



## Investigation of Vital Success Factors of Athletic Event Management: A Case Study of Greece

### Authors' contribution:

- A) conception and design of the study
- B) acquisition of data
- C) analysis and interpretation of data
- D) manuscript preparation
- E) obtaining funding

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### Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate the vital success factors of athletic event management in a case study of Greece. The study also examined the effect of events planning on the success of athletic events management to establish the influence of marketing and promotion techniques on the success of athletic events management and examine the effect of sponsorship packages on the success of athletic events management. Through a quantitative research approach, data was collected using a questionnaire with 270 organizers and other agents to gain insights into the critical elements that contribute to successful athletic events. The results demonstrate a strong positive relationship between event planning and the success of athletic events, emphasizing the significance of thorough planning, coordination, and budgeting. Effective marketing and promotion strategies are shown to enhance event visibility and audience engagement, highlighting the importance of well-executed promotional activities. Sponsorship packages were found to significantly contribute to the financial stability of event management and attract top-tier athletes, suggesting their pivotal role in the success of athletic events. Furthermore, the outcomes of a successful athletic event, including positive economic impact, profitability, environmental sustainability, increased employment opportunities, and a supportive future event base, were identified. These findings provide valuable insights for event planners, sponsors, and stakeholders, ultimately contributing to the enhancement of athletic event management in Greece and beyond.

**Keywords:** Events planning, marketing and promotion techniques, sponsorship packages, athletic event management

### Introduction

Sporting activities play a vital role on international, continental, and national levels and act as the driving force for socio-economic, cultural, and community transformations. In the global context, mega-events such as the Olympics and FIFA World Cup are unique platforms for promoting national brands and encouraging international cooperation. Mega-events yield extensive economic re-

turns through the global attention they attract: the host countries benefit from this visibility through increased tourist arrivals, foreign direct investments, and presenting cultural identity (Congdon-Hohman & Matheson, 2020). However, the management of such events is more challenging, with the need to balance stakeholder interests, environmental issues, and diversifying global sports market demands (Abeza et al., 2015; Daddi et al., 2022). Regionally, the location of Europe makes it a hub

for sports events where various occasions are held to promote urban development and socio-economic transformation. Hosting major sports events is often regarded as a strategic objective in city marketing and branding initiatives for European destinations (Lepschy et al., 2018; Cserhádi & Polák-Weldon, 2013). In this regard, Greece occupies a very special place because of the civilization that started in this region and for its position in the modern world. As the birthplace of the Olympic Games, Greece is no stranger to large sporting events, including the 2004 Olympic Games in Athens. However, Greece has certain disadvantages when it comes to the management of sports events and its ability to use new opportunities in this sphere (Kalogiannidis et al., 2023). At a local level, Greek sporting events transcend both global and regional frameworks and act as unifying and developmental forces for societies, as well as stimuli for economic growth. Activities like local marathons and other regional competitions help in keeping the sporting culture of Greece intact while promoting the related tourism and creating employment opportunities. However, many of these events face the problems of insufficient funding, poor promotional campaigns, and low community involvement, which hamper their ability to attain long-term success (Brochado et al., 2022; Dionísio et al., 2022).

In athletic events, success has both micro and macro perspectives which encompass economic, social, and cultural factors. In other parts of the world, success has been measured in ticket sales, spectator appreciation, and sustainability of infrastructure and organizational structures (Chappelet & Lee, 2016; Parra-Camacho et al., 2020). However, the role of building satisfaction amongst the stakeholders is equally cited in the literature; this includes the athletes, spectators, sponsors, and local communities (Freeman, 2010; Schönberner et al., 2022). In Europe, sustainability and inclusiveness, which address European culture and policy considerations, appeared as more concerning factors (Cury et al., 2023; Daddi et al., 2022). Locally in Greece, these success factors are embedded in the context of other success factors that present themselves in the Greek context, including financial limitation and proper volunteer management (Cuskelly et al., 2021). Several scholars have underscored the importance of planning, marketing, and sponsorship as key factors that influence the outcome of sports events. For instance, logistics and infrastructures are efficiently incorporated through event planning so as to minimize hitches, thus leading to better organizational flow and customer satisfaction. Communication and promotional activities, such as communication and publicizing options through the internet, also remain vital in increasing its visibility, creating awareness, audience appeal, and ticket sales (Mansour et al 2016). Sponsorship packages, on the other hand, help the event organizers to source the

necessary financial resources to help them attract the best talent and an audience (Cook et al., 2023).

There are still gaps in the literature on the management of sports events that have not been thoroughly discussed, including those related to the Greek context. However, literature on mega-event outcomes has a lack of focus on small and medium scale events, the kind that predominate in Greece in the context of sports events (Brochado et al., 2022). Furthermore, the cultural and economic phenomena that Greece offers – the ancient heritage and the economic crisis – offer a distinct context for the study of different approaches to managing organizations and business (Kalogiannidis et al., 2024). One major weakness relates to the failure to combine international benchmarks with the requirements of Greece. For instance, while European events consider the aspects of sustainability and technology, Greek events struggle at times with the resources to integrate such practices (Daddi et al., 2022). One of the areas given minimal attention is the impact of community engagement in promoting event success. Greek society remain passionate about its local sports cultures, but their participation is not generally taken into consideration in event planning and assessment models (Chatzitheodoridis et al., 2013). This research seeks to address these gaps by presenting a systematic review of the literature on the success factors in athletic event management within the context of Greece. Reflecting on the patterns of world practice and the specifics of the region, it explores the ways in which planning, marketing, and sponsorship affect events in Greece. The research employs the stakeholder theory, which focuses on considering different sponsors, athletes, spectators, and local communities' interests and expectations (Freeman & McVea, 2005). Therefore, the research offers significant theoretical and practical implications for sports management. From an academic perspective, the research enriches the existing body of literature on the management of localized sports events in Greece. In essence, it provides specific suggestions for better managing events, collaborating with stakeholders, and promoting Greece's rich history and culture to cement the country's place in the sphere of sports.

## Objectives

The major aim of the study was to investigate the vital success factors of athletic event management, using a case study of Greece. The study also achieved the following specific objectives:

1. To examine the effect of events planning on the success of athletic events management
2. To establish the influence of marketing and promotion techniques on the success of athletic events management

3. To examine the effect of sponsorship packages on the success of athletic events management

## Research hypotheses

H1: Event planning has a positive effect on the success of athletic events management.

H2: There is a significant relationship between marketing and promotion techniques on the success of athletic events management.

H3: Sponsorship packages have a positive effect on the success of athletic events management.

## Contribution of the study

This study contributes to the existing body of knowledge in the field of event management, specifically in the context of athletic events. By examining the critical success factors such as event planning, marketing and promotion techniques, and sponsorship packages, the research provides valuable insights and guidelines for event organizers in Greece and other regions. These findings can inform best practices and help enhance the quality and efficiency of athletic event management. The study's findings can inform educational institutions and training programs focused on event management. By understanding the critical success factors identified in this research, these institutions can develop curricula and training modules that prepare future event managers and professionals to excel in their roles. The significance of this study extends to the broader global sporting community. It provides valuable insights that can benefit not only Greece but also other countries hosting athletic events. The knowledge generated from this research can be adapted and applied in various international sporting contexts.

