

Examine the Critical Success Factors Involved in Organizing International Sports Events

Muhammad Aqib Khursheed*

University of Guilan Iran, Rasht, Iran

*Corresponding author: Muhammad Aqib Khursheed, aqib.superior@gmail.com

Abstract

International sports events such as the Olympic Games, FIFA World Cup, and Commonwealth Games serve as platforms for global visibility, economic growth, and national prestige. However, the successful organization of such mega-events depends on multiple interdependent factors. This study systematically reviews academic literature to identify the critical success factors (CSFs) in managing international sports events, applying the Resource-Based View (RBV) as the guiding framework. A systematic review was conducted using PRISMA guidelines, with Scopus and Web of Science as the primary databases. Out of 1,050 initial records, 42 academic papers were included for final analysis. The findings reveal that both tangible resources (e.g., facilities, financial input, volunteer workforce) and intangible resources (e.g., organizational capacity, reputation, stakeholder engagement) play pivotal roles in event success. Moreover, government policies, community involvement, and media engagement emerged as essential external influences shaping event outcomes. The study concludes that effective management of international sports events requires the integration of internal organizational strengths with supportive institutional frameworks. It further highlights gaps in existing research, including limited focus on events outside North America and Asia, and insufficient exploration of women's and disability sports. The paper proposes a strategic framework to guide future host nations, especially in the Global South, in achieving sustainable and high-impact sports events.

Keywords

International Sports Event, Event Success Factors, Global Sports Competitions, Successful Sports Hosting, Urban Development, Event Life Cycle

1. Introduction

Internationally recognized events including the Olympic Games, the FIFA World Cup, and the Commonwealth Games play a significant role in strengthening diplomatic relations, boosting tourism and enhancing a country's visibility on the world stage. Achieving success in these events depends on a combination of critical elements, including sound infrastructure, efficient management, political stability, collaboration among stakeholders and strategic media engagement [1]. According to Gratton and Preuss (2008)-1, careful planning and the development of a sustainable legacy are crucial for generating long-term economic and social benefits. Likewise, Getz (2005) emphasizes the importance of involving diverse groups such as governments, corporate sponsors and local communities in streamlining event operations.

The effectiveness of management practices such as risk control, coordination of volunteers and readiness of venues also plays a pivotal role in determining the overall outcome of these events. Additionally, delivering a high quality experience for athletes and spectators through proper logistics, hospitality and safety measures contributes significantly to the host nation's international reputation and future event opportunities. Therefore, a comprehensive understanding of the various success factors is essential for those responsible for planning and delivering global sports events [2].

Hosting the Olympic Games can place immense financial pressure on the organizing cities and nations, sometimes resulting in severe budget deficits, as witnessed in Montreal (1976) and Athens (2004). Although the International Olympic Committee now plays a role in overseeing financial planning, difficulties remain especially when it comes to funding large-scale infrastructure. Often, Olympic hosts invest in stadiums and transport networks that are either not fully utilized after the event or lack a long-term maintenance strategy [3]. A prominent example is the 2004 Athens Olympics, where many built structures are now unused and deteriorating.

International sporting events have transformed into complex and influential platforms that unite athletes, fans, media professionals and policymakers from all corners of the globe. Global competitions like the Olympics, FIFA and Asian Games showcase the pinnacle of sports excellence and elite performance but also serve as powerful tools for stimulating economic progress, enhancing urban infrastructure and improving a nation's global reputation. Nonetheless, the success

of these events relies on various interdependent factors such as administrative strength, political will, societal engagement, financial capacity and environmental foresight [4].

Scholarly literature indicates that effectively managing these mega-events requires robust governance structures, collaboration among diverse stakeholders, sound fiscal planning, and a clear focus on lasting legacies. When these foundational aspects are overlooked, host countries often face significant issues like overspending, disuse of built infrastructure, criticism from the public and failure to capitalize on long-term benefits. The cases of Athens (2004) and Rio de Janeiro (2016) provide vivid examples of how inadequate legacy strategies can diminish the lasting value of such events [5].

In today's globalized and highly visible environment, success in hosting international sports events extends beyond the execution of games or the medal tally [6]. It now includes broader criteria such as active community engagement, positive economic impact, environmental responsibility, and enduring societal gains.

The objective of this paper is to examine the critical success factors involved in organizing international sports events. By synthesizing academic insights, examining practical case studies and incorporating perspectives from relevant stakeholders, this study aims to propose a strategic framework that can assist future host nations especially those in the Global South in planning and delivering sustainable and high-impact events [7].

