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# Does relationship quality matter in policy-making? The impact of government-public relationships and residents' perceptions on their support towards a mega-sport event

Sungkyung Kim and Argyro Elisavet Manoli 

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## ABSTRACT

Guided by the increase in social and political challenges faced by local governments in their efforts to host mega-sport events, this study attempts to shed light on the under-researched relationship quality between a local government and its residents. Enhancing the relationship quality and mutual understanding through two-way communication between the government and its residents has become more important than ever, with the host community considered a key stakeholder in the policy decision-making process, due to the development of online communication technologies. This research aims to identify the major determinants of residents' support, using government public relationships and social exchange theory. Data collected through a survey of Tokyo residents (N = 406), where the Tokyo 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games were hosted, are analysed using structural equation modelling. Results show that satisfaction with the government can considerably influence the perceived impacts of a mega-sport event and trust, while trust in the government is shown to be a robust predictor of residents' support and a mediator to social exchange theory. Also, the importance of a mega-sport event's perceived impacts on residents' support is shown, further supporting social exchange theory. Through the findings and the integration of the two theories, this study illustrates the need for the government to focus on producing policies aiming to increase its public satisfaction and thus their trust in government using balanced symmetric communication, which in turn can raise residents' support for a mega-sport event and help establish a mutually beneficial relationship between the government and its public.

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Policy PR; social exchange theory; government-public relationship quality; structural equation modelling

## Introduction

The Olympic and Paralympic Games have long been considered the greatest mega-sport event worldwide (Kenyon *et al.* 2018). Recently, however, we have witnessed many cities withdrawing their bids from the hosting race, particularly in nations with democratic leadership, which resulted in an eminently charged political and social exercise (Scheu and Preuss 2018). In total, ten cities in Europe and North America withdrew from the race to host the Summer and Winter Olympic Games between 2013 and 2018, predominantly due to lack of residents' support (Hiller and Wanner 2018).

Based on this social phenomenon, recent research has started examining if the expected impacts of mega-sport events materialise, with increasing evidence showcasing negative economic effects and fail legacies from hosting such events (Mitchell and Stewart 2015). An increasing number of

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governments have faced social and political challenges in their efforts to bid for mega-sport events, with a noteworthy resistance originating from the local communities (Gursoy *et al.* 2017a, Hiller and Wanner 2018). This study applies a policy public relations (PR) angle on the issue and questions whether relationship quality between the governments and local communities does, in fact, influence residents' perception and attitude towards a mega-sport event.

Two-way symmetric communication is a core concept in understanding the PR activity of governments and their relationship quality with their citizens. The two-way symmetric communication is one of the four PR models that highlight symmetric communication as a means of managing conflicts and reaching a compromise, in order to gain a mutual understanding and build a long-term relationship (Grunig and Hunt 1984). When it comes to the mega-sport event context, advanced online communication technologies, which enable prompt two-way communication, can help amplify the importance of residents as a key stakeholder in the decision-making process. As such, the government's ability to facilitate feedback and information sharing provide the government with more opportunities to build mutually beneficial relationships with their key stakeholder (Hong 2013). New media adoption at the local government level furnishes an open form of government PR, which is a useful tool for implementing symmetrical communication strategies and increasing the engagement of citizens (Graham and Avery 2013, Manoli and Kim 2021). In this regard, relationship-building strategies have been highlighted as a means to build foundations for policy PR and good governance. However, efforts to assess the relationship quality between the government and its public are rare in the context of sport event management (Davenport *et al.* 2007).

Although a collective approach and collaboration among diverse stakeholders are prerequisites for the successful management of a mega-sport event, in most cases, very few stakeholders are involved in the decision-making process (Nunkoo 2015, Gursoy *et al.* 2017a). Along with the vital role of governments in planning and hosting mega-sport events, the residents of the host city should also be considered a key stakeholder in the mega-sport event policy-making process, since their participation is an essential part of the successful management of its legacy (Pappas 2014, Scheu and Preuss 2018). However, the decision-making process in a mega-sport event is often a top-down process, determined by a few political elites. Again, while residents should be seen as 'collaborative partners in governance affairs whose participation is an essential tool for building democratic and effective governance' (Kim 2010, p. 804), minimal efforts of involvement and input from host communities have been noted, often leading to a potential intensification of social resistance (Gursoy *et al.* 2017b). Given the importance of residents as one of the key stakeholders in the decision-making process of mega-sport events, and the recent increase in lack of residents' support, it is surprising to see how little attention has been paid to understanding the policy PR and relationship quality between the government and its public.

Considering the above, this study addresses these critical knowledge gaps by developing a theoretical framework connecting SET and GPR and examining it in the context of the 2020 Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games. This examination allows for managerial insights on the effectiveness of enhancing GPR quality to be offered, which could help policymakers effectively shape their policy and strategy towards hosting a mega-sport event.

## Literature review and hypotheses establishment

### *Government-public relationship quality and social exchange theory*

This section is dedicated to introducing GPR and SET and providing the rationale for integrating the two concepts. Since Ferguson (1984) first introduced the relationship management approach to public relations, the organisation-public relationship quality (government-public relationship quality in this study) has become one of the central concepts in the policy PR domain. Her stress on the importance of relationship management in PR has shifted the role of PR practitioners from press agents to relationship managers (Shen 2017). The nowadays popular concept of organisation-public

relationship emphasises the importance of cultivating a long-term relationship between an organisation and its strategic publics (Ki and Hon 2012). The premise of the organisation-public relationship, or in this case the GPR, is different from other marketing strategies since it aims at symmetric communication to achieve mutually beneficial relationships (Huang 2001).

In terms of symmetric communication, the increasing popularity of social media has changed the practice of governments' policy PR programmes (Hong 2013). The use of social media has eliminated the traditional boundaries of time and space for government PR (Graham and Avery 2013). As inexpensive, easily accessible and prompt communication channels, social media allow for two-way communication between the government and its residents (Porumbescu 2016). With the development of online communication, Ferguson (2018) argued that using a symmetric communication strategy is the best way to build and sustain a positive long-term reputation that may give impetus to the enlargement policy and enhance its successful implementation, while mitigating any damage to the government's reputation (Ferguson 2018). However, assessing the GPR quality and its impacts on residents' attitudes have yet to be investigated in the context of mega-sport events, even though governments have more opportunities than ever before to interact and engage with residents.