## Literature Review

### Theoretical Review

This study was guided by the stakeholder theory, which asserts that the performance of an organization depends on the management of stakeholder relations (Freeman, 2010). This point of view has been helpful in comprehending the complex role of managing events, especially in athletic events. According to Freeman and McVea (2005), stakeholder theory can be used as a practical guide for understanding and managing the multifaceted relationships between organizers, sponsors, athletes, and other related parties. However, what has not significantly changed is the fact that Freeman's work has been most important in the field. This review will incorporate more views in the

analysis. Engagement of stakeholders is a crucial element in the organization of large-scale athletic events (Dionísio et al., 2022; Schnitzer et al., 2020). Key stakeholders here are the sponsors, event promoters, athletes, volunteers, and the spectators or fans. Several works, such as Parent and Chappelet (2015) and Dionísio et al. (2022), reveal that a good organizational structure contains well-spelled out roles and responsibilities for individuals stakeholders, especially in competitive situations such as international competitions. Stakeholder theory also focuses on the continuous interaction between these groups, as well as the fact that management's success depends on the pursuit of varied and often conflicting interests (Parmar et al., 2010).

Stakeholder management is another critical area where event planning is critical, as it outlines how different stakeholders will be managed throughout the event. As noted by Cserháti and Polák-Weldon (2013), a blueprint that is properly thought out and whose planning is clearly outlined may aid in the avoidance of contentious situations and encourage inter-organizational cooperation. This is supported by Westerbeek et al. (2002), who pointed out that processes like stakeholder mapping and the involvement of these people in planning activities facilitates goal congruency and commensurate results. Vrchota et al. (2020) also stress that sustainable planning practices help to improve stakeholder satisfaction, especially in environments where nature is a critical factor. Marketing and sponsorship are effective ways of reaching out to stakeholders and guaranteeing the success of an event. Cook et al. (2023) note that there is a likelihood of shared value creation with the sponsors and the organizations which hold events, thus increasing stakeholder engagement. According to Schönberner et al. (2022), the notion of sponsorship packages is relevant to enhancing brand salience and encouraging sustainable stakeholder relationships. Likewise, effective marketing strategies, including the use of digital platforms, have been proven to enhance stakeholder engagement through provision of real-time communication mediums (Komkrit, 2019; Sambra et al., 2016). Volunteers are another important category of stakeholders involved in the delivery of athletic events. Research by Cuskelly et al. (2021) and Okada et al. (2021) provides insights into the drivers and expectations of volunteers, which again indicates the importance of effective management strategies. Managing volunteers well can be beneficial to other stakeholders at the event, as it creates a domino effect to the success of the event.

Though stakeholder theory offers a solid platform for managing athletic events, there are significant limitations when dealing with varied, ever-changing, and unpredictable circumstances (Thomas & Stephens, 2022). Modern extensions of stakeholder theory for application in the context of large-scale events have highlighted the need to involve other theoretical frameworks, including

resource-based and network theories (Lepschy et al., 2020; Yamaguchi et al., 2024). The integration of the theoretical works discussed in this paper can provide a more comprehensive understanding of stakeholder engagement in athletic event management. Taking into consideration Freeman (2010) and Parent and Chappelet (2015), as well as the findings of more recent empirical research, this section highlights the dynamics of this topic and paves the way for the analysis section.

### **Athletic Event Management**

Sports event management is an ever-growing and advancing industry in the athletic event management industry. It has been observed that, currently, sports events planning and management includes many stages which require effective coordination, so they are best carried out with planned methods (Mirzaei Kalar et al., 2019). Event management professionals work as organizational leaders and planners and are involved in selection processes for facilities, event logistics, marketing strategies, and fans. As the sports industry advances with new and broader organizing opportunities for athletic events, managing them has become a critical element in the operations of the sports business environment. Another important and quite basic component of athletic events is the choice of facility. Venue selection plays a critical role in event outcome in terms of attractiveness, mobility, and satisfaction among participants and spectators (Zournatzidou & Floros, 2023). According to Born et al. (2020), choosing the appropriate venue for an event should be tied to the objectives and recipients of the event, taking into account size, location, and facilities. Also important is the matter of the effects of economic activity on the host community. Thomas and Stephens (2022) established that the choice of facilities significantly influences the effectiveness of events while boosting the economic and social status of the hosting area. This perspective is endorsed in research by Curtis and Mocariova (2016), Dugalić (2013), and Yamaguchi et al. (2024), all of which highlight the significance of proper decision-making in choosing the appropriate venue.

Measures including athlete and spectator satisfaction levels, attendance, and income generation are well established as important performance measures for an event (Schnitzer et al., 2020). Athlete satisfaction depends on having a proper environment with enough equipment, well-organized matters and conditions, and good communication. Increased satisfaction has been shown to lead to improvement in athletes' performances, thus boosting the event success (Chappelet & Lee, 2016). Like their counterparts on the supply side, spectator satisfaction is therefore dependent on factors such as accessibility, levels of amenities, and content. Westerbeek et al. (2002) stated that these aspects need to be developed by the event for long-term loyalty. Control over the financial resources,

publicity, event organization, risk, and involvement of the participants also play an important role in determining the success of an event (Bukowski & Moore, 1980; House of Commons, 2022; Shasha et al., 2023).

Attention is another crucial area that needs to be measured in terms of the level of participation by students and physical turnout in class. Increased attendance is attributed to effective marketing campaigns, timely promotions, and effective ticket-selling mechanisms, particularly on the internet (Dionísio et al., 2022). Samba, Hower, and Van der Merwe (2016) pointed to the use of digital applications to spread an event's message across numerous platforms as a key aspect, and Cheah (2024) underlined the significance of traditional campaigns in attracting participants. Income generation, associated with tickets, sponsorship, and regional activity, influences the financial viability of athletic events (Chadwick et al., 2022). Cook et al. (2023) stressed that effective events help local economies as they drive people to travel, occupy more hotel rooms, and shop at local stores.

It is crucial to apply Project Management (PM) theories and practices to the construction of goals, processes, and measurements of achievements of the overall athletic events. According to Parent and Jean-loup (2015), although PM has not been widely researched in the context of sporting events, literature shows that the incorporation of PM methodologies drives positive results across fields. In their study, Mário et al. (2023) discussed how the use of PM strategies is becoming more popular in the context of events, and identified that enhancing co-ordination and resourcing played an important role. Similarly, Mirzaei Kalar et al. (2019) also called for more priority of PM in decision-making as a tool for improved planning, implementation, and assessment. Komkrit (2019) also pointed out that it is important to gain knowledge and implement tools to oversee and control the complexity of large-scale athletic event management, which is important in the increase in difficulty of athletic event management noted by Nikolaou et al. (2024).

