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Towards hosting multi-country sport mega-events: the case of the bidding process of the 2030 FIFA Men's World Cup

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ABSTRACT

Research Question: This study examines the antecedents and factors shaping resident support for the 2030 FIFA Men's World Cup bid. The analysis focuses on potential changes in a cross-cultural environment, specifically examining citizen support for a joint bid involving two culturally similar countries (Spain and Portugal) alongside a culturally dissimilar one (Ukraine).

Research Methods: Using a sample of 969 residents from the bid countries Spain and Portugal, a structural equation modelling and a multigroup analysis were used to examine differences between hypothesised paths across the two countries.

Results and Findings: The results indicate that Iberian residents have no strong sense of connection to support Ukraine in this bidding process. Understanding such support for an event bid involves more than merely participating in the bidding process; it is important to enhance resident trust levels, maximise social advantages, and minimise potential risks at every stage.

Implications: In an era when mega sporting events are characterised by a propensity towards establishing collaborative networks across multiple host countries to organise and facilitate large-scale sporting events, this study draws upon the theories of social exchange and community attachment to provide empirical insights into the factors that need to be improved as well as the relationships that need to be strengthened in order to gain support from co-bidding residents.

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Introduction

Bidding processes uniting multiple cities or nations have become more prominent as a strategy for hosting international mega sporting events (Byun et al., 2020). Co-hosting provides smaller countries a form of social inclusion through the unique chance to benefit from the positive impacts from such events (Walzel & Eickhoff, 2023). From

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enhancing cultural diversity and global unity to promoting economic benefits and improving social relationships (Preuss, 2019), the union of different countries plays a significant role as an antecedent for achieving social value in a co-hosting setting (Walzel & Eickhoff, 2023). In recognition of Ukraine's international significance, Spain and Portugal initially included it in the 2030 FIFA Men's World Cup bid, thereby making a proactive strategic partnership across the hosts (Boren, 2022). Wrapped in the attachment spirit and as an act of European solidarity (Reuters, 2022), this bidding aimed to contribute to the recovery of Ukraine and strengthen its ties with Europe through the power of football (Ames, 2022). Notwithstanding the positive recognition from society (Byun et al., 2020), the Portuguese and Spanish football federations decided to exclude the Ukraine from their bidding process apparently due to allegations of money laundering brought against the president of the Ukrainian Football Association (Boffey, 2022).

Public support is one of the critical selection elements for multiple host-city arrangements (Bakhsh et al., 2017). While FIFA has already decided on the host countries for the 2030 FIFA Men's World Cup (FIFA, 2023), the change in strategy by the Portuguese and Spanish football federations between 2022 and 2023 – first including and then excluding Ukraine – could significantly influence the formation of public support. This decision offers a practical empirical context to examine what factors can be emphasised as part of a bid support model to attract local support. As such, the present study is set to answer the following questions: Has the Ukraine attachment been a determinant of bidding support? What has been its role? Can the level of trust and expected impacts influence the public support? Complementarily, cultural imperatives are likely to have an impact on resident perspective as local citizens are deeply influenced by the cultural values and norms they hold (Hofstede, 1984). Thus, we examine the proposed model with residents from two bid countries because this bidding can provide different expectations on local communities (Bakhsh et al., 2017), making it essential to use cross-cultural comparisons. Therefore, the purpose of this study was twofold: (1) to examine the effects of Ukraine attachment on resident attitudes towards the 2030 FIFA Men's World Cup bid, and (2) to verify if changes occur according to the cross-cultural environment.

The study advances sport management literature by empirically investigating which factors need to be enhanced and which can overshadow resident support in a bidding process with Ukraine. While Ukraine shares a European geographical proximity with Spain and Portugal, it lacks solid cultural elements closely aligned with these two Iberian countries. Furthermore, we provide an event bidding support model in a multiple host-city arrangement context (Portugal-Spain-Ukraine) using a moderator variable to offer practical insights into the decision-making process in each respective country. Practically, we highlight the role of event bidders in exploring which antecedents are essential for garnering resident support as it may increase their (dis)interest in a multiple-bid arrangement.

Literature review and theoretical underpinnings

The literature on (mega) sporting events has grown in recent years (Walzel & Leopkey, 2024). Indeed, bidding for and hosting sporting events has been the subject of extensive research (Storm & Jakobsen, 2024). The focus has been broad and diverse ranging from success in the field (e.g. Haut et al., 2016) to national pride (e.g. Meier & Mutz, 2018;

Storm & Jakobsen, 2020), but research that draws on the bidding in a co-hosting context is still limited (Walzel & Leopkey, 2024). At the core of a successful bid is creating an affective or emotional bond between a resident and a community (Lee, 2013). Borrowed from sociology literature, the construct of attachment is an extension of social participation and integration (McCool & Martin, 1994) that can be evidenced by the sentiment or affect toward the host communities in the bidding process. As interactions increase social ties, community members' sense of unity and civic pride strengthen their attachment (Musikavanhu et al., 2021). Congruent with the community attachment theory (CAT), residents with high attachment levels are more likely to engage in events and support them for their community (Eluwole et al., 2022). Despite community attachment being a proximal determinant of resident support, no research has explored the effects of an external community in forecasting support for event bidding development.

The bidding process also requires an inclusive approach and substantial trustworthiness among several stakeholders (Nunkoo et al., 2018). This trust feeling demands the active participation of several players in the sport system linked with the local community for the event's success. Resident trust in those key groups or organisations associated with the event bidding, who play a critical role in legitimatising their decisions (Ribeiro & Almeida, 2021) and have a significant impact on their event support (Gursoy et al., 2017). Moreover, the bidding for mega-events promulgates a vision of structural change with associated risks and benefits (Preuss, 2019). They serve as bargaining chips for locals to support whether to host an event and fund the public expenditure. Previous studies have indicated that the benefits provided by hosting sport events generate positive impact perceptions on resident support (Al-Emadi et al., 2017; Ouyang et al., 2017), while others have demonstrated that risk perception negatively influences their support for the events (Gursoy et al., 2019; Ribeiro et al., 2022).

