Building Resilience and Managing Crises and Disasters in Sport Tourism

The focus of this commentary is to stimulate new discussions and debates amongst both established and emerging scholars with regards to the current limited body of knowledge on building resilience and managing crises and disasters within sport tourism. I am primarily advocating the development of a future research agenda for event sport tourism, and indicating that this is perhaps even more pressing given some of the more high-profile terror attacks have occurred within sport tourism environments or spaces. The highly publicised event sport tourism incidents at the Boston Marathon bombing in April 2013 and the November 2015 Stade de France attack in Paris are just two such examples. In doing so, there is also recognition that an exploration across the full spectrum of sport tourism activity (Gibson, 1998; Weed and Bull, 2009, Higham and Hinch, 2018) is perhaps also required. The combination of these relatively recent terrorist incidents and the increased (public) awareness of vulnerability and the need for greater resilience, merged with the growing global profile of major sports events and the ongoing global threats to sport tourism events and spaces more generally, now makes mitigation and prevention not just socially and economically acceptable, but also an imperative for both national and global governments, and more specifically for sport and tourism policy makers.

Following Gibson's (1998) classification of sport tourism as including active, event and nostalgia sport tourism activity, more recently Higham and Hinch (2018) have proposed a fourfold classification of sport tourism as (i) spectator events; (ii) participation events; (iii) active engagement in recreation sports; and (iv) sports heritage and nostalgia. As such, for the purpose of my commentary, the first two event focused elements of their schema, spectator

events and participation events, will serve as a framework for exploring resilience in sport tourism.

Fundamentally sport tourism events attract large congregations of people, in terms of staffing, stewarding, fans or more general public crowds (Tarlow, 2017). Given they are essentially locations of human activity then 'man-made' threats such as crowd incidents (like riots, demonstrations, crowd crushes and stampedes) as well as terrorist incidents (such as bombings, shootings, hostage taking and hijacking) are examples of anthropogenic hazards that have direct bearing on the resilience of sport tourism events. Equally there is likelihood of natural (geophysical) hazards that could potentially impact on major sport tourism events or tournaments that could emanate from geological, meteorological, oceanographic, hydrological or biological causes. As such, I am suggesting that these areas feature as potential event sport tourism hazards requiring further research exploration. The cancellation of the 2012 New York City Marathon in the aftermath of 'Hurricane Sandy' was one high profile example of a major sport tourism incident linked to a meteorological hazard. In early 2018 it was reported that Japanese authorities were making plans to use boats to evacuate Olympic tourists from Tokyo in the event of an earthquake during the 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games, amid predictions that 200,000 houses could potentially collapse if a significant earthquake were to directly hit the host city (Lloyd Parry, 2018). These natural threats, and others remain prevalent in numerous sport tourism destinations around the globe.

As an initial starting point, I am arguing that the concept of resilience is far broader than the narrower and more focused assessments of the standardised risk management practices that have been explored in sport tourism studies (Taylor and Toohey, 2007). In relation to operational risk and safety management that have been previously discussed in the

domain of sports event studies, risk management involves the consideration of the likelihood of a threat endangering an asset, function or individual and that broad categorisation can range from counter-terrorism intelligence or command, control and communication through to event security management plans and security (Taylor and Toohey, 2015). However, resilience theory has now significantly evolved to recognise uncertainties in predicting the complex and dynamic nature of how individuals, organisations and society respond to change (Gallopin, 2006). As such, resilience is both a multifaceted and multidimensional concept (Ponomarov and Holcomb 2009), relating to a variety of topics ranging from physical material properties to supply chain management, and has resulted in a diverse literature base.

The origins of the word *resilience* can be traced back to the Latin word *resilio*, literally translated meaning *to jump back* (Klein, Nicholls, and Thomalla, 2003). Thus, resilience generally refers to the capability of a system to recover after undergoing significant disturbance. According to Chandler and Coaffee (2017, p. 4) resilience is often defined 'as a capacity to prepare for, to respond to, or to bounce back from problems or perturbations and disturbances'. This capacity may affect sport tourism communities, organizations, events and even individuals. It is beyond the scope of my commentary but the resilience concept also overlaps to a large degree with the concepts of vulnerability and adaptive capacity (Gallopin, 2006).