Diverse theories have been used to explain the ways in which local communities react to mega-sport events, with most of the existing research investigating the determinants of residents' support, explicitly or implicitly, being rooted in SET (Gursoy and Kendall 2006). According to SET, individuals will get involved in social exchanges if '(1) the resulting rewards are valued; (2) the exchange is likely to produce valued rewards; (3) perceived costs do not exceed perceived rewards' (Jurowski *et al.* 1997, p. 3). SET postulates that residents' attitudes towards a mega event would be affected by the level of perceived positive and negative impacts (Nunkoo and Ramkissoon 2012).

What differentiates the current research from other studies based on SET is incorporating the GPR concept in understanding how residents' support is formed in the mega-sport event context. This study argues that the two concepts may combine and have an influence on each other for three reasons. First, the local government is the principal entity which invests its budget and creates policies that determine the positive and negative impacts for local communities. Residents inevitably enter into a relationship with their local government and are affected by the decisions of the local government. In this light, the relationship quality between the government and its citizens is closely concerned with SET which provides a theoretical basis for understanding the interactions between perceived impacts and residents' support. Secondly, it is worth noting that the residents' knowledge that determines the perceived impacts of a mega event is often not based on direct experiences but can be more associated with context or other socially driven factors (Fredline and Faulkner 2000). This means that the residents predetermined psychological outcomes after their experience with the government can affect their knowledge and vice versa. This idea is also supported by Zuo *et al.*'s (2017) argument that 'residents' supportive behaviour is not solely based on the calculation of material interests but may depend more on faith in and affection for the government' (p. 51). Therefore, it can be assumed that GPR quality can play an important role in understanding the residents' perceived impacts of a mega-sport event having an influence on each other. Third, a basis for the argument can be found in the limitations of SET (Ward and Berno 2011, Ouyang *et al.* 2017), which include the criticism on the assumption of rationality of individuals, which may be inaccurate depending on each culture (Boley *et al.* 2014), and the lack of predictive power while explaining the formation of individuals' attitude with SET alone (Nunkoo and Smith 2013). To make up for the weak points of the theory, many scholars attempted to integrate other theories in their studies. For example, Prayag *et al.* (2013) integrated the theory of reasoned action with SET to explain London residents' support towards the 2012 Olympic Games. Ward and Berno (2011) applied both SET and integrated threat theory to examine a predictive model of attitude towards tourists. Also, Li *et al.* (2015) synthesised SET and social representations theory in an attempt to understand residents' perception changes towards a mega event. In this study the GPR quality is selected since the

mutually beneficial relationship between the government and its residents should be an essential component in mega-sport events management. This study, thus, strives to investigate the mechanism of the formation of residents' support by incorporating the GPR quality in SET.

### ***Satisfaction: an outcome of government-public relationship quality***

#### ***Relationship between residents' satisfaction and trust in government***

In this section, the concepts of residents' satisfaction and trust in government, which are outcomes of governments' relationship building efforts, are reviewed, alongside the connection between the two concepts. Given the global concerns regarding the publics' cynicism and dissatisfaction with their governments which often lead to deteriorating public trust in government (Hong 2013), it is worth examining the quality of GPR, particularly the effects of residents' satisfaction towards the government. Among the GPR quality dimensions (e.g., control mutuality, commitment, satisfaction, and trust), this study focuses on the role of residents' satisfaction towards the government and trust in government as the two dimensions are closely associated with SET (Gursoy *et al.* 2017b). Indeed, previous research has identified satisfaction and trust as primary indicators of government public relations and made an attempt to investigate the relationship between the two constructs (e.g., Lam and Wong 2020; Men *et al.* 2018). Both dimensions (i.e., satisfaction and trust) of GPR have been found to be essential components of political support and thus constitute the foundation of policy legitimacy (Nunkoo and Ramkissoon 2011a, Nunkoo and Gursoy 2016). In public relations research, satisfaction is found to be the most frequently applied dimension of GPR since gauging the satisfaction of a targeted stakeholder is important in establishing public relations strategies and policies (Ki and Hon 2012).

As a government-public relationship outcome, satisfaction is formed when the government meets its citizens' expectations and needs in terms of responsibilities and communication (Men *et al.* 2018). Satisfaction is not only determined by citizens' overall evaluation of the performance and service of the government, but also the listening and reflecting function on residents' feedback to better address their needs and concerns. Therefore, citizens' satisfaction can effectively increase when the government invests time and resources to cultivate a relationship with them (Ledingham and Bruning 1999).

Satisfaction becomes prominently featured in GPR since it is argued that satisfaction with the government is a typical indicator of the effectiveness of symmetric communication strategies (Grunig *et al.* 2002). Conversely, relational dissatisfaction is a factor that may cause the deterioration or termination of a relationship (Moon and Rhee 2013). According to Ki and Hon (2012), satisfaction is associated with relationship cultivation strategies, meaning that it can be a good indicator in gauging the relationship quality as a result of the government's communication strategies.

The critical role of satisfaction is further emphasised in the early stages of relationship building (Ki and Hon 2012), allowing to assume the key role and potential impacts that residents' satisfaction can have. Satisfaction has been also identified as a prerequisite to other GPR dimensions such as trust in government (Ki and Brown 2013, Lam and Wong 2020). Empirical studies suggest that trust connects citizens' satisfaction in government services, with their related political-administrative system (Nunkoo and Ramkissoon 2011a, Ki and Brown 2013). When residents repeatedly obtain a positive experience from government services and administration management, they are satisfied with their government and learn to trust it (Ki and Hon 2007). Similarly, the lack of satisfaction in the relationship quality caused by a failure to cultivate a relationship can lead to distrust, fear, and anger (Ouyang *et al.* 2017).

