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**Public Trust in Mega Event Planning Institutions: The Role of
Knowledge, Transparency and Corruption**

Nunkoo, R., Ribeiro, M.A., Sunnassee, V. and Gursoy, D.

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Abstract

The political ramifications of hosting mega-events are huge. In this article, we investigate the relationships among corruption, transparency, knowledge, and public trust using data collected from 3786 Brazilians in the context of the 2014 FIFA World Cup Games. Findings from the structural equation modeling indicate that public trust in government is determined by the respondents’ perceptions of corruption and transparency and their level of knowledge about the roles of government and the local organizing committee in the mega-event. The respondents’ level of trust in the local organizing committee also exerts an influence on their trust in the government. The implications of the findings for governments planning to host mega-events in the future are discussed. This research makes an important contribution to the literature, being the first study to test a theoretical model that analyses the relationships between corruption, transparency, knowledge, and public trust in the context of a mega-sport event.

Keywords: mega-events; public trust; corruption; transparency; governance; tourism; FIFA World Cup

1. Introduction

Definitions of mega events vary across disciplines and theoretical underpinnings (Horne, 2017). Nevertheless, it is widely accepted that mega-events are large-scale cultural, commercial or sporting events which have a dramatic character, mass population appeal, and international significance (Roche, 2000). They are one-off events which are very costly and have far-reaching socio-economic implications, but have worldwide popularity and generate much media attention (Müller, 2015a). From this perspective, a mega-event is an important component of the tourism system and has important implications for the host area (Getz and Page, 2016; Jones, 2001). Mega sport tourism events such as the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) World Cup are perceived to have a number of positive socio-economic impacts (Arnegger and Herz, 2016; Bakhsh, Potwarka, Nunkoo, and Sunnassee, 2017; Maharaj, 2015; Potwarka and Banyai, 2016). It is therefore not surprising that governments of host countries invest large amounts of resources in bidding for and hosting such events. In the neoliberal era, the ‘sport-for-good’ narrative has been replaced by the ‘sport-for-development’ narrative to justify use of public resources for hosting mega-events (Coakley and Souza, 2013).

However, these events rarely live up to the expectations of the public and empirical results on the impacts of hosting are disappointing. Not only are the economic benefits overstated and promoters failed to deliver their promises (Jones, 2001), but mega sport events also generate a number of negative externalities and social costs. Corruption and lack of transparency are probably among the most documented unethical practices inherent to mega sport events. Despite the codes of practice established by sports federations like FIFA which include such directives as accountability, ethics, anti-corruption safeguards, and respect for the rule of law (Gaffney, 2013), there is no dearth of evidence of corrupt practices and intransparency in the organization of mega sport events (see for example Maharaj, 2015; Longman, 1999).

Corruption and lack of transparency represent a direct betrayal of public trust placed in mega-event planning institutions, since such practices revolve around situations where government officials and developers entrusted by the public engage in malfeasance for private enrichment (Bardhan, 1997). Distrust results in public protests against the political system, giving rise to a legitimacy crisis in mega-event planning and development.

Despite such political consequences, there is a dearth of studies on this topic in the tourism literature. Although in recent years, tourism researchers have shown a growing research interest on public trust (e.g. Gursoy, Yolal, Ribeiro, and Netto, 2017; Nunkoo, 2015; Olya and Gavilyan, 2017), none of them has looked at the theoretical relationships between public trust and corruption, transparency, and knowledge. As Henne (2015) and Getz and Page (2016) argue, there is little empirical evidence on the political consequences of corruption and transparency in the mega tourism event literature. Furthermore, existing empirical evidences on trust cannot be generalized to mega events because trust is context-specific as it is “given to specific individuals or institutions over specific domains” (Levi and Stoker, 2000, p. 476). From these perspectives, this research makes some important theoretical contributions to knowledge as it connects together the research on corruption and transparency with the study of public trust in two important bodies involved in the organization of the 2014 FIFA World Cup in Brazil: the Brazilian government and the Local Organizing Committee (LOC) of the games. The research uses data collected from 3786 respondents residing in the 12 Brazilian cities that hosted the World Cup games.

The paper proposes a baseline model (BM, Figure 1a) that predicts public trust in the government (TG) and public trust in the LOC (TOC) of the games from corruption (COR), transparency (TRA), and knowledge (KW). We then compare the BM with four competing models of public trust that reflect other theoretically plausible relationships among the

variables. This approach is necessary given the alternative and sometimes conflicting theoretical relationships among the variables revealed in previous research (Nunkoo, Ramkissoon, and Gursoy, 2013). Following existing studies (e.g. Grimmelikhuijsen, 2012; Grimmelikhuijsen, Porumbescu, Hong and Im, 2013), CM₁ (Figure 1b) proposes two additional path relationships between transparency (TRA) and knowledge (KW) and between KW and COR while CM₂ (Figure 1c) includes a path between TRA and COR. In CM₃ (Figure 1d), we investigate the spill-over effect of TOC on TG. While some studies suggest that corruption is an important predictor of public trust (Choi and Woo, 2016; Torcal, 2014), others found empirical evidence indicating that low trust leads to stronger perceptions of corruption (e.g. Morris and Klesner, 2010; Wroe, Allen, and Birch, 2013). Therefore CM₄ (Figure 1e) investigates the theoretical postulates that COR is influenced by TG and TOC. Failure to identify such alternative theoretical propositions that can be supported by a given set of data presents a direct threat to future research (MacCallum, Wegener, Uchino, and Fabrigar, 1993). Because research on such complex relationships among trust, corruption, transparency, and knowledge in the tourism and event literature is still in its infancy, it is important to uncover the most theoretically rigorous model from other competing ones. Our approach “increase[s] the alignment of modeling results with existing knowledge and theories” and is thus an important step toward theoretical advancement (Shah and Goldstein 2006, p. 162).

INSERT FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE

This study also has important practical implications for the development of mega sport tourism events in host countries planning to host such events in future, particularly in Brazil where anti-corruption efforts to promote the integrity of government and sport are now more than ever ubiquitous. As Spalding et al. (2014) note “...in a country where corruption has

been ‘business as usual’, it appears that Brazilian people have had enough... the call for accountability and transparency has only intensified” (p. 74). As the anti-corruption movements demanding good governance and adherence to the principles of democracy in mega-event development become global, other host countries can also expect similar situations to that of Brazil and face the challenges of maintaining the legitimacy of mega-event planning bodies. Legitimacy of and public support for mega-events is central to their sustainability (Bramwell, 1997; Gursoy et al., 2017; O’Brien, 2006; Kaplanidou, Al Emadi, Sargas, Diop, and Fritz, 2016; Lauermann, 2016). Government of host countries can promote good governance and gain legitimacy in and garner public support for mega-event development by fostering public trust (Park and Blenkinsopp, 2011). This is important because sport organizations now consider the level of public support for the sport event as one of the key selection criteria to assess a potential host country (International Olympic Committee, 2016). Hence, an investigation of public trust and distrust in the context of mega-sport events is more than ever essential, making the findings of this research valuable to several host economies.

