

GLOBAL IMPACT OF SPORTING EVENTS: MARKETING IMPLICATIONS AND CULTURAL TRANSFORMATIONS

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Abstract: This paper critically examines the global influence of sporting events on marketing practices and cultural dynamics in contemporary society. Building on established theoretical frameworks of sports marketing and event management, it analyzes the mechanisms through which mega-events and transnational leagues generate economic value via sponsorships, media rights sales, and digital platforms, while simultaneously shaping consumer behavior and fan identity. Special attention is given to branding processes (of places, organizations, and athletes) and “glocalization” strategies that blend global marketing standards with local cultural codes to enhance relevance and audience engagement. The study highlights the ambivalent cultural effects of such events—between the homogenization of global pop culture and the strengthening of local symbolic resources—as well as issues of social legacy, sustainability, and equitable access. Synthesizing findings from documented scientific literature, the paper proposes an analytical framework linking marketing implications (attention monetization, brand management, engagement measurement) with cultural transformations (identity reconfiguration, media convergence, participatory practices). Ultimately, it argues that the effects of sporting events are context-dependent: marketing outcomes are most sustainable when aligned with local cultural narratives, sustainable policies, and long-term community development goals.

Keywords: sport entrepreneurship, sport management, sport business, entrepreneurship

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Introduction

International athletic events, such as the Olympic Games and the FIFA World Cup, as well as international leagues and elite club tours, have emerged as key venues for the modern attention economy and symbolic production. These events serve as both extremely profitable market items and cultural rituals that restructure concepts of identity, belonging, and prestige within global flows under conditions of intense mediatisation of sport (Dašić, 2021; Kostadinović & Ilievska Kostadinović, 2025). According to recent research in sport marketing and event management, value is created both during and after the event through sponsorships, the sale of media rights, digital platforms, and multichannel management of fan and consumer relationships. This has significant ramifications for the branding of cities, organizations, and athletes. This perspective aligns with the focus of this paper on mechanisms of economic valuation and cultural dynamics, including branding and glocalization, as well as issues of legacy, sustainability, and equity of access.

From a marketing perspective, mega-events represent “temporary concentrators” of global attention, enabling brands to purchase or build visibility in environments characterized by high levels of emotional audience engagement (Pavlović et al., 2025; Trkulja et al., 2025). However, contemporary research emphasizes the importance of distinguishing short-term *impact* (e.g., media exposure) from strategic *leverage*, understood as a set of tactical and institutional activities through which investments in events are converted into sustainable benefits for destinations and relevant stakeholders. Chalip argues that leverage is the key concept for understanding how hosts and partners can systematically design activations, integrations, and alignments with local resources so that effects extend beyond the conclusion of the event (Chalip, 2004). This framework is particularly relevant in the era of digital platforms, where sponsor and organizer activations are increasingly optimized through engagement metrics and the management of user journeys across multiple touchpoints (TV/streaming, social media, applications, and the in-stadium experience).

Through long-term management of associations, experiences, and reputation, sponsorship has developed into a sophisticated communication and relational mechanism that connects brands with sport properties (teams, leagues, events, athletes). Although there is a wealth of research on audience reactions to sponsorship, systematic reviews published in prestigious marketing journals show that understanding sponsorship management “end to end”—from property selection through activation and integration to effect evaluation and reputational risk management—is becoming more and more important (Cornwell, 2020). This highlights the significance of an analytical framework that links brand management, attention monetization, and engagement metrics (such as conversion, retention, and sentiment) with the wider sociocultural

effects that athletic events have on local communities and audiences around the world.

Alongside the economic dimension, global sporting events also represent intense cultural nodes in which meanings of the local and the global are negotiated. The concept of glocalization helps explain how global sport products (competition formats, broadcast standards, global sponsorship categories) are “translated” into local cultural codes—and conversely, how local fan practices, symbols, and narratives become part of the global repertoire. Julianotti and Robertson demonstrate that glocalization does not imply mere homogenization, but rather multiple possible patterns (e.g., adaptation, hybridization, transformation) through which actors (fans, clubs, media) reshape global flows in accordance with local identity strategies (Julianotti & Robertson, 2007). From this emerges an ambivalent cultural outcome, explicitly recognized in your abstract as well: the simultaneous strengthening of global popular culture and the reaffirmation of local symbolic resources.