Two theories are adopted in this study to explain the hypothesised interrelationships. The CAT (McCool & Martin, 1994) reflects an emotional attachment or bond between an individual and a particular community. Within a large nation, regions or states can serve as points of attachment for the community (Hummon, 1992). These emotional bonds formed with groups, places, and other cultures can explain the citizen attachment level and support of event tourism (Li & Wan, 2017). As for the social exchange theory (SET) (Ap, 1992), it suggests that resident attitudes towards a mega event can be affected by both positive and negative impacts, community concerns and attachments (Gursoy & Kendall, 2006), or by the external environment (e.g. societal and contextual issues) (Ouyang et al., 2017). According to SET (Ap, 1992), residents will be involved in a social exchange if (1) the resulting benefits are valued, (2) the exchanges produce valued rewards, and (3) perceived costs do not exceed perceived benefits.

Both SET and CAT have commonly served as a basis for understanding resident support of a mega event (Gursoy et al., 2017, 2019), highlighting multiple critical factors as relevant in sport management literature. First, studies suggest that resident support intentions are shaped by the public and organisational trust (Gursoy et al., 2016) as a basis to explain the ongoing social exchanges between stakeholders. Second, resident support can be explained by the benefits and costs of hosting the event (Al-Emadi et al., 2017; Ouyang et al., 2017), which impact the host community differently. Furthermore, the influence of community attachment on attitudes and behaviours may differ due to cultural issues (Ouyang et al., 2017). Bakhsh et al. (2017) indicated

that joint bidding arrangements can change the formation process of alliances due to their susceptibility to various sociocultural factors. By combining these theoretical frameworks (SET and CAT), it is possible to examine the level of attachment to other communities and what underlying effects this can generate on the event bidding process.

Community attachment as an antecedent for bidding support

Citizen attachment to the community is considered one of the most critical factors influencing impact perception and event support (Gursoy et al., 2016). That attachment to a target (i.e. country, person, or object) induces a state of mental readiness that influences the emotional, cognitive, and behavioural domains towards such target (Holmes, 2000). The sport event literature indicates that community attachment is an important determinant of perceived impacts (Gursoy et al., 2016), emotional solidarity (Li & Wan, 2017), and resident support to the event (Eluwole et al., 2022). Similarly, recent studies employ the constructs of event attachment (Ouyang et al., 2017), destination attachment (Stylidis, 2016), or brand attachment (Jawahar et al., 2020) to explain resident attachment level of support for event development. This study employs the attachment construct focused on Ukraine as a co-host nation (see Figure 1) that comprised the Portugal and Spain bid for the 2030 FIFA Men's World Cup.

As such, and following CAT, this research argues that the concept of 'community' shall be understood beyond the borders of our own community. Individuals create an affectional tie to a target to fulfil their fundamental security needs (Holmes, 2000), and this connection can stem from the relationship between individuals and countries (Laczko, 1995). Previous studies have noted that attachments to cities or nation-states are not aligned with geographic proximity or distance (Hernández et al., 2007) but may be formed at multiple scales. This means that such attachments to a nation can be strongly influenced by broader socio-political structures, institutions, and cultural

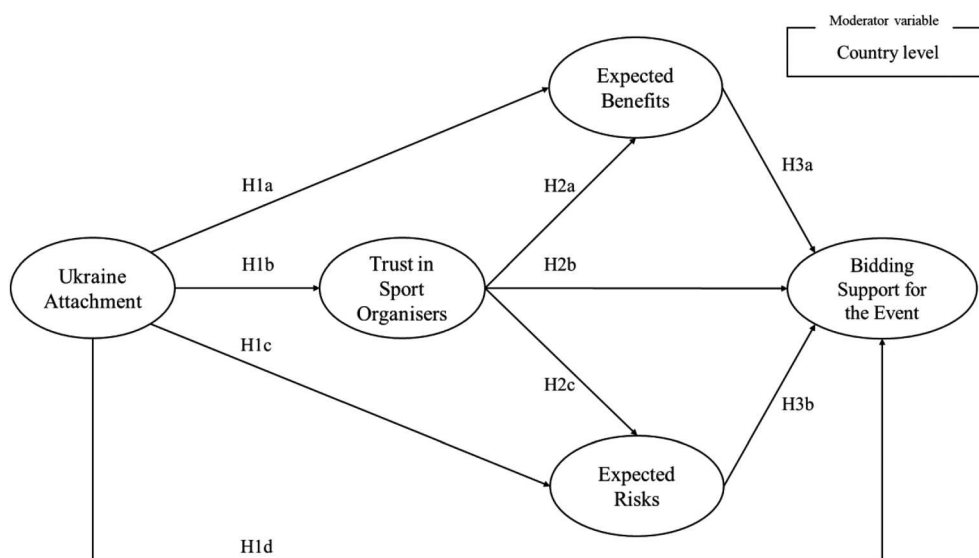


Figure 1. Hypothesised path model with hypotheses labelled.

symbols (Anderson, 1983). Even though they are not part of this community, individuals can manifest their values and emotional solidarity (Li & Wan, 2017), creating feelings of affection and support towards other country. Put differently, a resident does not need to live within the community's borders (i.e. within the country) to have an attitude (or perception) towards Ukraine. This is supported by the mass media that shares daily news about Ukraine as a nation and has an active presence in the lives of Europeans (Nisch, 2024). It is the interaction among the actors and states that defines 'community', not territorial or jurisdictional boundaries (Theodori, 2000). At this point, there is no political border; Ukraine is cross-border, which allows Portuguese and Spanish residents to have a perception regarding Ukraine.

By extending CAT to the hypothesised constructs, it is possible to argue that when individuals are sensitive to their surroundings and have a sense of connection associated with a specific nation, they are more likely to trust in the event bidders to make the right decisions, maximising the positive impacts and minimising the negative consequences (Gursoy et al., 2016). Consequently, those citizens tend to be more willing to participate in supportive actions to assist hosting a sport mega-event (SME) (Ouyang et al., 2017). Therefore, the following hypotheses are put forward:

H1a. Resident attachment to Ukraine positively affects their perception of the benefits of the 2030 FIFA Men's World Cup bid.

H1b. Resident attachment to Ukraine positively affects their trust in the organizers of the 2030 FIFA Men's World Cup bid.

H1c. Resident attachment to Ukraine negatively affects their perception of risks for the 2030 FIFA Men's World Cup bid.

H1d. Resident attachment to Ukraine positively affects their support for the 2030 FIFA World Men's Cup bid.