2. Public Trust in Mega Event Planning Institutions

In this study, following Miller and Listhaug (1990), we define trust as citizens’ beliefs that the institutions governing mega-event development will produce preferred outcomes for the public even in the absence of constant scrutiny. Any government and its related institutions need public trust for their policies and programs to flourish (Nunkoo, 2015; Nunkoo, Ramkissoon, and Gursoy, 2012; Nunkoo and Smith, 2014). Public trust fosters relationships underlying economic development and promotes legitimacy of governing and planning institutions as well as produces outcomes that work in the best interest of society (Anderson and Tverdova, 2003; Swaner, 2017). People who consider institutions involved in mega-event planning as trustworthy are more likely to support the institutions’ initiatives and

follow their leadership without needing to be coerced (Nunkoo, 2015; Nunkoo et al., 2012; Rudolph, 2017). However, public distrust in the political system governing mega-event development seems to be the norm rather than the exception in contemporary mega-sport event development. Although not formally acknowledged as such in the mega-event literature, corruption and lack of transparency in mega-event development are the primary causes of public distrust.

The study of corruption, transparency, and public trust is more salient in the context of mega-sport events than less intrusive forms of tourism development. The hybrid characteristic of mega-sport events, namely the synergies between bidding and non-bidding mechanisms, enabled by public-private partnerships, facilitate the pursuit of undemocratic actions, rendering event planning institutions susceptible to secrecy, lack of transparency, and corruption. Although sport planning bodies like FIFA are non-profit organizations, they enjoy considerable political power due to their monopolistic position and high entry costs (Forster, 2016). Furthermore, their ability to exert a strong influence on economic development through their command of exceptional popularity of mega-sport events, and their ability to dictate terms to potential host countries allow them to shelter from illegitimacy while transferring the impact of their intransparency and corrupt tendencies onto the host government.

Global sport reflects a corporatist model of development, reflecting what Henne (2015) labeled as ‘celebration capitalism’, which enable powerful officials of organizations like FIFA to coercively influence stakeholders in the quest for personal gains. Consequently, the planning process of mega-events can be attuned to government, corporations, and other societal elites to the detriment of the wider public (Gaffney, 2013; Henne, 2015; Mules, 1998; Ziakas, 2015). This encourages deviations from transparent practices and perpetuates

public perceptions of corruption, undermining public trust in the political system governing mega-sport events. For example in the case of the 2014 FIFA World Cup, bribes were solicited, corrupting the bidding process (Maharaj, 2015). Such corrupt practices have also been common across other mega-events such as the Salt Lake City Games of 2002, the Cape Town 2004 Olympic bid, and 2010 FIFA World Cup in South Africa (Kolamo and Vuolteenaho, 2013; Swart and Bob, 2004).

The corrupt and intransparent nature of mega-sport event development is detrimental to public trust. Consequences of distrust include rising civic suspicion of the political environment, making it difficult for the government and planners to advance the mega-event development plans. Distrust is often associated with mobilized modes of protestation and other similar activities directed against an existing system (Chen and Hua, 2015) as witnessed in several nations hosting mega-sport events. One of the most violent protests was the one witnessed in the days before the 1968 Olympic Games hosted by Mexico City when more than 15,000 people gathered for a political demonstration against the games (van Luijk and Frisby, 2012). The public expressed concerns over the use of public money by the government to host the Games (Lenskyj, 2004). The protests caused more than 5000 soldiers to be mobilized and led to the death of around 300 students. Public resistance was hailed by the Mexican government as a threat to the success of the Games and to social justice in the country (Preston and Dillon, 2004). In his research on the anatomy of resistance, Gaffney (2016) discusses how massive public protests and social unrest took place before the 2013 FIFA Confederation Cup in the different Brazilian cities, threatening the tournament. The work of Lenskyj (2008), Armstrong, Hobbs, and Lindsay (2011), and Fussey, Coaffee, Armstrong, and Hobbs (2011) further discuss how social movements in host cities sought to contest the development of mega sport events. Declining trust in the governance of mega sport events is a permanent feature of the contemporary mega sport tourism event discourse.

Although over the past years researchers have taken a more formal interest in transparency and corruption given the deluge of prominent scandals across the industry, the implications for public trust are yet to be understood. With the political consequences of distrust, it has become imperative to understand the sources of public trust in mega-event planning institutions. We argue here that corruption, transparency, and knowledge are important determinants of public trust. These determinants are explored below.

2.1. Corruption

Corruption is defined as the abuse or misuse of power or position for private gains, breaching important expectations of modern societies (Sandholtz and Koetzle, 2000). Although the occurrence of corruption is defined by broad rules and norms which differ across societies (Wroe et al., 2013), it is an act of transgression which violates the rule of law and democratic principles. An individual who acts in a corrupt manner deviates from an expected conduct and such action threatens the health of the political system (Weitz-Shapiro and Winters, 2017). In the absence of an objective measure of corruption, it is very common among researchers to measure an individual's perception of corruption (Wroe et al., 2013). In a mega-sport context, corruption manifests itself at two different levels: competitive and organizational. While competitive corruption attempts to influence the outcomes of the competition, organizational corruption, which is of interest here, adversely influences the organizational structure and planning of mega-sport events.

Corruption is a systemic problem in mega sporting events (see for example Kulczycki and Koenigstorfer, 2016; Longman, 1999; Maharaj, 2015; Spalding et al., 2014) and is often attributed to unbridled capitalistic pursuits coupled with abuses of political power (Henne, 2015). With frequent revelations of corrupt practices by the mass media and the accompanying rise of global anti-corruption movements, public and academic discourses on

corruption in mega-events have become so fervent that it is considered as a mega-event syndrome (Müller, 2015b). Corruption impacts on the legitimacy of sports federations and planning bodies (Buraimo, Migali, and Simmons, 2016), impeding public trust (Seligson, 2002). Indeed, the relationship between perceived corruption and public trust has been validated in several studies (e.g. Choi and Woo, 2016; Pellegata and Memoli, 2016; Torcal, 2014). In a mega-event context, Kulczycki and Koenigstorfer (2016) found that respondents' perceptions of the level of corruption adversely influenced their attitudes toward event planning bodies, although the researchers did not explicitly measure public trust. Based on the preceding discussion, the BM of this paper proposes that Brazilians' perceived level of corruption is inversely related to their trust in government and in the LOC of the games (COR→TG; COR→TOC).