Place and nation branding through major sporting events is one of the most obvious connections between marketing and culture. A mega-event can give a platform for deeper articulation of brand identity as well as short-term publicity recognition, according to empirical study in destination marketing—as long as stakeholder coordination and purposefully created legacy and leverage strategies are in place. Knott et al. highlight the role of media (both traditional and new) and citizens in co-creating a more authentic image using South Africa and the 2010 FIFA World Cup as an example. They conclude that "brand legacy" depends on strategic activities rather than just the fact that the event occurred (Knott et al., 2015). This finding is particularly relevant for considerations of equity of access and long-term community development: if brand-building occurs without local inclusion and benefits, cultural effects may shift toward resistance, cynicism, or reputational risk.

Finally, contemporary scholarly literature insists that the *legacy* of mega-events must be understood as a multidimensional set of planned and unplanned, positive and negative, tangible and intangible changes that remain after the event. Preuss proposes a conceptualization encompassing infrastructure, knowledge, networks, emotions, image, and cultural patterns, while warning that legacy measurement is methodologically demanding and that aggregate macro indicators often fail to capture the “soft” changes that are crucial for social impact (Preuss, 2007). In this sense, integrating sustainability and social equity into planning and evaluation becomes not only a normative obligation but also a condition for sustainable marketing outcomes: the reputation of the event, the destination, and its partners depends on whether global commercial ambitions are aligned with local narratives, capacities, and long-term development goals. Accordingly, this paper positions itself to analytically connect

marketing implications (attention monetization, brand management, engagement measurement) with cultural transformations (reconfiguration of identities, media convergence, and participatory practices), emphasizing the contextual contingency of outcomes.

Marketing Leverage Strategies and the Monetization of Attention in Global Sporting Events

Global sports mega-events, such as the Olympic Games, the FIFA World Cup, continental championships, and the final tournaments of elite club competitions, are uncommon "peak moments" of worldwide attention because they concentrate extremely high media visibility, intense emotional audience engagement, and dense flows of commercial transactions in a brief amount of time (Dašić, 2018; Pavlović & Marković, 2025). In this context, marketing leverage refers to a collection of carefully thought-out ideas and approaches that help organizers, partners, destinations, and other stakeholders turn this fleeting focus of attention into longer-lasting market, reputational, and relational benefits. Crucially, leverage does not reduce the event to a one-off media "impact," but rather treats it as a platform for activating multichannel touchpoints and creating measurable value over time.

Leverage as a Strategic Framework: From "Presence" to Organized Value Extraction

The first principle of leverage lies in the distinction between a mega-event merely "taking place" in a given country or region and its potential being systematically exploited. Empirical insights from leverage research demonstrate that even when clear ambitions exist (tourism, investment, reputation, industrial development), knowledge transfer and the application of "best practices" are not automatically successful: strategies must be localized and aligned with institutional and cultural contexts; otherwise, they may remain symbolic or operationally unviable. Analyses of attempts to transfer leverage knowledge from one context to another (e.g., non-host destinations) indicate that social, political, and cultural conditions may render imported models inadequate, and that leverage requires iterative adaptation and early preparation (Beesley & Chalip, 2011). This finding is particularly important for global events, where production and commercialization standards are highly globalized, while destination and actor capacities are markedly heterogeneous.

Accordingly, leverage should be conceptualized as a portfolio-based and phased framework:

- (a) before the event—building audiences, partnerships, narratives, and engagement infrastructure;

- (b) during the event—converting attention into interaction, data, transactions, and relationships;
- (c) after the event—retention, reactivation, and capitalization of acquired associations.

Across all phases, the central question is how to transform short-term attention into long-term attention (loyalty, repeat visits, repeat purchases, and reputational stability).