Organisational trust as an antecedent of the bidding support

Hosting an SME can lead to profound consequences, positive or negative, that directly influence the quality of life in local communities (Al-Emadi et al., 2017). Therefore, residents' willingness for such events depends on how much they support and trust the bidders (Gursoy et al., 2016). The sport bidder has emerged as a critical player in the bidding process of SME (Bason & Grix, 2018). Their political endeavours and actions can account for the shifts in resident attitudes stemming from hosting such events (Ouyang et al., 2017). Previous research has included trust in the organising committee to explain resident perceptions after the event, highlighting it as a predictor of the event support (e.g. Gursoy et al., 2017), as an antecedent of satisfaction with tourism development (Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2011), or a determinant of trust in the government (Nunkoo et al., 2018). Trust is a fundamental element in relationship building, and it refers to the perception of the credibility and benevolence of one's partner (Doney & Cannon, 1997). Based on SET, trust is a precondition for residents to participate in future exchanges when the outcomes seem uncertain (Nunkoo et al., 2018). In the case of the FIFA Men's World Cup bid, residents show their support long before it takes place, which potentially seems to be a risk as the promises may not be fulfilled

(Gursoy et al., 2017). For this reason, resident levels of trust in the decision-makers gain greater relevance as it may significantly impact their perceptions of benefits/costs and their willingness to support future events.

From a social exchange standpoint, there might be (dis)trust among stakeholders who are affected by the event hosting. If residents have trust in the main bidders involved in the process, they will be able to support the event hosting. Otherwise, they will be worried about the potential consequences for the host community (Nunkoo et al., 2018). High trust levels in the sport organisations may result in residents having the perception that the event benefits outweigh the costs and in turn lead them to support the event (Gursoy et al., 2017). In contrast, high distrust in these organisations may also generate a negative perception of the host community (Ribeiro & Almeida, 2021) and determine their lack of support. Moreover, the level of trust residents have in those sport federations is expected to play a critical role in shaping the nature and extent of their support. Based on this preceding discussion, the following hypotheses are put forward:

H2a. Residents' trust in sport organisers positively affects their perception of the benefits of the 2030 FIFA Men's World Cup bid.

H2b. Residents' trust in sport organisers negatively affects their perception of risks for the 2030 FIFA Men's World Cup bid.

H2c. Residents' trust in sport organisers positively affects their support for the 2030 FIFA Men's World Cup bid.

Expected impacts as an antecedent of the bidding support

Mega-events bidding drives structural changes associated with both positive and negative, short- and long-term impacts on host communities (Ribeiro et al., 2022). Academic literature has concluded that expected benefits and risks are two of the most critical antecedents of resident support/opposition to the event hosting (Gursoy et al., 2017, 2019; Li & Wan, 2017). Several studies have highlighted that benefits and risks are expected and perceived by the host community, but these studies have focused primarily on the implementation or wrap-up event phase, neglecting its bidding process (Bason & Grix, 2018). The debate around bidding should hinge on the potential impacts of the event, discussing the benefits of the bid itself for the host community before its submission (Bakhsh et al., 2017). Such perceived benefits could include increasing the international image and recognition (Ribeiro et al., 2021), community attachment and place attachment (Stylidis, 2016), enhancement of touristic and multicultural destinations (Potwarka & Banyai, 2016), or local infrastructure development (Johnston et al., 2021). In contrast, literature has also revealed that residents negatively assess the mega-event impacts (Gursoy et al., 2019; Ribeiro et al., 2022). For example, issues associated with over-tourism and pollution (Ribeiro et al., 2021), excessive investments, taxes, and inflation to cover costs (Gursoy & Kendall, 2006), or permanent displacement of locals (Müller et al., 2021) are critical determinants for their lack of support toward the event.

Resident support is a more behaviour-oriented intention of how residents welcome the event and are willing to become involved in it (Gursoy & Kendal, 2006), while the perceived impacts – whether positive or negative – refer to their attitudes on the holding of a mega-event in their community (Ouyang et al., 2017). Some longitudinal

studies have shown that resident support for SME is associated with the perception that the positive effects outweigh the negative ones (Getz, 1994), while others have noted that resident support gradually decreases over time when they feel a lack of positive social impact in their community (Ribeiro et al., 2022). SET does not focus on how individual responses evolve through time, but emphasises the multiple variables that at a certain moment in time can affect perceptions, i.e. actions of exchange. In the case of SMEs, this exchange depends on resident perceptions often formed within the societal and cultural context of the event (Fairley et al., 2016). In addition, the magnitude of the relationships between perceived impacts from and support towards the event is particular to each community (Nunkoo et al., 2018) and specific to each bidding process (Bason & Grix, 2018). Considering that the 2030 FIFA Men's World Cup bid was carried out without any public consent or referendum, exploring the event's impacts on residents early in the planning process is fundamental given their potential to influence society in the future (Preuss, 2019). Based on these assumptions, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H3a. Residents' perceptions of expected benefits positively affect their support for the 2030 FIFA Men's World Cup bid.

H3b. Residents' perceptions of expected risks negatively affect their support for the 2030 FIFA Men's World Cup bid.

Moderating effects and hypothesised model

This study proposes that the strength of the relationships between resident perceptions and their behavioural responses towards the multiple bids for the 2030 FIFA Men's World Cup will vary based on the residents' cultural background (Portugal and Spain), which can be explained by the theory of cultural dimensions (Hofstede, 1984). In Hofstede's (1984) perspective, culture is viewed as a collection of shared collective mental programs among group members. He has shown that culture is the differentiating factor that stems from interactions among countries and people. Following the Hofstede insights, Portugal and Spain have different levels of individualism and similar tendencies to avoid uncertainty (Insights, 2023). Within these cultures, a deep emotional yearning for rules exists, and the need for security strongly influences personal motivation (Gallego-Álvarez & Pucheta-Martínez, 2021). Portugal is labelled as a collectivist society that desires to have close and long-term relationships, while Spain is more individualistic than Portugal since locals frequently interact with people they do not know, influencing their levels of trust and lasting relationships. This evidence can influence the residents' attitudes toward sport events development (Potwarka & Banyai, 2016) since there is a great concern for changing, lasting, and undefining actions.