### **The Effect of Events Planning on the Success of Athletic Event Management**

The literature on event management for large sporting events that is currently accessible shows a deficiency of study on the operational planning of these events. Richards et al. (2018) provided an analysis of the operational planning stages of events within this small body of literature, with an emphasis on developing and composing operational plans from an educational perspective. An operational approach was used in a study by Cserháti and Polák-weldon (2013) that sought to analyze existing practices while considering the history and the future growth of the changing industry. Sports event managers were provided with specific techniques to enhance the

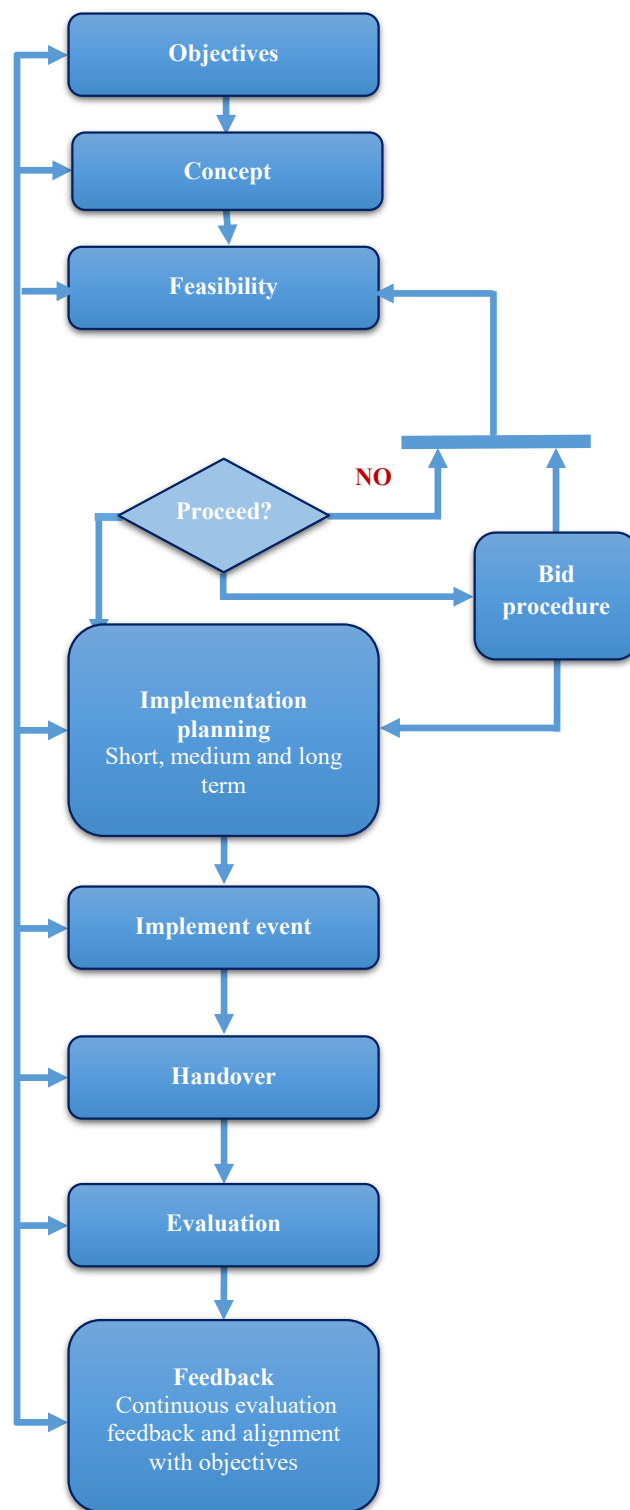
effectiveness of decision-making related to their events. Cserhádi and Polák-Weldon (2013) proposed that issue-specific strategies for developing the project and sport event management literature should be based on a clear event planning process, such as the one shown in Figure 1.

Strategies that guarantee long-term success must fully cover any prospective long-term advantages that are meant to be traceable to the event. Incorporating a cost-benefit prediction at the feasibility phase of the event planning process would, first and foremost, allow organizers to budget for their events appropriately and anticipate the amount of benefit they will provide (Othy, 2020). This would also help them obtain early and suitable funding for their events. To secure the long-term viability of any new facilities and/or regeneration initiatives, implementation methods must be included. The sustainability and durability—that is, the effectiveness of the regeneration and the legacies established as a consequence of organizing the event—must also be evaluated over an extended period of time, ten years or more. There is a rationale for adding mechanisms to the process that will enable ongoing alignment with short-, medium-, and long-term plans in order to achieve the goals. This would lead to a new way of organizing events that takes into account both the immediate needs for the event's execution and the long-term goals that will serve as its legacy (Groves et al., 2003; Masterman, 2021).

The event planning process model consists of up to ten separate steps. Its foundation is a phased approach whereby the planning process is achieved through steps. According to Dionísio et al. (2022), Manchester, for instance, chose its goals for urban redevelopment prior to deciding to submit a bid for both the 2000 Olympics and the 2002 Commonwealth Games. After that, it examined the likelihood that the latter would be able to carry out the long-term goals effectively. Following their decision to go forward, the city submitted a bid for the occasion (UK Government, 2015).

The creation of plans ahead of time, such as the construction of venues and the guaranteeing of their post-use before construction, was then carried out to ensure that the event would be successful in the long term. This shows that the city was not just planning for the long term prior to the event, but also lacked the readiness to go on with the next phase of planning until these conditions were satisfied. The strategy called for building permanent facilities only after post-use and users were safe (Kongruang & Samahito, 2022). In the process of organizing an event, everyone agrees on the function and positioning of assessment. Evaluating the event and providing feedback to improve future practice are crucial elements, according to many theories and planning models. Though assessments conducted after events are

generally acknowledged, longer-term evaluations are seldom given as much attention. Even though Richards et al. (2018) point out that event objectives are quantifiable goals with a range of time periods, particular preparation is necessary for longer-term metrics with significant sporting events.



**Figure 1.** The event planning process.

### Marketing and Promotion Techniques in Events Management

Despite currently being quite fashionable, event marketing is not a new phenomenon. As long as conventional marketing has been practiced, event marketing has existed in the US and across the globe (Joseph, 2018; Mário et al., 2023). Now known as special events, it is an organic component of the marketing mix. An event may draw both the “right” and “wrong” individuals with the help of effective promotion. However, it is even more important to make sure there are enough people attending the event for it to be successful (Dugalić, 2013). Marketing entirely intangible products, such as athletic events, has a significant service component (Mansour et al., 2016; Sambra et al., 2016). Selling a product that a consumer cannot physically take home or enjoy is, in some ways, significantly more challenging. Promotional activities may thus imply that the audience will be amused and have a good time at the event (De Bosscher et al., 2008; Sport England, 2006).

According to Westerbeek et al. (2002), one of the most important programs for large-scale events like the Olympic Games is ticketing. Customers’ tickets become, both directly and indirectly, a vital component of the event’s success; as such, they must be organized and executed in a manner that is more professional, consistent, and appropriate for the setting in which it will take place (Congdon-Hohman & Matheson, 2020). Therefore, a more complex definition of ticketing can be put forward, which includes a wide range of planned, coordinated, and controlled activities. It begins with the input of the event strategy (objectives, targets, and service concept) and develops through the integration of ticket prices, distribution, and communication in order to secure the attendance of a sufficient number of people in a way that will support the achievement of the event’s objectives and goals, which the various stakeholders hope to meet with the same event (Vrchota et al., 2020).

Marketing plays a central role in promoting and generating interest in athletic events. Effective marketing strategies are essential for attracting participants and spectators, as well as securing sponsorship deals (Komkrit, 2019). Social media, for instance, has become a powerful tool for event promotion, enabling organizers to reach a wide and engaged audience (Cserhádi & Polák-Weldon, 2013). Additionally, branding and image management are vital components of marketing, as they contribute to the event’s identity and appeal (Kongruang & Samahito, 2022). A well-planned marketing strategy can enhance the visibility of an athletic event, leading to increased attendance and financial support (Brochado et al., 2022; Chatzitheodoridis et al., 2013; Loizou et al., 2015; Papadopoulou et al., 2021).

