Introduction

The Masters sport movement, which began locally as collections of community-based ventures, has grown tremendously and expanded nationally and internationally (Hastings et al. 2005). It is estimated that over 50 countries hold their own Masters sport events, and that the Masters phenomenon relates to at least 44 different sports worldwide (Coaching Association of Canada 2013). Masters athletes (MAs) are individuals who participate in competitive sport in their adult years, with organized events typically beginning at age 35 and extending into the 90s. Masters sports-persons are characterized by formal registration for an organization (e.g. club or league) or event (e.g. 10 km road race, a bonspiel, a Masters games), and a sufficiently regular pattern of involvement that supports their training in preparation for a sport event (Young 2011). Some adult sport participants train in programmes dedicated to their specific age-cohort, whereas others carry out their day-to-day involvement alongside younger (e.g. adolescent, young adult) athletes; however, Masters sport is probably best characterized by adults’ participation in competitive events that are segregated and advertised to adults alone. Indeed, events that are dedicated and marketed to Masters sports-persons have grown tremendously in number and in popularity in recent years.

In light of this growth, this chapter aims to discuss several perspectives relating to the promotion, marketing, and empirical analysis of large-scale Masters sport events. In particular, we borrow from research or conceptual notions that appear to apply uniquely to MAs, and attempt to merge recent findings on MAs from the domain of social-psychology of sport with pertinent themes in sport marketing and event promotion. We outline research on factors that attract people to Masters sport, and advance these findings as being relevant for event programmers and promoters, who alike, endeavour to recruit greater masses (or participatory ‘consumers’) to their event. In particular, we consider a number of involvement opportunities that likely attract adults to invest in their sport, and consider how these opportunities may be advertised to various segments of the ‘Masters market’. Finally, we consider the effects of a large-scale Masters event, and propose that certain legacy outcomes are age-related – that is, changes in aging conceptions and what people think is possible in aging. Such outcomes may be particularly unique to large-scale Masters events compared to more familiar mega-events (e.g. Olympic Games, Commonwealth Games, Pan-American Games), and we suggest methods by which researchers may seek empirical evidence supporting these changes in the wake of large-scale Masters events.
The topics in the current chapter may be of interest to various stakeholders in Masters sport, including international federations such as World Masters Athletics, *Fédération Internationale de Natation*, and the International Masters Games Association, as well as various event host organizing committees, such as the FINA World Masters Championships Committee (Montréal 2014). Other potential stakeholders include National Governing Bodies (NGBs) and provincial sport organizations (PSOs), Masters athletes, various levels of government (federal, provincial, and municipal), tourism-related organizations, media, and sponsors. However, in order to frame our discussion of these matters, it is important to begin by describing the nature of large-scale Masters events, their scope, and claims relating to the significant impacts from these events.

**Growth of the big three events**

Amidst the growth of Masters sport, several large-scale international events have grown significantly in number of participants and in prestige (see Figure 8.1). These events represent a new frontier of large-scale sport events, showcasing ever increasing numbers of aging competitive sport participants for extended periods of time in multiple sport disciplines. These events have grown for many reasons, including the aging demographics of the Westernized world, as well as an enlarged middle class and a ‘Baby Boomers’ cohort with disposable income to spend on sport as a predominant form of leisure (Dionigi 2008). In these countries, highly educated adults have grown up in a culture emphasizing the importance of physical literacy and the value of physical activity for promoting health, and these persons live in societies where there has been increasing acceptance for sport programming for the aged. Finally, against the backdrop of a consumer

![Figure 8.1](image_url)
Masters sport perspectives

society, Masters sport is beginning to thrive as a market for adults’ spending on ‘serious leisure’ (Heo et al. 2012) and a welcome form of sport tourism (Trauer et al. 2003). The explosion of such mass adult sport events epitomizes the increasing commodification of Masters sport, as evidenced by increasing corporate involvement (Hastings et al. 2005). Due in part to these factors, the Masters sport landscape now has a select few competitive events and festivals that have risen to prominence for their ability to draw significant masses from across the globe, for their visibility in promoting ‘sport for life’ and an ‘active healthy aging’ agenda, and because they may cause us to re-think how we view and value the possibilities afforded by mass-scale sport events. We now review three of these events – the World Masters Games, The FINA World Masters Championships, and the World Masters Athletics Championship, by describing the nature of the event, the scope of participation, and anecdotal evidence supporting each event’s impact.

World Masters Games (WMG)

Held every four years, this event has been labelled as the ‘world’s largest multi-sport event’ (International Masters Games Association 2013). The WMG is governed by the International Masters Games Association (IMGA), which is a non-governmental, not-for-profit international association that is recognized by the International Olympic Committee as the representative body for Masters sport worldwide. The IMGA mission includes the promotion of sport for all among ‘mature’ athletes worldwide as well as the organization of international multi-sports events for mature sportspersons. The Board of Governors comprises representatives from 21 international ‘core sport’ federations tasked with accepting applications and subsequently appointing future host organizing committees to stage the WMG.

The WMG event attracts sportspeople of all abilities and most ages – the minimum age criterion for most of its constituent sports is 35 years of age, although a few sports begin as young as 25. Following the inaugural edition in Toronto in 1985, which drew about 8,000 participants from 65 countries in 22 sports, the event has repeatedly grown (Figure 8.1). The Sydney 2009 WMG drew 28,676 competitors, which was more than double the number of competitors at the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games (Sydney WMG Host Organizing Committee 2009). Up to 50,000 people from more than 90 nations were expected to attend the 2013 edition in Torino, Italy, participating in 30 sports (Torino WMG Organizing Committee 2013). WMG has been variably branded as a ‘global celebration of sport for life’, and its promotion has been affiliated with slogans such as ‘the challenge never ends’ and ‘fit, fun and forever young’. The WMG is an ‘open’ event, meaning that all adults who meet age criteria and who demonstrate proof of medical eligibility can compete. Participants range from being highly recreational in their competitive orientation to more serious-minded, with a very small minority (e.g. approximately 200 competitors in Sydney) claiming to be former Olympians. Participation is most popular for adults between 40–49 (comprising 36 percent of all participants) and 50–59 (30 percent) years of age, with relative distributions in other age cohorts as follows: 30–39 years (15 percent); 60–69 years (13 percent), 70+ years (5 percent) (Sydney WMG Host Organizing Committee 2009). Males (59 percent) outnumber females, and typically about 60–65 percent of competitors are from the host country, with the remainder being foreign travellers. At the 2005 Edmonton WMG, the average participant reported a mean annual household income of CDN$107,000, was highly educated (79 percent of people had completed a post-secondary degree or higher), and attended the WMG for the first-time (81 percent were first-time WMG participants; Edmonton WMG Host Organizing Committee 2005). The most popular sports have typically been soccer (10.4 percent of participants), athletics (9.7 percent), softball (9.1 percent), rowing (7.2 percent), and swimming (6.4 percent; Sydney WMG Host Organizing Committee 2009).
Participant expenditures make a significant economic impact on the host city, with spin-off effects arising when participants and their companions extend their visits before and after the games (Deloitte and Touche 2006, Torino WMG Organizing Committee 2013). For example, the total direct spending by 2005 WMG visitors in Edmonton was $44.9 million (CDN) dollars (Deloitte and Touche 2006). Direct spending was derived from estimated expenditures during the nine days of the Games, but also from extended stays in the region before or after the event. The impact of total expenditures for Edmonton was $36.4 million (CDN), including an increase in wages and salaries of $27.1 million (CDN). The event also had significant effects on industry output, generated significant tax revenue, and precipitated the creation of almost 800 new jobs in the host city. Beyond economic impacts, Deloitte and Touche also acknowledged other benefits, such as civic pride, international exposure, and increased credibility and marketing value for future bids on athletic events. One of the other prominent outcomes from the Edmonton WMG pertained to the 5,500 people who had volunteered their time to stage the event, leaving an important legacy of sport volunteerism (Edmonton WMG Host Organizing Committee 2005) that is important to future events (e.g. Doherty 2009).