2. Materials and Methods

To investigate the research question, “Which business resources are critical key success factors (KSFs) in managing sports events? A systematic approach is adopted. This method allows for an in-depth and structured evaluation of existing literature related to a specific inquiry. By applying clear inclusion and exclusion criteria, it helps minimize potential biases in the selection process. Furthermore, it provides a framework for researchers to thoroughly assess the methodological quality of the studies reviewed, thereby enhancing the credibility and robustness of the conclusions drawn. Initiating the systematic review involves using the PRISMA flowchart to detail each stage of the review process. At the outset, specific inclusion and exclusion criteria were defined to guide the selection of relevant literature [8]. The process of locating academic articles took place from May to June 2021. The databases Scopus (Elsevier) and Web of Science (Clarivate) were selected as the primary sources because of their extensive coverage of scholarly publications and their advanced tools for citation tracking (figure 1).

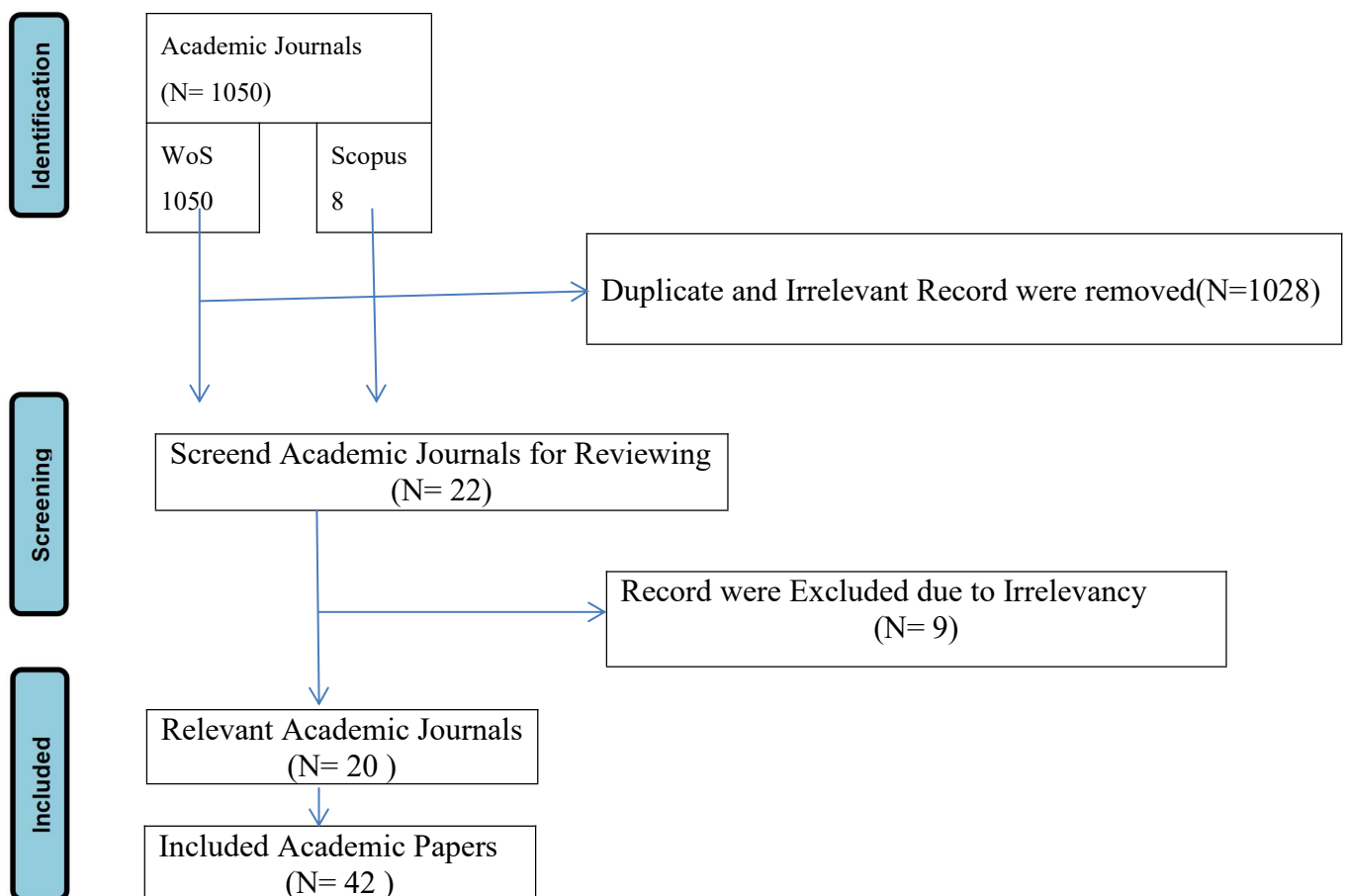


Figure 1. Show academic journal retrieval procedure according to PRISMA.