In the sport management literature, contextual settings and cultural safety have been shown to have different social effects (Rich & Breunig, 2020) that influence the relationships among the organising committee, residents, and the event. Public knowledge about the event is highly dependent on a given country's political and societal structure (Al-Emadi et al., 2017). In particular, the level of attachment may change due to cultural and contextual aspects (Ouyang et al., 2017) that further influence the host's behavioural responses. According to Byon et al. (2014) locals from different cultural origins have

distinctive attitudes and behaviours. Fairley et al. (2016) argued that to understand the social exchanges, it is critical to consider each country's societal and contextual factors. Likewise, Ouyang et al. (2017) highlighted the relevance of cross-cultural analysis in various geographical contexts to ascertain if the attachment level and event impacts may vary among different cultures and mega-events. Considering that culture is a useful 'construct' that can explain and predict human behaviour (Hofstede, 1984), we argue that cross-cultural differences in the bidding process can explain variation in resident support intention. Therefore, the moderating hypothesis is the following:

H4. Cross-cultural differences significantly moderate the relationship between community attachment, trust, and the perceived impacts on resident support.

Figure 1 shows the hypothesised model, the moderator variable, and the hypotheses.

Materials and methods

Sample and data collection

This is a quantitative, cross-sectional study. A non-representative sample of residents from Portugal (PT) and Spain (SP) was collected through a Google Forms online questionnaire between January 1 and 20 February, 2022. Therefore, data collection was performed before the possible corruption case against the president of the Ukrainian Football Association came to light and, ultimately, before FIFA decided to allocate the hosting countries for the FIFA 2030 Men's World Cup. All participants were recruited through adverts in 40 resident groups on Facebook (Portugal: 20 groups, Spain: 20 groups). Respondents were selected based on meeting three conditions: (a) residents who lived in one of the bid countries, (b) residents who were aware of the 2030 FIFA Men's World Cup bid, and (c) residents over the age of 18.

The survey's URL was posted on the Facebook public groups of Portuguese and Spanish communities (e.g. homeowners associations and resident groups). Permission was obtained from the content moderators before inviting residents to participate in the survey. The participants agreed to the informed consent and willingly participated in the survey following the ethical principles outlined in the Declaration of Helsinki (World Medical Association, 2013). The server logged their IP address to prevent further access and guarantee that each resident responded only once. A total of 1,103 surveys were collected and answers that were incomplete or did not meet the selection criteria (age, residence, and bid recognition) were removed (DeVellis, 2016). Following these data screening steps, a set of 969 surveys were deemed appropriate for analysis considering both SP ($n = 515$) and PT ($n = 454$) samples. The demographic characteristics of the participants and comparisons to the respective national populations are presented in Table 1.

Instrument

The research instrument was developed following the scales established in sport management literature and is available in Appendix A in Supplemental file. The level of trust in the sport organisation was measured using 4 items from the scale proposed by Gursoy et al. (2017) to capture resident perceptions towards the trust in the Portuguese and

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of participants.

	Portugal (<i>n</i> = 454)			Spain (<i>n</i> = 515)		
	Frequency	%	PP	Frequency	%	SP
Gender						
Male	303	66.7	47.8	322	62.5	49.1
Female	145	31.9	52.2	190	36.9	50.9
Non-binary	6	1.3	–	3	0.6	–
Age						
18–29	215	47.3	15.6	302	58.6	15.6
30–39	66	14.5	11.5	84	16.4	12.4
40–49	91	20.0	14.9	32	6.2	16.4
50 or more	82	18.1	44.1	97	18.8	38.3
Mean Age (years)	35.2	–		32.4	–	
Education levels						
Elementary school	25	5.5	49.7	10	1.9	22.1
High school	124	27.3	23.5	109	21.2	49.4
College Degree	305	67.2	19.8	396	76.9	11.3
Master's	(77)	(17.0)	–	(95)	(18.4)	–
Doctorate	(3)	(0.7)	–	(23)	(4.5)	–
Bidding support						
Yes	288	63.4		370	71.8	
No	141	31.1		76	14.8	
I don't know/Did not answer	25	5.5		69	13.4	
Passion for football						
Yes	413	91.0		364	29.3	
No	41	9.0		151	70.7	

Note: PP: Portuguese population from INE (2021a); SP: Spanish population from INE (2021b).

Spanish sport federations. Community attachment was assessed using a simplified version of the Ouyang et al. (2017) scale to gauge resident level of attachment to the Ukraine as a co-host nation. The benefits and costs were assessed as event impacts for the local community considering a 10-item scale proposed by Ouyang et al. (2017) and Gursøy et al. (2019). Lastly, support intentions were measured using 4 items adapted from Ribeiro and Almeida (2021) for capturing resident support for the event bid (see Appendix A in Supplemental file).

All measures were initially developed in English. To ensure accuracy and appropriateness for Portuguese and Spanish translations, five researchers (three Portuguese and two Spanish) were invited to review the translated versions. They rated all items in terms of clarity, relevance, and representativeness (DeVellis, 2016). After this process, nine items were rephrased, and the back-translation revealed changes in wording for 7 items between the initial and final survey versions. A total of 22 items comprised the final instrument to assess the psychometric factors of the study. The survey consisted of two parts (sociodemographic and constructs analysis). Participants were guided by a critical question to assess the items according to their agreement level. Two initial filter questions were included in the survey related to the respondents being (or not) residents of Portugal/Spain and if s(he) were aware of the event bid. All items were crafted in Portuguese and Spanish with positive statements mixed throughout their sections.

Data analysis

The confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and structural equation modelling (SEM) were conducted for data analysis and to test the relationships between variables using

AMOS 27.0. To address potential Common Method Bias (CMB), the Common Latent Factor (CLF) analysis and the difference of standardised regression weights of each variable were employed (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Assumption tests including normality, multicollinearity, and outliers were also conducted. CFI, TLI, GFI, chi-square ratio (χ^2), SRMR, and RMSEA were examined to check the goodness-of-fit of the model (Hair et al., 2009). Common convergent and discriminant validity and reliability criteria were also employed (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). The statistical significance, CFI, and TLI differences were used to evaluate the structural weights' significance to test the models' invariance (Cheung & Rensvold, 2002). A simultaneous multigroup path analysis was also carried out to determine if the path coefficients for the hypotheses differed across the models.