2.2. Transparency

Transparency refers to the extent to which an entity reveals information about its own decision-making processes, procedures, functioning, and performance (Gerring and Thacker, 2004). The degree of transparency is the extent to which an organization allows people to monitor its performance and participate in its policy decision-making (Burman, Albinsson, and Hyatt, 2016). Calls for greater transparency in global sports have focused on the appropriation of resources by officials of sports organizations like FIFA to the detriment of public interests. Transparency is often hailed by several researchers as being central to citizens' trust in government as it creates an environment of openness which allows the public to monitor the performance of institutions (Grimmelikhuijsen, 2012). Transparency creates a positive feeling among the general public which in turn fosters the development of trust. The relationship between the two variables has been discussed lengthily in previous studies, but evidence on the nature of the relationship is inconclusive (e.g. Grimmelikhuijsen and Meijer, 2014; Laitin and Reich, 2017; Wu, Ma, and Yu, 2017). While some researchers

believe that transparency and trust are positively related (Song and Lee, 2016), other scholars argue that transparency hardly influences trust (Grimmelikhuijsen and Meijer, 2014; Mabillard and Pasquier, 2016). Others found transparency to exert an inverted U-shaped effect on trust, noting that transparency improves trust, but only to a certain point (Horvath and Katuscakova, 2016). Based on the preceding discussion the BM proposes a positive relationship between transparency and public trust in the government and in the organizing committee of the games (TRA→TG; TRA→TOC).

2.3. Knowledge

Public knowledge of the role and working of an institution is another determinant of public trust in that institution (Nunkoo, 2015). Trust is the result of a cognitive process resulting from accumulated knowledge that allows an individual to make judgments about the likelihood that the object of trust is indeed trustworthy (Lewis and Weigert, 1985). As Simmel (1978) argues, trust involves a degree of cognitive familiarity with the object of trust that is somewhere between total knowledge and total ignorance. When there is absolute ignorance about the object of trust, there can be no reason to trust (Lewis and Weigert, 1985). A number of studies suggest a positive relationship between knowledge and public trust. For example, Cook, Jacobs, and Kim (2010) found empirical evidence that increased knowledge led to higher levels of public trust in government organizations. In a tourism context, Nunkoo (2015) found that residents who had more knowledge about the role and the workings of government displayed a higher level of trust. Based on this discussion, the BM proposes to investigate the relationship between knowledge and public trust in government and in the LOC of the games (KW→TG; KW→TOC).

2.4. Competing Models of Public Trust

The preceding discussion provides theoretical support for the BM which predicts public trust from corruption, transparency, and knowledge. Competing models 1-4 ($CM_1 - CM_4$) take into account other theoretically plausible relationships among the variables evidenced in the literature. Transparency and knowledge are closely related concepts. Given that transparency involves making information about an organization available publicly to individuals and groups outside the organization, it enhances public knowledge about the role and workings of the institution (Grimmelikhuijsen, 2012; Grimmelikhuijsen and Meijer, 2014). Furthermore, several authors argue that public knowledge of an institution's processes and performance fosters public understanding by creating a culture of openness, thereby reducing perceptions of corruption (Grimmelikhuijsen et al., 2013). Accordingly, CM_1 proposes a positive relationship between transparency and knowledge ($TRA \rightarrow KW$) and an inverse relationship between knowledge and corruption ($KW \rightarrow COR$), in addition to incorporating the paths proposed in the BM.

Transparency is increasingly viewed as central to reducing corruption. The theoretical link between the two variables has been discussed and validated empirically in a number of studies (Kolstad and Wiig, 2009; Papyrakis, Rieger, and Gilberthorpe, 2017; Saad and Elshaer, 2017). Accordingly, CM_2 proposes an additional relationship between transparency and corruption ($TRA \rightarrow COR$). A low level of trust in one institution is usually accompanied by a low level of trust in other related institutions (Hetherington, 1998). Nunkoo's (2015) study demonstrated empirically that public trust in tourism institutions positively influenced the general level of public trust in local government. In this paper, we take the view that the level of public trust in FIFA's local organizing committee influences public trust in the Brazilian government in the context of the Games. Accordingly, CM_3 proposes a relationship between public trust in the organizing committee of the games and public trust in government ($TOC \rightarrow TG$). The BM and $CM_1 - CM_3$ predict public trust from corruption. However, the

relationship between the two variables is unlikely to be unidirectional (Dalton, 2004). For example, Morris and Klesner (2010) found a “powerful causality between perception of corruption and trust...” (p. 1258). Wroe et al. (2013) also reported that individuals who are less trusting of institutions have stronger perceptions of corruption. CM₄ takes this possibility into account and proposes that public trust in the government and in the LOC of the games is inversely related to perceived corruption (TG → COR; TOC → COR).

3. Research Methodology

The study relied on data collected from Brazilians residing in the 12 cities that hosted the 2014 FIFA World Cup six months after the event. A two-step procedure was used to determine the study sample in each hosted city. First, a stratified random sampling approach was utilized to determine the sample size for each city. The number of usable responses needed from each city was determined based on a confidence level of 95% and margin of error of 6.2% to guarantee that a minimum of 250 valid questionnaires were collected from each city. In cities like São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro which host a larger proportion of the population in Brazil, a larger number of questionnaires were collected. Second, using a quota sampling based on gender and age, the number of questionnaires from each stratum was determined. The survey was carried out by trained interviewers employed in a survey company. Residents were intercepted in the most popular locations of the different cities. Every tenth person was selected and was asked to participate in the survey. In a case of refusal, the next individual was solicited. Responses were recorded in a tablet. To confirm validity of the responses, the survey company called around 20 percent of respondents from each city after each interviewer submitted the data they collected. A total of 3,786 valid questionnaires were obtained.