It has been suggested that satisfaction with the government is closely associated with trust in government (Welch *et al.* 2005). A number of scholars have examined the links among the relationship qualities (i.e., satisfaction, trust and commitment), with their studies' results revealing satisfaction as a significant predictor of trust in an organisation (e.g., Ki and Brown 2013, Lam and Wong

2020). Likewise, in studies focusing on government trust, empirical evidence is increasingly offered suggesting that public satisfaction results in higher levels of trust in the government (Kim 2010). Based on the above discussion, this study hypothesised:

**H1:** There is a direct positive relationship between satisfaction and trust in the government.

### ***Relationship between residents' satisfaction in government and perceived impacts***

This section deals with the concept of satisfaction as a GPR quality dimension, and the association between satisfaction and perceived impacts. The relationship between residents' satisfaction and perceived impacts can be inferred from existing studies. Residents' satisfaction with community services (e.g., government services, business services, non-profit services) has been found to be an important component of tourism development planning (Ko and Steward 2002). In many empirical studies, community satisfaction has been suggested as a predictor of residents' responses to tourism development, which is closely concerned with the perceived cost and benefits. Nunkoo and Ramkissoon (2011a) confirmed that satisfaction with community services is related to residents' perceived impacts of tourism development. This result indicated that residents who were satisfied with community services were more likely to hold positive perceptions towards their government, while less satisfied residents were more likely to have unfavourable perceptions of the development. It also implies that the government's effort to improve satisfaction with community services will be a determining factor in influencing the residents' perceived impacts of tourism. However, this result is inconsistent with subsequent research, which suggested the rejection of a direct negative relationship between overall community satisfaction and perceived negative impacts (Nunkoo and Ramkissoon 2011b). This contradictory finding can be explained as a result of the coping mechanisms of residents, demonstrating that communities with a long history of tourism develop coping strategies.

Taking all the above into consideration, this study assumes that residents' satisfaction with the government may reinforce their expectations of perceived impacts. As a result, the following hypotheses are posed:

**H2-1:** There is a direct positive relationship between residents' satisfaction with the government and perceived benefits for hosting a mega-sport event.

**H2-2:** There is a direct negative relationship between residents' satisfaction with the government and perceived costs for hosting a mega-sport event.

### ***Residents' perceived impacts and support: social exchange theory***

#### ***Perceived impacts and residents' support towards a mega-sport event***

In this section, the influence of residents' positive and negative perceived impacts on their support is discussed. Examining residents' support and its determinants is essential since the host community directly interacts with tourists and visitors, and thus residents' willingness to support is considered one of the most critical resources of successful hosting (Ouyang *et al.* 2017). More importantly, residents' support provides political legitimacy to the government and their involvement in the planning process is required to be able to achieve the sustainable management of a mega-sport event (Nunkoo and Ramkissoon 2011b, 2012).

The rationale for the positive association between perceived impacts and residents' support stems from SET. Research suggests that hosting mega-sport events can create new opportunities for potential investors, provide employment opportunities for residents, and improve the commercial activity within the host communities (Pappas 2014, Gursoy *et al.* 2017b). Although economic benefits have attracted most of the attention and are indeed reported to be the most critical

predictors of support, a host community can also benefit from the socio-cultural impacts of mega-sport events (Zuo *et al.* 2017). Organising a mega-sport event could result in the promotion of a nation's brand, increased international publicity, renewed sporting venues, urban development, and enhanced community pride (Prayag *et al.* 2013, Pappas 2014). For example, Waitt (2003) argued that national pride was the most potent driver eliciting residents' enthusiasm for the 2000 Sydney Olympic Games. This result is also consistent with Mihalik and Simonetta's (1999) study which suggested that residents of the 1996 Atlanta Summer Olympic Games considered community pride as equally if not more critical than positive economic consequences. Positive social impacts of a mega-sport event, including the improvement of the host city's external image through its greater recognition worldwide, was also highlighted by Oshimi and Harada (2019) as a significant factor for residents' support, while interestingly, Styliadis *et al.* (2014) pointed out that residents are often willing to accept negative social impacts to a certain degree to obtain some economic benefits. This idea was also supported by Kim *et al.*'s (2006) research which argued that host communities often overlook the negative consequences of a mega-sport event, while simultaneously glorifying the anticipated benefits when supporting the event.

At the same time, several studies cast doubt on the actual economic benefits of mega-sport events for the host communities (Giesecke and Madden 2007), with research suggesting that some residents fear that an event will result in increased taxes, excessive spending on operating costs, price inflation and mismanagement of public funds (Prayag *et al.* 2013). In terms of environmental impacts, hosting mega-sport events can generate more traffic congestion, litter, noise, environmental pollution, destruction of nature and overcrowding (Lorde *et al.* 2011). Some residents believe that hosting a mega-sport event may result in significantly negative socio-cultural impacts on a host community, such as conflicts between residents and visitors, crime, vandalism, and crowding (Lorde *et al.* 2011). Moreover, mega-sport events have been accused of causing socio-economic inequalities by enabling only specific social groups to reap their benefits over time, while alienating the poorer classes (Maharaj 2015). As a result, residents who view the trade-off between positive and negative impacts as unfavourable have been found to show low willingness to support an event (Boley *et al.* 2014), and as a result, recent studies have indicated that the perceived negative impacts are negatively related to residents' support for mega-sport events supporting SET (e.g., Prayag *et al.* 2013, Pappas 2014, Gursoy *et al.* 2017a). Taking all the above into consideration, the following two hypotheses are formed:

**H3-1:** The perceived benefits of hosting a mega-sport event influence residents' support positively.

**H3-2:** The perceived costs of hosting a mega-sport event influence residents' support negatively.

### *Relationship between perceived impacts and trust in government*

This section explores the mechanism between perceived impacts and trust in government. Two competing assumptions exist concerning the relationship between trust in government and residents' perceived impacts. Some studies present a positive influence of trust in government on the perceived impacts (Ouyang *et al.* 2017, Gursoy *et al.* 2017b), while others support the reverse relationship, that is, that the perceived benefits and costs of tourism development lead to trust in government positively and negatively (Nunkoo and Ramkissoon 2012, Nunkoo 2015, Zuo *et al.* 2017). These competing findings suggest that a bidirectional relationship may exist between trust and perceived impacts. The current study postulates the effects of perceived impacts on trust in local government.

