and 154 surveys from 682 spectators.

Research Objective

The main objective of this study was to estimate the incremental spending of the observers and participants of the Speed River Inferno Track and Field Festival on the City of Guelph. Incremental spending, which refers to "the money that is spent at or because of the event that would not otherwise have been spent in the community" (Research Resolutions and Consulting Ltd., 2007, p.9), is one critical factor that reflects the economic impact of an event.

The research questions included:

- What are the characteristics of the observers and the athletes?
- How much did the observers and the athletes spend in this event?
- What are the athletes' motivations for participating in this event?
- What is the economic impact of this event on the City of Guelph?

Methods

Surveys were used to better capture the data from spectators and participants:

- A paper survey captured the characteristics of the Speed River Inferno Track and Field Meet held on May 30, 2015, aiming to measure the incremental spending and other related information of the observers.
- An online survey was developed for the participants with similar expenditure and demographic questions, and additional scales were obtained from previous studies to measure their motivations. Three University of Guelph professors were asked to pretest both surveys before final distribution.

Sample Size:

- The spectator group: 154 responses were collected, representing 682 spectators
- The athlete group: 123 responses were collected

Limitations

The paper survey for observers was distributed during the main running races on May 30, 2015. Attendance was 1080 (based on the number tickets sold). Unfortunately, extreme rain conditions kept many ticket holders away, which may have influenced the response rate and the time observers had for answering the survey. Also, this study did not collect the opinions from the coaches and officials, who could have provided some insights to improve the promotion of this event.

"The Inferno's impact on Wellington County was \$142,400 in GDP, \$97,300 in labor income, \$40,000 in direct taxes and \$65,000 in total taxes."

THE ECONOMIC IMPACT of the 2015 Speed River Inferno Track and Field Festival

The annual Speed River Inferno running races were held on May 29 and 30, 2015 at the University of Guelph, with the cooperation with Athletics Canada and the City of Guelph. The Inferno is a two day track and field event that includes the Track and Field Experience, The Downtown Road Mile and the Speed River Inferno Track and Field Meet. The races attracted 365 young runners to learn from some of Canada's top track and field athletes, as well as amateur or professional runners for the community road mile run. The European style track meet, competing among Olympians and athletes from 20 countries, also brought close to 1100 observers to the University of Guelph.

Research Findings:

Key findings from the observer survey include (Table 1):

- The majority of observers were well educated, holding a university or graduate degrees (72.2%), and were in high-income brackets (51.7% earned \$100,000 and more annually)
- The main purposes of attending this event were (1) to watch world-class athletes, and (2) to support friends and family
- 65.1% of observers were from outside Guelph
- The average expenditure was \$91/person, and they collectively contributed over \$62,000 to the local economy

Key findings from the athletes include (Table 2):

- This event attracted a good combination of amateur (64%) and professional (36%) runners
- The majority of athletes (70%) were experienced runners that have completed more than 10 races in the last 3 years
- The top 3 motives of participating were (1) to challenge their abilities, (2) to improve their finishing time, and (3) to compete against others and themselves
- Almost all indicated that they were very or somewhat satisfied with this event (95%), with a very high willingness to participate again in the next 2 years, and to recommend this event
- Since 71% of the athletes do not reside in Guelph, and spend an average of \$230, they collectively contributed about \$60,000 to the local economy

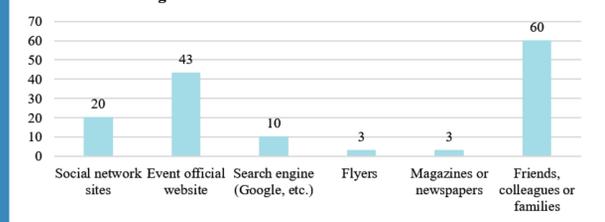
Table 1. Expenditure by Spectators as Determined by Survey Data

Expenditure Categories	Mean (\$)	Std. Dev.	N	Total (\$)
Total Expenditure	91.25	211.13	117	10,677
Accommodation	251.67	182.58	6	1,510
Transportation	68.41	197.25	44	3,010
Food and beverage	44.05	54.53	75	3,304
Recreation	30.09	22.03	47	1,415
Other: shopping, souvenirs, photos etc.	42.50	37.06	10	425

Table 2. Expenditure by the Athletes as Determined by Survey Data

Expenditure Categories	Mean (\$)	Std. Dev.	N	Total (\$)
Total Expenditure	230.24	339.34	62	14,275
Accommodation	298.77	144.16	13	3,884
Transportation	91.18	180.19	49	4,468
Food and beverage	53.71	50.47	59	3,169
Recreation	32.33	28.25	15	485
Others: shopping, souvenirs, photos, etc.	45.00	34.58	12	540

Figure 1. Information Sources of the Athletes



Conclusions:

- This event attracted observers from nearby cities within Ontario; 65% of respondents were not residents of Guelph, but the majority indicated they did not stay overnight in Guelph (86.6%)
- This event attracted both professional and amateur runners from Guelph and beyond. These athletes had very different socio-demographics backgrounds, expenditure behaviours and motivations to participate in this event. Thus, it is very important to segment the athletes and provide different strategies to satisfy them.
- For professional runners, the organizers can create a more competitive atmosphere by posting on the website who the elite runners are along with their achievements. For amateur runners, the organizers might consider creating a "fun run" and emphasize the social and relaxation aspects.
- Using the Tourism Regional Economic Impact Model, the Inferno's impact on Wellington County was \$142,400 in GDP, \$97,300 in labor income, \$40,000 in direct taxes to various levels of government and \$65,000 in total taxes

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