3.1. Measurement of Variables

The scales used to measure the different constructs were borrowed from previous studies and are presented in Table 1. Public trust in government and in the LOC of the games were measured by five and four items respectively (1 = do not trust them at all; 5 = trust them completely) borrowed from Lühiste (2006), Nunkoo (2015), and Shi (2001). Two items adapted from Grimmelikhuijsen (2012), Hung, Sirakaya-Turk and Ingram (2011) and Nunkoo (2015) were utilized to measure knowledge. Transparency was measured using five items adapted from Barker and Carter (1994) and Park and Blenkinsopp (2011). Corruption was measured using five items borrowed from Park and Blenkinsopp (2011). In each case a five-point Likert scale was used, where 1 represented ‘strongly disagree’ and 5 represented ‘strongly agree’. Where necessary, we brought contextual modifications to the scale items.

3.2. Preliminary Statistical Verifications

Structural equation modelling (SEM) was used to test the models of the study. Before the models were tested, a number of preliminary statistical tests were conducted on the dataset. We verified whether missing data presented a threat to the dataset using Little's Missing Completely at Random (MCAR) test (Little, 1988). Results indicated a non-significant chi-square value, indicating that missing data in the study did not follow any particular pattern and were therefore not a threat to the results. As recommended by Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson, and Tatham (2006), we used the mean substitution method for imputation of missing data where needed. We also tested for non-response bias using Armstrong and Overton’s method (1977). We compared early respondents (top 10%) with late respondents (bottom 10%) on their demographic variables (gender, age, marital status, and education). Results from the chi-square tests indicated no significant differences ($\alpha = .05$) between early and late respondents in terms of respondent characteristics.

As data were collected using only a face-to-face survey method, we also assessed common method variance. Following Baldauf, Cravens, Diamantopoulos, and Zeugner-Roth (2009), we conducted a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to examine whether a single factor can account for all of the variance in the data. A CFA with all 20 items loading onto a single common factor was estimated. A chi-square difference test was then performed to compare the results of the common factor model with the CFA results of the proposed measurement model, which included the five latent factors. The results show that the proposed measurement model fits significantly better than the common factor model, suggesting that common method variance was not an issue. We then assessed the normality of the data by analyzing kurtosis values which influence analysis of variances and covariances underlying SEM. A rescaled value of greater than 7 indicates a departure from normality (West, Finch, and Curran, 1995). Results generated by AMOS indicated that no item had a kurtosis value greater than 7, satisfying the normality condition underlying the maximum likelihood estimation of SEM.

4. RESULTS

4.1. Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) for the variables and their respective indicators. Respondents expressed a neutral view when asked about their level of knowledge of the role of government and the LOC in the World Cup Games ($x\bar{ } = 2.97$, $SD = 1.53$). They generally disagreed that the planning of the event were conducted transparently ($x\bar{ } = 2.35$, $SD = 1.50$). Respondents were of the opinion that the event planning process was highly corrupted ($x\bar{ } = 4.37$ $SD = 1.09$). They reported a low level of trust in government ($x\bar{ } = 2.11$, $SD = 1.30$) and in the LOC of the Games ($x\bar{ } = 2.16$, $SD = 1.31$).

INSERT TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

4.2. Confirmatory Factor Analysis

The models were tested using the recommended two-step approach to SEM (Anderson and Gerbing, 1988). The measurement model was first tested using CFA. Results indicated a significant chi-square value ($\chi^2 = 747.11; df = 148; p < 0.001$) which is however known to be highly influenced by sample size. However, the other indices suggested that the model was a good fit to the data (TLI = 0.98; CFI = 0.98; RMSEA = 0.03; GFI = 0.97; SRMR = 0.02). The measurement model was further evaluated for its reliability and validity. As shown in Table 2, the model achieved reliability because the composite reliability and average variance extracted values for all the constructs exceeded the minimum recommended values of 0.70 and 0.50 respectively (Hair et al., 2006; Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2012; Nunkoo et al., 2013). We also tested the model for its validity. Discriminant validity was tested by comparing all pairs of constructs in two-factor CFA models, where each model was estimated twice, with one constraining the correlation between the constructs to be one and the other allowing free estimation of the parameter. Discriminant validity is achieved if a significantly lower chi-square value is obtained for the unconstrained model (Bagozzi and Phillips, 1982). As shown in Table 3, this requirement was met, evidencing discriminant validity. Convergent validity was met with statistically significant factor loadings as presented in Table 2 (Anderson and Gerbing, 1988).

INSERT TABLE 2 & 3 ABOUT HERE

4.3. Baseline Model versus Competing Models

Given that the measurement model was acceptable, the BM was tested using AMOS 21 with the maximum likelihood estimation method. Results indicated a good model fit: $\chi^2 = 786.368, df = 151, p < 0.001$; TLI = 0.98; CFI = .98; GFI = 0.97; AGFI = 0.97; RMSEA =

0.03; SRMR = 0.02; AIC = 904.37; BCC = 905.03). All the path relationships proposed in this model were statistically significant. Each competing model was then estimated individually, with the exogenous variables being assumed to be correlated. Results are presented in Table 4 and indicated that all the competing models exhibited good fit. In a case of equally good fitted models, it is recommended to use a chi-square difference test to determine the best model (Anderson and Gerbing, 1988; Rust, Lee, and Valente, 1995). Results indicated that the BM was significantly better than CM₁ ($\Delta\chi^2 = 319.63$; $\Delta df = 1$; $p < 0.001$). Accordingly, we rejected CM₁.

INSERT TABLE 4 ABOUT HERE

The BM, CM₂, CM₃, and CM₄ were found to be equivalent models. Equivalent models produce the same predicted correlations or covariances, but with a different configuration of paths among the same observed variables. Consequently, all goodness-of-fit statistics are identical for each of these equivalent models (Kline, 2011; MacCallum et al., 1993). In such a case, the researcher's selection of the best model should be based on theoretical grounds as well as on quantitative criteria (Hershberger, 2006; Kline, 2011). As the literature offers theoretical support for the relationship between trust in the LOC of the games and trust in government, we tested this additional path relationship in CM₃ and found it to be statistically significant. In addition, as the R^2 value is a primary criterion for evaluating the theoretical rigor of structural models (Hair, Ringle, and Sarstedt, 2011), we also evaluated the models based on this measure. Accordingly, although CM₃ has identical fit indices to BM, CM₂, and CM₄, it explained the highest amount of variance in public trust in the government ($R^2 = 0.71$). On these bases, we concluded again that CM₃ was the best fitted and theoretically most rigorous model for our study. We therefore analyzed the path relationships proposed in this model. Results are presented in Table 5.

