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**Social Outcomes of the Sydney World Masters Games:**  
**A Participant Study**

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## Social Outcomes of the SWMG: A Participant Study

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# Research Summary

## Social Outcomes of the Sydney World Masters Games: A Participant Study

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### 1.0 Project Rationale

This research sought to investigate the social outcomes evidenced at the 2009 Sydney World Masters Games (SWMG). Large-scale sport events are typically conceived as tools of economic management through stimulus construction, city branding and for tourism. However, an area that has received limited attention as an outcome of large-scale sport events are the social outcomes that the host city receives for the participants and the wider public (Andersson, Rustad, & Solberg, 2004; Fredline & Faulkner, 2001; O'Brien & Chalip, 2008). There has been limited research into the planning, management, legacies and evaluation of social outcomes across various stakeholder groups (Kellett, Hede, & Chalip, 2008). Recently, the social outcomes from sport events have attracted increasing attention from researchers, policy makers and event organisers with one focus being the outcomes of physical activity and sport participation (Brown & Massey, 2001; Coalter, 2008; Frawley, Van den Hoven, & Cush, 2009; Insight Economics, 2006; Murphy & Bauman, 2007; Weed et al., 2009). The enhanced coverage of sport outcomes has been underpinned by a shift in how events are perceived within their urban context. Chalip (2004) has argued that events are a means, not an end and that strategic initiatives must be strategically put in place to ensure these broader outcomes. While research has intensified in this area, most work has remained at the conceptual level with very few empirical studies. This project was conceived as part of a program of PhD research to empirically investigate the social outcomes expected by participants of the SWMG. This summary document focuses on the online pre-event Participant Survey conducted in the week prior to the Games commencement, 7<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup> October 2009. Two areas of literature are discussed briefly, including event leverage and sport development, the research design explained and key findings highlighted.

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## Social Outcomes of the SWMG: A Participant Study

### 1.1 Event Leverage Literature

Chalip and others have outlined the potential for event organisers and policy makers to leverage the celebratory nature of events by focusing the event community and event media attention on particular social agendas (Chalip, 2004, 2006; Kellett et al., 2008; O'Brien, 2007; O'Brien & Chalip, 2008). They have coined the phrase 'event leverage', which is defined as "the implementation of strategies by stakeholders to maximize the benefits from hosting an event or festival" (O'Brien, 2007, p. 142). O'Brien (2005, 2007) has identified through empirical investigation of event leverage models (Chalip, 2006; O'Brien & Chalip, 2008) the importance of understanding the nature of both sport tourists and participants in large scale sport events. He argues that sport subcultures are an asset to be leveraged for both short- and long-term outcomes. Evidence suggests that where event organisers have sought to identify and understand subcultures of event attendees they have been able to deliver event experiences that are desired by the attendees (Green, 2001). By considering the delivery of event experiences through a strategic event leverage model there are opportunities to promote particular social agendas.

The Model for Social Event Leverage (O'Brien & Chalip, 2008) has recently attracted interest from the area of sport development through opportunities to enhance both the service side of sport through sport delivery and the demand side of sport through increases in physical activity and sport participation (Shipway, 2009; Taks, Misener, Chalip, & Green, 2009; Weed et al., 2009).

### 1.2 Sport Development Literature – Physical Activity and Sport Participation

A commonly applied justification for government involvement in sport events is the argument that sport events promote and encourage increased participation in sport activities by the host populations and spectators of such events (Coalter, 2007; Murphy & Bauman, 2007). However, the potential benefits that large scale sporting events may have on physical activity levels, sport participation and sport development is questioned in the literature as there is limited evidence to demonstrate these benefits actually occur and to what extent. To understand the current state of events and sport outcomes, Weed et al. (2009) conducted a review of event research for sport and health outcomes in the lead up to the London 2012 Olympics. They found that there is limited understanding of how sport events might be used for sport development outcomes. They also argued that no Olympic Games, or similar event, have sought to raise physical activity and sport participation through event purpose or objectives (Weed et al., 2009).

A review of recent Australian events found that several large scale sport events *have* set objectives for social and sporting outcomes (Thomson & Darcy, 2009). The review included the 2006 Commonwealth Games, Melbourne and the 2007 FINA World Swimming Championships, Melbourne. These two events positively demonstrated a much broader conceptualisation of the role of the events across objectives, strategies and reporting mechanisms of social outcomes for the host city, including social, health and legacy outcomes (Thomson & Darcy, 2009). Within the evaluation mechanism, a focus on counting organisational outputs and surveying host resident perceptions of the event were favoured. This type of evaluation is limited in the ability to demonstrate the benefits of an event and its associated strategies through the development of sport delivery, increased physical activity and sport participation, as argued for by sport development scholars (Brown & Massey, 2001; Coalter, 2008; Frawley et al., 2009; Insight Economics, 2006; Murphy & Bauman, 2007; Weed et al., 2009).

