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Shaping of relationships with external stakeholders
in the process of organizing sports events

Kształtowanie relacji z interesariuszami zewnętrznymi
w procesie organizacji wydarzeń sportowych

Abstract of the Doctoral Dissertation

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1. Justification for the choice of subject

In times of progressing globalization, market volatility and strong competition, the success of a given venture is determined by an action strategy based on unique resources and the creation and maintenance of lasting relationships with entities from the environment [Kwiecień, 2014]. Currently, researchers agree that it is the cooperation of enterprises connected in various types of network connections that creates the greatest chance of success. Managers are beginning to notice the high value of the network of relationships, within which there may be a consolidation of resources and mutual support, which creates conditions for building a competitive advantage and may contribute to the development of the project [Tubielewicz, 2013]. Multilevel and multifaceted relationships in which various entities from the market environment participate are the foundations of the most popular and most frequently recommended management concept, i.e. the relational concept.

In network organizations, the key importance is played by stakeholders who can actively influence the decisions and actions of enterprises, and in some cases even co-create the value created with them. For this reason, an element of strategic management of an economic entity should be shaping relations with stakeholders in order to use their dormant potential and include them in value-creating processes.

It is no different in the sports market, which was the area of scientific exploration in this dissertation. The modern sports market, including entities, phenomena and processes taking place in it, is subject to the rules of the market economy, just like in other areas of life. This requires a new look at the sports market, and thus a new way of organizing and managing sports [Wańkowski, 2011].

The literature on sport and the sports market emphasizes its complex nature and links not only with physical fitness and competition, but also with other areas of socio-economic life [Krawczyk, 1997]. The links between sport and business, economy, labor market, culture and politics at the regional or national level are becoming more and more important. Confirmation of this may be the use of sport as an instrument to achieve various social or economic goals [Bosiacki, Śniadek, 2012]. The modern sports market is multidimensional, it is in relation to most areas of life, thus becoming an excellent platform

for the operation of numerous entities, both those operating commercially and those not focused on a profit.

One of the most important elements of sport are sports events. From a managerial point of view, they should be treated as a marketing product that is to meet the needs and expectations of the client and other stakeholders. It turns out that building relationships with stakeholders in the sports events market is a particularly difficult task due to the high diversity of, often different expectations of many stakeholder groups [Waśkowski, 2015a]. The organization of sports events must take into account the needs of many groups of stakeholders who may directly or indirectly influence the process of their preparation and course. Understanding these needs and expectations, and then shaping appropriate relationships with stakeholders, increases the organizer's chances of success, so what approach should be considered necessary in the contemporary management of sports organizations.

For several decades now, there has been a noticeable increase in the number of various sports events, ranging from small local events to the so-called mega events attracting the attention of the whole world. The wide interest in sports events contributed to their professionalisation and commercialization. Sport has become a business, and its links with the economy on its various levels are becoming more and more clear [Sznajder, 2007]. Thus, it has become an attractive field of scientific exploration. Many researchers dealing with this area of socio-economic life draw attention to the specific features of the sports market, its differentiation and dissimilarity in relation to the market of consumer goods. This means that known management mechanisms and methods used in other industry markets should be adapted to the analyzed market, and therefore it is justified to conduct scientific research on the phenomenon of sport, also from an economic perspective.

Considering the above, the need to conduct research on the stakeholders in sports events market and their importance in the process of organizing these events. In both world and Polish-language literature, little space is devoted to this complex problem.

The conducted, in-depth literature studies highlighted a gap in the research on shaping and using relationships with stakeholders by entities operating on the sports market in the process of organizing sports events. It has been noticed that the previous scientific works related most often to the recognition of various forms of activity and involvement of stakeholders, ignoring the concepts of managing relations with them, e.g. by the organizers

of sports events. Even more so, there is a lack of studies, supported by research results, relating to the management of these relations in terms of processes. This finding inspired the author to take up this research problem.

2. The purpose of the dissertation and research questions

The review of the literature allowed for the formulation of the research problem, the main purpose of the dissertation and specific objectives. The research problem concerns the shaping of relations with external stakeholders by entities operating on the sports market in the process of organizing sports events.

The main goal of the dissertation is to assess the importance of the relationships built with external stakeholders in the process of organizing a sports event.

To achieve the main goal of the dissertation, it is necessary to achieve the specific objectives as follows:

1. Identification and classification of external stakeholders interested in the preparation, organization and course of a sports event.
2. Establishing the perception of relationships with external stakeholders by organizers of sports events.
3. Identification of ways of building relationships with external stakeholders by the organizers of sports events.
4. Determining the influence of external stakeholders on the decisions made by the organizers at each stage of the process of organizing sports events.

Based on the main goal and specific goals, research questions were formulated:

P1. What is the structure of external stakeholders depending on the range of the sporting event?

P2. What is the role of partner relations with entities from the environment on the sports events market in the context of their organization?

P3. How do sport event organizers build and maintain relationships with external stakeholders in order to improve activities in the organizational process?

P4. With which external stakeholders do sport event organizers have the greatest difficulty in building partnerships and what is it caused by?

P5. To what extent do sports events organizers take into account the expectations of external stakeholders?

The relationship between specific goals and research questions is presented in Figure 1. With regard to the third goal, two research questions were posed.