INSERT TABLE 5 ABOUT HERE

5. Discussion

Of the 10 path relationships tested in CM₃, nine were supported by the findings. The perceived level of corruption in the planning and development of the FIFA World Cup was found to exert a strong negative effect on public trust in government. This finding confirms the long standing argument that corruption erodes public trust in institutions (Choi and Woo, 2016; Pellegata and Memoli, 2016; Torcal, 2014). Corruption represents a direct violation of democratic values and the rule of law, causing distrust among the public (Grimes, 2017; Uslaner, 2017). As our findings indicate, Brazilians reported a very high level of perceived corruption in the planning of the Games ($x\bar{ } = 4.37$). In a country where corrupt practices used to be part of daily business, corruption has today become a negative valence issue of great concern to citizens (Weitz-Shapiro and Winters, 2017). Mass protests over the past years demonstrate the depth of Brazilians' frustration with corruption in the country to such an extent that this adversely influences their attitudes toward the government in a sport context.

Interestingly however, while corruption adversely influenced public trust in government, it was insignificantly related to their trust in the LOC of the event. These findings can potentially be explained by the fact that citizens consider the government as the principal actor in the political process of tourism and related development. As a result, the public holds the government responsible and accountable for all policy decisions even if these are the outcomes of government partnerships with other private organizations (Bramwell, 2011; Hall, 1994) as in the case of the World Cup Games and other mega-sport events. In addition, the extent of corruption in any public or private organization in a country is dependent on the prevailing political culture and the institutional and legal framework in that country which are to a large extent determined by the government. As a result, citizens sanction the government

by displaying less trustworthy attitudes in cases of heightened perceptions of corruption. While government is answerable to the public, sport organizations are only answerable to their members, and to the legal system in appropriate cases. Furthermore, the government is ‘closer’ and its activities more ‘visible’ to the citizens than the LOC of the Games. Institutions that are more visible to the public take a more prominent role in their mind and in consequence, stronger perceptions of corruption in those institutions impede on public trust (Nunkoo, 2015).

Our results suggest that citizens perceived a clear lack of transparency in the planning of the Games ($x\bar{ } = 2.35$), lending support to researchers’ argument that secrecy and lack of transparency is inherent to mega sport tourism events (Hoberman, 1995; Krüger, 1993). This variable was found to be positively related to public trust in government and in the LOC of the World Cup, confirming results of existing studies (Grimmelikhuijsen et al., 2013; Grimmelikhuijsen and Meijer, 2014). The findings also lend support to the arguments of transparency optimists who stress that transparency is the solution to public mistrust in government institutions (Grimmelikhuijsen et al., 2013). We investigated the relationship between transparency and perceived corruption and found a statistically significant relationship between the two variables. As expected, increased transparency was inversely related to perceptions of corruption, confirming existing empirical studies (Kolstad and Wiig, 2009; Papyrakis et al., 2017; Vadlamannati and Cooray, 2017).

Knowledge was found to be another significant predictor of public trust in government as well as in the LOC of the games, confirming the findings of existing research (e.g. Grimmelikhuijsen, 2012; Li, 2004; Nunkoo, 2015). We note here that knowledge of the object of trust (i.e. the government and the LOC) is necessary for the development of public trust. From a theoretical standpoint, our result lends support to the long established argument that trust is influenced by a degree cognitive similarity between total knowledge and total

ignorance, where in the case of absolute ignorance, there is no reason for trust to develop (Luhmann, 1979). Individuals with a greater amount of knowledge about the government and the LOC of the games can understand their workings and their respective roles in the organization and planning of the event. Knowledge provides sufficient information that allows individuals to make a judgement about the trustworthiness of the trusted (Levi and Stoker, 2000).

We also investigated the relationship between transparency and knowledge and the latter's influence on perceptions of corruption. Both path relationships were supported by the findings. Transparency was found to positively influence knowledge while an inverse relationship was noted between knowledge and corruption. Transparency relates to the extent to which an organization makes available to the public such information as its decision-making processes, procedures, and functioning. This enables what Grimmelikhuijsen and Meijer (2014) termed ‘inward observability’, which refers to the ability of outside individuals and groups to understand and monitor the workings of an organization. This fosters public knowledge, creates a culture of openness, and reduces perceptions of corruption. However, in a sport context, there have been attempts to hold back information from the public. It is common practice for governments and sport organizing committees to suppress public knowledge about the real costs of an event to avoid controversies (Long, 2005). In addition, as Henne (2015) argues, “...efforts to disclose the inner workings of sport-related agreements have yielded significant pushback” (p. 331). For example, there was debate among FIFA members on whether or not to make available publicly a 430-page report on corruption and collusion allegations related to the 2018 and 2022 World Cup bidding processes. FIFA decided to publish only an abridged version of the report. This decision did not go down well with the public as it fell short of the principles of good governance (Henne, 2015). Citizens' attitudes toward institutions are shaped by underlying democratic values, whereby

governments are accountable to their citizens and are expected to act equitably and fairly, and where decision-making processes are transparent. Absence of such values adversely influences public opinion toward government and its institutions. FIFA's actions have thus hindered public knowledge and compounded perceptions of corruption as we demonstrate in this study. For these reasons, Transparency International has been calling for the introduction of bidding integrity pacts and citizens-monitoring mechanisms to improve governance processes in mega sport events.

Furthermore, we tested the effect of public trust in the LOC of the games on public trust in the host country's government. While there was a clear lack of trust in the LOC ($x\bar{ } = 2.16$) and in the Brazilian government ($x\bar{ } = 2.11$) in the context of the Games, we found the relationship between the two dimensions of trust to be positive. The results confirm the domain specificity of trust where individuals usually display varying levels of trust in different, albeit related institutions. We argue that a low level of trust in one institution is usually accompanied by a low level of trust in the other institution. We also found in this study that public trust in the LOC spilled over to influence trust in the Brazilian government in the context of the FIFA World Cup, confirming existing empirical findings which suggest that public trust in one institution affects public attitudes toward a government (Bouckaert and Van deWalle, 2001; Christensen and Lægreid, 2005). Our findings may not be encouraging for the Brazilian government or any other nations interested in hosting FIFA World Cup Games. Public distrust in the local organizing committee of FIFA, an organization mired in corrupt and questionable practices (Onwumechili and Bedeau, 2017) is likely to create a culture of distrust in the host country's government.