According to SET, communities' trust in government primarily relies on cumulative outcomes between political authorities and citizens (Nunkoo 2015). SET is based on the premise that the level of trust is determined by the mutual expectations in a social exchange relationship (Nunkoo and Ramkissoon 2012). For instance, if residents understand that the government formulates and implements policies to maximise the potential benefits and minimise the expected costs on the

community, their trust in the government is likely to increase. As such, empirical results indicate that residents' trust in government is dependent on the perceived benefits and costs (e.g., Nunkoo and Ramkissoon 2012, Nunkoo 2015). Therefore, this study postulates that according to their exchange relationship, the perceived impacts of hosting a mega-sport event may influence residents' trust in government, and the following hypotheses are proposed:

**H4-1:** There is a direct influence of perceived benefits on residents' trust in government.

**H4-2:** There is a direct influence of perceived costs on residents' trust in government.

### ***Trust: an outcome of government-public relationship quality***

#### ***Residents' trust in government and support***

This section discusses the importance of why trust in government as an antecedent of residents' support is important. Trust in government stimulates cooperation while creating goodwill that maintains the relationship between the two partners (Nunkoo 2015). In this regard, trust in government is the focal point for the stability of democratic political systems. Public relations studies identified trust as a core indicator of GPR and an essential ingredient in quality relationships, since it elicits residents' commitment, compliance, and cooperation (Ki and Hon 2007). Since trust is a relational construct, trust between exchange partners can be generated through governments' efforts to establish transparent and symmetrical communication which can result in making the whole process mutually beneficial (Hong 2013). The relational feature of trust is well reflected in its definition, since trust is defined as 'one party's or partner's level of mutual confidence in the other relational parties of partners' (Shen 2017, p. 997). In the GPR context, trust would be based on residents' perceptions that their government is fair, just, dependable, and thus their confidence that the government is capable of fulfilling its promises.

Residents' trust in government is an immensely important factor in successful bidding, hosting, and managing the legacy of a mega-sport event, since it is deeply associated with government legitimacy and performance (Men et al., 2018). However, research on the role of residents' trust in shaping their attitude towards a mega-sport event has been limited (Gursoy et al. 2017a). When it comes to relationships between the government and the citizens, it is evident that the government requires a certain level of trust for its policies to be implemented (Nunkoo 2015). If residents have low levels of trust towards their government, they may have concerns and sceptical views about a mega-sport event, rather than expect benefits from it. Also, given that it is almost impossible for citizens to have in-depth knowledge about potential impacts of an event, residents' perception of the government (i.e., trust in government) is a key source of securing legitimacy in its policy. The government is a principal actor in the political process of hosting a mega-sport event, and residents' support is the government's principal political resource that can legitimise their policies. Thus, residents' trust in government makes the government sustain effective legitimacy and authority and is essential for good governance (Nunkoo and Smith 2013).

Both SET and GPR provide a suitable theoretical basis for explaining a causal relationship between residents' trust in government and their support for hosting a mega-sport event. SET posits that an individual decides to exchange activities by assessing the trustworthiness of another actor (Nunkoo 2015). Both public relations and tourism scholars have found a strong association between trust in government and support. In the field of tourism, studies revealed that trust in government is a major factor contributing to the level of residents' support towards mega-sport events (e.g., Nunkoo and Smith 2013, Nunkoo 2015, Ouyang et al. 2017). In the field of GPR, an individual's trust in the government is believed to have a substantial influence on the individual's perceptions and attitudes (Hong 2013), since

empirical studies demonstrated that individuals who have a high level of trust in an organisation are more likely to be favourable and supportive of the organisation (e.g., Ki and Hon 2007, 2012). Based on the preceding discussion, this study formed the following hypothesis:

**H5:** There is a direct relationship between residents' trust in government and support towards a mega-sport event.

### *The mediating role of trust in government*

Although the majority of studies has illustrated the predictive effect of positive and negative perceived impacts on the endorsement of residents, thus supporting SET, some studies showed counterintuitive results. For instance, Nunkoo and Ramkissoon (2012) found that the relationship between the perceived costs of tourism development and political support is insignificant, which is consistent with Gursoy and Kendall (2006). Prayag *et al.* (2013) explicitly confirmed an unfitting relationship in the influence of perceived positive and negative environmental impacts on residents' support towards the 2020 London Olympic Games. Thus, it is necessary to explore the relationship further, possibly by identifying any mediating variables between perceived impacts and support, which can help us better understand the process of support. The current study postulates that rather than directly affecting residents' support, management of both positive and negative impacts first leads to trust in government, which then in turn affects their support towards a mega-sport event. This study aims to test the assumption that if residents are aware of the local government's efforts to develop strategies to maximise the benefits and minimise the costs of the mega-sport event, their level of trust in government is likely to increase, which in turn, leads to residents' support. Thus, the following hypotheses are suggested:

**H6-1:** The effect of residents' perceived benefits of a mega-sport event on support is mediated by trust in government.

**H6-2:** The effect of residents' perceived costs of a mega-sport event on support is mediated by trust in government.

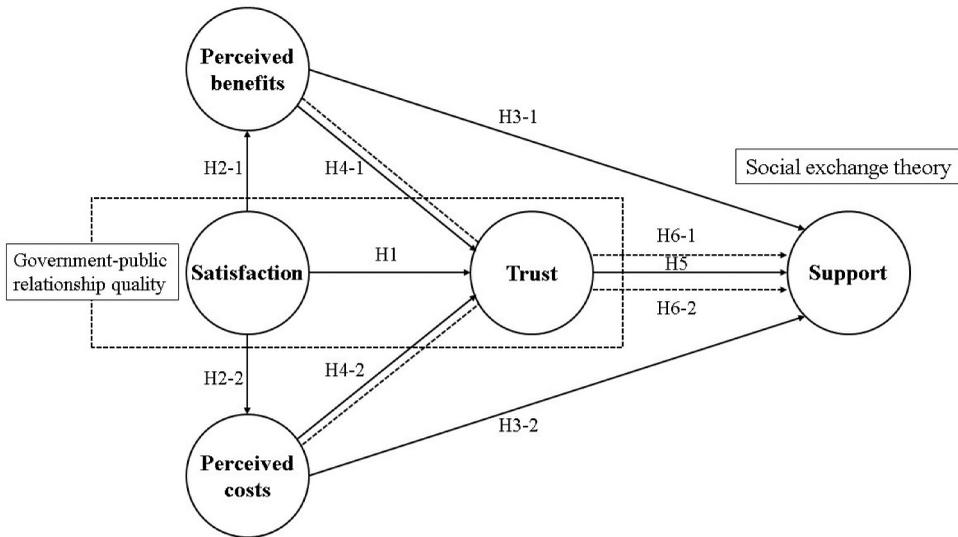
Figure 1 illustrates the research model for the current study.