FINA World Masters Championships

Masters swimming has become a global phenomenon with at least 84 countries boasting dedicated national programs. There is a world championship sanctioned by the Fédération Internationale de Natation (FINA), a not-for-profit international association responsible for the aquatic disciplines of swimming, open water swimming, diving, water polo, synchronised swimming, and Masters programs/activity. The FINA Bureau, the ultimate governing arm of the organization, consists of 22 members elected by a General Congress. The Bureau chooses the dates and host cities of World Championships and other FINA events. FINA officially recognized the Masters movement in 1986 and the creation of the FINA Technical Masters Committee followed in 1992. International growth in Masters swimming participation continues to be driven in part by FINA federation members who have worked to establish Masters programs in their home countries, and by the prominence of the FINA World Masters Championships (Hastings et al. 2005).

The ‘FINA World Masters’ is an international aquatics event for adults 25 years and older that is held biennially, with competition in five aquatic disciplines. The first championship in 1986 drew 3,400 participants to Tokyo, and the event has grown exponentially since then (South African Masters Swimming 2013) – the recent edition in Riccione, Italy, attracted more than 14,000 athletes from 74 nations. All participants must be a registered member of a national federation that belongs to FINA before registering, and swimmers are instructed to meet qualifying standards prior to the meet – although these standards are not strictly challenging, they make the event less inclusive than the WMG. At the 2012 event, just over 70 percent of participants were swimmers; amongst them, males (58 percent of participants) outnumbered females, and percentage representation by age cohort was as follows: 45–54 years (27 percent), 35–44 years (24), 25–34 years (22), 55–64 years (14), with the remaining 13 percent over the age of 65.

The event occurs over 13 days and has a significant presence in the host community and environs. For example, government reports heralded the 2008 Perth championships as a success, estimating that the event generated an estimated $10 to $12 million (AUD) benefit to the Western Australian economy, mainly through accommodation and hospitality (Kobelke 2008). Reports proclaimed that the event endowed ‘an outstanding legacy’ for the sporting community, and also developed local expertise in staging major international events. The minister for sport and recreation declared that the FINA Masters event reflected the government’s commitment to promoting the health benefits in continuing with physical activity no matter what one’s age,
and noted how the competition was ‘proof that age is no barrier to participation, camaraderie and achievement’ (Kobelke 2008: 1). Like Perth, other FINA Masters events have been lauded for generating civic pride, and a legacy related to the ‘sport for life’ movement, with their political currency paraded by event organizers, stakeholders, and politicians.

**World Masters Athletics (WMA) Championships**

These are the premiere championships for athletes in track and field, road racing, race walking, and cross-country running who are over the age of 35. These championships are governed by the World Masters Athletics, which is a not-for-profit organization that is recognized by the International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF) as the regulatory and administrative body for the sport of Masters athletics world-wide. The General Assembly of the WMA organization includes an elected council and delegates representing over 140 member (national) federations; one of its many roles is handling bid and selection procedures pertaining to future host city organizing committees for the WMA championships.

The WMA championships, an event that has been promoted under the banner ‘Athletics for Life’, has been held biennially since 1975, offering competitive events over the course of 12–13 consecutive days in one city. The events have grown in popularity and scope, and the WMA organization has begun endorsing non-stadia events (road racing, race walking, and cross-country) and also indoor championships and mountain running championships biennially in alternating years to stadia championships (WMA 2013). Testifying to the global reach of Masters athletics, past stadia and non-stadia championships have been held on six different continents in 17 different countries. Competitive participants have consistently surpassed 4,000 for the past five WMA stadia championships, despite many possible participants being attracted to non-stadia events (comprising 700 to 17,000 registrants) and indoor championships (~ 3,000 registrants) in the intermediary years. Moreover, WMA stadia championships have had to compete for participants with the WMG in recent years. To avoid this conflict in the future, WMA organizers have decided to host their championship biennially in even instead of odd calendar years beginning in 2016. WMA championships are open events, meaning that individuals who meet age criteria and pay their entry fee can participate; however, competition in the highest seeded races is deep, especially because certain European countries field national teams, comprising members who have competed in qualifying meets and who have been chosen by their national organizing group.

Hosts for the WMA Championships frequently claim that the event provides financial, cultural, and recreational benefits to their community. For example, hosts for the 2016 Perth WMA are predicting that international and national visitors will deliver up to $31 million (AUD) to the Western Australia economy (Hames 2012). Forecasts indicated that the 2011 Sacramento event would generate $23 million (USD) for the city and surrounding region (Sacramento Sports Commission Department 2010). In addition to almost 2,000 American competitors in Sacramento, close to 3,000 foreign athletes and 7,500 accompanying visitors stayed for an average of 12 nights in local hotels, contracting out more than 2,170 rooms per night. Conservative forecasts placed estimates at $2.7 million in direct hotel revenue, with another $5.5 in direct spending at restaurants and businesses, and $400,000 in estimated tax revenues. Local council contended that the event heightened the international and national prestige and renown of the city. Moreover, the event engaged local citizenry, by attracting over 500 volunteers who helped stage 937 age-group events at six separate venues during the 13 days of the championships (Sacramento WMA Championships Organizing Committee 2011).

In sum, these three Masters sport events have grown to become remarkable showcases of aging competitors participating in multiple disciplines and remaining in host regions for extended
periods. Due to the success of these events, seasonal and regional championships and Games have begun to populate the sporting landscape. For example, the International Masters Games Association has endorsed two recent editions of a World Winter Masters Games, and regional Games events are gaining a greater foothold, such as the 2015 European Masters Games (Nice, France), with more on the horizon, such as 2016 The Americas Masters Games in Vancouver. Although the FINA Masters is the largest world-wide adult aquatics event, there are many established national events such as the annual United States Masters Swimming long-course (~1,400) and short-course championship (~1,600), and regional events such as the European Masters Championships (~4,000) and the Pan-American Masters Championships (~2,000) that draw ever-increasing numbers of participants. The growth of regional and/or intermediate-sized events signals the diffusion of Masters sport – indeed, an integrated hierarchy of competitive events to complement the largest-scale festivals may prove significant for the future health of the movement. There is potential for even further growth in Masters sport participation overall, and also with respect to adults’ attendance at dedicated Masters events. Event managers and programmers therefore need to look at innovative ways to retain current participants and to attract newcomers.