### Sponsorship Packages in Athletic Events Management

Large-scale sporting events are now a significant aspect of international commerce, and sports sponsorship has grown as a result of the need for commercial funding for professional sports organizations to operate (Nuseir, 2020). To host sporting events, sports organizations must raise money via sponsorship deals, ticket sales, and the sale of telecasting and broadcasting rights. Because sponsorship is a significant source of income for many sports organizations, current research focuses on this revenue stream (Congdon-Hohman & Matheson, 2020). It is projected that North American sports sponsorship spending will reach USD 19.88 billion by 2021, from an estimated USD 16.62 billion in 2017. The total amount spent on sponsorship globally in 2012 was USD 40 billion, and by 2018, it is expected to reach USD 62.7 billion (House of Commons, 2022). According to Chadwick et al. (2022), sports sponsorship is important for both marketing and funding different games. According to Hsiao et al. (2021), a number of variables, such as the power of the sponsor-event and the leverage of activities, impact consumer-based brand equity, even if sports sponsorship greatly contributes to it. He claims that the best sponsorships enhance the quality and loyalty of the business. According to Frawley et al. (2013), sponsorships in sports help to promote a variety of sports by giving sponsors’ goods, services, and money.

Sponsorship of sports teams and the promotion of businesses’ goods and services go hand in hand. The marketing and sponsorship of sporting events has expanded as a result of the commercialization of sports (Dancsecz, 2008; Rai et al., 2024). Businesses that participate in sponsorship programs see a rise in brand awareness and a strengthening of their image. Schnitzer et al. (2020) clarified that participating in sports sponsorship guarantees sports organizations the funding they need to improve the quality of the sporting events. Conversely, companies that provide sponsorships receive both material and immaterial rewards, such as increased visibility for their brands and a more favorable perception of their company among stakeholders (Schönberner et al., 2022; Younies & Al-Tawil, 2021).

Innovative techniques and tactics are essential for major firms and small- to medium-sized enterprises trying to manage rapid development (Kongruang & Samahito, 2022). According to Sambra et al. (2016), using dynamic tools as innovation enablers may assist maximize developing enterprises’ performance in a cost-effective and efficient manner. Businesses have greatly expanded their sponsorship of sporting events, particularly during the last 30 years, as a result of the advantages they accrue (Mansour et al., 2016; Siegert et al., 2024). The use of sponsorship as a marketing technique has grown significantly. Businesses see sponsoring different sporting events as appropriate investments, as shown by the rise in sponsorship spending

over time (Cook et al., 2023; Kariuki et al., 2020; Nu-seir, 2020). According to Singram and Thanaiudompat (2023), a variety of sponsors for sports have surfaced, including corporate entities, non-profit organizations, and governmental bodies. As they record, sponsors contributed USD 957 million to the Olympic Partner Program in 2012.

Businesses are becoming more focused on sponsorship due to the rising expense of advertising (Kongruang & Samahito, 2022). Businesses are being forced to find new methods of advertising their brands due to the rapid advancements in communication technologies and intense competition. Businesses employ sponsorships in a variety of ways, according to Vrchota et al. (2020), including funding athletic and cultural events. Due to its ability to benefit both society and the sports industry, sports sponsorship is becoming a significant component of firms' marketing strategies. Sports is an unregulated industry where firms are eager to invest (Schnitzer et al., 2020). According to Phiri et al. (2023), the success of sporting events is determined by the strength of the connection between sponsors and sports organizations. Parent and Jean-loup (2015) showed that sports sponsorship is a strategic relationship between corporations and sports organizations, as well as a co-marketing alliance.

Researchers have looked at the ways in which sports sponsorship functions as a promotional tool due to its growing significance (Emery, 2010; Irwin & Sutton, 1994; Lepschy et al., 2018; Shasha et al., 2023). Due to the field's recent development, there are research gaps in sports sponsorship. Even though research has shown how important sponsorship is for sporting events, further empirical study is still required to determine how sponsorship affects sports event marketing (Born et al., 2020; Theodorou et al., 2023). The swift expansion of sports sponsorship has spurred investigation in several crucial domains concerning the goals and reasoning behind sponsorship expenditure, the assessment of sponsorship, and the administration of connections between sports organizations and sponsors (Lepschy et al., 2018; Plakias et al., 2024). The strategic significance of sports sponsorship has grown as a result of growing management pressure to be accountable for spending (Singram & Thanaiudompat, 2023). According to Chadwick et al. (2022), sports sponsorship should be taken into account when developing integrated marketing strategies. Thus, thorough research is also required, since sports sponsorship is a key element of strategy planning and execution.

## Methodology

### Research Design

This study adopted a cross-sectional survey research design based on a quantitative research approach. Such a research design involves collecting data from a sam-

ple of participants at a single point in time. This design is often used to gather information about a particular population or group at a specific moment and is useful for studying phenomena, attitudes, or characteristics that are not expected to change over time. By employing the quantitative research approach, the study primarily focused on collecting and analyzing numerical data to draw conclusions about the vital success factors in athletic event management in Greece.

### Target Population

The survey was conducted among organizers and other agents in Greece, which is known for its traditional and cultural connection with sports. Since it is home to the Olympics, there are many international, regional, and local sporting events taking place in Greece, thus embracing the historical event experience complemented by sophisticated events management. The study targeted professionals involved in planning, marketing, sponsorship, and contracting athletic events in order to establish key factors that influence athletic event management in Greece. Identification of the population of 900 participants was carried out via national an event registration site, as well as industry publications, thus ensuring the inclusion of all clientele who have direct experience in the organization of athletic events.

### Sample Size and Sampling Technique

The 1970 Krejcie and Morgan table was utilized in determining the sample size for this study, as shown in Table 1. Therefore, based on the target population of 900 participants that could have experience in organizing athletic events, a corresponding sample size of 270 participants was used for this study (Kalogiannidis et al., 2024; Krejcie & Morgan, 1970). Equation 1 shows the Krejcie and Morgan equation.

$$n = \frac{\chi^2 NP(1-P)}{d^2(N-1) + \chi^2 P(1-P)} \quad (1)$$

Where:

n = Sample size

N = Population size (900)

$\chi^2$  = Chi-square for specified confidence level at 1 degree of freedom (3.841)

d = Desired Margin of Error (expressed as a portion =0.05)

P = Population portion (0.05)

### Data Collection

The quantitative data for this study were obtained through a survey in the form of a standardized self-administered questionnaire on events with a focus on event organizers in Greece. This made it possible to gather information directly from professionals practicing ath-

letic event management. Also providing responses to the questionnaire were other stakeholders such as marketing professionals, sponsorship managers, and venue managers, whose responsibilities are crucial in event planning and success. This broader sampling strategy provided a vantage point that allowed a descriptive view of issues affecting event management processes. In developing the questionnaire, the research utilized theoretical and prior empirical studies and benchmarking techniques for efficient athletic event management. Mirzaei Kalar et al. (2019) and Cserháti and Polák-Weldon (2013) were useful in developing questions concerning event planning, event marketing and promotion strategies, and event sponsorship deals. While constructing the items for the questionnaire, the sources of content validity included not only scholarly articles but also recommended practices in the industry. To ensure the validity and relevancy of the questionnaire, certain validation steps were taken as follows: First, the questionnaire was presented to three professionals involved in event management, sports marketing, and sponsorship tactics. Their feedback was used to improve the clarity of the questions and their relevance and relation to the goals and objectives of the study. Some were minor, since they nearly captured all the focal areas of athletic event management, and adjustments were made accordingly. A pilot was then conducted with 10 participants from the target population to determine its comprehensibility and feasibility for full-scale administration. This pilot phase assisted in making sure that the questions used were clear and that the instructions provided were easily understandable. The last was a close-ended questionnaire, which used a 5-Likert scale index to assess stakeholders' perceptions of the event planning activities adequacy, marketing and promotional tools' efficiency, and the influence of sponsorship on event success. This process helped to increase the validity and reliability of the instrument used to collect the data, making the collected data credible for statistical analysis.