## **Methods**

This section discusses the context and population of the study, the data collection and sampling used, the sample of our research and the measurement development.

### *Context and population*

In order to explore the above-illustrated research model, this study focused on the 2020 Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games as a topical platform for the study of mega-sport events. It is also worth noting that the data collected is only focused on the pre-games perceived impacts, GPR quality and residents' support. This study limits the scope of government to the Tokyo Metropolitan Government since the local government played a central role in every step of the decision-making process from bidding to organising, while also providing the largest portion of the budget (Tokyo Organising Committee 2019) that might require residents' (i.e., taxpayers) psychological and physical assent. Therefore, the sample population consisted of individuals who reside in Tokyo and are over 18 years old.



**Figure 1.** Research model. (Note: dashed line indicates indirect effect, solid line indicates direct effect)

### **Data collection and sampling**

The population of the study consisted of the individuals who reside in Tokyo. Data were collected through both a self-administered face-to-face survey and an online survey. The face-to-face survey with convenience sampling was carried out by two trained PhD students in strategically chosen areas, main shopping streets (e.g., Shibuya and Shinjuku) and landmark venues (e.g., Odaiba Marine Park and Tokyo Dome City). The participants were asked if they are Tokyo residents and would be willing to take part in the survey after the nature and aim of the project was explained. This face-to-face survey was conducted between 5<sup>th</sup> and 9 August 2019, and a total of 152 usable responses were collected.

Due to time and geographical constraints, it was decided to continue with an online survey, using an online survey company. The online survey was carried out from 25<sup>th</sup> to 27 September 2019, targeting the same sample, Tokyo residents. Data were gathered from 254 participants identified from a panel of one of Japan's largest survey companies, making the total number of responses obtained 406. In order to control for potential issues arising from the integration of online and offline survey data, a comparison between the two was conducted, indicating that no differences and thus no method bias exists.

### **Sample description**

Of the 406 respondents, 51.7% (N = 210) were male and 48.3% (N = 196) were female. The age distribution of the respondents was as follows: 45–54 years (30.6%), 35–44 years (21.4%), 55–64 years (20.4%), 25–34 years (14.9%), 18–24 years (6.7%), and over 65 years (6.0%). In terms of education, 62.8% (N = 255) and 12.8% (N = 52) held a bachelor's degree and postgraduate degree respectively, which indicates that the sample consisted of fairly educated individuals. Finally, the majority of the sample had been living in Tokyo for over 25 years (53.0%), followed by 15–19 years (13.5%), less than five years (9.8%), 20–24 years (9.5%), 10–14 years (7.1%) and 5–9 years (7.1%). This indicates that the respondents had been living in Tokyo for a relatively long time, enough to build a relationship with their government.

## Measurement development

A self-administered survey was designed following the steps recommended by Churchill (1979). All measurement items used were adapted from previous research, while the measurement scales used were seven-point Likert scales ranging from 'strongly disagree' (=1) to 'strongly agree' (=7). In terms of the measurement items, the perceived benefits and costs were measured using five items each from the works of Prayag *et al.* (2013) and Gursoy *et al.* (2017b) which cover economic, socio-cultural and environmental impacts. As for the dimensions of GPR quality, public satisfaction and trust in government were measured using five and six items from Hon and Grunig (1999) and Shen (2017) respectively. Finally, to measure residents' support, five items were used from Prayag *et al.* (2013) and Gursoy *et al.* (2017b).

After generating the questionnaire items, the current research applied a back-translation technique to convert the questionnaire items from English to Japanese following Brislin's (1970) procedure and repeating back and forth translations. Two PhD students who are bilingual in Japanese and English were involved in this process. Following this step, the content validity of the items was assessed before the main survey was distributed. The survey instrument was additionally checked by one scholar in public relations and two academics in sport management. They were asked to check the wording, ease of understanding and layout of the questionnaire, and its specific measurement items. The questionnaire was amended according to their comments and feedback in order to improve its clarity and readability. For instance, one of the measurement items of trust in government (e.g., 'I believe that the Tokyo government treats citizens fairly and justly') was divided into two items since 'fairly' and 'justly' can be interpreted differently. Therefore, trust in government was measured by seven items. After ensuring its content validity, a pre-test was undertaken on Tokyo residents, before finalising all questionnaire items. Following the pre-test with ten residents, the responses of whom were not included in the overall results, expression errors and typographical errors in the questionnaire items were modified.

## Results

A four-step procedure was employed to conduct hypotheses testing: (a) a preliminary analysis to carry out data screening (e.g., multivariate outliers and normality check), (b) a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to assess how well the proposed model accounts for the correlations among constructs in the dataset, (c) reliability (e.g., Cronbach's reliability and composite reliability [CR]) and validity (e.g., convergent validity and discriminant validity) to assess whether constructs demonstrate adequate reliability and validity (e.g., a latent construct is explained by observed constructs), and (d) structural equation modelling to examine the relationships between constructs.

### Analysis of measurement model

As a preliminary analysis, this study assessed the multivariate outliers by Mahalanobis distance and Cook's distance. Given the result of the multivariate outliers, six outliers were removed ranging from 23.39 to 29.38 according to Mahalanobis distance, while 21 outliers were eliminated ranging from 0.01 to 0.16 according to Cook's distance. Skewness and Kurtosis were also assessed to see if the data is normally distributed, confirming that there is no multivariate normality issue (see Table 1.). Subsequently, reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficients. The Cronbach's alpha coefficients of each factor ranged from .84 to .96, and thus exceeded the .70 threshold (Nunnally 1978).