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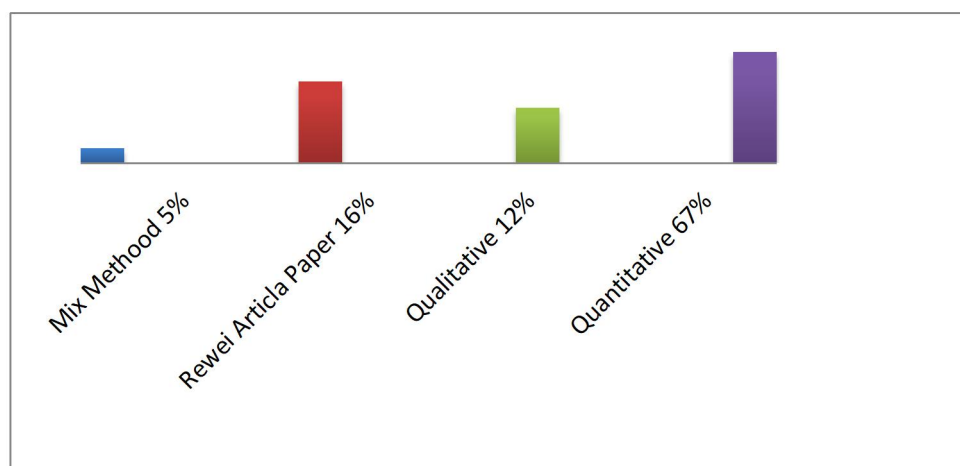
Table 1. List of academic journals included in the study.

Journal Title	
The Journal Sport Management Review	The International Journal of Sports Marketing and Sponsorship
The Journal of Sport Management	The International Journal of the History of Sport
The European Sport Management Quarterly(ESMQ)	The Recreational Sports Journal
The Event Management Journal	The Sport Marketing Quarterly
The International Journal of Sport Management and Marketing	The Journal of Sports Economics
The Journal of Global Sport Management	The Sport in Society Journal
The Journal of Applied Sport Management	The Journal of Sport & Tourism
The Managing Sport and Leisure	The Journal of Policy Research in Tourism, Leisure and Events
The SPORT TK-EuroAmerican Journal of Sport Sciences	The International Journal of Event and Festival Management
The Journal of Sport Policy and Politics	The Journal of Convention and Event Tourism

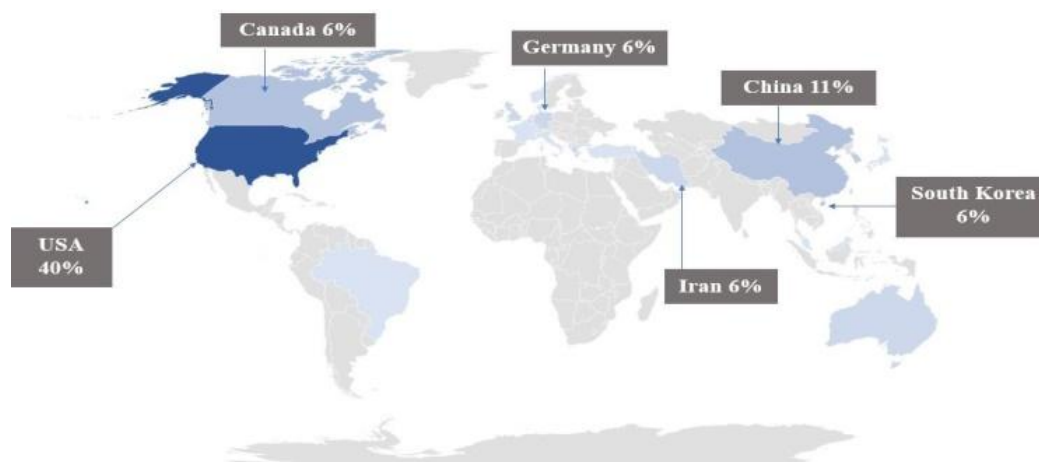
Results:

Table 1 mention Analysis reveals approximately 67% scholarly research adopts quantitative methodologies, in contrast to about 12% that apply qualitative techniques (figure 2).