### Measurement of Variables

The variables in this study were measured using the bipolar 5-point Likert scale, whereby the participants were asked to indicate the extent of their agreement with various statements regarding the success of event management. The scale used concerned five items, and the options ranged from 1 Strongly Disagree to 5 Strongly Agree, thus capturing the respondents' perceptions as quantitative responses. The dependent variable, Successful Athletic Events Management, was measured retrospectively through statements focusing on success factors like financial effective, attendance, athlete satisfaction, spectator satisfaction, and environmental. Participants indicated their level of agreement with these factors toward event success.

The independent variable Event Planning was assessed by looking at logistical arrangements involving people and money. Audiences were asked to provide ratings relating to the extent to which planning positively impacted the event outcomes in terms of efficiency and minimizing disruption. For Marketing and Promotion Techniques, the level of usefulness of ticketing systems, online advertising, and promotion materials were evaluated through the Likert scale responses. Sponsorship Packages were assessed by focusing on financial, infrastructure, and athlete indicators that were matched with participants' perception on how the sponsorship affected the success of the event.

## Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using statistical software, and factors contributing to the success of athletic events in Greece were determined through inferential statistics. The overall predictive power of the independent factors on the study's dependent variable was calculated using regression analysis. In order to determine various predicted values in this situation, a multiple regression model is required (Equation 2).

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \varepsilon \quad (2)$$

Where:

Y= Successful athletic events management

$\beta_0$ = constant (coefficient of intercept);

$X_1$  = Events planning

$X_2$  = Marketing and promotion techniques

$X_3$  = Sponsorship packages

$\varepsilon$  = Represents the error term in the multiple regression model

$\beta_1$ ,  $\beta_2$  and  $\beta_3$ =demonstrates how the regression coefficient for the independent variables may be used to predict changes in agriculture sustainability.

The hypotheses of the study were tested at the 5% (0.05) level of significance throughout the study.

## Results

### Demographic Information

Results concerning key demographic characteristics of the selected respondents are presented in Table 1.

The gender distribution among the participants indicated that the majority of respondents were male, constituting 71.1% of the total, while females made up the remaining 28.8%. This gender breakdown suggests that, in this particular field, there is a higher representation of male professionals. When examining the age distribution of the participants, it is evident that the majority of them fell within the age brackets of above 35 years (47.8%).

**Table 1.** Showing participants’ demographic information

| Characteristic                         | Frequency  | Percentage (%) |
|----------------------------------------|------------|----------------|
| <b>Gender</b>                          |            |                |
| Male                                   | 192        | 71.1           |
| Female                                 | 78         | 28.9           |
| <b>Age bracket</b>                     |            |                |
| Below 25 years                         | 5          | 1.9            |
| 25-30 years                            | 24         | 8.9            |
| 31-35 years                            | 112        | 41.4           |
| Above 35 years                         | 129        | 47.8           |
| <b>Experience in events management</b> |            |                |
| Below 5 years                          | 20         | 7.4            |
| 5-10 years                             | 43         | 15.9           |
| 11-15 years                            | 118        | 43.7           |
| Above 15 years                         | 89         | 33.0           |
| <b>Total</b>                           | <b>270</b> | <b>100</b>     |

Source: Survey (2024)

This data reveals that the field of athletic event management is populated by a more experienced and mature demographic. The younger age groups, below 25 years and 25–30 years, make up a smaller percentage of the sample, indicating that these age groups might need more time to establish themselves within the industry. The number of years spent in events management also provided significant insights into the participants’ professional backgrounds. It is notable that the majority of respondents had 11–15 years of experience in events management, constituting 38.8% of the sample, closely followed by those with over 15 years of experience at 29.6%. The results show that the industry attracts and retains professionals with

substantial experience, possibly due to the complexities and challenges associated with organizing athletic events. While there were participants with less than 5 years and 5–10 years of experience, their percentages were comparatively smaller, implying that this field tends to require a certain level of expertise and accumulated knowledge.

## Findings

The study examined the different effects of events planning on the success of athletic Event Management and the obtained results are presented in Table 2.

**Table 2.** The effect of event planning on the success of athletic event management

| Statement                                                                                                  |   | SD  | D    | NS  | A    | SA   |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|-----|------|-----|------|------|
| I feel more confident in the success of athletic events when I know that thorough planning has taken place | % | 0.0 | 4.9  | 6.6 | 88.5 | 0.0  |
| Event planning should take into account the specific needs and preferences of athletes                     | % | 1.9 | 6.7  | 2.8 | 50.9 | 37.7 |
| The coordination between event planners, venue staff, and athletes is well-managed                         | % | 0.0 | 8.9  | 4.7 | 78.7 | 7.7  |
| Detailed budgeting and financial planning are key to the success of athletic events                        | % | 7.7 | 3.4  | 7.2 | 54.5 | 27.2 |
| Poor event planning negatively impacts the experience of athletes and spectators                           | % | 3.8 | 17.5 | 4.4 | 74.3 | 0.0  |

Note: SD=strongly disagree, D=Disagree, NS=Not sure, A=Agree, and SA=Strongly Agree.

Source: Primary data (2024).

The results in Table 2 show that most participants (88.5%) agreed that thorough planning contributes significantly to their confidence in the success of athletic events. This suggests that event planners and promoters place a high value on meticulous planning when organizing athletic events. The majority of participants (88.6% combined) agreed or strongly agreed that event planning should consider the specific needs and preferences of athletes. This indicates the importance of tailoring event plans to meet the requirements and expectations of athletes, which can enhance the overall success of athletic events. The majority of participants (86.4% combined) agreed or strongly agreed that coordination between event planners, venue staff, and athletes is well-managed. This suggests that effective communication and collaboration between these key stakeholders are essential for success-

ful athletic event management. The results indicate that a significant portion of participants (81.7% combined) agreed or strongly agreed that detailed budgeting and financial planning play a crucial role in the success of athletic events. This emphasizes the importance of sound financial management in ensuring the overall success of such events. A substantial majority of participants (74.3%) agreed that poor event planning can have a negative impact on the experience of both athletes and spectators. This highlights the potential consequences of inadequate planning, which can harm the reputation and success of athletic events.

The study established the influence of Marketing and Promotion techniques on the success of athletic events management and the obtained results are presented in Table 3.

**Table 3.** Results on the influence of Marketing and Promotion techniques on the success of athletic Event Management

| Statement                                                                                                        |   | SD  | D    | NS   | A    | SA   |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|-----|------|------|------|------|
| Effective online ticketing and registration processes contribute to the success of athletic events               | % | 0.0 | 7.2  | 4.6  | 67.8 | 20.4 |
| Well-executed marketing strategies improve the visibility of athletic events                                     | % | 4.8 | 4.5  | 0.0  | 77.9 | 12.8 |
| The success of athletic event management depends on the quality of promotional materials (e.g., posters, flyers) | % | 3.7 | 8.9  | 0.0  | 75.9 | 7.9  |
| Online advertising and paid social media campaigns are crucial for attracting a broader audience                 | % | 7.7 | 3.4  | 7.2  | 64.5 | 17.2 |
| The timing of promotional efforts (before, during, or after the event) affects the event's success               | % | 3.8 | 17.5 | 4.2  | 49.3 | 25.2 |
| Effective communication with the target audience is vital for promoting athletic events                          | % | 1.3 | 5.2  | 13.6 | 64.5 | 15.4 |

Note: SD=strongly disagree, D=Disagree, NS=Not sure, A=Agree, and SA=Strongly Agree.