This study conducted CFA using AMOS 25.0 to analyse the dimensionality of multi-items under each construct as well as reliability and validity. The CFA model goodness-of-fit achieved the acceptable model fit criteria by Hair *et al.* (2010):  $\chi^2/df = 2.09$ , RMR = .08, GFI = .89, NFI = .94, TLI = .96, CFI = .97, and RMSEA = .05. The construct validity and reliability were assessed through

**Table 1.** Measurement item properties.

Measurement items	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
<i>Perceived benefits</i>				
(PB1) The 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games will provide locals with employment opportunities	4.37	1.57	-0.43	-0.49
(PB2) The 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games will prosper the tourism industry of Tokyo	4.81	1.53	-0.80	-0.10
(PB3) The 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games will reinforce the pride among Tokyo residents	4.19	1.58	-0.29	-0.61
(PB4) The 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games will improve infrastructures	4.75	1.42	-0.72	0.13
(PB5) The 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games will improve environmental conservation	4.08	1.54	-0.31	-0.77
<i>Perceived costs</i>				
(PC1) The 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games will increase tax rates for Tokyo residents	4.93	1.44	-0.57	0.03
(PC2) The 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games will disrupt residents' daily life	4.62	1.30	-0.34	-0.01
(PC3) The 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games will increase pollution and littering	5.13	1.45	-0.70	0.01
(PC4) The 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games will increase the crime rate	5.51	1.37	-0.98	0.53
(PC5) The large investment is required to manage the 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games	5.08	1.43	-0.69	0.02
<i>Satisfaction towards government</i>				
(SATIS1) Most citizens like me are happy in their interaction with the Tokyo government	3.99	1.36	-0.22	-0.39
(SATIS2) Both the Tokyo government and citizens like me benefit from the relationship	4.05	1.27	-0.07	-0.08
(SATIS3) Citizens' relationship with the Tokyo government is good	3.59	1.36	-0.09	-0.45
(SATIS4) Generally, I am pleased with the relationship the Tokyo government has established with citizen like me	3.77	1.31	-0.11	-0.21
(SATIS5) Most citizens like me enjoy dealing with the Tokyo government	3.73	1.35	-0.11	-0.38
<i>Trust in government</i>				
(Trust1) The Tokyo government treats citizens fairly	3.62	1.53	0.18	-0.53
(Trust2) The Tokyo government treats citizens justly	3.78	1.55	0.07	-0.68
(Trust3) Whenever the Tokyo government makes an important decision, I know it will be concerned about its citizens	3.64	1.48	0.02	-0.46
(Trust4) The Tokyo government can be relied on to keep its promises to citizens	3.61	1.45	0.17	-0.41
(Trust5) The Tokyo government has the ability to accomplish what it says it will do	4.06	1.48	-0.22	-0.51
(Trust6) I believe that the Tokyo government takes the opinion of citizens like me into account when making the decision	3.60	1.45	0.05	-0.59
(Trust7) I feel confident about the Tokyo government's administration skills	3.83	1.49	-0.02	-0.57
<i>Residents' support</i>				
(RS1) I support the 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games	4.44	1.82	-0.46	-0.82
(RS2) Tokyo should bid for other major sport events	4.43	1.79	-0.47	-0.82
(RS3) I believe that hosting the 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games is desirable for Tokyo	4.50	1.80	-0.50	-0.75
(RS4) I believe that hosting the 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games will benefit Tokyo and its residents	4.21	1.79	-0.24	-0.88
(RS5) I am glad that we are hosting the 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games	4.44	1.88	-0.45	-0.89

standardised loading estimate ( $\beta > .70$ ), convergent validity ( $AVE > .50$ ), discriminant validity, and composite reliability ( $CR > .70$ ). The confirmatory factor analysis revealed that the standardised factor loading of two perceived costs items was below the suggested threshold of .70 (Hair et al. 2010). Given the results, the two perceived costs items were removed to maintain the reliability and validity of measurement items for further analysis. Also, all AVE values were greater than .50 and all CR values were over .70, showing a good convergent validity and composite reliability (Hair et al. 2010). Details on the properties of the measurements are provided in Table 2. Subsequently, discriminant validity was examined following Fornell and Larcker's (1981) criterion, which posits that the squared root of AVE is greater than correlations between constructs. The result showed that the squared root of AVE values exceeded the inter-construct correlations, indicating evidence of discriminant validity across the constructs (see Tables 2, 3).

### **Structural equation modelling and hypotheses testing**

Structural equation modelling using a maximum likelihood estimation method was conducted to test the hypotheses, revealing the following. H1-1 and H1-2 hypothesised that the perceived benefits and perceived costs would affect residents' support for the 2020 Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games. The results indicated that perceived benefits were found to have a significant positive relationship with residents' support ( $\beta = .62$ ,  $t = 16.91$ ,  $p < .001$ ), and the perceived costs were found to have a significant negative relationship with residents' support ( $\beta = -.16$ ,  $t = -5.40$ ,

**Table 2.** The measurement model of confirmatory factor analysis and convergent validity.

Constructs and labels	$\beta$	C.R.	$\alpha$	Composite reliability	AVE
<i>Perceived benefits</i>					
PB1	.83	–	.86	.89	.79
PB2	.71	15.16***			
PB3	.82	18.69***			
PB4	.77	17.09***			
PB5	.77	17.33***			
<i>Perceived costs</i>					
PC1	.77	–	.84	.85	.81
PC2	.82	15.01***			
PC3	.83	15.07***			
PC4		Dropped			
PC5		Dropped			
<i>Satisfaction</i>					
SATIS1	.90	–	.94	.94	.85
SATIS2	.83	22.49***			
SATIS3	.88	22.34***			
SATIS4	.90	27.01***			
SATIS5	.84	23.00***			
<i>Trust</i>					
TRUST1	.83	–	.94	.95	.87
TRUST2	.82	29.89***			
TRUST3	.90	29.89***			
TRUST4	.90	29.89***			
TRUST5	.77	29.89***			
TRUST6	.88	29.89***			
TRUST7	.79	29.89***			
<i>Support</i>					
RS1	.92	–	.96	.96	.92
RS2	.88	27.96***			
RS3	.93	32.57***			
RS4	.93	32.27***			
RS5	.93	33.34***			

\* $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.001$

Goodness-of-fit statistics:  $\chi^2/df = 2.09$ ,  $p < .001$ , RMR = .08, GFI = .89, NFI = .94, TLI = .96, CFI = .97, RMSEA = .05

Note:  $\beta$  = standardised loading estimate;  $\alpha$  = Cronbach's alpha; AVE = average variance extracted.