To frame the present discussion, it is important to point out two differences between large-scale Masters events and more familiar mega-events, beyond the observable differences relating to an adult cohort and more-inclusive competitive criteria. First, large-scale Masters events generally depend on existing infrastructure and facilities, and little capital investment is required – much of the operating expenses are typically covered by participants’ expenditures, although there are some exceptions. However, generally, there appears to be relatively smaller expenses incurred by organizers/hosts for large-scale Masters events compared to more familiar mega-events (e.g. Olympic Games, Commonwealth Games, Pan-American Games). Second, Masters events are participant-focused rather than spectator-focused. Whereas studies of mega-events aim to understand who will watch them as ‘consuming spectators’, the critical mass of consumers at Masters sport events are the participants themselves. Thus, sport managers and promoters may be particularly interested in understanding the conditions that influence adults’ decisions to commit to go to a big event, and then to spend considerable monies in relation to the event. We contend that psycho-social research on MAs may be fruitful in this regard because approaches used to study the psycho-social conditions that motivate adults’ decisions to participate in competitive sport (e.g. a club, league) may be similar to those that foster these same adults’ commitment to invest in Masters event participation. Thus, we advocate that psychological theories of behavioural commitment, which seek to understand how an individual makes decisions based on complex interactions with, and interpretations of, the broader social environment (including the attraction of a product/event in that environment) may be particularly insightful. Past leisure research has similarly used this framework to study recreationists’ commitment to service providers at a brand level (e.g. Kyle et al. 2006).

**Involvement opportunities and commitment**

Commitment models have been advanced to explain the frequency and persistence of adult sport participation, as well as purchase intention in adult sport (e.g. Casper 2007, Casper and Babkes Stellino 2008). In a series of studies on tennis players, Casper and colleagues demonstrated how
Masters sport perspectives

commitment was strongly associated with intention to continue to play tennis and to invest personal monies in sport (see Jeon and Ridinger 2007 for similar findings among windsurfers). Findings showed how one particular antecedent of commitment – involvement opportunities – positively predicts commitment consistently across all demographic segments (Casper and Babkes Stellino 2008). Involvement opportunities are the perceived rewards, anticipated benefits, or special opportunities that individuals see as arising from their continued involvement in sport (Scanlan et al. 2003). Heightened perceptions of involvement opportunities are associated with increased desire by MAs to remain committed (e.g. Medic et al. 2006, Young et al. 2008) to ongoing sport activity (e.g. attendance at league games), and should be associated with participatory and consumptive behaviours (Casper 2007) relating to particular Masters events, although the latter relationship has yet to be tested.

What are the specific involvement opportunities that relate to Masters athletes?

Emerging research has begun to focus on understanding the content of various involvement opportunities (IOs) that may influence adult athletes’ commitment to sport, as well as their intentions to attend sport events. Bennett and Young (2013), for example, conducted an extensive review of the literature on adult sportspersons and discovered a wide breadth of opportunities that may attract adults to sport. They contended that no existing survey instrument effectively captures the full breadth of these IOs, pointing out that past research has taken survey data for multiple opportunities and presented them as a collective average (e.g. resulting in one mean score based on six items on a singular IO scale). For the purposes of understanding the particular opportunities that cause people to commit to adult sport, however, this approach is rudimentary – it does not indicate which of the many particular IO sub-themes are critical for commitment. Furthermore, knowing what specific sub-themes can be assessed reliably is critical, especially if research endeavours to inform future programming or marketing strategies.

To this end, Bennett and Young (2014) subsequently constructed a survey to encompass broader IO constructs, and submitted more than 60 survey items to factor analyses to properly identify and to determine the structure of different IO scales capturing such sub-themes. Data were from 390 Masters swimmers (M age = 51; SD = 12.5; range = 25–92; 248 f; 142 m; M yrs involvement = 14.3, SD = 12.1; range = 0–59). Respondents were all formally registered with swim clubs, and represented a highly educated (83 percent had completed a bachelor’s degree) international sample, hailing from the United States (65 percent) and Canada (20.5 percent), with the remaining 14.5 percent from African, Asian, European, Oceanic, and South American countries. Exploratory factor analyses (direct obliminal rotation) revealed that the structure of the IO scale consisted of 10 identifiable sub-themes. These sub-themes, comprising 54 retained items, are presented as separate factors in Table 8.1; all showed satisfactory loading values and internal consistency reliability. Readers are encouraged to consult this table to inspect constituent survey items within each factor.

Although further ongoing work will be important to confirm the structure of the 10 IO sub-scales (Bennett and Young 2014), the resultant factors presented herein reliably capture the content of opportunities discussed more broadly in the literature pertaining to MAs (see Dionigi et al. 2011, and reviews by Medic 2009, Young 2011, Young and Medic 2011). Reviews of Masters’
Table 8.1 Factor loadings and cronbach alphas for 10 involvement opportunity sub-theme scales based on a principal axis factoring analysis with direct obliminal rotation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Item</th>
<th>Testing and Assessing Oneself</th>
<th>Stress Relief</th>
<th>Delaying and Negotiating Aging</th>
<th>Team Attachment</th>
<th>Professional Opportunities</th>
<th>Travel Recognition from Others for Competitive Achievements</th>
<th>Social Opportunities</th>
<th>Health and Fitness</th>
<th>Enjoyment and Satisfaction</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% Variance Explained</td>
<td>23.2</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>4.7</td>
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<td>2.7</td>
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<td>To pursue personal challenges</td>
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<td>To achieve personal goals</td>
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<td>I would miss the opportunity to challenge my personal best</td>
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<td>To identify personal accomplishments</td>
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<td>To identify areas for personal improvement</td>
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<td>To learn new things</td>
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<td>To relieve stress I am feeling</td>
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<td>To release any tension I am feeling</td>
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<td>To put myself in a better state of mind</td>
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<td>To clear my mind</td>
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<td>I would miss the chance to feel relaxed</td>
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<td>To delay the effects of aging</td>
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<td>To defeat aging stereotypes</td>
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<td>To feel younger</td>
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<td>I would miss the opportunity to deter the effects of aging</td>
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<td>To be a good role model for others on how to age gracefully and successfully</td>
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<td>To be affiliated with a team</td>
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</table>
To feel like I am part of a team -.89
To show my devotion to a team -.83
I would miss the chance to belong to a team -.81
For fellowship with teammates -.79
For job-related benefits .91
Career opportunities .89
I would miss the career/job opportunities afforded by my sport involvement .83
For financial benefits .57
To visit new places -.94
To travel -.90
I would miss the occasion for unique travel experiences -.87
To tour new sites -.84
To have my ability viewed favourably compared to other participants .81
To establish new records relative to my peers in competition .74
To get publicly recognized for my achievements .73
To be a winner .72
To receive awards and trophies .69
To demonstrate my ability to others .68
To be known as a good athlete .68

