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Relevance and drivers of sustainability in the sponsorship of major sporting events

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Abstract

The awareness of sustainability has increased by current developments (e.g., climate change) and companies have located sustainability topics as fields of profiling (Trail & McCullough, 2020). Concurrently, sustainability considerations are becoming increasingly important for the organizers of sporting events (Moesch, Nagel & Lamprecht, 2022). Since, especially elite sport is no longer automatically associated with positive effects, both, organizers and sponsors, are required to emphasize sustainability in sponsorships (Putzing & Menn, 2014). Therefore, this study analyses the relevance of sustainability in sponsorship commitments and its drivers. In so doing, semi-structured interviews were conducted with five event organizers and five sponsors of major sporting events. The findings show that sustainability is relevant for all analyzed sponsorship engagements. While larger sponsors rather tend to introduce the sustainability issue, the initiative more likely stems from the organizers' side for smaller sponsors. Furthermore, sustainability efforts of the organizers are strongly influenced by requirements from the public sector. The interviewed stakeholders agree that sustainability in sponsorships adds value for both sides. While the organizers profit from securing event financing and fulfilling public sector requirements, the sponsors may improve their image through social responsibility efforts. The study demonstrates major sporting events stakeholders' drivers to implement sustainability measures, which may help to shape incentives for future sustainable sponsorship commitments.

Key words: major sporting events, sports sponsoring, event sponsoring, sustainability, corporate social responsibility

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