Source: Primary data (2024).

The majority of the participating event organizers (88%) either agreed or strongly agreed that effective online ticketing and registration processes contribute to the success of athletic events. This suggests that streamlining the online ticketing and registration process is crucial for the success of athletic events, as it likely enhances the overall experience for participants and attendees. A substantial percentage (over 90%) agreed or strongly agreed that well-executed marketing strategies improve the visibility of athletic events. This indicates that the quality and execution of marketing strategies have a substantial impact on the visibility of athletic events. Effective marketing can attract a larger audience and generate more interest in the event. Whereas some respondents disagreed, the majority (around 84%) agreed or strongly agreed that

the success of athletic event management depends on the quality of promotional materials (e.g., posters, flyers). This highlights the importance of having high-quality promotional materials to create a positive perception of the event. Furthermore, 82% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that online advertising and paid social media campaigns are crucial for attracting a broader audience. This suggests that online advertising and paid social media campaigns play a vital role in reaching a wider audience, possibly due to the broad reach and targeting options available through digital marketing. A majority (over 74%) agreed or strongly agreed that the timing of promotional efforts (before, during, or after the event) affects the event's success. This indicates that event organizers and promoters recognize the importance of

when they carry out their promotional activities, which can impact the event’s overall success. Over 79% either agreed or strongly agreed that effective communication with the target audience is vital for promoting athletic events. This emphasizes the significance of maintaining

clear and effective communication with the target audience to ensure the success of athletic events.

The study further examined the effect of Sponsorship packages on the success of athletic Event Management and the results are presented in Table 4.

**Table 4.** Findings on effect of Sponsorship packages on the success of athletic Event Management

| Statement                                                                                                |   | SD  | D    | NS   | A    | SA   |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|-----|------|------|------|------|
| Sponsors’ support helps cover the costs of organizing and promoting athletic events                      | % | 0.0 | 11.8 | 0.0  | 52.3 | 35.9 |
| Athletes’ and teams’ participation in events is influenced by the attractiveness of sponsorship packages | % | 9.0 | 10.9 | 0.0  | 42.6 | 37.5 |
| Sponsorship packages contribute to the financial stability of athletic event management                  | % | 8.6 | 1.1  | 3.5  | 51.3 | 35.7 |
| Sponsorship packages positively impact the ability to provide quality facilities and equipment           | % | 5.5 | 9.1  | 11.8 | 56.6 | 17.0 |
| Effective sponsorship management leads to increased attendance at athletic events                        | % | 1.5 | 8.1  | 0.0  | 61.8 | 28.6 |
| Sponsors play a vital role in attracting top-tier athletes to participate in events                      | % | 1.8 | 7.4  | 11.5 | 51.2 | 28.1 |

*Note: SD=strongly disagree, D=Disagree, NS=Not sure, A=Agree, and SA=Strongly Agree.*

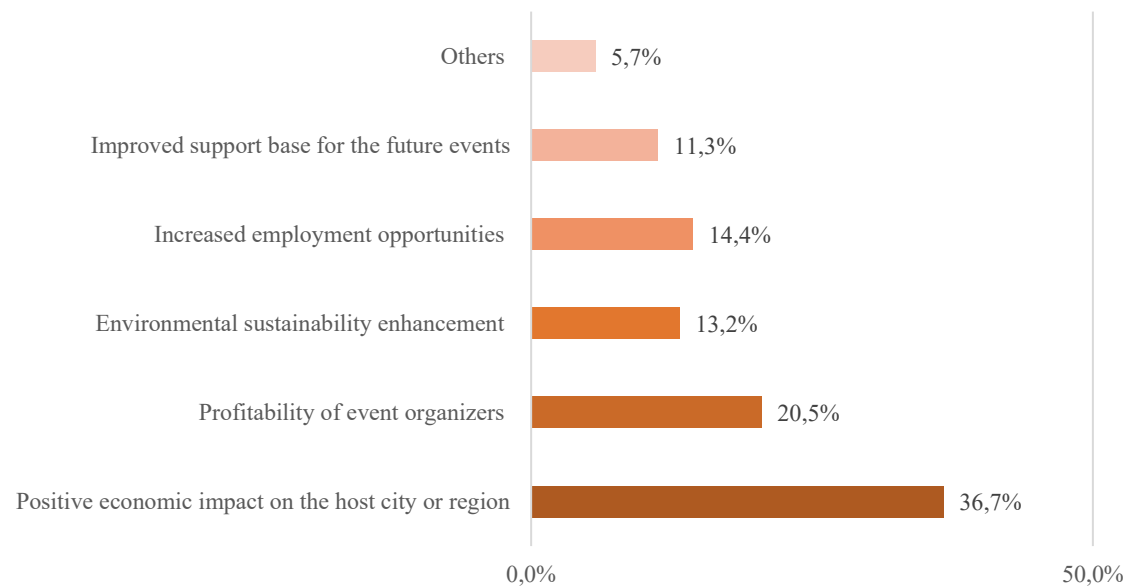
Source: Primary data (2024).

Most participants (88.2% combined) either agree or strongly agree that sponsors play a crucial role in covering the costs of organizing and promoting athletic events. This suggests that sponsors are seen as vital in providing financial support for event management. A substantial portion of participants (80.1% combined) agree or strongly agree that the attractiveness of sponsorship packages has an impact on the participation of athletes and teams in events. This underscores the importance of well-structured sponsorship deals in attracting top-tier athletes. The majority of participants (87.0% combined) either agree or strongly agree that sponsorship packages contribute to the financial stability of athletic event management. This indicates that sponsors are perceived as significant contributors to the economic viability of events. While some participants have reservations (14.6% combined), a majority (73.6% combined) agree or strongly agree that sponsorship packages have a positive impact on the provision of quality facilities and equipment. This highlights the role of sponsors in enhancing the overall event experience. The vast majority of participants (90.4% combined) agree or strongly agree that effective sponsorship management is linked to increased attendance at athletic events. This indicates that sponsorship activities can be influential in attracting spectators. While a notable proportion of participants are unsure (11.5%), a significant majority (79.3% combined) agree or strongly agree that sponsors

play a vital role in attracting top-tier athletes. This highlights the perception that sponsorships are instrumental in securing high-profile athlete participation.

The study also established the different outcomes of a successful athletic event. The results are presented in Figure 2.