5.1. Practical Implications

The results of the study have important practical implications for governments planning to host mega sport tourism events. As our study demonstrates, citizens neither trusted the government nor the local organizing committee of FIFA when it came to the planning and management of the event. FIFA is an organization that has generally lacked trust among the public. As Tomaž Vesel, Chairman of FIFA's Audit and Compliance Committee himself states, FIFA needs to be able to rebuild the trust among its internal and external stakeholders (FIFA, 2017). Notwithstanding the initiatives FIFA is undertaking to improve its accountability and governance processes (FIFA, 2017) which are indeed encouraging for future host governments, the latter should devise their own strategies to gain public trust and increase their legitimacy in mega-event planning, evidently, in collaboration with FIFA where necessary. This is critically important because FIFA's initiatives to improve good governance and its image seem to have met with little success (Henne, 2015; Onwumechili and Bedeau, 2017).

Corruption in global sport maps into existing political conditions (Henne, 2015). It is therefore important for government officials to develop a political culture that favors good governance and adherence to the rule of law and democratic principles. As our findings indicate, reducing perceptions of corruption, improving transparency, and increasing public knowledge of the role of government and the organizing committee in mega-event development are pre-requisites to fostering public trust. Improving transparency will not only increase public trust but as our findings demonstrate, is also an effective strategy to attenuate perceptions of corruption in mega sport tourism event development. Transparency is made up of policy transparency and decision-making transparency (Grimmelikhuijsen et al., 2013). Policy transparency refers to the information disclosed by a government about the policy itself. Therefore, governments should make publicly available the policies governing the mega-event, articulating clearly the public and private partnerships the development

process entails, the decision-making processes, the benefits to the country, and the socio-economic implications for the citizens. This is an area where considerable work is required by host governments because mega events are usually only narrated under the guise of delivering economic benefits when in fact such developments usually lead to a “reconfiguration of power at the local and national levels” through an imposed “neo-liberal order marked by authoritarianism and exceptionalism” (Sánchez and Broudehoux, 2013, p. 135), engendering corrupt practices. Policy documents about the development should make public-private partnerships visible and open to scrutiny and should consider their far-reaching effects on transparency and corruption (Henne, 2015). Governments can also integrate in the policy documents the practices that foster good governance such as those outlined in the Transparency International’s Business Principles for Countering Bribery which provides a holistic anti-bribery framework. Government planners can also consider including whistleblower protection in policy documents. Such initiatives are likely to increase transparency, reduce the perception of corruption, and improve public trust in government.

As decision-making transparency relates to the degree of openness about how decisions are reached, it is important for the host government to ensure a democratic decision-making process involving all stakeholders, not just societal and commercial elites. At present, critiques point to how mega event developers partner with governments to develop policies in ways that benefit only selected groups of stakeholders (Henne, 2015). Such practices perpetuate the perception of corruption and foster a culture of distrust. Host governments should therefore promote a participatory approach to mega sport tourism event planning, involving local communities and other marginalized stakeholders in the process. The government should also provide all information relevant to the event bidding process which is often a target for public criticisms because negotiation processes are secretive, intensifying

the perception of corruption. It is important for governments to provide the public with factual information about government processes in relation to mega event planning.

Transparency initiatives, particularly information dissemination ones, are also likely to enhance public knowledge of the role of government and the local organizing committee in mega event development. As our findings demonstrate, enhanced public knowledge has the joint effect of reducing the perception of corruption and fostering public trust. Therefore, improving the knowledge of the citizens through information provision seems to be an effective strategy for governments to improve their legitimacy and political accountability in mega-event development. Such information should be credible and reliable as evidence points out that citizens usually rely on cues from trusted sources to make judgments about a government (Weitz-Shapiro and Winters, 2017). It is also important that the government diversifies the information strategy to communicate with local communities and other stakeholders. For example, information savvy citizens may need detailed and comprehensive information about the mega-event while others may require only briefs on the development. The government should also be able to target individuals with a lesser interest in and knowledge of the mega-event as they are likely to have heightened perceptions of corruption and adverse opinions about government's role in the development, as our findings show. Social media such as Facebook and Twitter may be used by governments to encourage disinterested individuals to access information about the development as such communication modes have been found to enhance perceptions of government transparency and public trust (Song and Lee, 2016). Social media is also an effective tool to communicate with and engage the younger generation.

5.2. Limitations and Scope for Future Research

As with any research, this study is not without limitations which readers should take into account when interpreting the findings. We identify three sets of limitations that emanate from (1) the research design of the study, (2) the specific socio-economic and political conditions of Brazil, and (3) the theoretical basis of the study's research model. First, the study is based on a survey design which is a non-experimental research approach. Therefore, the findings should be interpreted in the light of the caveats inherent to survey research, commonly referred to as the total survey error (Eckman and Leeuw, 2017). The latter is defined as "the accumulation of all errors that may arise in the design, collection, processing, and analysis of survey data. In this context, a survey error is defined as the deviation of a survey response from its underlying true value" (Biemer, 2010, p. 817). Survey errors can pose challenges to the reliability and validity of research findings. A superior method to test theories and examine causal relationships is an experimental design approach which is known to increase internal validity and, eventually, the robustness of research findings (Bradley and Sparks, 2012; Kline, 2011; Namasivayam, 2004). Future researchers should therefore consider using an experimental design to validate the findings of the study.

Second, the specific socio-economic and political conditions of Brazil limit the extent to which the findings can be generalized to other economies. Brazil has a history of corruption scandals which has bred a climate of distrust among citizens that in turn feed the perception of corruption. Mega sport tourism events, seen as corrupt by the public may have intensified perceptions of corruption and distrust in political institutions. In addition, Brazil's historically low levels of educational achievement and quality, coupled with the country's relatively short history of democratic competition and multiparty system, make it harder for citizens to understand strategic incentives and the behaviors of political actors (Weitz-Shapiro and Winters, 2017). These factors may explain the low level of knowledge of the respondents reported in this study. Thus, the socio-economic and political environment of

Brazil is likely to have influenced public perceptions of corruption, transparency, and Brazilians' trust in the institutions involved in mega-event development and thus, the magnitude of the relationships among the different variables of the study. It is possible that if the model of the study is tested in more transparent and corruption-free societies, the strength and directions of the path relationships would be different. Therefore, the extent to which the research findings can be generalized to other societies is limited. Thus, researchers are encouraged to test the model in other countries to validate the findings of the study in other contexts.