The remaining studies apply either theoretical models or a mix of research methodologies [9]. Quantitative methods are commonly selected because the subjects examined such as attendance at sports events, levels of participation, motivational factors, intentions to return, and volunteer engagement often require analysis of large populations. Due to practical limitations in terms of time and funding, these methods are considered more efficient and appropriate for addressing such topics.

**Figure 2.** Show types of research methods used in the included papers.

Many of the available studies have been carried out in the United States, with some also conducted in countries like China, South Korea, Iran, Canada and Germany. This shows that sports event research tends to be centered around North America and Asia [10]. On the other hand, there is a noticeable lack of scholarly work focused on South Africa, indicating that important success factors for sports events in that region have not been thoroughly explored (figure 3).

**Figure 3.** Mention country and regional distribution.

Mini football stands out as the most frequently examined sport in relation to key success factors (KSFs). Other events, such as hockey and marathons, have also been the subject of notable academic inquiry [11]. In contrast, there is a

noticeable lack of research focused on disability sports and women's sporting events, indicating the need for further study in these areas. Much of the scholarly work in sports event studies centers around prominent global competitions and elite professional leagues, including MLB, NBA, NFL, NHL, and MLS. Figure 4 illustrates that about 38% of this research is devoted to examining major events such as the Olympic Games. On the other hand, smaller and moderately scaled sports events have not received the same level of academic interest, indicating a noticeable gap in the literature.

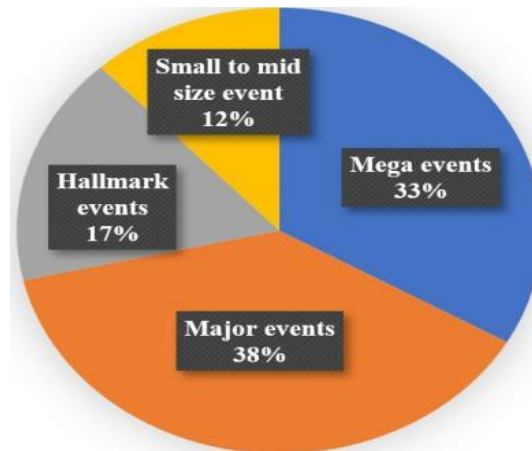


Figure 4. Show types of events in the included studies.

Figure 4 highlights main success factors in managing sports events, organized according to the Resource-Based View (RBV) framework. Tangible resources are shown to be especially important for the effective delivery of these events. Among the resource types, organizational and reputational assets are mentioned more often than others, including human, financial, and physical resources [12].

3. Discussion

Intangible assets, including an event's reputation and internal capabilities, play a better role in the successful organization of International sports events. When approached from a business perspective, these events rely on organizational strengths such as effective partnerships, collaborative networks, tailored event services, branded sports products and strong managerial execution [13]. Effective use of internal resources through professional event coordination can significantly increase media coverage and draw major financial support from corporate sponsors. The involvement and backing of stakeholders, especially from the local community, are fundamental to the effective organization of sports events. According to Johnston and Naylor, the attitudes and support of residents significantly affect the overall success of hosting large-scale sporting competitions, as they shape public perception of the event's outcomes. Sports and event offerings encompass different competition formats, the administration of sports clubs and the attractiveness generated through proficient event coordination. These elements affect people's decisions to engage in sports events by enhancing their experience, which in turn encourages greater willingness to spend money. Sports events can increase their funding through multiple sources in addition to broadcasting rights and sponsorship agreements. Moreover, intangible assets like a positive perception of the host city, professionalism and a well-regarded event reputation play an important role as business resources that help ensure event success. The perception of a city or location, influenced by its distinctive character and authenticity, significantly contributes to creating meaningful experiences for attendees and participants alike. Such positive impressions often lead to a higher likelihood of people returning for future sports events. Additionally, a strong and appealing event reputation helps draw larger audiences, secure sponsorships and increase media exposure. Volunteers are an essential part of the tangible resources in sports event organizations, contributing significantly to the successful execution of events through their dedication and work [14]. Event organizers can maximize the value of this resource by supporting volunteers' personal growth through teamwork assignments and fair distribution of tasks. Building an environment of trust, belonging and altruism is key to boosting volunteer satisfaction and encouraging their ongoing participation in future sports events. Tangible resources are important in influencing the experiences of those involved in sports events. In particular, the condition of facilities, the range of amenities and the comfort provided within the stadium help improve attendees' overall enjoyment. Elements like the layout of seats, size of the venue, cleaning of restrooms, available of refreshments and Retail spaces that sell keepsakes and themed items help enrich the spectator's overall enjoyment at events. To summarize, the Resource Based View (RBV) theory is essential for explaining what drives success in sports event management. It emphasizes how various resources both tangible and organizational are interconnected and influence the reputation of the event. This, in turn, affects the experiences of key groups including spectators, participants, local communities and sponsors. However, it should also be acknowledged that elements beyond organizational resources and capabilities play a significant role in achieving success and maintaining a competitive advantage in sports events suggest to the Paines. Our analysis shows that certain external factors—such as shifts in government policies, particularly those related to sports and tourism development and play an important role in the successful delivery of sports events. Government and institutional involvement can play an important role in the development and long-term impact of elite sports events, especially when policies are aligned with goals of success and legacy building. In light of this, a conceptual framework