Results

Descriptive analysis and assumption tests

Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics for both groups. Following the assumption test for CFA and SEM, the kurtosis values (-1.07 to -0.07) and skewness (-0.84 to 0.92) showed no issues related to normality. Using the boxplot, we found no extreme scores in the dataset. Moreover, the correlation analysis (<0.81) and variance inflation factor (1.04 – 1.35) revealed no severe concerns with multicollinearity in the dataset (Hair et al., 2009). The descriptive statistics revealed that Portuguese participants on average provided higher scores exceeding the midpoint (i.e. above 3.5 values) for trust, event impacts, and bidding support ($M_{\text{trust}} = 3.80$; $M_{\text{benefits}} = 5.01$; $M_{\text{risks}} = 4.06$; $M_{\text{support}} = 5.00$), while Spanish respondents showed high score means only on their perceived benefits and support to the bid ($M_{\text{benefits}} = 5.15$; $M_{\text{support}} = 4.68$). Both groups showed low score means regarding the Ukraine Attachment factor, showing that both residents did not feel connected with the Ukraine community through this bidding. The means about 'Expected Benefits' and 'Bidding Support' were those with the highest mean scores, evidencing a positive perception by residents on impacts who expressed a high support level for the bid in both countries.

Measurement model

The results of the measurement model for Portugal [χ^2 (196) = 504.50 ($p < .001$), $\chi^2/df = 2.57$, $CFI = .96$, $GFI = .90$, $TLI = .95$, $SRMR = .05$, $RMSEA = .05$ ($CI = .053$ – $.065$)] and Spain [χ^2 (196) = 644.24 ($p < .001$), $\chi^2/df = 3.28$, $CFI = .95$, $GFI = .90$, $TLI = .95$, $SRMR = .05$, $RMSEA = .06$ ($CI = .061$ – $.072$)] revealed a good fit to the data. Each factor loading surpassed the .50 threshold (see Table 2), affirming that each item faithfully represented its associated factor (Hair et al., 2009). The composite reliability values supported internal consistency, which ranged from .84 to .97 in both groups (Hair et al., 2009). The AVE values demonstrated discriminant validity by surpassing their respective squared correlations and the suggested criterion for convergent validity (<0.50) (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). As for the CMB, the CLF value was 0.467 and its variance was 0.218, suggesting that there was no significant common method bias since the calculated variance (21.8%) is below the threshold of 50% (Eichhorn, 2014). While comparing the

Table 2. Descriptive statistics, correlations, and summary results of measurement models.

	M (SD)	Sk/Ku	λ	CR	α	AVE	UA	TO	EB	ER	BS
Portugal (<i>n</i> = 454)											
Ukraine Attachment	2.75 (.08)	.92/–.07	.645–.981	.93	.92	.78	–	–	–	–	–
Trust in Organisers	3.80 (.07)	.13/–.81	.796–.970	.95	.94	.82	.21* (.45)	–	–	–	–
Expected Benefits	5.01 (.06)	–.72/–.14	.562–.921	.91	.90	.66	.08* (.29)	.35* (.59)	–	–	–
Expected Risks	4.06 (.06)	.06/–.39	.596–.777	.84	.84	.51	.00* (.10)	.00* (.02)	.00* (.07)	–	–
Bidding Support	5.00 (.08)	–.81/–.20	.785–.943	.94	.93	.79	.05* (.22)	.26* (.51)	.28* (.53)	.08* (.29)	–
Spain (<i>n</i> = 515)											
Ukraine Attachment	3.12 (.09)	.65/–.92	.922–.980	.97	.96	.90	–	–	–	–	–
Trust in Organisers	3.26 (.07)	.60/–.61	.721–.957	.91	.90	.71	.02* (.15)	–	–	–	–
Expected Benefits	5.15 (.07)	–.84/–.40	.805–.912	.94	.93	.75	.12* (.35)	.14* (.37)	–	–	–
Expected Risks	3.55 (.06)	.25/–.74	.556–.797	.84	.84	.52	.04* (.22)	.00* (.09)	.11* (.33)	–	–
Bidding Support	4.68 (.08)	–.35/–.1.07	.856–.915	.94	.93	.80	.00* (.05)	.25* (.50)	.30* (.55)	.00* (.04)	–

Notes: **p* < .001. Parenthesis: Squared correlation; M/SD: Mean/Standard Deviation; Sk/Ku: Skewness/Kurtosis; λ : Factor Loadings; CR: Composite reliability; α : Cronbach alpha; AVE: Average variance extracted; UA: Ukraine Attachment; TO: Trust in Sport Organisers; EB: Expected Benefits; ER: Expected Risks; BS: Bidding Support.

Source: Authors own creation.

resultant standardised regression weights, it was also found that the difference in standardised regression weights of each variable is less than 0.200, and the VIF values for the factors consistently remained below 1.351. Thus, this study does not raise significant concerns regarding CMV.

Hypothesis testing

Each structural model fit index showed good fit to the data. In the SP model, the path coefficients from resident attachment perception on benefits perceived ($\beta_{1a} = .31$, $p < .001$), organisational trust ($\beta_{1b} = .16$, $p < .001$), and expected risks ($\beta_{1c} = .21$, $p < .05$) were statistically significant, providing support for H1a, H1b, and H1c. In contrast, the Ukraine attachment was non-significant in predicting the associated benefits of the event ($p > .05$) for Portuguese residents. The relationships between trust in sport organisations and event impacts were significant for associated benefits (PT: $\beta_{2a} = .59$, $p < .001$; SP: $\beta_{2a} = .33$, $p < .001$) but non-significant for risks perceived ($p > .05$), confirming H2a and rejecting H2b in both models. The path coefficients of resident organisational trust and expected benefits to their event support were positive and significant in both countries (PT: $\beta_{3a} = .39$, $\beta_{3b} = .27$, $p < .001$; SP: $\beta_{3a} = .52$, $\beta_{3b} = .34$, $p < .001$), providing support for H3a and H3b. The same is valid for the negative path coefficients between risks perceived and the support intentions of Portuguese ($\beta_{3c} = -.33$; $p < .001$) and Spanish ($\beta_{3c} = -.16$; $p < .001$) residents, thus supporting H3c in both models. Interestingly, the Ukraine attachment showed a significant negative effect on bidding support for Spanish residents ($\beta_{3d} = -.14$; $p < .001$) and a non-significant effect in predicting support intentions ($p > .05$) for Portuguese residents. Hence, H3d was not supported in either country. The structural model proposed explained 45% of the variance of support intentions regarding the 2030 FIFA Men's World Cup bid in Portugal (R^2