(Continued)
Table 8.1 (Continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Item</th>
<th>Testing and Assessing Oneself</th>
<th>Stress Relief</th>
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<td>To surpass the expected level of competitive performance for my age group</td>
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<td>I would miss the occasion to be recognized for my accomplishments*</td>
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<td>To compete against others</td>
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<td>To move to a higher level of competition</td>
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<td>To receive attention from the media</td>
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<td>I would miss my friends*</td>
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<td>To be with friends</td>
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<td>To make new friends</td>
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<td>To interact with other like-minded individuals</td>
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<tr>
<td>To improve my fitness</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.75</td>
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<tr>
<td>To look and feel healthy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td>.69</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>To improve my health</td>
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<td>.68</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>To control my weight</td>
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<td>.55</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>To have fun</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>.79</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>To have a good time</td>
<td></td>
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<td>.70</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>I would miss the good times I have had*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.70</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To enjoy myself</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.63</td>
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<td>(a)</td>
<td>.82</td>
<td>.84</td>
<td>.88</td>
<td>.93</td>
<td>.88</td>
<td>.94</td>
<td>.92</td>
<td>.86</td>
<td>.71</td>
<td>.81</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: All items were preceded with the stem ‘My sport involvement/participation gives me the opportunity . . . ’ except for items denoted with \* which were preceded by the stem ‘If I stopped/quit/discontinued my sport participation/involvement . . . ’.
motives illustrate how participants view their activity as a means to improve health and fitness, but equally as a means to have a good time and enjoy oneself. These athletes emphasize the opportunity to improve physical skills, with findings often suggesting that they want to improve and test their skills, and often wish to test these skills against other people. Overall, the identified sub-themes acknowledge a heterogeneous profile of IOs that aligns with prior work which described how social affiliation and health-enhancement reasons are attractive to MAs, and simultaneously how the importance of competitive and personal challenge facets of Masters sport should not be discounted or underestimated (Dionigi et al. 2011, Young 2011).

Bennett and Young’s factor analyses also demonstrate how several other IOs or motives that appear in the Masters literature can be assessed reliably. These motives, such as a desire to use Masters sport to see new places and have unique cultural experiences (Hritz and Ramos 2008), to see sport activity as a means for stress relief (Vallerand and Young 2014), or to view sport as possibly providing career-related or professional opportunities (Scanlan et al. 2003), may appear less consistently in the broader literature, but may nonetheless be important in research that seeks to capture the breadth of all possible IOs affiliated with MAs’ experiences. Finally, a distinct factor emerged – the opportunity to delay and negotiate aging. This theme captures athletes’ perceptions that are in keeping with broader works where MAs say that they do sport because it helps them to look and feel younger and to delay age-related physical decline. Elsewhere, empirical work shows how MAs may use sport to try to defeat aging stereotypes and to be a good role model on how to age successfully (e.g. Horton 2010), and as a personal strategy in negotiating their own aging process (e.g. Dionigi and O’Flynn 2007).

In sum, with respect to how adults approach future sport events, when the event is distant and not yet at-hand, anticipated perceptions of IOs may be important constructs in explaining adults’ intentions to attend. The factor analysis results discussed herein illustrate the types of IOs that psycho-social researchers, but also sport marketing researchers, might consider assessing in future work. To know what to assess, and to further judge whether certain IOs have been successfully marketed, advertised, and accommodated in event programming, researchers will require reliable assessment tools.

How do involvement opportunities vary according to sample segment?

Studies of various motives and the ‘wants’ of sport participants are especially valuable if they can provide segment-specific information that might inform targeted marketing/programming initiatives. To this end, Bennett, Séguin, Parent, and Young (2014) explored how currently active Masters swimmers felt about various IOs, using a series of MANOVAs to identify whether there were differences according to segments of the sample (see Table 8.2). Adults who entered Masters swimming in the past five years judged opportunities for personal testing and assessment and team attachment more highly than experienced adult swimmers (> 5 years of involvement), who instead rated opportunities to delay/negotiate aging and travel opportunities highly. Males more highly reported that Masters swimming gave them the opportunity to get recognized for competitive achievements, whereas females more highly acknowledged opportunities to have a good time (enjoyment), for stress relief, health and fitness, for testing and assessing oneself, as well as for social affiliation and team attachment. These trends are in keeping with psycho-social literature on MAs that has often portrayed males as more competitive-oriented and females as more focussed on intrinsic enjoyment, health-enhancing, or socially-oriented orientations (Hastings et al. 1995, Gill et al. 1996).

With respect to age groups, all cohorts clearly saw swimming as an occasion to realize good times; however, perceptions of enjoyable opportunities were tempered slightly in the oldest group. Although all age groups saw swimming as a particular activity for stress relief, these views were
### Table 8.2 Mean levels for perceived involvement opportunities according to various demographic categories of adult swimmers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Testing and Assessing Oneself</th>
<th>Stress Relief</th>
<th>Delaying and Negotiating Aging</th>
<th>Team Attachment</th>
<th>Professional Opportunities</th>
<th>Travel</th>
<th>Recognition from Others for Competitive Achievements</th>
<th>Social Opportunities</th>
<th>Health and Fitness</th>
<th>Enjoyment and Satisfaction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Probability of attending FINA World Masters</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low (0-40 % likely)</td>
<td>284</td>
<td>5.55**(1.04)</td>
<td>5.89(1.13)</td>
<td>5.25(1.43)</td>
<td>4.55**(1.63)</td>
<td>1.70*(.86)</td>
<td>3.19** (1.81)</td>
<td>3.76**(1.31)</td>
<td>5.50*(1.29)</td>
<td>6.30(78)</td>
<td>6.17*(.89)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High (60-100 % likely)</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>5.88**(1.96)</td>
<td>5.70(1.31)</td>
<td>5.29(1.38)</td>
<td>5.02**(1.61)</td>
<td>1.88*(1.02)</td>
<td>4.81**(1.83)</td>
<td>4.37**(1.42)</td>
<td>5.78*(1.21)</td>
<td>6.20(85)</td>
<td>6.35*(.77)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>462</td>
<td>5.72**(1.07)</td>
<td>6.00**(1.08)</td>
<td>5.14(1.52)</td>
<td>4.86**(1.68)</td>
<td>1.75(9.3)</td>
<td>3.75(2.04)</td>
<td>3.71**(1.43)</td>
<td>5.74**(1.26)</td>
<td>6.31* (.79)</td>
<td>6.33**( .81)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>262</td>
<td>5.40**(1.13)</td>
<td>5.61** (1.21)</td>
<td>5.31(1.24)</td>
<td>4.33**(1.62)</td>
<td>1.63(81)</td>
<td>3.66(1.92)</td>
<td>4.07**(1.38)</td>
<td>5.28**(1.31)</td>
<td>6.15*(.82)</td>
<td>6.04**( .86)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length of participation as Masters swimmer</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>&lt; 5 years</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>5.78**(1.09)</td>
<td>5.97(1.00)</td>
<td>4.86**(1.50)</td>
<td>4.88*(1.58)</td>
<td>1.70(88)</td>
<td>3.47* (1.93)</td>
<td>3.83(1.36)</td>
<td>5.48(1.32)</td>
<td>6.31(82)</td>
<td>6.23(83)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 or more years</td>
<td>504</td>
<td>5.52**(1.14)</td>
<td>5.11(1.20)</td>
<td>5.35** (1.37)</td>
<td>4.58**(1.72)</td>
<td>1.71(90)</td>
<td>3.83*(2.02)</td>
<td>3.84(1.42)</td>
<td>5.62(1.28)</td>
<td>6.23(80)</td>
<td>6.23(85)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age group</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>25-39 years</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>5.73**(1.00)</td>
<td>6.18(9.1)</td>
<td>4.50(1.62)</td>
<td>4.99(1.62)</td>
<td>1.92(1.05)</td>
<td>3.71(1.94)</td>
<td>3.90(1.31)</td>
<td>5.61(1.32)</td>
<td>6.32(79)</td>
<td>6.37(81)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-54 years</td>
<td>277</td>
<td>5.55(1.10)</td>
<td>5.97(1.00)</td>
<td>5.23(1.43)</td>
<td>4.67(1.64)</td>
<td>1.72(88)</td>
<td>3.64(2.02)</td>
<td>3.79(1.43)</td>
<td>5.64(1.27)</td>
<td>6.23(85)</td>
<td>6.26(79)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55-69 years</td>
<td>226</td>
<td>5.65(1.11)</td>
<td>5.71(1.23)</td>
<td>5.57(1.21)</td>
<td>4.55(1.71)</td>
<td>1.60(80)</td>
<td>3.82(2.06)</td>
<td>3.82(1.47)</td>
<td>5.56(1.27)</td>
<td>6.29(73)</td>
<td>6.19(87)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70+ years</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>5.24(1.57)</td>
<td>4.98(1.50)</td>
<td>5.68(1.18)</td>
<td>4.24(1.81)</td>
<td>1.45(60)</td>
<td>3.73(1.82)</td>
<td>4.09(1.60)</td>
<td>5.25(1.45)</td>
<td>6.02(90)</td>
<td>5.81(96)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post hoc tests for age group</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1 &gt; 4*</td>
<td>1 &gt; 3,4**</td>
<td>2,3,4 &gt; 1**</td>
<td>1 &gt; 4*</td>
<td>1 &gt; 3,4**</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 &gt; 4**</td>
<td>3,4 &gt; 2*</td>
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<td>3 &gt; 4**</td>
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</table>