### 1.3 Summary

This literature review has highlighted that to leverage events effectively, an understanding of event attendees is critical. To demonstrate the sporting outcomes of large-scale sport events, measurement must go beyond counting of programme outputs, anecdotal accounts and measurement of perception. The literature identifies a need to look at the real outcomes that event participation may have on attendees' wider physical activity and sport participation. The SWMG offered an opportunity to empirically investigate the social outcomes of major sport events expected by the participants.

## Social Outcomes of the SWMG: A Participant Study

### 2.0 Research Aim & Method

The aim of the research was to investigate the social outcomes of participant involvement in the SWMG. The objectives sought to:

1. Provide a detailed participant profile;
2. Identify participant expectations; and
3. Measure perceived impacts on physical activity and sport participation.

The SWMG was identified as a suitable case study for two reasons. First, the event owners and organiser had only limited management information from previous editions of the Games regarding participants. Second, the organising committee included two pertinent objectives to:

- Highlight health and well being benefits associated with sport participation for mature age; and
- Provide a foundation for legacy development for master's sport in NSW.

### 2.1 Research Design

This study was part of a larger research design for a Ph.D. program of research. This paper reports only on the online pre-event survey instrument that included a significant number of open-ended responses to gather qualitative data, together with informal onsite participant observation. The survey was developed through engaging with relevant literature, in consultation with people regarded as experts in the field, and reviewed by the Organising Committee and approved under the UTS Human Research Ethics Committee guidelines and NSW Privacy legislation. Lastly, a letter outlining an information sharing agreement between Communities NSW, UTS and Alana Thomson was put in place.

An online survey instrument was used to gather primary data from the population and sample set out in Table 1. The survey instrument was divided into three sections. The first identified the outcomes that respondents expected from their participation in the SWMG. The second measured participant perceptions of how their participation in the SWMG had influenced their physical activity and sport participation. This section featured a number of closed-response options developed from literature on sport development included above. The third gathered demographic information for respondent profile and to compare to the population census. Table 1 sets out details of the participant survey method.

**Table 1: Participant Survey Method Summary**

<b>Who, where, how</b>	<b>Population:</b> Participants included in the SWMGOC database <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 26,244 emails delivered by Communities NSW, 855 emails were unable to be delivered (27,099 in total) with a link to a self-administered self-complete online survey available between 5pm 7<sup>th</sup> October 2009 until 6pm 11<sup>th</sup> October, 2009</li></ul> <b>Sample:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 3442 surveys were returned</li><li>• 3149 were fully complete and used for analysis</li></ul>
<b>Analysis</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Open-ended response – preliminary content analysis using Leximancer software (Smith &amp; Humphreys, 2006)</li><li>• Closed response options: Descriptive statistics – Frequencies and Cross Tabulations</li></ul>

### 3.0 Key Findings

Almost 12 percent of the population completed the survey, regarded as an excellent response to a Broadcast email, given the survey was only distributed four full days prior to the commencement of the event due to organisational constraints. It is considered that had there been a longer lead-time and reminder emails to the response rate may have been higher, and possibly more representative of overseas participants. Overseas participants were anticipated at 1/3 of the overall event participation, however, they only reflect 15 percent of the results from this research. Travel obligations and internet access are considered to have impacted on this result. This section highlights key findings for expected outcomes of respondents; perceived impacts on physical activity and sport participation; and provides a detailed participant profile for the SWMG.

### 3.1 Respondent Characteristics

In all, some 53 percent of respondents were male and 47 percent of respondents were female. The largest proportion of respondents was aged 45-54 (41.2%), 35-44 (24.5%), and 55-64 (21.3%). Some 15 percent of respondents were overseas visitors, while 85 percent resided in Australia. Almost half of the respondents had completed either an undergraduate or postgraduate university degree (49.8%), with an additional 28 percent having completed Diploma/Trade/Technical Qualifications. The majority of respondents were in full-time employment or self-employed (68.5%), with an additional 15 percent in some form of flexible employment (part-time/casual/contractor). Finally, some 10 percent of respondents indicated they were retired. Full details of respondent characteristics can be found in Appendix 1.