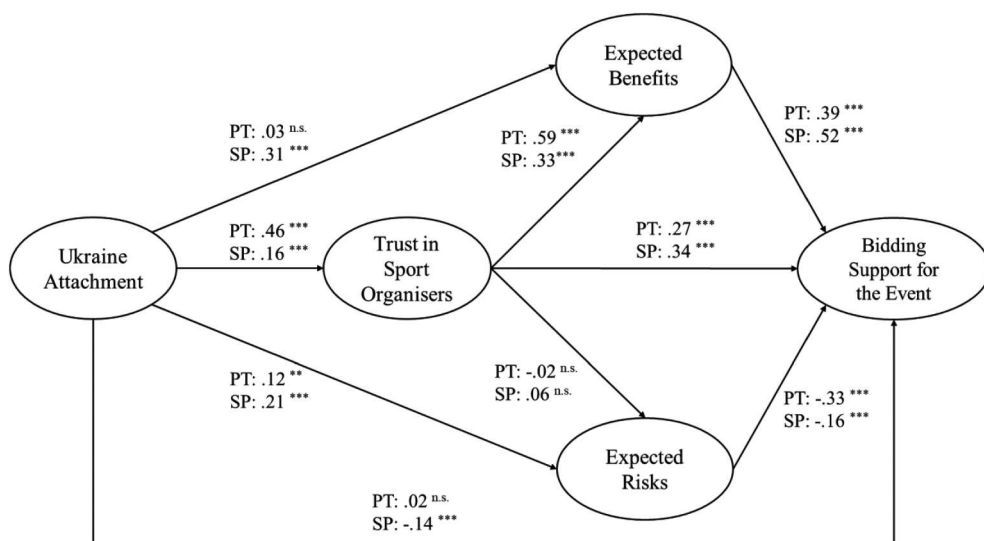


Figure 2. Standardised estimates of the structural models.

Note: PT: Portugal; SP: Spain; ** $p < .05$; *** $p < .001$; n.s.: Not Significant. Source: Authors own creation.

= .45) and 48% of the variance of Spanish resident's support intentions ($R^2 = .48$). Figure 2 shows the relationships between the path coefficients for both countries.

The bootstrapping method and bias-corrected (BC) 95% confidence intervals were applied to estimate the paths for indirect effects in the model. Both the Ukraine attachment ($rPT = .19$, $p < .05$, 95% CI = [0.17–0.42]; $rSP = .18$, $p < .05$, 95% CI = [0.13–0.33]) and the trust in organisers ($rPT = .29$, $p < .05$, 95% CI = [0.13–0.27]; $rSP = .20$, $p < .05$, 95% CI = [0.12–0.23]) showed a positive indirect effect on resident support intention for both countries (see Table 3). While the direct effect of Ukraine attachment perceptions on Portuguese residents' bid support was not statistically significant, the indirect influence was found to be significant and favourable. It appears that the total effect of Ukraine attachment on Portuguese resident support was suppressed to some extent by the presence of the mediating variables. As for Spanish residents, the expected benefits dimension seems partially mediated by the relationship between attachment perception and resident support with 29% of the total effect. Table 3 depicts the direct and indirect effects.

Cross-cultural comparisons

Metric invariance testing was conducted on CFA, and the results indicated a statistical significance ($\Delta\chi^2 = 146.32$) with 17 degrees of freedom (df) at $p = 0.01$, suggesting that invariance between models was not warranted. Nevertheless, the literature shows that the magnitude of factor loadings might differ between groups, suggesting that partial measurement invariance can be assessed when some measures are invariant across the groups and do not heavily influence such comparisons (Vanderberg & Lance, 2000). Therefore, we sought to determine if partial invariance or a lack of factor equivalency may threaten invariance (Byrne et al., 1989). First, both the unconstrained model [χ^2 (394) = 1181.33 ($p < .001$), $\chi^2/df = 2.99$, CFI = .96, GFI = .90, TLI = .95, SRMR = .05; RMSEA = .04] as the constraining measurement weights model [χ^2 (411) = 1327.65 ($p < .001$), $\chi^2/df = 3.23$, CFI = .95, GFI = .89, TLI = .94, SRMR = .05, RMSEA = .04] showed a good fit to the data. Second, neither the CFI comparison nor the RMSEA or SRMR

Table 3. Results of SEM analysis and indirect effects.

Hypothesis/Path	Portugal			Spain		
	Supported?	β	t-Value	Supported?	β	t-Value
<i>Direct effects</i>						
H1a UA → EB	No	.027 ^{n.s.}	.579	Yes	.307***	7.34
H1b UA → TO	Yes	.456***	9.72	Yes	.156***	3.40
H1c UA → ER	Yes	.115**	1.97	Yes	.214***	4.38
H2a TO → EB	Yes	.586***	11.21	Yes	.327***	7.35
H2b TO → ER	No	-.022 ^{n.s.}	-.373	No	.064 ^{n.s.}	1.30
H3a EB → BS	Yes	.387***	7.62	Yes	.521***	11.88
H3b TO → BS	Yes	.268***	5.01	Yes	.339***	8.32
H3c ER → BS	Yes	-.331***	-7.38	Yes	-.164***	-4.10
H3d UA → BS	No	.022 ^{n.s.}	.506	No	-.144***	-3.82
	<i>r</i>	[95% CI]	<i>p</i> -value	<i>r</i>	[95% CI]	<i>p</i> -value
<i>Indirect effects</i>						
TO → BS	.289**	[0.13–0.27]	.009	.202**	[0.12–0.23]	.007
UA → BS	.188**	[0.17–0.42]	.006	.177**	[0.13–0.33]	.009

Notes: β : direct effect; *** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.05$; n.s.: Not Significant; 95% CI: 95% Bias-corrected confidence intervals.

Source: Authors own creation.

comparisons across the models were more than .02 ($\Delta CFI = .006$; $\Delta RMSEA = .003$; $\Delta SRMR = .001$) (Cheung & Rensvold, 2002). Third, the TLI difference was also lower than .05 ($\Delta TFI = .006$), indicating its partial measurement invariance (Vanderberg & Lance, 2000). Fourth, all items in each construct showed significant factor loading ($p < 0.01$). Following these findings, we assume partial measurement invariance between models.

A multigroup comparison was conducted to evaluate the two models and determine if the path coefficients differed between Spain and Portugal. The path analysis revealed significant differences in the effects of the Ukraine attachment on expected benefits and trust in the SME organisers. Ukraine attachment had a significant and positive effect on perceived benefits in Spain, but this effect is non-existent for Portugal. Also, comparing the country samples revealed statistically significant differences in the effects of perceived risks and Ukraine attachment on support intentions towards the bid. Specifically, the risks associated to the bid were significantly more relevant for Portuguese residents than for Spanish. Furthermore, the role of attachment negatively influenced the support intentions of Spanish residents, as indicated by Table 4.