*Note:* Likert responses from 1 (not at all true) to 7 (very true). SDs are in parentheses. * significant at p < .05; ** at p < .007 (Bonferonni adjusted)
strongest in the younger cohorts. Across the age groups, each consecutively older group increasingly acknowledged Masters swimming as an opportunity to delay/negotiate aspects of the aging process. Results showed that testing and assessing oneself was a very important IO across all ages, although the under-40 group rated these opportunities most highly. Opportunities for team attachment were judged at moderate-to-high levels across all ages, though the oldest group saw this as being relatively less important. Although age segment differences were not found, opportunities for health and fitness and social opportunities were judged as highly important, and being recognized for competitive achievements was moderately important, across the entire sample. Overall, these findings tell us that already-active Masters swimmers judge there to be several special opportunities that arise from their continued sport involvement, which they risk losing should they quit. The poignancy of these opportunities depends on the participatory segment under consideration. Sport programmers and marketers who know the demographics of their targeted cohort might therefore emphasise those opportunities that match their target segment, strategically promoting content relating to these opportunities in their efforts to retain Masters participants. If future research were to ask about IOs with respect to a targeted Masters event (e.g. which of the IOs do you associate with your attendance at FINA Masters?), as well as the types of attributes and values that are linked to Masters sports, then results could be used to effectively develop a Masters sport brand and find the most appropriate positioning in relation to other sport properties. In other words, it could be used to tailor content in the marketing and planning strategies for an event, and for the Masters movement more broadly.

Bennett et al. (2014) performed analyses to understand how IOs might relate prospectively to the 2014 FINA Masters event in Montréal, Canada. First, they compared perceived IOs for swimmers (all of whom acknowledged being aware of the upcoming FINA event) who reported higher probability of attending (between 60–100 percent probability on a scale anchored at ‘0’ – no chance, and ‘100’ – very high chance) next year’s FINA Masters with those who reported low probability (0–40 percent chance) – these questions were posed to a varied international sample of swimmers 11 months in advance of the event. Highly probable attendees judged IOs to test and assess oneself, for team attachment, to travel through sport, and social recognition for one’s competitive achievements more highly (Table 8.2). For a North American cohort specifically, swimmers’ probability of attending the FINA event was regressed upon the various involvement opportunities. Recognition for competitive achievements ($\beta = .12$) and stress relief ($\beta = .10$) were the only IOs associated with probable attendance at FINA Masters. Interestingly, perceived opportunities for health and fitness were negatively associated ($\beta = -.12$) with probability of attending FINA Masters. It is important to note, however, that little variance in probability of attending was explained, likely due to co-varying factors that will need to be controlled for in future surveys; for example, personal finances, anticipated travel costs, capacity to get time off work, and uncertainty about reaching qualifying times are all intangibles that become clearer as one temporally approaches the event. While controlling for these factors, future work might ask questions at multiple time points about how IOs relate to one’s intention to attend the FINA Masters event. Results might illustrate which opportunities but also when exactly (e.g. 3, 6, or 9 months in advance) the effect size of any significant associations (e.g. variance explained) becomes sufficiently pronounced such that event programmers and marketers could confidently take stock of the results and use them to inform their strategies for recruitment/promotion.

**Can involvement opportunities be promoted effectively?**

If the most attractive IOs can be identified, and packaged as part of a promotional campaign, what influence will such messages have on adult sportspersons’ decisions to attend Masters events? The
possibilities of such a promotional campaign are perhaps underscored by a recent investigation on messaging among 40- to 59-year-old Canadian adults (Lithopoulos and Young 2013). Messaging is a type of informational intervention that employs tailored messages to strategically persuade more people to engage in a target behaviour (Rothman and Salovey 1997). In a randomised controlled experiment, Lithopoulos and Young created a brief online audio-visual presentation (three minutes) in which nine gain-frame messages were presented to participants. Participants were adults who had at least somewhat favourable attitudes towards sport, had been involved in sport in youth, but who had since disengaged and presently were not involved in organized sport. Gain-frame messages were based on nine IOs that prior research showed that MAs perceive as important to their sport participation, and they were presented as benefits that adults might expect should they decide to join adult sport. Compared to a control group, participants who watched these gain-frame messages were immediately more likely to seek out information about adult sport by requesting newsletters about local sporting opportunities and programmes. One month post-intervention, adults who had watched the gain-frame messages were also more likely to have registered for adult sport programs. Gain-frame participants reported greater intention to do more sport activity, and these effects lasted at least one month post-intervention; these increases were significantly pronounced for individuals who had not previously been inclined to seek out any information on adult sport compared to those individuals who may have previously thought about approaching adult sport activities.

Additionally, Lithopoulos, Rathwell and Young (2014) demonstrated how the promotional messages of IOs affected the way that participants imagined themselves in adult sport in the future (i.e. their ‘possible selves’; Markus and Nurius 1986). Compared to a control group, participants who received gain-frame messages elaborated more about the future sport self that they would like to become. Elaboration was reflected in the degree of detail used by participants when they were describing how they thought about themselves as a future active adult sport participant. Manipulation check analyses indicated that gain-frame participants particularly attended to messages about the opportunity ‘to improve health and fitness,’ compared to eight other IOs. Compared to a control group, the possible sport selves of gain-frame participants included significantly more elaborate information about how adult sport offered the opportunity ‘to be with friends through sport,’ and the opportunity ‘to delay the effects of aging.’ Overall, this novel research on gain-frame messaging showed that promotional messages can attract people towards initiating Masters sport – in particular, tailored messages pertaining to IOs for health and fitness, delaying aging, and social affiliation resonated most with recipients. Future research will be required to determine similar effects, for similar IOs, among already active MAs and whether similar promotional protocol can attract people towards particular events.