**Table 3.** Correlations and discriminant validity analysis.

	Perceived benefits	Perceived costs	Satisfaction	Trust	Support
Perceived benefits	<i>.79</i>				
Perceived costs	.09	<i>.81</i>			
Satisfaction	.50	.08	<i>.85</i>		
Trust	.43	.07	.70	<i>.87</i>	
Support	.73	.18	.39	.43	<i>.92</i>

Note: The italicised cells present the values of AVE

$p < .001$ ). H2-1 and H2-2 postulated that perceived benefits and costs would affect residents' trust in government. The result illustrated that the perceived positive impacts significantly influenced public trust in government ( $\beta = .14$ ,  $t = 3.55$ ,  $p < .001$ ), while the perceived negative impacts had an insignificant impact on trust ( $\beta = -.04$ ,  $t = -1.26$ ,  $p > .05$ ), supporting H2-1 alone. Consistent with the proposed hypothesis, the result of H3 showed that a high level of public trust in government results in significant increases in residents' support ( $\beta = .22$ ,  $t = 5.91$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Regarding the mediating effect of trust in government, results indicated that residents' trust in government partially mediates the effect of perceived benefits on their support (H4-1:  $\beta = .03$ ,  $t = 2.59$ ,  $p < .01$ ), meaning that perceived benefits would lead to residents' support through their trust in government. However, trust in government was not found to have a mediation role in the relationship between perceived costs and residents' support (H4-2:  $\beta = -.01$ ,  $t = -1.42$ ,  $p > .05$ ), not supporting H4-2. H5-1 and H5-2

**Table 4.** Results of the structural equation modelling.

Hypothesised paths	Direct effects		Indirect effects	
	$\beta$	<i>t</i> -value	$\beta$	<i>t</i> -value
H1-1: Perceived benefits → Support	.62***	16.91		
H1-2: Perceived costs → Support	-.16***	- 5.40		
H2-1: Perceived benefits → Trust	.14***	3.55		
H2-2: Perceived costs → Trust	-.04	- 1.26		
H3: Trust → Support	.22***	5.91		
H4-1: Perceived benefits→Trust→Support			.03**	2.59
H4-2: Perceived costs→Trust→Support			-.01	- 1.42
H5-1: Satisfaction → Perceived benefits	.65***	16.62		
H5-2: Satisfaction → Perceived costs	-.24***	- 4.69		
H6: Satisfaction → Trust	.69***	17.05		

\* $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.001$

Goodness-of-fit statistics: chi-square/df = 3.09,  $p < .001$ , RMR = .03, GFI = .98, NFI = .98, TLI = .97, CFI = .98, RMSEA = .06

hypothesised that residents' satisfaction towards a local government would affect perceived benefits and costs, respectively. The results revealed that satisfaction in government significantly influenced perceived benefits ( $\beta = .65$ ,  $t = 16.62$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and costs ( $\beta = -.24$ ,  $t = -4.69$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Lastly, H6 posited that residents' satisfaction in government would affect trust in government. The result showed that satisfaction in government had a strong positive influence on trust in government ( $\beta = .69$ ,  $t = 17.05$ ,  $p < .001$ ). The results of the structural equation modelling and hypotheses testing are illustrated in Table 4.

## Discussion, implications and limitations

### Discussion and implications

Overall, the current study demonstrated that a significant positive relationship exists between the perceived benefits of hosting a mega-sport event and residents' support, while a significant negative relationship occurs between the perceived costs of hosting a mega-sport event and residents' support. These relationships between the perceived impacts and residents' support align with previous studies not only on tourism (e.g., Nunkoo 2015, Zuo *et al.* 2017) but also on mega-sport events (e.g., the Olympic Games or FIFA World Cup), supporting the use of SET in the study of sport management (e.g., Prayag *et al.* 2013, Nunkoo *et al.* 2018). While the two relationships identified suggest a rather intuitive influence of the perceived impacts of a mega-sport event on residents' support, they also underline the need for a deeper understanding of how the perceived impacts can be managed to avoid the increasing trend of lack of public support.

In practical terms, several policy implications emerge for governments and organisers. A way in which this vital residents' satisfaction can be built, as many scholars have highlighted (Nunkoo and Ramkissoon 2011a, 2011b, Ki and Brown 2013), is symmetrical communication between the government and its publics, while considering residents an equal and collaborative partner in mega-sport event planning and management. In regard to the latter, this study builds on Pappas' (2014) and Nunkoo *et al.*'s (2018) view on residents as key stakeholders of mega-sport events, while stressing that their importance on the matter should position them as informed, equal and collaborative partners in mega-sport event decision-making. As a result, this study underlines the urgency for governments to establish balanced communication strategies and policies that can nurture their relationship quality with the residents, in order to advance shared visions regarding mega-sport events and beyond. This could be achieved by providing the host community with transparent information and by responding to residents' needs both regarding mega-sport events and beyond (i.e., the Olympic legacy).

Further elements of relationship cultivation strategies that can help build satisfaction (Ki and Hon 2009, Nunkoo and Ramkissoon 2011a) could also be used, including the sharing of tasks when possible and offering assurances to the residents regarding the mega-sport event organisation and management. The assurances offered could be then centred around previously documented residents' concerns regarding mega-sport events (Waitt 2003). The improvement of government services, the control of public security and caring for social and environmental issues could assist in securing residents' satisfaction and thus their support towards the hosting of mega-sport events.