Discussion

This study examined how social factors/antecedents can influence resident support of the FIFA Men's World Cup bid in different cross-cultural settings as part of a joint bid by two countries with very close cultural ties (Spain and Portugal) as well as a country geographically situated in Europe (Ukraine) that has distinct cultural differences to the Iberian countries, not to mention experiencing a war. The study evidences that the presence of Ukraine influenced the residents' trust level and their impact perception in different ways. It then demonstrated how the level of trust, benefits, and risks perceived were salient for garnering resident support for the bid. Third, it notes that residents from different cultural backgrounds had a distinct understanding of the Ukraine attachment to the FIFA Men's World Cup bid process. Our findings have practical implications for governments, sport federations, and bidding providers, albeit the results obtained do not support all the stated assumptions.

Table 4. Path and model comparison results across each country.

Hypothesis/Path	Standardised regression weights		Z-tests (critical ratios)	Multigroup analysis CMIN/p
	Portugal	Spain		
H1a UA → EB	.025 ^{n.s.}	.307***	4.61 ^a	21.13/.000
H1b UA → TO	.459***	.156***	−5.04 ^a	25.49/.000
H1c UA → ER	.121**	.214***	1.32 ^b	1.74/.187
H2a TO → EB	.587***	.327***	−3.01 ^a	9.04/.003
H2b TO → ER	−.025 ^{n.s.}	.064 ^{n.s.}	1.21 ^b	1.46/.226
H3a EB → BS	.387***	.521***	1.33 ^b	1.77/.183
H3b TO → BS	.268***	.339***	1.16 ^b	1.35/.245
H3c ER → BS	−.331***	−.164***	3.29 ^a	11.13/.001
H3d UA → BS	.021 ^{n.s.}	−.144***	−2.79 ^a	7.77/.005

Notes: ** $p < .05$; *** $p < .001$; n.s.: Not Significant; ^aModeration effect was supported; ^bModeration effect was not supported.

Source: Authors own creation.

Theoretical implications

The structural equation analysis demonstrated that the Ukraine attachment significantly influenced Spanish residents' perceived benefits (see [Figure 2](#) and [Table 4](#)). These results suggest that its relative importance on the level of trust in sport federations may differ between the bid countries. For Spanish residents, the presence of Ukraine in the bidding process was a critical determinant of expected benefits towards hosting a SME, while for the Portuguese it played an important role in influencing their level of trust in the event organisers. The Portuguese were concerned with the effects that the Ukraine attachment can have on their organisational trust, whereas for the Spanish, the positive effects explained their attachment. Broadening the CAT, resident attachment to the Ukraine can manifest itself in social bonds through community feeling and friendship between residents and such country (Hummon, 1992). Based on Ouyang et al.'s (2017) arguments, our study shows that residents can form an affective attachment to another country with this social and affective bond playing an important role in influencing their responses to an event bid. Previous studies investigating the construct of attachment in the event policy field have predominantly focused on the host community, place, and event attachment without investigating the individuals' attachments to other co-host nations or communities (e.g. Gursoy et al., 2017; Ouyang et al., 2017; Styliadis, 2016). By conceptualising and operationalising the attachment construct to Ukraine based on CAT premises, this study extends the knowledge on resident attachment to a specific community outside their cultural bond.

Contradictions persist in the relationship between community attachment and benefits/risks perception in SME development. Such a relationship seems highly contextual and significant in some countries and cultures (e.g. Gursoy et al., 2017) but insignificant in others (e.g. Lee, 2013). Our findings clearly emphasise the relevance of country as a unit in the context of community attachment, demonstrating how the presence of Ukraine is likely to influence the resident risk perception in the event support. This can be explained by the differences about levels of attachment studied and the attitudes of the host residents (Lee, 2013). Both the Portuguese and Spanish perceived that the connection to Ukraine in this bidding process could bring risks to the event hosting in their community. This interesting finding may justify their future fears of external threats from conflict or repression (Gehring, 2022) as well as the escalating costs associated with Ukraine joining the bidding process. In this light, our study contributes to the community attachment literature, informing how and to what extent the level of attachment to Ukraine influences the Iberian resident's attitudes within this co-hosted bidding context. Furthermore, these findings underscore the significance of country attachment as a multifaceted variable from which the event context should be understood.

Findings from this study also revealed that the level of trust showed a significant positive effect on benefits perceived in both countries, but a non-significant effect on expected risks associated with the event bid. This is consistent with the idea that the higher a resident's trust level is in the national sport federation, the greater their perception of social benefits, and consequently their support for the event bid. At this point, the bid process for the 2030 FIFA Men's World Cup can be viewed as beneficial to host residents since they view the bid as a way of strengthening relationships and promoting an international image of their community (Chalip & Heere, 2013), thus supporting the social exchanges

in trade-offs between risks and benefits (Qi et al., 2021). SET suggests that social behaviours are influenced by exchange activities that have the potential to bring benefits to the local communities (Ap, 1992). The beneficial effect of event bids on residents largely depends on their level of trust (Gursoy et al., 2017) and the appropriateness of existing and future impacts on their community (Qi et al., 2021). The social value of the FIFA Men's World Cup for Iberian residents is fully recognised as they perceived that this bid could increase the trust in organisers, maximising benefits and contributing to a positive social exchange. Thus, one may argue that when event bidding is embedded in benefits and organisational trust, social exchanges may occur, resulting in higher event support.

However, the attachment to Ukraine is highlighted as a negative and/or null predictor of the residents' behavioural intentions in that bidding process. For Portuguese residents, the attachment to Ukraine did not influence their support intentions (non-existent effect), while for the Spanish, the presence of the Ukrainian community was seen as a negative influence in this process (negative effect). Both residents reported a low level of attachment ($M_{\text{Portuguese}} = 2.75$; $M_{\text{Spanish}} = 3.12$), which suggests that the Iberian resident does not have a strong sense of connection/support to Ukraine stemming from this bidding process. The residents' cultural background may explain this finding. Iberian countries feel threatened by ambiguity, which is characterised by 'avoiding uncertainty' (Hofstede, 1984). For them, strict rules, rituals, and security levels are prioritised, showing little tolerance for unconventional behaviour and ideas (Insights, 2023). According to Hofstede's studies (1984), Portugal and Spain are cultures more likely to be risk-averse and prefer to avoid situations with uncertain outcomes as is the case of multiple bid arrangements for SMEs. This means that there is a cultural pattern in the Iberian community and that the level of attachment to others is not assumed a priori by residents to support events in their community. Following Hofstede's perspective (1984), it seems logical to assert that the cultural context plays a crucial role in determining resident willingness to support the event bidding process, aligning with the cultural dimensions theory.