Implications for branding Masters sport

Such research may be of interest to sport marketers interested in branding Masters sport. The opportunity to expand our understanding of the Masters sport movement from a brand perspective could benefit sport organizations wishing to engage more adults into the movement. It could also consolidate the positioning of Masters sport events with important stakeholders such as sponsors and governments interested in this particular market.

The definition of a brand has evolved from being simply a name or symbol that helps differentiate one product from the other (Aaker 1991) to a promise aimed at delivering a specific set of features, benefits, services, or experiences to consumers on a consistent basis (Kotler et al. 2005). While marketers have used branding and brand strategies for decades (Merz et al. 2009), their application in the sport context is quite recent (Richelieu 2004, Ferrand et al. 2012). For example,
the International Olympic Committee’s (IOC) efforts to develop a brand strategy began in the latter part of the 1990s. Today, the Olympic brand is arguably one of the top brands in the world. Indeed, the brand has reached high level of brand awareness, it has loyal customers, it has strong positive associations linked to it, and finally the brand is perceived to be of high quality (Ferrand et al. 2012). In other words, the brand has reached a high level of ‘brand equity’ (see Aaker 1991).

We suggest that the Masters sport movement could also benefit from such an approach, and from research aimed at defining the core essence and values associated with ‘Masters sport’. Although extremely rare, work is beginning to emerge. In a recent study that sought to understand key components linked to the 2014 FINA Masters World Championships, current Masters swimmers were asked to write down three words that came to mind when they thought of Masters sport (Parent et al. 2014). In total, 707 respondents suggested 2,000 words that were associated with Masters sport. These words were qualitatively analysed for content, words/groups of words of similar meaning were aggregated, and frequencies tabulated. For the majority of respondents, Masters sport is about fitness (e.g. fitness maintenance, workout, conditioning, physical activity), being part of the Masters’ family (e.g. fraternity, friendship, great people, interacting with like-minded people), and fun (e.g. blast, enjoyment, happy, joy, laughter, pleasure, satisfaction). Other key characteristics identified were health (e.g. physical and mental health, life quality, mental stability, peace of mind, well-being, stress release) and competition (e.g. compete, competitive, events).

Interestingly, these findings closely match the results of research on Masters swimmers and IO themes (Bennett et al. 2014; Bennett and Young 2014). While these studies are not representative of Masters sports in general (i.e. they focused on swimmers), they do provide excellent insights (features and benefits) into the meaning of the brand from the participants’ perspective. Hence, future research should also look into how participants from other sports as well as how other stakeholders perceive, connect, and experience Masters sport (Jones 2005). This would not only help define the Masters brand into the minds of the participants (current and future) but could also be an attractive value proposition for public (i.e. governments) and private (sponsors) investors interested in reaching this growing market. Given the highly cluttered international sport events environment (junior/senior/Masters, major/mega, individual/multi-sports, special advocacy groups, etc.), it becomes paramount that the Masters sport movement clearly differentiates itself, and its high-profile events, especially in the eyes of governments which remain the primary form of funding for these events.

So far, we have documented the impressive growth of pre-eminent competitive adult sport events and illustrated many claims to their impact on host communities. Framed within a sport commitment framework, we have described empirical approaches to catalogue and assess the IOs that pertain to Masters participants. These IOs may prove important in the future for informing promotional and branding strategies for Masters sport, and specifically for large-scale Masters events. In keeping with our discussion of the possibilities of Masters sport, we now turn our attention to the notion that large-scale events may be catalysts for increasing adult sport participation, and may uniquely afford legacy outcomes relating to change in aging stereotypes.

Masters sport events as catalysts

The notion that large-scale, one-off sporting events might have widespread effects on community/societal outcomes has begun to receive empirical attention in the past 15 years with respect to mega-events such as Olympic Games, FIFA World Cup, or Commonwealth Games. With respect to these more familiar mega-events, the significant increase in public and private expenditures linked to bidding and organizing events certainly places considerable pressure on organizers and other stakeholders to demonstrate return on investment (ROI). While economic
or social impacts are often used to measure ROI, the concept of legacies is a common term used to determine the effects of hosting these events. There is a growing body of empirical literature examining these effects and to date, the results are not always consistent. Further, there is no one single definition of the concept of legacy; making the discourse around this concept more challenging (Leopkey 2013). Although legacy outcomes may be planned or unplanned and may create positive or negative benefits (Preuss and Gratton 2007), the trend is to approach legacy from a strategic perspective by involving numerous stakeholders (e.g. governments, sponsors, sport organizations, etc.). The ultimate goal of such planning is to benefit both the local and global community (Girginov 2012). Some of the most common legacies of mega-events include heightened societal/community pride, infrastructure and facility resources, boosts to tourism, and positive economic impacts, amongst others. Although such events may prospectively leave positive legacies and cause positive change, recent literature reviews have called into question the veracity of such claims, suggesting that they are often over-stated, unproven, and very difficult to prove because of limited research designs (Preuss and Gratton 2007).

The legacy literature centres exclusively on familiar mega-events and it is difficult to determine whether similar claims could be made for Masters sport. Clearly, however, the number of participants at these events is on the rise, making it plausible to suggest a similar trend at the grassroots. As the adult sport landscape becomes increasingly populated with these large-scale event fixtures, it is appealing to consider the degree to which they leave legacies for their host communities and on participants. As described earlier in this chapter, reports by WMG organizing committees have often heralded the economic benefits of hosting; however, the notion of return on investment (ROI) and legacies that we attach to any Masters event may need to be considered differently and somewhat more expansively than for mega-events. The first unique consideration we wish to address concerns the fact that Masters events are participant- and not spectator-oriented, so outcomes relating to adult sport participation should be explored more extensively.

**Might Masters events be a catalyst for adult sport participation?**

There have been proclamations that the wave of excitement associated with mega-events translates into motivation for physical activity (PA) and sport (e.g. Hindson et al. 1994), particularly among youth. Even these claims have been difficult to prove and remain intangible (Coalter 2004, Taks et al. 2009); attempts to establish such effects are perhaps challenged by the fact that translating the ‘watching’ into ‘doing sport’ is difficult to prove. A critical review of the ‘Olympic bounce’, following hosting of an Olympics, and the potential ‘inspiration’ effect following international medal success on participation in one’s home country, showed null effects for 27 out of 28 sports (Donnelly et al. 2009). In an extensive review of the effects of short-term, discrete, organized mass physical-activity events, Murphy and Bauman (2007: 198) ‘identified much rhetoric, but limited evidence that mass sporting events impact PA participation at the individual, community, or environmental level’. They concluded that rigorous evaluations of major sports events on actual mass participation in sport and PA behaviour were scarce and, where they did exist, they had either a modest or null effect.