### 3.2 Expected Outcomes of Participation

Participants were asked to explain the 5 most important outcomes they expected from their participation in the SWMG. This question attracted a high response, with just over 70,000 words collected for analysis. This research summary provides preliminary analysis of the expected outcomes, a thematic analysis continues as this summary is written. The results from a content analysis using Leximancer are presented in Figure 1 & 2 which illustrate the concept map generated by the software. Figure 1a shows a broad view of the map with significant concepts through bright colour circles, and identifies the relationships between the expected social outcomes of the respondents through the connectors between the circles (Smith & Humphreys, 2006). Figure 1b shows a detailed view of the map and includes the words that contributed to the main concepts.





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Several main concepts are apparent, sport, world, competition and event. To understand the implications of the concept map, the data was reviewed in depth to guide the interpretation (Kivunja, 2008). A preliminary summary is presented here starting with *Sport* as the central concept and working clockwise, respondents expected the outcomes of:

- *Playing* their *sport*, with and against *teams* from around the *world*;
- Spending *time* with their *team*;
- Having *fun*, this was linked with team, but also stood on its own as single references in the data to “Fun”;
- Meeting people from around the *world*, and as demonstrated in the map, friends and people were two different concepts, a distinction is observed between meeting new *people* and catching up with old *friends*;
- Participating in an international *sport event* with athletes from all over the *world*, with fair *competition*, that is fairly played and fairly matched, this was referred to by both serious and social participants;
- Competing against the world’s *best*, and many respondents expected that they would perform at their *best* in *competition*, and be rewarded through medals and other recognition;
- Performing well due to their pre-event *training*, and also expected that the experience would encourage them to keep *training*; and
- Having good *time playing sport*, socialising sightseeing and experiencing sport venues in *Sydney*.

### 3.3 Current and Previous Participation in Organised Sport

Participants were asked to indicate what their CURRENT participation in organised sport entailed. Each respondent selected an average of at least 3 response options, indicating a variety of roles of participation in sport (3368 respondents answered the question with 10395 valid responses). As illustrated in Figure 2, respondents were most likely to be sporting participants. This category consisted mainly of:

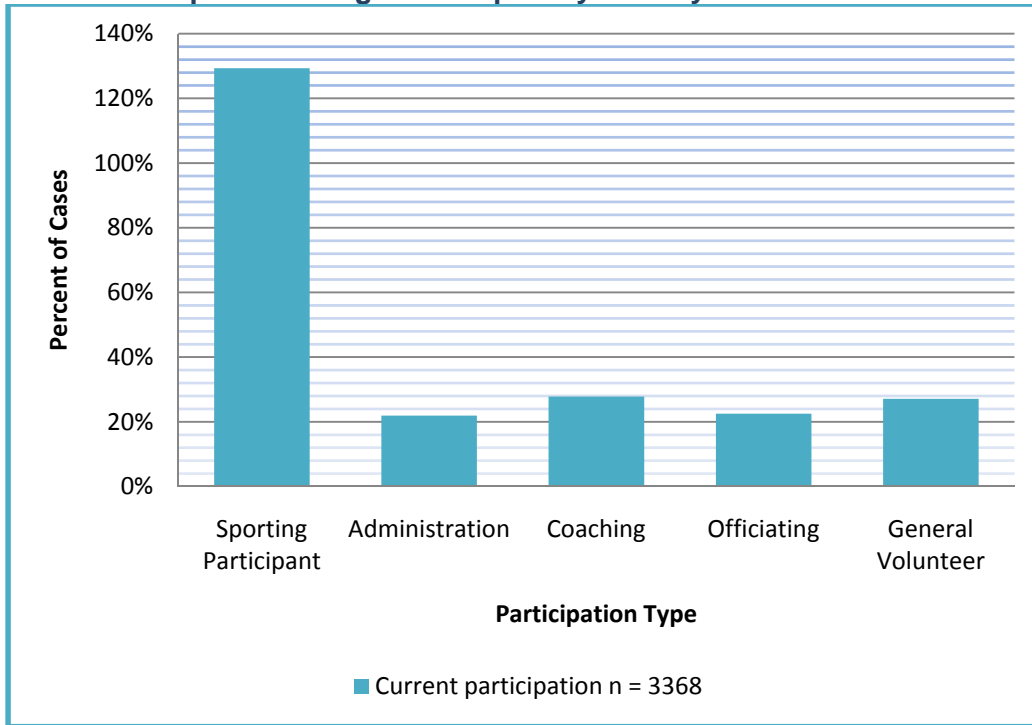
- Masters - Serious Competitor (37.3%) and Social Competitor (34.6%); and
- Adult - Social Competitor (29.5%) and Serious Competitor (27.2%).