Monetizing Attention: Mechanisms, Revenue Streams, and Rights Management

Media rights (broadcasting/streaming), sponsorships, and ticketing/experience sales are usually the main revenue streams that support the monetization of attention in international sporting events. The value of media rights rises with audience predictability, consumption intensity, and the ability to package content into various formats (live coverage, clips, behind-the-scenes material, short vertical content, etc.). This is significant because media rights are not just a distribution channel but a primary mechanism for turning attention into revenue. In addition, as it has an impact on ecosystem sustainability, investment incentives, and competitiveness, the structure of rights sales and revenue distribution is a strategic concern.

Although part of the literature focuses primarily on leagues, its insights are applicable to mega-events in terms of the logic of valuing attention and allocating revenues. Revenue-sharing models derived from collective rights sales demonstrate that “fair” and stable arrangements must account for heterogeneous audience contributions and market power among actors, since inappropriate allocation can generate strategic tensions that undermine the product and its viewership over the long term. In this sense, formal analyses of compromise-based allocation rules emphasize that media rights sales and revenue distribution are not neutral administrative decisions, but integral components of broader strategies for sustaining attention value over time (Bergantiños & Moreno-Ternero, 2021).

This suggests that in order to maximize marketing leverage, an organizer must optimize not only reach but also digital measurability (attribution, registrations, CRM integration) and the architecture of rights (territories, languages, platforms, short-form formats, clips, secondary content). Due to the fragmented nature of today's attention ecology, monetization is moving toward hybrid models that combine direct-to-consumer channels, platform partnerships, and data-driven tactics with linear broadcasting.

Digital Leverage Infrastructure: Social Media, Co-Creation, and an “Always-On” Presence

Digital platforms have fundamentally transformed leverage: mere “presence” in broadcast coverage is no longer sufficient; attention must be managed through interactive flows (comments, shares, user-generated content, live chats, real-time

clips). Reviews of research on sport and social media show that sports marketing increasingly relies on value co-creation and relational logic, where audiences are not passive message recipients but active participants in the production and circulation of meanings and content (Filo et al., 2015). From a leverage perspective, this implies that organizers and partners must plan content and community strategies in advance: editorial calendars, real-time posting protocols, moderation mechanisms, and engagement metrics aligned with concrete objectives (e.g., registrations, app downloads, fan-zone visits, purchases).

The transition from campaign-based to continuous attention models is another crucial factor. The mega-event becomes the pinnacle of a "always-on" narrative: before to the event, audiences are segmented and expectations are set; during the event, attention is focused on activations; and following the event, attention is stabilized through legacy narratives, highlights, and future formats. The design of user journeys from impression to engagement and from engagement to transaction or loyalty is where leverage takes on operational substance.

Branded Communities as Instruments for Converting Attention into Relationships

One of the most effective mechanisms for monetizing attention in digital environments is the development of online communities that enable longer-term relationships between brands and audiences. In the sports context, the concept of branded communities is particularly significant because it allows companies and sports organizations to bridge the gap between short-lived event hype and long-term relational value. Empirical findings suggest that such communities can enhance brand loyalty and, when transparently managed, need not undermine loyalty to the community itself; rather, they can become infrastructural nodes through which sponsorship and brand strategy are implemented via content, services, and interactions rather than mere exposure (Popp & Woratschek, 2015).

For leverage in global sporting events, this means that sponsor and organizer communication should not be designed as a one-off message, but as a relational ecosystem governed by its own rules (membership, privileges, exclusive content, gamification, loyalty programs). In practice, branded communities may take several forms:

- (a) platforms run by clubs or organizers (apps, memberships);
- (b) communities built around sponsor brands (e.g., fitness challenges, fantasy games);
- (c) hybrid models developed in partnership with media platforms.

The key leverage criterion is the ability to "lock in" attention through repeatable interaction and to measure and manage that interaction via CRM systems and data flows.

Reputational Leverage and “Image Leveraging”: Integrating Event, Destination, and Nation Brands

Beyond direct monetization, mega-events function as instruments of reputational leverage (destination or nation image, perceptions of modernity, competence, and hospitality). Research on “image leveraging,” using the case of Germany and the 2006 FIFA World Cup, shows that states can deliberately use mega-events as platforms for reshaping international perceptions, with intentionality and coordination of communication mechanisms proving more decisive than the mere staging of the event itself (Grix, 2012). This form of leverage is marketing-relevant because reputation spills over into investment attractiveness, tourism demand, and bargaining power in future commercial and sporting arrangements.