Determining the effects of a participant-oriented event on already-involved sportspersons, or potential new ones may, however, represent a more feasible challenge. Murphy and Bauman (2007) were more optimistic about an event’s effects (e.g. ‘Bike to Work’ week; a city’s weekend road race festival) when there were opportunities for community-wide mass participation that included non–elite cohorts. Neither Murphy and Bauman, nor other works, however, have comprehensively addressed the latter category of mass participant-oriented sporting events, which would include large-scale Masters Games.'
Although their work did not relate to MAs per se, Funk et al. (2011) investigated the influence of a mass participant sport event (MPSE; the Philadelphia marathon race weekend) on a wide-range of skilled athletes (mostly 25–49 years old). Although the study was limited by a cross-sectional retrospective design (all measures were recalled three months post event), results showed how a MPSE has both 'pull' and 'push' effects on participation. Once registered for the event, people acknowledged that various participatory motives were activated as they prepared via training, which ‘pulled’ their participation toward the event. Nearly the entire sample reported that motives related to personal challenge, inherent enjoyment of running, improvements in strength and endurance, and positive health, were enacted in anticipation of the event. Participants also claimed higher levels of commitment to running after the event, but only when they also reported that they had been highly satisfied in their decision to participate in the event. The event ‘pushed’ participants to subsequently increase their future exercise intentions. Event satisfaction was the most significant predictor of subsequent intentions ($b = .38$), compared to a number of other simultaneous predictors related to participatory motives (all $bs < .19$) and prior physical activity ($bs < -.11$). These results offered evidence for how a large-scale, participation-oriented event can promote sport activity both anticipatorily and consequentially, although consequent effects may be mediated by the degree to which participants are satisfied with their experience at the event.

Research is needed to investigate the pull and push effects of large-scale Masters events on adults’ sport participation. First, longitudinal designs spanning pre- and post-event durations should be employed to ensure inferences can be made about causality, with experimental groups represented by individuals who have registered for an event (suitably in advance), and control groups representing individuals who are aware of the same event but who have elected to not participate. Second, there has been speculation that an MPSE may actually intervene to make only already-active adults more committed, rather than attracting new or inspiring intermittently active persons (Funk et al. 2011). To this end, efforts should be taken to document registrants’ participatory status when they first register for an event (e.g. is this their first registration to a Masters event? Have they intermittently registered, or frequently registered for such events in the past?). Answering these questions quantitatively, and qualitatively, will be important for understanding the conditions that ‘pull’ newcomers to register to a Masters event (e.g. ‘it’s in my community and I had to sign up’) or that re-engage people who have taken a hiatus since doing sport in youth. Moreover, activity/involvement status (e.g. self-reported weekly sport activity) should be considered as a moderator of any effects. Third, a suitable number of time points will be required for reports of weekly sport activity to examine temporal trends and whether registrants’ sport participation escalates as the event approaches; similarly, multiple post-event assessments are imperative to enumerate whether increased participation can be sustained, or whether and when it recedes. Fourth, analyses should target mediators (e.g. satisfaction with the event) and pertinent moderators (e.g. gender, socio-economic status, attitudes towards sport), because moderators may inform us about whether an event equally impacts all people, or differently based on individual differences (e.g. social or competitive orientation). Finally, studies should explore the reach of a Masters event; the question of whether an event such as the 2014 FINA World Masters impacts participation only in the immediate host community (e.g. Montréal), or beyond (across larger portions of the province of Québec, or more broadly to other Canadian provinces) should be of interest. By interviewing competitive participants who have travelled from afar for an event, researchers can begin to generate qualitative data about the factors that lengthen the reach of the sport event, and also generate information about the infrastructure and programming that these people feel they have/need to sustain their sport participation when they return home.
We have thus tendered our first unique legacy consideration for large adult sport events – that they serve as catalysts for adult sport activity and that careful steps need to be taken to ensure prospective designs and analyses to elucidate valid and reliable results, along with effect sizes and the various parameters associated with effects. We now turn our attention to our second consideration that may apply in a novel fashion to Masters events; that is, the unique middle-aged and older athletic cohort on display at events may positively influence perceptions of aging and legitimise perceptions of lifelong sport for participants and spectators alike, including stakeholders.

*Might Masters events cause people to re-think possibilities around aging and sport stereotypes?*

A significant barrier to growing Masters sport may relate to ageist beliefs that perpetuate the notion that competitive sport is the playground for youth and adolescence, for professional or Olympic athletes. These ageist beliefs suggest that as one gets older, they should reduce activity, that they should begin to enter a time of rest, and that competitive sport is not suitable for somebody who is in the their 40s, 50s, 60s, or 70s (Horton 2010). Indeed, such perceptions prove to be a barrier in attracting new participants (Grant 2001), and although yet to be researched, traditionally stereotyped perceptions are likely a barrier that limits how the possibilities associated with Masters sport are received by stakeholders (e.g. government organizations, sport federations) and sponsors.

Against this back-drop, it is interesting to consider chronicles of aging ‘super hero’ athletes (e.g. emergent images of select MAs which present them as medical marvels; e.g. Kidd 2009, Grierson 2014) in the popular media and the impact of such messages on participation. Large Masters events invariably attract media coverage and can be considered a platform for celebrating the exploits and successes of participants, for advertising aspects of an adult sporting lifestyle, and for informing non-participants of a yet-explored leisure opportunity. Assuming that such media accounts have a suitable audience in their reach, a speculative question becomes: Do these images serve to successfully change how society as a whole conceives of what is possible for older people, and for people as they age? This is one question for which we do not yet know the answer. However, a significant boost in optimistic attitudes towards aging and perceptions relating to physical capacities and capacities for ongoing aged development (e.g. Wurm et al. 2007), if precipitated by a large-scale Masters event, would represent a novel and remarkable legacy in a host community. If such an impact could be empirically documented, this would be particularly attractive, especially because improved age-related perceptions are positively associated with PA and sport participation (Meisner et al. 2013). Importantly for the community, increased age-related perceptions also correlate with various other benefits, such as increased quality of life, promotion of personal health-promoting behaviours, and longevity (e.g. Levy 2003).

One might also consider how media messages relating to Masters events legitimise and promote adult sport participation directly to new recruits (Horton et al. 2007, Horton et al. 2013). For example, let us entertain the idea that there are large groups of people out there who are currently inactive, but who are also contemplating being active and seeking an avenue for being active. When these people see emergent stories of MAs, what is the consequence? On one hand, these spectacular images may resonate with them, they may personally connect with these images, and these groups of people may say that the images are personally relevant. In that case, they will be inspired because perhaps they have been afforded role models who they can go out and follow (Lockwood and Kunda 1997). That said, these images/stories can actually work in a defeatist direction (Ory et al. 2003). The same inactive but contemplating audience may realise a ‘psychological distance’ between themselves and the images. This distance could be, in part, because the images that are dominating the media are only the most spectacular feats by the eldest.
Masters elders. In this case, the inactive contemplators (who are also the potential new recruits to Masters sport) see the images as too spectacular – instead of people saying these Masters models are relevant, and attainable, they may instead become discouraged from joining Masters sport. More research is required to explore the catalytic effect of media messages, including efforts to document the nature of narratives and images associated with Masters events, to determine whether they propagate or defeat stereotypes, and to identify which messages help to encourage Masters sport as a viable participatory opportunity for more people.