The organisational trust and benefits perceived were mediator variables that led to positive indirect effects between the Ukraine community attachment and support intentions of residents. This additional empirical evidence should be highlighted given its full and partial mediating role for the Portuguese and Spanish cases, respectively. Our results showed that the direct effect of attachment on Portuguese support was non-significant despite its positive and significant indirect effect. This insignificant direct effect may be due to the inclusion of organisational trust in the model proposed, which provides a broader picture of how resident support is shaped. From Spain's standpoint, our study confirmed the assumption that attachment to Ukraine may indirectly promote resident support intention. Although some studies have established a direct positive relationship between levels of attachment and resident support (see, Lee, 2013), our results indicate that this relationship may change once an external country is considered. By adopting the CAT, this article extends its application into the event and management research domain, showing that the formation mechanism of resident support for multiple bid arrangements is essentially based on the process of social exchange. For Portuguese and Spanish residents, the social exchanges embedded in a trust and reciprocity relationship are more important than their attachment levels to other countries.

Managerial implications

From a practical perspective, our findings can help the local governments, sport federations, and event providers to rethink the bidding process within their local communities. Through media narratives such as targeted news, public debates, social campaigns, or discussion sessions with local communities, event bidders can spread positive impacts and attract social support to the bid. This is particularly relevant since the residents' perception of the risks of such a bid is high. In this sense, event organisers must create conditions to reduce this perception through structured processes of social awareness and public information about the potential risks and benefits of this event bid.

Although Ukraine was withdrawn from the bid, involving its community in the bidding process was essential for ensuring legitimacy. Local governments and authorities should have promoted formal methods through public and participative referenda before the bidding process. This step would empower the locals and strengthen the bid's foundation, aligning it with principles of democratic decision-making and inclusivity. Furthermore, the Portuguese and Spanish federations should encourage developing discussions and seeking a consensus through public votes, thus contributing to generating national support, which is a pivotal factor in the host-city selection process.

This type of multiple host-city bid may generate more resident support if a higher level of trust and security is perceived in co-hosting the event. Amidst the global insecurity context, individuals are growing more apprehensive about economic and security issues surrounding such bids that attract large crowds (Rookwood, 2019). Hence, a multiple bidding arrangement can provide an opportunity to address such issues, avoiding huge costs for each country by allowing different stakeholders to be involved in the accountability process for such SMEs.

Conclusions, limitations, and further research

This study has sought to provide empirical evidence related to structural relationships between Ukraine attachment, organisational trust, expected impacts, and bid support intentions towards distinct countries in the bidding process for a mega event such as the 2030 FIFA Men's World Cup, which at the time the sample was collected involved a joint bid by Spain, Portugal, and Ukraine. The value of community attachment was a distinct element between the countries, and it played an essential role in supporting future events for multiple bid arrangements. Even though we know who the next event hosts are, Ukraine was overlooked in this bid. This fact seems to go unnoticed because these countries won the bidding process, placing European solidarity in the background. While winning the bidding process is important, it is also important to strengthen resident trust, maximise social benefits, and reduce potential risks. In this article, we provide support for the social perspective that mutually beneficial exchanges can drive support formation, which should require a greater level of social commitment and responsibility on the part of national federations and bidders. A range of questions remain regarding the social fairness, inclusion, and sustainability of the bid process with Ukraine, as well as whether such an arrangement would reinforce the level of attachment with other countries. What is clear, however, is that each community views support for communities outside its borders differently. Moreover, cultural backgrounds influence resident support behaviours in a significant way.

Despite the study's contributions to co-hosting bids of sporting events, some limitations should be acknowledged. The first concerns the sampling in two countries. Our findings might be limited to the two-dimensional approach of Spain and Portugal. This study did not consider Ukraine's residents, and late advances in the bidding process show that Morocco joined Portugal and Spain to strengthen its bid (Dotson & Sterling, 2023). Cultural backgrounds in each community may generate different attitudes and behaviours by the locals (Ouyang et al., 2017). As such, it is necessary to recreate the relationships between constructs considering different contextual factors as they cannot be universally generalised to each community.

Second, our sample is predominantly male and young people with a high level of education and a strong tendency to support this bid. While Facebook has been a time- and cost-efficient recruitment method, the content of advertisements and the research topic may have influenced recruitment rates (Choi et al., 2017), leading to a skewed sample. Despite Facebook being a gender-balanced social network, women are not committed to or recognise the relevance of this theme, and therefore a gender bias may occur. Subsequent studies should seek to gather a larger and more diverse sample to validate the conclusions of the current study and estimate how well our results can be replicated.

Third, although the pathways proposed are consistent with previous research (e.g. Gursoy et al., 2017, 2019), we cannot infer causality or temporal sequence conclusions. Our study assumed a cross-sectional design in which all measures were assessed over the same period. Since causal estimates are time-specific, future experimental and longitudinal research should be employed to demonstrate causality. For instance, following FIFA's announcement that Spain, Portugal, and Morocco would jointly host the 2030 FIFA Men's World Cup, a scandal erupted due to the behaviour of Luis Rubiales, president of the Spanish Football Federation, during the 2023 FIFA Women's World Cup final (García, 2024). This scandal, coupled with indications of potential corruption, is expected to impact Spanish resident perceptions regarding the organisation of the 2030 FIFA Men's World Cup, particularly regarding their trust in the Spanish Football Federation. Therefore, it would be valuable to replicate this study at multiple time points to further explore these dynamics.

Fourth, our hypothetical model might be viewed as exploratory in some paths such as when exploring the effects of the Ukraine attachment on event support in different countries. In fact, several external factors (i.e. economic proximity and/or political factors) can influence support perceptions for the bid. Such concerns about fear of reprisals due to solidarity with Ukraine or the widespread economic crisis in Europe could influence participant responses. In this regard, it will be particularly valuable to conduct studies that explore these factors and the resident perceptions of the co-hosting countries given the exceptional nature of organising a SME in six countries across three different continents (Europe, Africa, and South America).

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