Third, the research also has a number of theoretical limitations. The study considered only those determinants of public trust that are endogenous to the political system, with the rationale that citizens trust those institutions that work effectively and satisfactorily. However, political trust in the context of tourism and related development is also culturally determined (Nunkoo, 2015; Nunkoo and Smith, 2013; Nunkoo et al., 2012). For example, Grimmelikhuijsen et al. (2013) found that the effect of transparency on political trust is culturally dependent. Brazil shares some of the characteristics of other developing countries such as colonial histories and social stratification in terms of race and color which may not be present in all developed and industrialized societies. However, the study did not consider these cultural determinants of political trust. It is therefore recommended that researchers consider such antecedents of public trust in mega-event development alongside the endogenous ones to strengthen the theoretical basis of their study. Finally, the study considered public trust and its determinants in the context of a one-off and intrusive form of tourism development that has massive socio-economic implications for people. It is important that future studies test the path relationships using other forms of tourism development as well so as to test the theoretical rigor and generalizability of our structural model.

6. Conclusion

Hosting of mega sport tourism events such as the FIFA World Cup Games is a political act, involving the local communities, public institutions, event organizing committees, and other stakeholders who compete over the allocation of resources and distribution of power (Horne, 2017). Consequently, the political ramifications of hosting are very significant. In this article, we investigated the relationships among corruption, transparency, knowledge, and public trust using data collected from Brazilians in the context of the 2014 FIFA World Cup Games. In so doing, the study makes an important theoretical contribution to existing literature. While the terms corruption and transparency appear in several articles on mega tourism events (e.g. Al-Emadi, Kaplanidou, Diop, Sagas, Le, and Mustafa, 2017; Preuss, 2015; Kirilenko and Stepchenkova, 2017), to date, there has been no systematic investigation of these issues. As Getz and Page (2016, p. 617) recently highlighted, “There is a clear gap in the research on political outcomes of event tourism. These could include corruption, changes in government, the evolution of governance (i.e., new models involving stakeholders), or the politicization of decision-making about events and tourism.” Henne (2015) also notes that very little is known about the consequences of corruption and transparency in mega-event development. Thus, this research makes an important contribution to the existing literature, being the first study to set out a theoretical model which is tested in the context of a major mega tourism event.

As the evidence outside the tourism literature points to different theoretical possibilities among the constructs, it was important to arrive at a theoretical model of public trust that holds most relevance to mega tourism events. To determine the theoretically most rigorous model, the study developed a baseline model and compared it with four competing models that reflect other theoretical and sometimes competing propositions among the variables of

interest. The study utilized SEM to compare the different models. We demonstrated here that public trust in government in the context of the mega-event is strongly influenced by perceptions of transparency and corruption, citizens' knowledge as well as their trust in the organizing committee of the event. We argue that while governments can influence the internal political culture governing mega-event development through policy reforms, it has less control on FIFA's strategies to boost public trust in the organization. Complicating the issue, are the broad and pluralistic field of mega sport tourism event and the public-private sector partnerships such a form of development entails which all present particular challenges for transparency and corruption eradication. Thus, restoring public trust in institutions involved in mega tourism events requires multiple stakeholder engagement and political willpower. It is a task that should form a core element of the overall hosting strategy but which has often been marginalised. The findings and conclusions of this pioneering research set out useful signposts for host governments.

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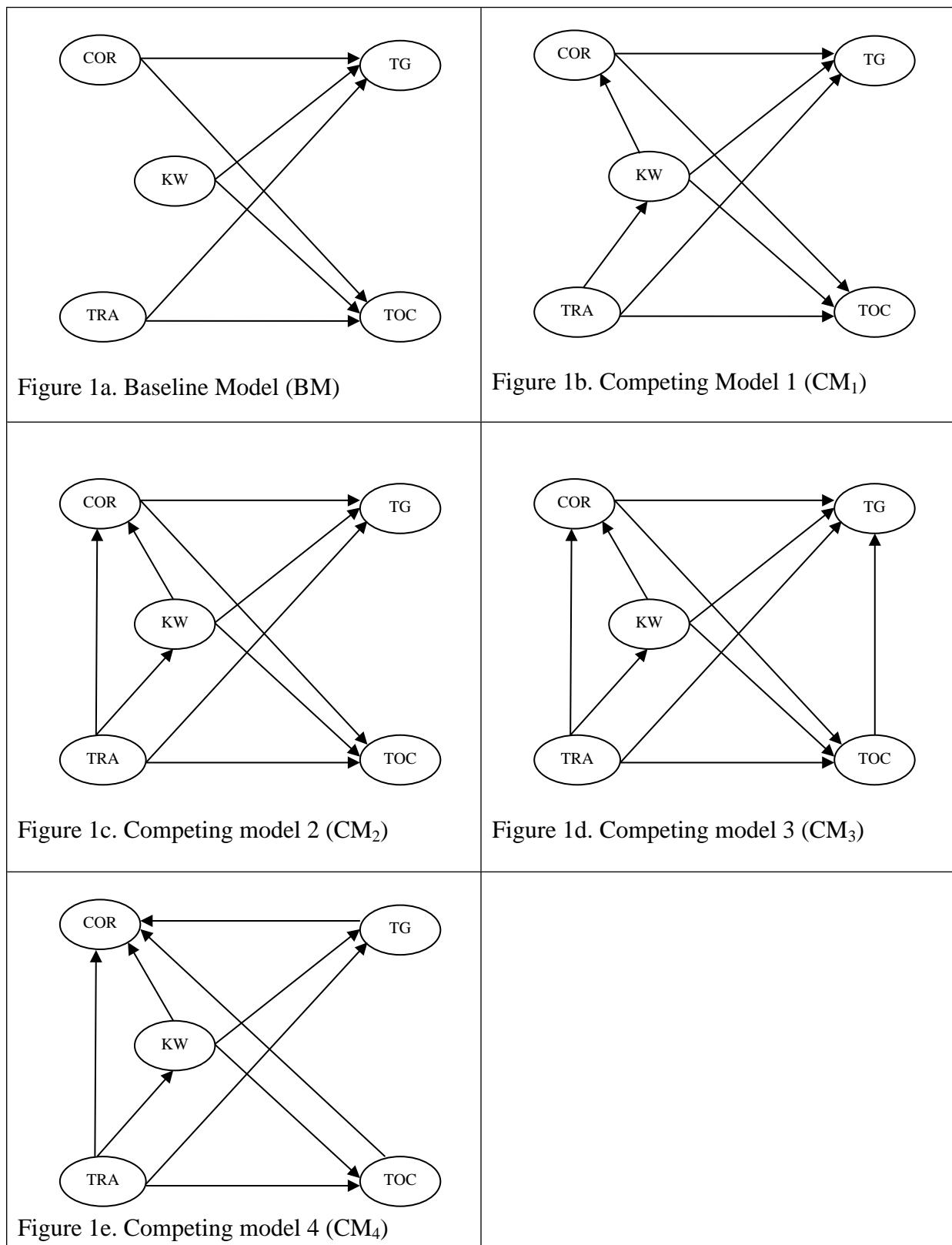
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Notes – TG: Trust in local government; TOC: Trust in local organizing committee; TRA: Transparency; COR: Corruption; KW: Knowledge.