Whilst studies are evident in the tourism domain (See Laws and Prideaux, 2006; Mair, Ritchie and Walters, 2014; Ritchie, 2009); an initial review of literature on crisis and disaster management in both sport tourism and broader studies on both major and mega sports events indicates a significant paucity of studies. Additionally, in the broader field of sport management studies, crisis and emergency dimensions are not mentioned with any depth or

with reference to the existing body of knowledge that emanates from the crisis and disaster management literature (see Hall, 2016). Despite the identified body of tourism specific work, in the domain of sport tourism studies, and most notably across both spectator and participation events (Higham and Hinch, 2018), the field is clearly at an early and descriptive stage with considerable work to be undertaken on shaping both research agendas and future directions. Moving forward, in the context of sport tourism it is now important to identify gaps in knowledge and contribute to understanding future research directions, most notably with respect to developing resilience. In doing so my commentary also highlights implications that could potentially be equally applicable for all aspects of Higham and Hinch's recently proposed fourfold classification that incorporates both active engagement in recreation sports, and sports heritage and nostalgia tourism.

Despite the various definitions and conceptualisations of both sport tourism and sports events more specifically, there is little if any mention of building resilience in any of the current literature. For example, many of the current benchmarks that define major and mega sports events, irrespective of scale, seniority and/or status, are largely based around perceptions of importance, internationalisation, complexity and size (Getz, 2008; Gratton and Taylor, 2000; Hiller, 2000; Horne, 2007; Muller, 2015; Roche, 2000; Shipway and Fyall, 2012). Whilst previous studies surrounding sport and tourism have adopted a range of these criteria in attempts to define either spectator or participation events (Higham and Hinch, 2018), importantly those and other discussions have not incorporated any critical dialogue on the impact of crises and disasters. A closer examination of the more recent sport tourism literature indicates that Higham and Hinch (2018) now conceptualise sport as a tourist attraction, choosing to build on other previous work in this area (Gibson, 2006; Higham and Hinch, 2010; Weed and Bull, 2009) by using tourist attraction theory as a framework for

better insights on the unique aspects of sport tourism. However, despite this recent insightful perspective and addition to the field of study, limitations still remain.

Firstly, I am suggesting that at present, crises and disaster management considerations are largely ignored and significantly underestimated, despite those current sport tourism classifications having major implications and connotations in terms of understanding resilience. Secondly I would also argue that relevant crises and disaster management approaches from that body of knowledge can provide significant added value to the broader literature on sport tourism and more specifically with regards to understanding some of the complexities within event sport tourism dimensions. In doing so, I am advocating the development of a series of new studies that would help provide a contribution towards understanding why and how sport tourism practitioners can better develop resilience in the future, and ultimately become more robust at handling the potential life threatening (individual impact) and reputational damaging (destination level impact), onset of crises and disasters.

There are several nuances within the complexity of sport tourism activity that merit greater exploration, and within the scope of this short commentary I will now highlight three. Firstly, from a resilience perspective, the added dimension of changing host locations for numerous major sport tourism events, often due to the increasingly competitive biddings agenda of many host cities and nations, represents a significant challenge that has major implications for the way we think about the resilience of such events in terms of crisis and disaster management. For example, variations in sites of mega sports events, such as the Olympic and Paralympic Games or the FIFA Football World Cup tournaments also leads to

much greater complexity in gauging risk to crisis and disasters that are also differentiated across the world.