Moreover, a robust positive relationship between satisfaction and trust in government was shown, suggesting that if the government succeeds in making its public satisfied with them, using methods outlined above, they can, in turn, increase the trust the public feels about them. Because host communities tend to equate their government with the only principal actor in the political process of hosting the Olympic Games (Ribeiro and Almeida 2021), this result once again highlights the benefits of applying GPR to better secure residents' support. In more detail, in practical terms, this significant relationship underlines the need for the government to introduce and adhere to strategies that aim to increase the satisfaction of its public, possibly by adhering to the essential GPR quality premises of symmetric communication and mutually beneficial relationships as it has been highlighted through this study.

The influence of perceived benefits on resident's trust in the government was also found to be significant, whereas the one of the perceived costs was instead shown to be insignificant. This idea would, in turn, suggest that while SET can help us understand the influence of perceived benefits on trust in government, it falls short of explaining the lack of a direct link between perceived costs and trust, potentially pointing towards the existence of indirect links that might be worth exploring. According to the exchange relationship between the government and its public, the findings illustrate that the perceived benefits from a mega-sport event can influence and help build trust in the government, something that has not been previously documented in studies examining mega-sport events (e.g., Pappas 2014, Gursoy *et al.* 2017a). In practical terms, this would suggest that the expected positive outcomes of a mega-sport event need to be clearly highlighted to increase the public's perceived benefits, while explaining clearly the positive socio-economic and environmental impacts of the mega-sport event (Ribeiro and Almeida 2021).

Furthermore, the significant direct relationship between residents' trust in government and their support towards a mega-sport event highlights how GPR quality can help underpin the relationship between the government and the host community in enhancing the support of the residents, something that has not been stressed enough within the sport management literature. Apart from the theoretical implication of this finding which expands the potential use of GPR to mega-sport events, it also presents us with a major managerial implication that could prove useful against the increasing trend of declining resident's support towards mega-sport events. The study suggests that one promising strategy that the government as a mega-sport event organiser can use to garner the level of trust, is to engage residents in the policy-making process, by following a transparent and two-way communication strategy (Nunkoo *et al.* 2018), acknowledging the host community as an important stakeholder in the policy-making process. Although there is no simple way to gain the trust of its citizens, strategic communication with the public can be an option in strengthening government trust and policy acceptance (Kim 2010). In this light, selecting a city or country where adequate level of trust in government exists can be an option when allocating the hosting of mega-sport events.

The importance of information dissemination about a mega-sport event is often highlighted, alongside the need for residents' opinions to be heard (Nunkoo 2015). For this to be accomplished, social media platforms can be employed by the local government to assist in sharing information on the expected benefits of the Olympic Games and nurturing satisfaction and trust in government. It is thus suggested that Internet-based two-way communication can be an effective tool as a reciprocal message exchanger for governments and organisers who prepare to host the Olympic Games. Furthermore, this policy PR could ease any possible public's concerns and might result in devising

methods for reducing negative impacts from hosting mega-sport events (Gursoy *et al.* 2017a). As such, it is suggested that government websites or social media can play a role as channels for addressing the social needs and concerns of residents (Porumbescu 2016) and even employing major sport stars' social media to act as PR ambassadors (Gursoy *et al.* 2017b), can help the government reduce the physical and economic barriers previously documented (Prayag *et al.* 2013) and allow its public to participate in the Olympic Games decision-making process.

At the same time, the partial mediator role of trust in government between residents' perceived benefits of a mega-sport event and their support towards it, suggests that the perceived benefits lead to residents' support partially through trust in government, further emphasising why the government should pay attention to public trust. When combining this with the previous findings, it could again be argued that the government that focuses on publicising the expected benefits of a mega-sport event could benefit in not only building residents' support towards the event but also in increasing its own trustworthiness.

Overall, this study's use of GPR quality allowed us to illustrate how by focusing on residents' satisfaction and trust towards the government, through symmetric communication between the government and its public and the establishment of beneficial relationships, their support to host a mega-sport event can increase. Adopting a strategy based on GPR quality and employing effective communication channels would also allow for the residents to be viewed as empowered, active decision-makers who can make rational decisions based on the information provided, while improving their satisfaction and trust towards the government. This empowerment could materialise through the opening of the decision-making process and the use of two-way communication tools, such as Internet-based communication technologies, which would then enable residents to raise their voice and actively participate in the process of deciding to host a mega-sport event, possibly tipping back the scale in terms of residents' support towards mega-sport events.

### **Limitations and further research**

As with any study, the limitations of this research need to also be acknowledged. First, although the current study focuses on the relationship between the local government and its residents, many stakeholders are involved in hosting a mega-sport event, including several ministries at the national government level, local authorities, and private and public institutions, all of which have relationships with their publics (Gursoy *et al.* 2017b). Future research could examine the relationship quality of the residents with these stakeholders, and even compare the relationship quality of residents with local and national governments.

Second, in terms of the context and the sample characteristics, this study focused on the 2020 Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games, the Tokyo local government and the Tokyo residents. It is thus suggested that future studies could explore different mega-sport events, in similar or less similar contexts in order to expand the generalisability of the research framework and its findings. Similarly, exploring contexts in similar or less similar cultures could also assist in furthering our understanding of residents' support and the government public relationship (e.g., Huang *et al.* 2016). In addition, considering multiple governing bodies related to a mega-sport event (e.g., organising committee and central government) might also assist in generating additional insights into the research model (e.g., Gursoy *et al.* 2017b).

Finally, as potential contributions for future research, the current study offers clues and fertile ground that synthesising SET and GPR quality could yield a robust understanding of the underlying mechanism of forming residents' support. Given that satisfaction and trust in government as core elements of GPR, are fundamental for the mutually beneficial relationship between actors (Ki and Hon 2009, 2012), future studies could further explore the determinants of GPR quality in the context of mega-sport events. Also, future investigations could adopt a longitudinal approach to capture the change of the structural relationship among perceived impacts, GPR quality and support over

a significant period of time, from pre-event, during an event, to post-event. A longitudinal study would then assist in offering insights on how residents' perceptions change over time, enabling government agencies to establish proactive measures and appropriate communication strategies.

## Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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