Figure 1. Competing models of public trust

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of the variables and their indicators

Variables and indicators	Mean	SD
<i>Knowledge</i>		
I understood the role of local government in the World Cup	2.97	1.53
I understood the role of the organizing committee in the World Cup	3.02	1.56
<i>Transparency</i>		
The world Cup's works/infrastructures were implemented transparently.	2.91	1.56
The entire process of the World Cup works was transparently disclosed.	2.35	1.50
Local residents could clearly see the progress of World Cup works.	2.20	1.46
The works of World Cup were transparently done.	2.49	1.55
The Government disclosed sufficient information to local residents on the World Cup	2.51	1.54
<i>Corruption</i>		
The there were malpractices associated with sub-contracts in managing the construction of World Cup's infrastructures	2.21	1.48
There was inappropriate participation of contractors who were under required standards in the World Cup's projects in Brazil.	2.34	1.49
There was an atmosphere that something valuable had to be given to the officials in charge to smoothly complete the World Cup's infrastructures	4.37	1.09
The works of the World Cup in Brazil weren't fair in some senses.	4.33	1.14
<i>Trust in Government</i>		
The government to make the right decisions in the events development?	4.40	1.03
The government to do what was right in the event development without you having constantly to check on them?	4.53	.95
The government to look after the interests of the community in relation to this events development?	4.21	1.25
Event decisions made by the government?	2.11	1.20
Government's effort to incorporate residents into event planning process?	2.23	1.34
<i>Trust in Organizing Committee</i>		
Organizing committee to make the right decisions in the event development?	2.32	1.36
Organizing committee to do what was right in the event development without you having constantly to check on them?	2.28	1.34
Organizing committee to look after the interests of the community in relation to this event?	2.35	1.36
Event decisions made by organizing committee?	1.93	1.23

Table 2. Properties of the measurement model

Variables and indicators	SL	t-values	CR	AVE
<i>Knowledge</i>			0.81	0.68
I understood the role of local government in the World Cup	0.82	-		
I understood the role of the organizing committee in the World Cup	0.83	23.34***		
<i>Transparency</i>			0.88	0.59
The world Cup's works/infrastructures were implemented transparently.	0.81	-		
The entire process of the World Cup works was transparently disclosed.	0.75	43.82***		
Local residents could clearly see the progress of World Cup works.	0.73	41.10***		
The works of World Cup were transparently done.	0.88	53.37***		
The Government disclosed sufficient information to local residents on the World Cup	0.77	46.75***		
<i>Corruption</i>			0.88	0.65
There were malpractices associated with sub-contracts in managing the construction of World Cup's infrastructures	0.87	-		
There was inappropriate participation of contractors who were under required standards in the World Cup's projects in Brazil.	0.84	28.55***		
There was an atmosphere that something valuable had to be given to the officials in charge to smoothly complete the World Cup's infrastructures	0.79	24.92***		
The works of the World Cup in Brazil weren't fair in some senses.	0.52	23.21***		
<i>Trust in Government</i>			0.85	0.54
The government to make the right decisions in the events development?	0.74	-		
The government to do what was right in the event development without you having constantly to check on them	0.73	54.63***		
The government to look after the interests of the community in relation to this events development?	0.74	43.11***		
Event decisions made by the government?	0.73	42.97***		
Government's effort to incorporate residents into event planning process?	0.71	41.67***		
<i>Trust in Organizing Committee</i>			0.84	0.58
Organizing committee to make the right decisions in the event development?	0.75	-		
Organizing committee to do what was right in the event development without you having constantly to check on them?	0.73	58.90***		
Organizing committee to look after the interests of the community in relation to this event?	0.77	40.07***		
Event decisions made by organizing committee?	0.79	41.68***		

*p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001.

Table 3. Discriminant validity

Comparisons		Constrained model		Unconstrained model		Chi-square difference		Discriminant validity
		χ^2	df	χ^2	df	$\Delta\chi^2$	Δdf	
KW	TRA	296.23	10	40.04	9	256.19	1	yes
	COR	62.68	8	45.18	7	17.5	1	yes
	TG	269.89	11	29.16	10	240.73	1	yes
	TOC	196.41	6	9.15	5	187.26	1	yes
TRA	COR	2411.68	21	43.26	20	2368.42	1	yes
	TG	166.06	28	44.36	27	121.7	1	yes
	TOC	242.97	20	84.26	19	158.71	1	yes
COR	TG	2669.02	23	56.37	22	2612.65	1	yes
	TOC	2613.93	19	539.79	18	2074.14	1	yes
TG	TOC	427.36	21	388.54	20	38.82	1	yes

Table 4. Baseline model versus competing models

Model	χ^2	df	$\Delta \chi^2$	Δdf	TLI	CFI	RMSEA	SRMR	AIC	BCC
Baseline	786.37	151	Base comparison	N/A	.98	.98	.03	.02	904.37	905.03
CM1	1106.00	152	319.63	1	.97	.97	.04	.06	1222.00	1222.65
CM2	786.37	151	N/A	N/A	.98	.98	.03	.02	904.37	905.03
CM3	786.37	151	N/A	N/A	.98	.98	.03	.02	904.37	905.03
CM4	786.37	151	N/A	N/A	.98	.98	.03	.02	904.37	905.03

Table 5. Results of path relationships in CM₃

Path relationship	Standardized beta	Critical ratio	Results
COR → TG	-.21	-10.04***	Supported
COR → TOC	.03	1.60	Rejected
TRA → TG	.44	21.41***	Supported
TRA → TOC	.05	2.56*	Supported
TRA → COR	-.37	-15.86***	Supported
KW → TG	.20	11.23***	Supported
KW → TOC	.08	4.91***	Supported
TRA → KW	.27	13.66***	Supported
KW → COR	-.04	-2.01*	Supported
TOC → TG	.50	25.07***	Supported

* $p<0.05$; ** $p<0.01$; *** $p<0.001$.