There was an even split between those who identified as Social (64.8%) or Serious (64.5%) competitors.



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Figure 2: Current Participation in Organised Sport by Activity



A cross tabulation between CURRENT Sporting Participation and PREVIOUS Sporting Participation was conducted to determine relationships between the two participation periods. What this demonstrated was that those currently participating in the Adult and Masters competition were most likely to have been participating in both serious and social competition from their youth.

### 3.4 Type of Participation in SWMG

Participants were asked how they were involved in the SWMG (participants could select multiple answers). Table 2 shows that the majority of respondents were associated with the SWMG as Sporting Participants only (87.8%), with a little over 10 percent extending their roles to include team personnel and technical official.

Table 2: Roles Describing Type of Participation

Role	Frequency	%
I am a sporting participant only	2845	87.8%
Team personnel, e.g. Coach/Manager	232	7.2%
Technical official, e.g. Umpire/Referee	146	4.5%
Both Team personnel & Technical Official	19	0.5%
Total (n = 3242)	3242	100%

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### 3.5 Previous Participation in World Masters Games

Participants were asked to indicate their attendance at previous World Masters Games. Some 3242 respondents answered the question with 3552 responses, indicating some had attended one or more previous event. As presented in Table 3, 75 percent of respondents indicated that the SWMG was their first experience participating in a World Masters Games.

**Table 3: Attendance at Previous World Masters Games**

Event Year & Country	Frequency	% of Cases
1985 - Toronto, Canada	7	0.2%
1989 - Aalborg, Aarhus and Herring, Denmark	9	0.3%
1994 - Brisbane, Australia	181	5.6%
1998 - Portland Oregon, USA	53	1.6%
2002 - Melbourne, Australia	581	17.9%
2005 - Edmonton, Canada	294	9.1%
2009 - New to the event in Sydney, Australia	2427	74.9%
<b>Total (n = 3242)</b>	<b>3552</b>	<b>109.6%</b>

### 3.6 Influence of the SWMG on Participation in Organised Sport

Participants were asked whether the SWMG influenced their participation in organised sport. Table 4 shows that just over a quarter of respondents (28%) indicated that since they became aware of the SWMG they had increased their participation in organised sport.

**Table 4: Influence on Participation in Organised Sport**

	Frequency	%
I have been participating more since I became aware of the SWMG	909	28.0%
I have been participating at the same level as before I became aware of the SWMG	1437	44.3%
The SWMG has had no influence on the level of my participation	835	25.8%
I have been participating less since I became aware of the SWMG	61	1.9%
<b>Total (n = 3242)</b>	<b>3242</b>	<b>100%</b>

Participants were asked how participation in the SWMG influenced their membership status of local sport clubs or organisations. Table 5 shows that some 90 percent of respondents were already members of a local community sport club or organisation. An additional 6 percent had either become, or intend to become a member due to participation in the SWMG.

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**Table 5: Influence on Membership Status of Local Sport Clubs or Organisations**

	Frequency	%
I have become a member of a local community sport club or organisation because of my involvement in the SWMG	135	4.2%
I am already a member of a local community sport club or organisation	2915	90.0%
I intend to become a member of a local community sport club or organisation in the next 12 months because of my involvement in the SWMG	69	2.1%
I have no intention of becoming a member of a local community sport club or organisation	121	3.7%
<b>Total (n = 3240)</b>	<b>3240</b>	<b>100%</b>

### 3.7 Impact of the SWMG on Sport Participation and Physical Activity

Respondents were asked to rate 10 statements describing the impact of the SWMG on their sport participation and physical activity. Each statement could be answered with a defined 7 point Likert scale, from 1 = Strongly Agree to 7 = Strongly Disagree, including a Neither Agree or Disagree option. Table 6 shows descriptive statistics for each statement.