Reputational leverage, however, necessitates discipline: promises must be in line with audience experience (both visits and watchers worldwide), and narratives must be consistent across platforms. If not, there is a greater chance of reputational retaliation, especially in digital settings where unfavorable signals can spread quickly. Because reputation in the attention economy is defined as accumulated attention with a normative “quality signal,” reputational leverage should be viewed as a component of more comprehensive attention management.

The literature on sport and social media emphasizes the need to connect operational metrics with strategic objectives, as “high engagement” without a clear link to conversion or reputational outcomes may be tactically impressive but strategically inefficient (Filo et al., 2015). In parallel, studies on branded communities suggest that long-term value emerges when attention is translated into stable communities and when community management is integrally linked with brand strategy and sponsorships (Popp & Woratschek, 2015). Finally, monetization through media rights requires understanding attention value at the ecosystem level (who contributes audiences, how revenues are allocated, and how this affects the product), since long-term attention stability depends not only on creative campaigns but also on institutional arrangements (Bergantiños & Moreno-Ternero, 2021).

Cultural Transformations and Glocalization: Fan Identity, Media Convergence, and Event Legacy

Today, international sporting events serve as intense cultural “nodes” where (1) media formats and consumption habits, (2) symbolic values and identity narratives, and (3) longer-term patterns of socio-cultural change in host destinations and larger sport communities are formed concurrently. From the standardization and commercialization of the sporting spectacle to the negotiation of national, local, and transnational identities, the

literature increasingly highlights that a mega-event is a format that generates cultural resources and power mechanisms rather than a neutral "stage" on which sport is merely displayed (Horne, 2015). Within this framework, glocalization can be treated as a key analytical concept: it explains how globally organized sport products (rules, the aesthetics of television coverage, sponsorship models, digital ecosystems) are translated into local cultural codes (Vuković et al., 2025), while also showing how local fan practices, symbols, and narratives enter global flows and redefine them.

One of the most operational demonstrations of glocalization in sport appears in studies that track the reception and appropriation of "imported" sporting formats within local fan cultures. Cho shows that the expansion of global sport products (e.g., U.S. professional leagues and their associated pop-cultural infrastructure) does not necessarily lead to cultural homogenization; rather, it can generate a complex process of "de-/re-constitution" of the national and the local within the fan experience. In this process, the global becomes a resource rather than a substitute for the local: fans selectively appropriate global symbols and practices, but embed them within their own identity narratives and social distinctions (Cho, 2009). For mega-events, this has a direct implication: audiences are not homogeneous, and the cultural impact of the event depends on how different audience groups (local communities, diasporas, transnational fans, "spectator-tourists") interpret the event and integrate it into existing cultural repertoires.

In mega-events, glocalization frequently takes the shape of simultaneous local cultural distinctiveness (local symbols, language, national/city narratives, fan choreographies) and a universal worldwide framework (ceremonies, "broadcast grammar," standardized visual aesthetics). By definition, this simultaneity is not harmonious; rather, it is a site of negotiation and conflict, especially when local expectations of authenticity, fair access, or cultural representation clash with international economic standards. Because of this, glocalization is better understood as a process of ongoing decision-making about what is emphasized locally, what is suppressed, who obtains prominence, and who is ostracized rather than as "soft adaptation" (Dašić, 2023; Stanković, 2025).

Mega-events accelerate the transformation of fan identity from spatially rooted belonging (club/city/nation) toward multiple, situational, and network-mediated identities. Fan identity increasingly becomes a "layered" construction: the same individual may simultaneously be a local supporter, a transnational follower of a global club, a participant in a digital community, and a consumer of sports content across multiple formats. Such layering is especially activated during mega-events, when symbolic production intensifies—flags, rituals, fan repertoires, narratives of nation, and "us–them" distinctions.