A majority of the participants (36.7%) noted that a “positive economic impact on the host city or region” was the most crucial outcome of a successful athletic event. This finding confirms the significance of sports events as drivers of local economic growth. When a sporting event is successful, it can lead to increased tourism, boosted local businesses, and a general uplift in the economic conditions of the host city or region. Event organizers and promoters evidently recognize the potential of athletic events to stimulate economic development and prosperity in the surrounding community. Profitability of event organizers was the second most important outcome as cited by 20.5% of participants. This finding suggests that event organizers and promoters view the financial success of their endeavors as a critical indicator of event success. The profitability of event organizers is a reflection of effective planning, management, and execution, demonstrating the financial viability and sustainability of such events. Environmental sustainability enhancement, at 13.2%, emerged as another noteworthy outcome in the study. This indicates a growing awareness and



**Figure 2.** The different outcomes of a successful athletic event. Source: Primary data (2024)

commitment within the athletic event management community to incorporate sustainable practices into their operations. The recognition of environmental sustainability as a success factor highlights the shift toward responsible event management that considers ecological impact and long-term environmental well-being. Furthermore, 14.4% of respondents cited increased employment opportunities as an important element of successful athletic events management. Furthermore, “improved support base for the future events” was cited by 11.3% of respondents, showing that organizers and promoters value the ability of a successful event to lay the groundwork for continued success in future athletic endeavors. This emphasizes the importance of building a dedicated and enthusiastic

fan base and stakeholder network that can sustain and expand the event’s influence over time. Finally, the lowest proportion of respondents (5.7%) suggested that there are additional, less common, but still significant outcomes of a successful athletic event that may have been acknowledged by a minority of participants, such as the reputation of the organized event.

**Results of Regression Analysis**

Regression analysis helped to discover the level to which successful athletic events management is predicted by Events Planning, Marketing and Promotion techniques, and Sponsorship packages. The results are presented in Table 5.

**Table 5.** Model Summary

| Model | R     | R-Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate |
|-------|-------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|
|       | 0.618 | 0.624    | 0.652             | 1.1624                     |

*Note: Predictors: (Constant): Events Planning, Marketing and Promotion techniques, Sponsorship packages*

The study’s three independent variables showed a positive link with Successful athletic events management, as indicated by the positive multiple correlation coefficient (R). Additionally, the R-Square value attests to the fact that the study’s independent variables account for 62.4% of the variation in Successful athletic events management.

To determine if the linear regression model adequately fitted the data or if the three independent variables were better predictors of the dependent variable, a one-way ANOVA was employed.  $F(3, 267) = 215.031, p < 0.05$ , showing an excellent match between the model and the data (Table 6).

**Table 6.** ANOVA analysis

| Model        | Sum of Squares | df         | Mean Square | F       | Sig.  |
|--------------|----------------|------------|-------------|---------|-------|
| Regression   | 40.019         | 3          | 17.182      | 215.031 | 0.015 |
| Residual     | 1.055          | 267        |             |         |       |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>41.073</b>  | <b>270</b> |             |         |       |

*Note: Dependent Variable: Successful athletic events management, Predictors: (Constant): Events planning, Marketing and promotion techniques, Sponsorship packages*

Regression analysis yielded unstandardized coefficients, which were used to determine the association between Successful athletic events management and Events Planning, Marketing and Promotion techniques, Sponsorship packages.

The results (Table 7) show that events planning is significantly related to successful athletic events management ( $P=0.003<0.005$ ). Hypotheses 1 was therefore accepted that events planning has a positive effect on the success of athletic events management.

Marketing and promotion techniques also showed a significant positive influence on the success of athletic events management ( $P=0.001<0.005$ ). This means that there is a significant relationship between marketing and promotion techniques on the success of athletic events management.

Additionally, sponsorship packages ( $p=0.011$ ) significantly affect the success of athletic events management. Hypothesis 3 was therefore accepted, meaning that sponsorship packages have a positive effect on the success of athletic events management since ( $P<0.005$ ).

**Table 7.** Regression coefficients

| Model                              | Unstandardized Coefficients |            | Standardized Coefficients | t     | Sig.  |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|-------|-------|
|                                    | B                           | Std. Error | Beta                      |       |       |
| (Constant)                         | 0.318                       | 0.136      |                           | 2.438 | 0.026 |
| Events Planning                    | 0.156                       | 0.057      | 0.397                     | 3.736 | 0.003 |
| Marketing and Promotion techniques | 0.084                       | 0.067      | 0.213                     | 3.195 | 0.001 |
| Sponsorship packages               | 0.113                       | 0.049      | 0.282                     | 3.511 | 0.011 |

*Note: Dependent Variable: Successful athletic events management*

## Discussion

This study investigated the vital success factors of athletic event management in Greece. It explores the impact of event planning, marketing and promotion techniques, and sponsorship packages on the success of athletic event management. The study also identifies the outcomes associated with successful athletic events. The study found that thorough event planning significantly contributes to the success of athletic events. The study showed that meticulous planning is essential for ensuring the success of athletic events. This finding is in line with existing literature on event management, which highlights the importance of effective planning and organization (Abeza et al., 2015; Emery, 2010; Groves et al., 2003). Effective event planning involves various aspects, such as venue selection, budgeting, logistics, and participant management. Stakeholder theory, as mentioned in the theoretical review section, is

relevant here. Freeman's stakeholder theory emphasizes the importance of considering all groups and individuals that can affect or be affected by the success of a business enterprise (Freeman, 2010; Parmar et al., 2010). In the context of athletic events, stakeholders include event organizers, athletes, sponsors, venue staff, and spectators. Effective event planning takes into account the specific needs and preferences of these stakeholders, which was also highlighted in the study's results. Moreover, the study showed that poor event planning can have a negative impact on the experience of athletes and spectators. This aligns with the concept of problems management, which involves a coordinated and proactive approach to managing relationships with stakeholders (Theodorou et al., 2023). Inadequate planning can lead to various issues, impacting the overall success of athletic events (Chadwick et al., 2022).

The study found that well-executed marketing and promotion techniques significantly improve the visibility

of athletic events. Effective online ticketing and registration processes were also identified as key contributors to the success of these events. These findings are consistent with Mirzaei Kalar et al. (2019) on event marketing, which emphasizes the importance of promoting events to attract the right audience. Marketing for athletic events is not limited to traditional methods like posters and flyers (UK Government, 2015; Westerbeek et al., 2002). The study recognized the growing role of online advertising and paid social media campaigns in reaching a broader audience. The timing of promotional efforts was also considered important, as it can impact the success of events (Mansour et al., 2016; Sambra et al., 2016; Siegert et al., 2024). Effective communication with the target audience was found to be vital for promoting athletic events, highlighting the need for clear and direct communication with potential participants and attendees. These findings align with the concept of service marketing, where intangible products like athletic events are promoted based on the experience they offer. Services like those described by Thanavutd & Teepakorn (2023) encompass “deeds, processes, and performances”, and marketing such services involves creating an enjoyable and satisfying experience for the audience.

The study established that sponsorship packages play a crucial role in the success of athletic event management. Participants agreed that sponsors’ support helps cover the costs of organizing and promoting athletic events, and sponsorship packages contribute to the financial stability of event management. This is in line with the literature on sports sponsorship, which emphasizes the financial importance of sponsors for sports organizations (Peake & Davies, 2024). Sponsorship packages were also found to influence the participation of athletes and teams in events. This is consistent with the idea that sponsors can attract top-tier athletes and teams by offering attractive packages (Palumbo, 2012; Schnitzer & Stickdorn, 2012). Effective sponsorship management was associated with increased attendance at athletic events, indicating that sponsors can play a significant role in attracting spectators. The study’s findings are in line with the notion that sports organizations rely on sponsorship deals, ticket sales, and broadcasting rights to fund their operations (KPMG, 2023b). The growth of sports sponsorship and its strategic significance in marketing and funding sports have been well-documented in the literature. It is evident that the success of athletic events is closely tied to the financial support and incentives provided by sponsors (Born et al., 2020; Dionísio et al., 2022; Lepschy et al., 2018, 2021). There is an untapped market for sports sponsorship where companies are eager and prepared to spend. All parties involved gain when a solid relationship between businesses, sports organizations, and fans grows gradually but steadily (Dionísio et al., 2022). The efficiency of sporting events is determined by the strength of the partnership, according to

established sports sponsorship as a co-marketing alliance. When questioned about their opinions on these claims, survey participants strongly agreed, and their replies were statistically significant. Spectators’ impressions of sponsors and their brand names aid in marketing a sports event (Phiri & Chakauya, 2023; Vrchota et al., 2020). Customers are more likely to buy tickets for sporting events when they have faith in a certain brand (Kalogiannidis et al., 2023; Papaevangelou et al., 2023).