has been developed to identify the key success factors (KSFs) in managing sports events (refer to figure 5). The framework outlines the core business resources essential for effective event execution and demonstrates how these elements are interconnected. The statement also points to policy orientation as a significant outside influence on the success of managing sports events [15].

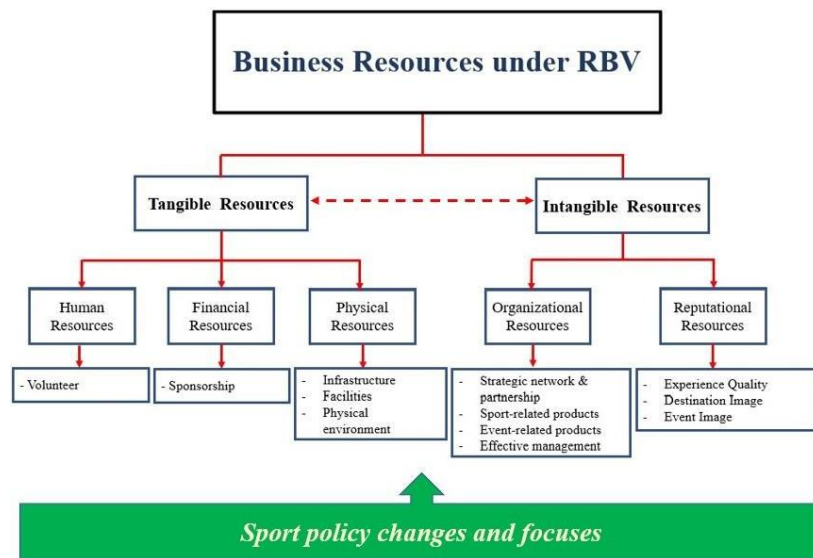


Figure 5. Mention framework representing the core success factors in managing sports events.

4. Literature Review

A deeper application of the Resource-Based View (RBV) highlights that critical success factors (CSFs) in international sports events are not solely dependent on tangible inputs but also on the ability of organizers to deploy intangible capabilities strategically. Tangible resources, such as modern facilities, advanced logistics, and financial sponsorship, are visible indicators of preparedness, yet without intangible resources—such as leadership quality, strategic partnerships, and organizational reputation—these assets cannot generate sustainable outcomes. In this regard, the Dynamic Capabilities Theory complements RBV by emphasizing the adaptability and innovation of organizing committees in responding to uncertainties, including political instability, pandemics, and technological disruptions. For example, the Tokyo 2020 Olympics demonstrated the importance of resilience and adaptability, as organizers were forced to redesign entire operational models due to the COVID-19 pandemic [16].

Equally significant is the role of stakeholder theory in understanding how diverse interests—governments, sponsors, local communities, athletes, and international federations—shape the trajectory of mega-events. Effective stakeholder management requires inclusive communication, transparent decision-making, and equitable distribution of event benefits. Research consistently shows that community resistance can undermine the perceived legitimacy of hosting, as observed in Brazil where widespread protests during Rio 2016 raised concerns about corruption, overspending, and displacement of local populations. Conversely, London 2012 is frequently cited as a model of community inclusion, where urban regeneration projects and long-term housing development enhanced local support and left a positive legacy.