Cho (2009) further indicates that global sports flows can generate new forms of the national and the local: appropriation of global sport formats sometimes produces "individualized" or hybrid forms of nationalism and belonging (e.g., identification that is si-

multaneously national and strongly personalized through consumer styles). In mega-events, this becomes visible in practice: national symbols are often “consumer-designed” (merchandise, aesthetics, branding of fandom), while a strong emotional and ritual charge of belonging is preserved.

This is the exact point at which a crucial question emerges: do mega-events promote societal cohesiveness or cause fragmentation? The literature on the social effects of mega-events emphasizes that “social” and “cultural” effects should not be viewed as inherently positive. While social cohesion, pride, and solidarity may rise, exclusion, unequal benefit distribution, and cultural tensions may also worsen (Mair et al., 2023). As a result, identity “gains” for fans and communities are not just psychological occurrences; rather, they are linked to participation, access, and inclusion policies (i.e., who can attend, who has symbolic and financial access to the event, and whose identity is validated in official narratives).

In contemporary sports communication, the mega-event is no longer primarily a television product; it is a transmedia regime in which content is distributed and reinterpreted across multiple platforms, with intensive interweaving of professional production and user-generated content (UGC) (Lunić, Ćesarević, 2025). Lee Ludvigsen analyzes the hyper-digitalization of sports mega-events through the shift toward platforms such as YouTube and related ecosystems, emphasizing that digital platforms are not merely secondary channels but spaces in which what counts as an “event” is (re)defined: through clips, recompositions, comments, algorithmic recommendation, and “always-on” dynamics (Lee Ludvigsen, 2023). The cultural consequences are twofold:

1. Fragmentation and narrative re-assembly—audiences increasingly experience the event through clips and micro-narratives rather than a single linear broadcast;
2. Algorithmic curation—the visibility of sporting moments and identity narratives increasingly depends on platform logics (recommendations, trends, engagement).

Such a convergent media system also changes how fan identity is produced: identity is “performed” through comments, sharing, memes, remix culture, and micro-communities. In other words, fandom becomes performative and network-mediated, with the mega-event serving as the peak of this performativity.

The mediatization of sport is not only a question of technology, but also of institutions that govern how the event is represented—through which language, which values, and which interpretive frameworks. Ličen, Antunovic, and Bartoluci analyze how mediatization manifests through digital Olympic content on social media and show that institutional media (e.g., public service broadcasters) negotiate between public interest and platform logics in digital environments, so that the “Olympic” narrative can be simultaneously informative, promotional, and identity-laden (Ličen et al., 2022). This is relevant to mega-events because it demonstrates that the cultural politics of representation unfolds not only in organizing committees and ceremonies, but also in everyday digital posts: topic selection,

tone, focus on national pride, selection of athletes as symbols, and the visibility of marginalized groups, among others.

In the context of a larger sociological framework, Horne highlights that mega-events are by definition "media events" and that a "non-mediatized mega-event" is paradoxical since mass media coverage makes it possible for a mega-event to serve as both a cultural resource for identity and a tool for commercialization and urban transformation (Horne, 2015). One important finding is that media architecture (platforms, rights, editorial rules, algorithms) influences what becomes "significant" and "historic" in the public memory, therefore it is impossible to assess the cultural impacts of mega-events independently.

The concept of legacy is often used normatively in the political and promotional rhetoric of mega-events, whereas scholarly literature insists on empirical differentiation: legacy may be planned or unplanned, positive or negative, tangible or intangible, short-term or long-term. Thomson et al., through a systematic quantitative review of the literature, show that the legacy research field has expanded, but also that substantial heterogeneity persists in terminology, theoretical frameworks, and measurement methodologies; moreover, the "cultural" and "political" dimensions of legacy constitute a stable yet methodologically demanding research area (Thomson et al., 2019). This is particularly important for this chapter because cultural transformations often fall into the category of "intangible" changes: shifts in identity, pride, perceptions of the city/state, patterns of cultural participation, and media practices.