The study identified several outcomes of successful athletic events, with a positive economic impact on the host city or region being the most crucial. This outcome is consistent with the literature on the economic effects of sporting events, which have the potential to boost local economies by attracting tourists and promoting local businesses (Salcinovic et al., 2022). The profitability of event organizers was also identified as an important outcome, highlighting the financial success of such events. Environmental sustainability enhancement emerged as an important outcome, reflecting the growing commitment within the athletic event management community to incorporate sustainable practices (Cury et al., 2023; Daddi et al., 2022). Increased employment opportunities and an improved support base for future events were also recognized as valuable outcomes. These findings align with the broader objectives of sports events, which extend beyond the immediate event to leave a lasting impact on the host city or region. Successful athletic events not only generate revenue but also contribute to environmental and social sustainability, showcasing their significance in a broader societal context (Cserhádi & Polák-Weldon, 2013; Dionísio et al., 2022). The regression analysis in the study demonstrates that event planning, marketing and promotion techniques, and sponsorship packages are significant predictors of successful athletic events management. The findings show that these three factors collectively account for 62.4% of the variation in successful athletic events management. These results are consistent with the literature on event management, which highlights the importance of effective planning and organization, marketing and promotion strategies, and the financial support provided by sponsors (KPMG, 2023a; Mirzaei Kalar et al., 2019). The successful management of athletic events is a multifaceted process that relies on the integration of these elements. Event planning sets the stage, marketing and promotion create awareness and attract participants and spectators, and sponsorship provides the necessary financial resources (Mário et al., 2023).

## Conclusion

This study examined the key success factors for managing athletic events in Greece, with emphasis on planning strategies, marketing and promotions, and sponsorship pro-

grams. The findings are useful in understanding the role of each of these elements in supporting the success of athletic events and their effects on host communities. The findings suggest that efficient event management plays a crucial role in the successful conduct of athletic events. When it comes to aspects critical to event execution, strategic planning, effective stakeholder management, and proper budgeting were mentioned. The study revealed that lack of planning negatively affected athletes, spectators, and the event in general, suggesting that adequate planning processes are critical to efficient execution of an event. Given these observations, it was possible to conclude that comprehensive planning plays a crucial role in achieving higher rates of success in athletic events and to recommend that event organizers pay adequate attention in this area. It emerges from the study that proper marketing and promotion strategies are essential to increasing event awareness and attendance among participants and spectators. It was established that use of online ticketing, social media marketing, and proper interaction with the target group contributes to high audience turnout and interest. Also, it was found that the timing and quality of promotions can influence event outcomes, which again points to the need for effective marketing strategies. In the context of the research findings, it is possible to conclude that sponsorship packages represent one of the key factors that can help to achieve the objective of sustaining the financial viability of the athletic events. In addition to funding organizational expenses, sponsors also contribute to the recruitment of superior athletes and improving the quality of equipment and facilities. Sponsorship management was positively associated with attending and economic benefits, and further, asserting the significance of sponsorship acquisition and supervision. It was also noted that the positive results of successful sporting events are complex, as these include: economic development of host communities, improved environmental standards, existence of employment opportunities, and fans' support for future sporting events. This study indicates that there is a need for professionals who intend to organize events to consider the financial, social, and environmental returns of those events. With regard to each objective, this conclusion highlights that event planning, marketing, and sponsorship are essential for effective athletic event management in Greece. The analysis of the findings and their implications offer practical solutions that can benefit event organizers, marketers, and sponsors, as well as enhance the development of the sports event industry locally and globally.

## Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made to enhance the management and success of athletic events.

1. **Strengthening Event Planning through Structured Processes and Digital Tools:** Preparation is an important aspect that goes into managing an athletic event, since it can minimize complications, increase the chances of success, and improve outcomes for athletes, audiences, and the organizers of the event. To this end, event organizers need to incorporate project management tools, including Trello and Asana, to provide a framework for accomplishing tasks, to update the team and notify them of their assignments in real-time. Communication between various stakeholders such as event planners, facility managers, and athletes is key, and with social tools like Slack and Microsoft Teams, there is easy real-time information sharing.
2. **Enhancing Marketing and Promotion Strategies for Maximum Audience Engagement:** A successful marketing and promotion strategy is crucial in raising awareness about an event and encouraging people to attend. In today's world, event organizers should consider online marketing tools like Facebook Ads Manager, Google AdWords, and Instagram Promotions to come up with the right awareness campaigns. Also, through the services of Eventbrite or Ticketmaster, ticketing and registration online can easily be provided, making attendance easier for participants.
3. **Optimizing Sponsorship Management to Foster Long-Term Partnerships:** Many athletic events are not financially self-sufficient, which means that sponsorship is a vitally important source of funding that needs to be effectively leveraged through the use of clear sponsorship strategies which combine benefits for the sponsors. Sponsorship packages should include things like logos, reserved marketing rights, and social media mentions that will help make the sponsorship more appealing to sponsors. To keep sponsors engaged, event organizers can work with Customer Relationship Management (CRM) systems such as Salesforce or HubSpot, which assist in tracking a sponsor's engagement, calculating the return on investment and overall performance.
4. **Integrating Environmental Sustainability into Event Management:** Integrating sustainability into the organization of athletic events is a crucial step introduced in consideration of the growing public expectation of 'green' event planning and delivery. There should be advocacy for environmentally friendly aspects such as the use of degradable items, recycling bins, and replacing traditional tickets with digital tickets. Moreover, the event venues should employ green

technology, including the use of renewable energy technologies, like solar energy lighting and energy efficient infrastructure.

### Areas for Future Research:

Based on the results of this study, several suggestions can be made to extend the inquiry of success factors in athletic event management for future research. One potential approach is to study the socio-economic and environmental effects which arise from athletic events, and the effects that can be observed on the local or regional level over time. More importantly, questioning the sponsors as fundamental stakeholders could also provide information about their roles in determining the success, ROI, and impact of the event on the community. It could also investigate innovations and strategies where sponsors have initiated them, how organizations retain sponsors, and how sponsorship can benefit in improving event legacies. These areas would offer a broader perspective of stakeholder involvement and event sustainability.

### Ethics Approval and Informed Consent

Informed written consent was obtained from all participants prior to their involvement in the study. At the beginning of the questionnaire, participants were presented with a detailed consent form outlining the purpose of the research, their right to anonymity, and the option to withdraw at any point before submitting their responses. Only those who provided written consent were able to proceed with the questionnaire. The study was reviewed and approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the University of Western Macedonia (REC-UOWM 216/30-05-2024).

### Competing Interests

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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