From a policy and governance perspective, international institutions such as the IOC and FIFA exert considerable influence over host nations [17]. While these organizations set strict requirements for infrastructure, media rights, and sponsorship agreements, they also provide opportunities for global visibility. However, critics argue that the imbalance of power between international federations and host nations often results in unsustainable investments. To mitigate this risk, governments must integrate sports event planning into broader national development strategies, aligning infrastructure projects with long-term urban and social objectives. For instance, the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar showcased how infrastructure investments were designed not only for the tournament but also for long-term urban development, transportation networks, and global positioning as a hub for sports tourism.

Looking towards the future of international sports events, two trends stand out: digital transformation and sustainability. Digital innovations are reshaping spectator experiences through mobile ticketing, virtual and augmented reality platforms, and data-driven fan engagement. These technologies not only expand revenue streams but also increase accessibility for global audiences. On the other hand, sustainability has emerged as a non-negotiable success factor [18]. With growing scrutiny from environmental groups and international bodies, host cities are expected to commit to carbon neutrality, renewable energy adoption, and circular economy principles in event planning. Paris 2024, for example, has pledged to deliver the first climate-positive Olympics, aiming to halve carbon emissions compared to previous editions.

Despite these advances, several research gaps remain. Existing scholarship disproportionately focuses on mega-events in North America, Europe, and parts of Asia, leaving limited understanding of success factors in underrepresented regions such as Africa, South America (beyond Brazil), and the Middle East (excluding Qatar). Moreover, women's and

disability sports remain marginalized in academic research, despite their growing importance for inclusivity and social sustainability in global sports governance. Addressing these gaps would contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the global sports event ecosystem and offer practical insights for nations aspiring to leverage such events for broader development goals.

5. Conclusion

The study explores essential factors that lead to successful management of sports events, using the Resource-Based View (RBV) as its foundational theory. By systematically analyzing existing literature, it concludes that both physical and non-physical resources, along with policy directions shaped by institutional structures, play a crucial role in ensuring effective sports event execution. Intangible elements such as organizational capacity and brand reputation play a pivotal role in managing sports events successfully. Stakeholder engagement, a positive perception of the event and strong project execution can help draw spectators, attract sponsorship and secure media interest. Additionally, the involvement of volunteers, financial input from sponsors and the availability of physical facilities are important in enhancing the experience for all event participants. Furthermore, when governments prioritize sports policy as part of broader national development, such efforts can significantly support the long-term success of sports events [19].

Despite its contributions, the study acknowledges several limitations. Only English-language sources were considered, excluding non-English articles indexed in databases like Web of Science (WoS). Also, the selection of literature was based primarily on keywords relevant to sports and focused on journals within the field, possibly omitting relevant research published in other academic disciplines. Since sports event management intersects with multiple fields, important insights may also be found in journals outside traditional sports studies. Key journals referenced include *International Marketing Review*, *World Leisure*, *Marketing Intelligence & Planning* and *Performance*.

The analysis highlights significant gaps in current research related to sports event management. Most existing studies tend to prioritize quantitative methods and concentrate on large-scale events, particularly those conducted in North America and Asia. This narrow focus has restricted the broader understanding of key success factors (KSFs) across diverse contexts [20]. Consequently, there is a strong need for the adoption of more varied research methodologies and the inclusion of wider geographic perspectives. Moreover, each identified KSF should be examined more thoroughly to understand its practical relevance and application in different types of sports events.

Key Observations

- ❖ Through a systematic review of the existing literature, this study identifies vital business resources that play a key role in the successful organization of sports events. To make the most of these resources, it is suggested that event organizers adopt well-defined strategic planning and apply focused marketing communication approaches.
- ❖ Moreover, external influences particularly government policy should be carefully considered, as they can have a substantial impact on both the organization and outcome of sports events.

Author Contributions

Muhammad Aqib Khursheed conceptualized and designed the study. He also conducted the data collection, performed the analysis and interpreted the findings. In addition, he prepared the initial draft and made substantial intellectual revisions to the manuscript. Since the study did not involve statistical testing, no statistical procedures were applied. Sadia Abdul Khaliq provided administrative, technical and material assistance. Professor Dr Goher Rustami oversaw the overall supervision of the research.

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