The literature on the social effects of mega-events also shows that assessments frequently suffer from selectivity: costs (such as exclusion, gentrification, and disruption of local cultural scenes) are less commonly operationalized or treated as "collateral" effects, while benefits (such as pride, solidarity, and destination branding) are highlighted (Mair et al., 2023). Because cultural legacy is not just a "outcome," but also a process of allocating resources, visibility, and legitimacy, it is vital to examine which cultures and behaviors are supported by the mega-event.

When insights on glocalization, media convergence, and legacy are integrated, a clearer picture emerges: cultural transformations in mega-events are not marginal side effects of sporting competition, but a systemic product of interactions between global flows and local practices, mediated by regimes of media infrastructure.

- Globalization explains how global sport formats become locally meaningful through selective appropriation and hybridization of identities (Cho, 2009).
- Media convergence explains how the "event" is disassembled and reassembled through transmedia flows and platforms, reshaping fandom practices and cultural participation (Lee Ludvigsen, 2023).

- Mediatization explains the institutional production of meaning and the competition between public interest, national narratives, and platform logics (Ličen et al., 2022), within a broader context in which the mega-event becomes a key element of contemporary consumer culture and symbolic politics (Horne, 2015).
- Legacy, finally, describes how these transformations are stabilized (or contested) over time, amid methodological challenges in measuring intangible cultural and social change (Thomson et al., 2019) and the need to assess both benefits and costs (Mair et al., 2023).

A research and practical conclusion follows: cultural transformations and glocalization in mega-events cannot be credibly analyzed without integrating three levels—(1) fan identities and practices, (2) media/platform architectures and institutional editorial regimes, and (3) empirically grounded legacy evaluations that capture both positive and negative, and both tangible and intangible outcomes.

Conclusion

The role of global sporting events can no longer be understood exclusively as athletic competitions or one-off spectacles, but rather as complex socio-economic and cultural platforms that simultaneously generate market value, symbolic resources, and long-term societal consequences.

From a marketing perspective, global sporting events function as exceptionally powerful accelerators of attention; however, attention in itself has no lasting value unless it is strategically managed. The concept of marketing leverage emerges as a key analytical and operational framework for understanding the distinction between short-term exposure and long-term value creation. The analysis demonstrates that successful attention monetization depends on early preparation, stakeholder coordination, and the capacity to embed the event within a broader ecosystem of media rights, digital platforms, branded communities, and reputational management. In other words, the market value of mega-events does not arise automatically from their global visibility, but from the ability of actors to translate that visibility into sustainable relationships, data assets, loyalty, and reputation.

At the same time, cultural analysis shows that global sporting events operate as intensive spaces of identity production and transformation. Processes of glocalization clearly indicate that global sport formats do not erase local cultures and identities, but reshape them through selective appropriation, hybridization, and the negotiation of meaning. Fan identities become multilayered, transnational, and strongly mediated, while belonging is increasingly expressed through digital practices, performative forms of fandom, and

participation in networked communities. Media convergence further intensifies these dynamics, as the mega-event no longer exists as a singular, unified experience, but as a set of fragmented, algorithmically distributed narratives that collectively shape cultural significance and collective memory.

A particularly important conclusion concerns the question of legacy. The analysis shows that the legacy of mega-events cannot be reduced to infrastructure or short-term economic indicators alone, but must also encompass intangible cultural and social changes: shifts in identity perceptions, media practices, patterns of cultural participation, and relations between global and local actors. These effects are neither inherently positive nor evenly distributed; rather, they depend on how events are governed, on the inclusion of local communities, and on the balance between commercial interests and social responsibility. This confirms that marketing strategies and cultural consequences are deeply intertwined: the ways in which attention is monetized and managed directly shape the kind of cultural legacy an event leaves behind.

Global sporting events thus represent a paradigmatic example of the contemporary attention economy and spectacle culture, in which market, media, and identity processes unfold simultaneously and interdependently. Their analysis requires an integrated approach that connects marketing, media studies, and the sociology of sport. Only such an approach makes it possible to understand how short-lived sporting moments are transformed into long-term economic, cultural, and social structures, and under what conditions these processes can be sustainable, inclusive, and socially legitimate.

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