Secondly, and partially aligned to this previous observation, in terms of vulnerability to natural disasters, differing regions and host countries will be subject to variances in types, forms and frequency of natural hazards, such as earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, cyclones and/or tsunamis (see Miles, Gordon and Bang, 2017). Similarly, as the Rio 2016 Olympic and Paralympic Games highlighted with the zika virus, there are differing vulnerabilities to health hazards and communicable diseases (see Walters, Shipway, Miles and Aldrigui, 2017). Likewise, in the developing world, man-made threats and risks such as crime rates, kidnapping, insurgencies, terrorism or conflict may be more notable than in the more 'traditional' host nations. The sport tourism resilience challenges of providing integrated planning and procedures to handle such natural hazards and man-made threats while sport tourism events are taking place are considerable, and place new pressures on the capacities of host nations and societies. My main observation here is that the numerous initiatives that are currently supporting the globalisation of the sport tourism industry increasingly involve host cities and nations with little or no prior experience gaining the right and contracts to host major sport tourism events. As such, this will inevitably lead to differing degrees of resilience for every individual international event, tournament, championship or major sporting festival where no two sport tourism events will be the same, not just in space but over time.

Thirdly, it has also been previously identified that spectator perspectives on safety and security also feature in the attitudes of spectators on where to travel and when to attend (George and Swart, 2015; Taylor and Toohey, 2007; Qi, Gibson and Zhang, 2009; Walters et al, 2017). I would suggest that this relatively limited body of work would certainly merit a

more comprehensive investigation in future years. To further highlight this area as one that merits closer academic scrutiny, a risk management report on security risks ahead of the 2018 FIFA World Cup tournament, hosted in Russia, highlighted several concerns for travelling sport tourists surrounding *perceptions* of crime, corruption, discrimination (notably homophobia), terrorism, civil unrest and hooliganism (Van Gelderen and Barclay, 2018).

As such, and bearing in mind the three brief areas highlighted above, I am proposing that it may be useful for future studies on sport tourism to factor greater attention to, and more sophisticated appreciations of, resilience when deciding which sports events or tournaments are perceived as 'successful' or 'effective' by a wide range of stakeholders including international federations, governments, and global media commentators. Understanding resilience will give them, and sport tourism scholars, further tools to support wider work on any further revised classifications on sport tourism.

I would also suggest that the development of a future research agenda for managing crises and disasters in sport tourism also has practical implications for decision-makers and sports event and venue managers in developing suitable resilience strategies in order to be prepared for uncertain events. By harnessing the potential for closer synergies between sport tourism and crisis and disaster management fields, there are notable possibilities to substantially move forward our understanding of the complexities of sport tourism (Higham and Hinch, 2018), both in terms of theory and practice. Moving forward and to simplify the underlying rationale for my commentary, there is a need for additional work that scopes the resilience landscape in terms of future research agendas that may help us to further understand how sport tourism studies could be informed by disaster management and resilience studies.

The previously identified research on disaster management and risk management within a tourism context, has adopted a more 'top down' tradition, with the focus on organisations, planning and cooperation, and addressing issues relating to mitigation, preparation, responding and recovery (see Mair, Ritchie and Walters, 2014; Ritchie, 2009). In contrast, one of the main aims of my commentary is to critique sport tourism through the lens of resilience, and as such, I am proposing that this is achievable with future studies that adopt a more 'bottom up' ethos, with the focus on (i) sport tourism organisations/events; (ii) the societal/community aspects of sport tourism, and (iii), closer scrutiny of the individual sport tourist.

Taking a broader holistic overview, additional potential future research themes should also include studies linked to social, community and individual sport tourism resilience perspectives; an extension of current work on crowd management and control at major sports events and the development of an expanded body of knowledge on fandom and resilience studies; more extensive explorations on crisis communication, culpability and litigation in sport tourism organisations; and additional studies on the risk perceptions of sport tourists that continues to build on the previous work of Qi, Gibson and Zhang (2009), George and Swart (2015), and Walters et al., (2017). Not only is there a pressing interdisciplinary research agenda waiting to be further developed, but there are also notable practical implications to enable sport tourism events to more effectively handle crisis and disasters in the future. However, to move this research agenda forward and to add rigor, relevance, significance and originality to what is proposed in my commentary, there is now a clear need to move beyond such 'ivory tower' theorising, and for both established and early career researchers of sport tourism to now empirically engage with this topic 'in the field'.

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