#### Appendix 2: Impact of the SWMG on Sport Participation and Physical Activity

Statement	Mean Score
The Sydney World Masters Games is highlighting for me the health and wellbeing benefits of continued participation in organised sport	5.59
My participation in the Sydney World Masters Games is encouraging me to take up sports again	3.99
My participation in the Sydney World Masters Games is encouraging me to lead a healthy and active lifestyle	1.94
My participation in the Sydney World Masters Games is discouraging my family and friends from leading healthy and active lifestyles	1.94
The training regimes available on the Sydney World Masters Games website are encouraging me to lead a healthy and active lifestyle	3.90
Participating in the Sydney World Masters Games is discouraging me from being more physically active	1.73
The Sydney World Masters Games is providing me with the opportunity to participate in sports I normally do not participate in	3.03
The Sydney World Masters Games is encouraging healthy and active lifestyles for all participants	5.84
The motto “fit, fun and forever young” accurately describes my participation in the SWMG	5.67
Participating in the Sydney World Masters Games is discouraging my involvement in local community sport organisations	1.77
<b>(n = 3149)</b>	

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Respondents agreed (means of 5 and over) with the following statements:

- The SWMG is highlighting for me the health and wellbeing benefits of continued participation in organised sport;
- My participation in the SWMG is encouraging me to lead a healthy and active lifestyle;
- The SWMG is encouraging healthy and active lifestyles for all participants; and
- The motto “fit, fun and forever young” accurately describes my participation in the SWMG.

Respondents disagreed (means of 3 and under) with the following statements:

- My participation in the SWMG is discouraging my family and friends from leading healthy and active lifestyles;
- Participating in the SWMG is discouraging me from being more physically active; and
- Participating in the SWMG is discouraging my involvement in local community sport organisations.

Respondents neither agreed nor disagreed (means of over 3 and under 5) with the following statements:

- My participation in the SWMG is encouraging me to take up sports again;
- The training regimes available on the SWMG website are encouraging me to lead a healthy and active lifestyle; and
- The SWMG is providing me with the opportunity to participate in sports I normally do not participate in.

### 4.0 Summary

This research addressed two key areas: participant expectations; and perceived impacts on physical activity and sport participation through the SWMG case study. The findings presented the descriptive outcomes that will be developed further as part of the broader PhD study. The respondent profile revealed an even gender balance of people across the mature age cohorts who were highly educated and in full-time employment. Respondents expected their participation in the SWMG would result in the experience of an intrinsic nature of the sport, including preparation through training, fairness, competition and performance; the nature of socialising with friends (new and old) from around the world; experiences of Sydney; and having fun. As outlined above, a thematic analysis of this data continues to develop from the 200,000 words of qualitative data collected from the open-ended questions.

In terms of the impact of participation in the SWMG on physical activity and sport participation, the findings demonstrated patterns depending on whether participants identified themselves as serious or social athletes, individuals or as part of a team and whether they were from overseas or Australia. Respondents were found to have been involved in sport throughout most life stages. Additional roles beyond being a sport participant were not strongly represented. A significant number of respondents were new to the World Masters Games experience. While a quarter of respondents perceived the event to have had a positive impact on the involvement in organised sport, the majority of respondents perceived their participation to have no impact on their participation in organised sport as they have always been involved. Last, participants overall identified strongly with the motto “fit, fun and forever young” and that their participation in the event was reinforcing their belief in a healthy active lifestyle, both individually and for all participants.

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### Appendix 1: SWMG Respondent Characteristics

Variable	Frequency	%	Variable	Frequency	%
<b>Gender</b>			<b>Highest Level of Education Completed</b>		
Male	1654	52.7%	Primary School	15	0.5%
Female	1486	47.3%	Secondary School	622	19.8%
Total	3140	100%	Diploma/Trade/Technical Qualifications	877	28.0%
			Undergraduate university degree	683	21.8%
<b>Age</b>			Postgraduate university degree	878	28.0%
Under 24	10	0.3%	Other	59	1.9%
25-34	117	3.7%	Total	3134	100%
35-44	769	24.5%	<b>Current Employment Status (n= 3135)</b>		
45-54	1295	41.2%	Full-time employment	1765	56.3%
55-64	669	21.3%	Part-time/casual employment	421	13.4%
65-74	227	7.2%	Self-employed	381	12.2%
75+	53	1.7%	Contractor	57	1.8%
Total	3140	100%	Full-time home duties	82	2.6%
<b>Overseas Visitor or Australian Resident</b>			Looking for work	41	1.3%
Overseas Visitor	477	15.2%	Volunteer	15	0.5%
Australian Resident	2663	84.8%	Retired	307	9.8%
Total	3140	100%	Full-time education	15	0.5%
			Other	51	1.6%
			Total	3135	100%