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Reputation and perceived resilience in developing countries bidding for major sports events

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Introduction

Increasingly, international sports events (ISEs) are viewed as attractive opportunities for developing nations seeking to enhance their global profile in terms of both global prestige, economic development, and tourism (Chappelet & Parent, 2015; Shipway & Fyall, 2012). From a resilience perspective, the dimension of changing host locations, often due to the increasingly competitive bidding agenda of many host cities and nations, represents a significant proposition that has major implications with regards to the resilience of such events, in terms of crisis and disaster management. As such, changing host locations, from a resilience perspective, requires not only attention to the capacity of sports venues and infrastructure to absorb shocks and still maintain function, but to also include the propensity to facilitate adaptation, renewal and even re-organisation (Shipway, 2018). Whether these are natural disasters or man-made terrorist attacks, any disturbance creates an opportunity for both undertaking new actions (innovation), and for more effectively reacting to their onset (ongoing development) (Berkes et al., 2003; Holling, 1973; Gunderson 2000). Similarly, crisis management is influential in being an assessment of the ability of the

country, including its emergency services, political elite, medical services, military and disaster management system to handle emergencies and/or disasters (Shipway & Miles, 2018).

Using two case studies from new emerging host nations, one from the Middle East (Qatar) and one from Africa (Cameroon), this chapter critically explores the resilience landscape, and identifies some of the challenges associated with how destinations faced with either political instability or image issues, due to negative perceptions held by both tourists and global media, have chosen to manage their destination image through bidding to host major sports events. Both nations, Qatar and Cameroon, have been proactive in the bidding processes to host tournaments linked to 'The People's Game', Association Football, and to manage the various challenges that exist with their effective organisation and delivery (Sugden & Tomlinson, 1998). This planning has been particularly controversial and tumultuous for both nations. The chapter will also critique some of the broader strategies being adopted by other African countries and Gulf States, in close proximity to Cameroon and Qatar, to both reassure potential tourists with regards to safety and security, and to also ensure suitable measures are in place to minimise any reputational damage that might result from potential future crises or disasters.

From a global perspective, it is apparent that new emerging host nations and destinations will have differing levels of resilience based on their relative (in)experience of previously hosting high profile ISEs. These broadly correlate with two interlinked dimensions. First, there could be challenges linked to the actual ability of the respective sports federations, clubs, organisations, stakeholders to ensure that the sporting tournament will be completed smoothly. As such, on this basis it is vital to establish whether they have sufficient measures in place to ensure this, whilst also being able to handle any emergencies and/or disturbance. Second, there is the symbiotic relationship with the resilience of the wider country and its effect on national reputation and branding.

Defining resilience and reputational risk

As discussed in the Introduction to this volume, the concept of resilience overlaps to a large degree with the concepts of vulnerability and adaptive capacity (Gallopín, 2006). Specifically, vulnerability is the

susceptibility of a system to disturbances and is determined by exposure and sensitivity to perturbations and the capacity to adapt (Nelson et al., 2007). It is therefore logical to assume that the more vulnerable a sports event or venue is, the more extreme the impact of a given shock will be. Hence, the link to resilience: if a sports event or venue is vulnerable and has little adaptive capacity, then a shock is more likely to shift it from one state to another, such as from stable to chaotic (Biggs et al., 2012). In the sports event context, this shift might not be classed as 'chaotic' per se, however the shock and subsequent impact on both event and destination could be highly significant. As such, this concept will now be explored in relation to the hosting of ISEs in developing countries, which view these tournaments and championships as an effective means to assist with their own tourism development and to enhance destination image.

Yet, if this is the case, it is also important to recognise the evolving and sometimes symbiotic relationship between perceptions of existing and future resilience. This is particularly pertinent with regards to handling and delivering ISEs and some of the specific implications for the overall reputation of the ISEs, venues, and even the host nation(s). In simple terms, understanding the perceived level of resilience of an ISE and the host destination for event organisers, sports fans, and also for potential future tourists, will have implications for the reputation and reputational risk associated with specific country more generally, and vice-versa.

Indeed, this is even more challenging in developing countries that may have experienced political instability and thus may have existing negative reputational issues. Hence, a *resilience-reputational paradox* often exists. On the one hand, developing countries may secure a successful bid for hosting a major international sporting tournament precisely because global sports federations and wider political entities believe that hosting that tournament will be a stabilising force and ethical 'force for good' in building the reputation of sport in developing countries (Dowse & Fletcher, 2018). It represents part of the 'soft power' influence and strategies of the international community (Grix & Lee, 2013). Equally, it is often the case that one of the main reasons why host nations in the developing world are chosen is because of the desire of international sporting communities and global governing sports federations to be seen to contributing actively to building better reputations for host countries and encouraging stability. In contrast, developing countries will wish to secure ISEs precisely because, as