Still, the transformative influence that large Masters events may have on individuals within a community is appealing. For example, amateur journalist and 65-year-old blogger Paul Clegg (2011) decided, as a spectator, to spend a fortnight watching the 2011 WMA Championships. He wrote:

Curiosity took me out to the WMA Championships. I thought it would be a good opportunity to see what athletes are capable of doing on the playing field of time . . . [Events I see] at the venues are an antidote to pessimism. Enthusiasm and camaraderie are in the air. Volunteers are eager to help. Dozens of different languages can be heard . . . Hundreds of remarkably fit-looking men and women in track outfits are milling around inside the stadium. Competitors are on the track. Friday morning, I went to see the age 95–99 men’s shot put competition. Stop and think about that for a second: men that age throwing a 6.6-pound metal ball as far as they can. It’s a shock to the stereotypes. As I watched the impressive nonagenarian competitors, I couldn’t help but wonder where I would be in 30 years . . . Seize the day, I reminded myself.

(Clegg, 2011: gameto100.com/?p=552)

He professed to have a new conception of what is possible for people as they age, writing:

These are the best track and field competitors in their age brackets in the world. They make you rethink what it means to get older . . . I pedaled away from the stadium feeling upbeat. I won’t be setting any world records in the years ahead, but I have a new image of what it means to be 70-plus, and it looks encouraging.

(Clegg, 2011: gameto100.com/?p=572)

In his final entry, he indicated that the WMA event had caused him to consider his own participation:

It’s got me thinking: Why not take up a new sport? Some of the competitors in the track and field events started late in life. I could have another 35 years of athletic activity ahead of me. When I started this blog, I picked the title ‘Game to 100’ as kind of a fantasy destination. Now that I’ve seen men and women in their 90s competing in sprints and weight events, the fantasy has turned into a reality . . . ‘Athletics for Life’, the motto of the WMA Championships, is becoming my mantra . . . I wonder what it would be like to take up a new sport in which I could expect to see increasing improvement for years . . . I would probably like the workouts and the opportunity to practice on my own. The next WMA Championships are in two years. That sounds tempting.

(Clegg, 2011: gameto100.com/?p=592)

Paul’s reflections exemplify how the modelling of competitive sport by Masters event participants can open people to the notion that sport in middle-aged and older years is acceptable, and
even beneficial, in his case, causing him to introspect on the value of sport for him, and how adult sport need not be the same as sport in youth.

**Considering stakeholders**

One further potential impact of an event may relate to how it changes possibilities in the minds of stakeholders (e.g. government officials, sport federations and clubs, media, sponsors). It may be that ageist pre-conceptions prevent stakeholders from recognizing the possibilities and value of Masters events relative to more traditional events oriented towards younger cohorts. To our knowledge, no research has yet documented the explicit perceptions of stakeholders towards Masters sport and the hosting of Masters events, or for that matter, their potential lack of information about what these events entail. However, it is likely that pre-conceptions held anecdotally by others (e.g. Masters is not real sport, it’s too recreational, only for rich early retirees, it’s for oldies who don’t know when to hang it up, etc.) are in part shared by stakeholders, which limits their support of such ventures. Future research should explore the nature and extent of these pre-conceptions and whether they stymie efforts to change the mega-event landscape to accommodate more Masters sport. Ironically, the successful hosting of a large-scale event in one’s own community/country may be necessary to change stakeholders’ pre-conceptions. Thus, we posit that one additional legacy of a Masters event is the increased legitimization of such ventures in the eyes of stakeholders and policy makers going forward. By heightening the value of Masters sport in stakeholders’ minds, this may increase the probability that future policies (e.g. event hosting pieces) and decision-making will favour Masters events, and indirectly grow the Masters movement.

**Summary and future directions**

This chapter aimed to discuss the growing possibilities of Masters sport events, and how recent psycho-social research can be merged with sport branding and marketing perspectives to further consider these possibilities. Studies of the motives of MAs, and particularly the involvement opportunities that they perceive as fostering commitment, may inform promotional/marketing strategies. If assessed reliably and widely, knowledge of these involvement opportunities may also be considered as one piece in a multi-faceted approach to branding adult sport events and the Masters movement. In the latter half of the chapter, we proposed two relatively unique legacy outcomes that may be precipitated by large Masters events. Although yet to be tested, future research employing proper designs and analyses may uncover the prospective effects of these events on the sport participation of adults. It is also plausible that Masters events are catalysts for change in how people view dominant aging stereotypes, creating greater social currency for aging people, and also increasing the viability of adult sport in the minds of participants and stakeholders alike. Overall, we sought to engage academics in an inter-disciplinary discussion on the possibilities affiliated with Masters events and how they might be better considered conceptually, and substantiated empirically, in future.

In particular, there are key lines of inquiry that could help further inform our understanding of how to promote Masters events and measure their impacts. First, it will be important to confirm the structure of the IOs survey scales to support their use in assessing the attractive factors that resonate with segments of the Masters cohort in the lead-up to an event. Second, longitudinal research is required to demonstrate how IOs relating to an upcoming Masters event actually cause individuals to commit to, register for, and spend monies at the event. Emphasis should be on demonstrating causality, specifying effect sizes attributable to certain IOs and the time frame in advance of the event when effect sizes begin to significantly explain participatory/purchase
Masters sport perspectives

behaviour. Third, research should examine how various stakeholders (e.g. sponsors, governments) see Masters events – quantitative and qualitative studies that explore stakeholders’ awareness of IOs, and particularly how they perceive features and benefits associated with the Masters brand, remain a vastly under-explored area. Fourth, rigorous designs are needed to elucidate whether a large-scale Masters event actually precipitates increased adult sport participation, whether such changes are in anticipation of an event, whether they can be sustained afterwards, and the conditions that influence the scope of such changes. Fifth, similar pre-post designs would be needed to establish the influence of a Masters event on age-related perceptions among stakeholders, participants, and the broader community. Future efforts in these key areas will create empirical evidence that is critical in portraying the value of Masters sport to participants, event organizers, and stakeholders.

In conclusion, we believe that topics in this chapter merit consideration by stakeholders, particularly how information herein may contribute/add to their current knowledge of Masters sport. For example, international sport federations (e.g. FINA, WMA, IAAF, IMGA) with vested interests in Masters sports may find the information helpful in developing marketing strategies aimed at branding Masters sports, growing Masters sport participation globally, and leveraging the potential benefits (i.e. economic, possible legacies, etc.) of large-scale Masters sport events. Governments with policies aimed at hosting international sport events may consider the possibility of redressing policy to more firmly recognize the sport development, social, cultural, economic, and community benefits that may arise from these events. National and provincial sport organizations seeking to promote Masters sports and increase their number of registered participants may contemplate how to import content relating to IOs into effective recruitment and activity/event programming strategies. Finally, tourism-related agencies, sponsors, and media represent additional stakeholders who may be keen to gain more knowledge on a growing yet targeted market associated with Masters sports.

Suggested readings


Note

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Masters sport perspectives