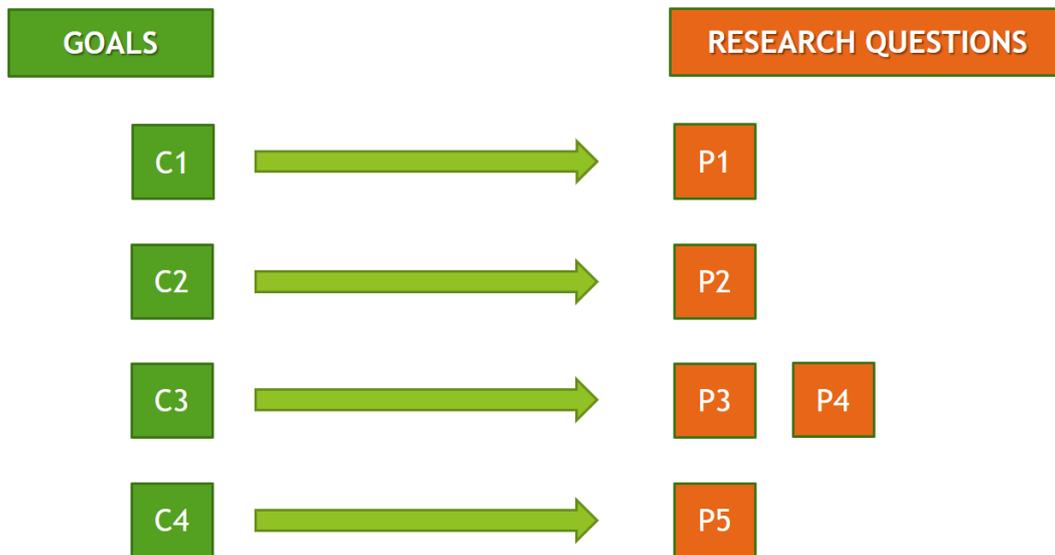


Figure 1. Goals and research questions.

Source: Own study.

The considerations in the dissertation refer to sports events organized periodically, e.g. once a year, but not to events taking place within sports leagues.

The author of the dissertation proposed her own classification of stakeholders, which divides them into five groups (Figure 2.):

- Business to Customers (B2C),
- Business to Business (B2B),
- Business to Public (B2P),
- Sports organizations,
- Media.

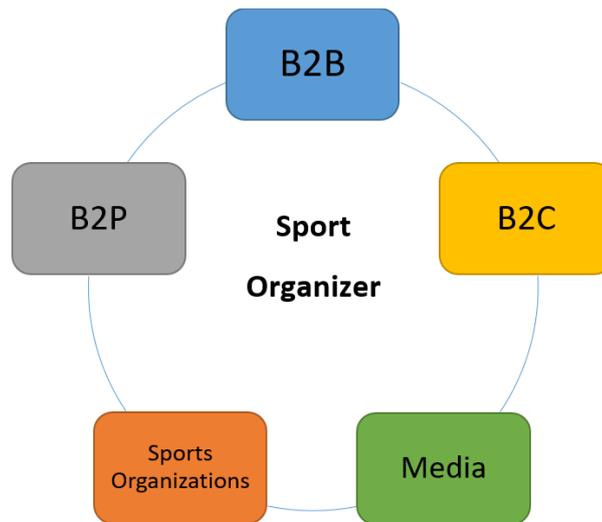


Figure 2. Main groups of event stakeholders

Source: Own study.

Only relationships with external stakeholders who have or may have their share in creating the value of these events will be analyzed and examined. The role of stakeholders in creating these values can change at each stage. The scope of the dissertation follows from the assumptions described above.

The material scope of the research conducted covers the relations between the organizers of sports events and external stakeholders.

The subjective scope of the dissertation includes organizers of sports events who organized regional, national or international events.

The spatial scope in relation to the conducted own research covers the entire territory of Poland.

The time scope of empirical research covers the period from 2020 to 2022. On the theoretical level, this scope covers the literature from the last three decades, supplemented, where necessary, with even older.

3. Sources and research methods

The dissertation is a theoretical and empirical study which concerns the impact of relations with external stakeholders on the organization of sports events. The adopted research methods result from the research problem and the formulated research objectives.

The dissertation is a theoretical and empirical study and concerns the impact of relations with external stakeholders on the organization of sports events. The adopted research methods result from the research problem and the formulated research objectives.

In the theoretical part of the dissertation, methods of logical analysis and deduction methods will be used. Literature sources covering over 250 bibliographic items will be used. They will include monographs and scientific articles, both Polish and foreign, research results conducted by institutions managing sports events and information from websites regarding the subject of the dissertation.

For the purposes of this dissertation, the research will cover the organizers of regional, national and international sports events.

Verification of the research questions assumed in the dissertation will require the use of primary sources. The empirical part of the work will be based on data from Individual Depth Interviews and from the conducted questionnaire research.

First, research was conducted in the form of Individual Depth Interviews. The research was carried out between March 2020 and December 2020, on a group of 30 sports events organizers. The purpose of the in-depth interview was to draw attention to specific issues related to shaping relations with external stakeholders at a given stage of the process of organizing a sports event and identifying various activities addressed to specific groups of stakeholders. Information gathered during the interviews allowed for the preparation of a proprietary questionnaire.

Another study was conducted with the use of the proprietary questionnaire. The research was conducted in electronic form, in the period from December 2020 to April 2022. The survey included a sample of 123 organizers of sports events. The tool was constructed after the questionnaire was verified by competent judges (industry specialists and a statistical analyst). The final version of the tool on which the research was carried out was used in the first stage for pilot studies sent to 30 organizers of sports events, with a regional, national or international range. The pilot stage is to verify the correctness of the questionnaire through the reliability analysis. Positive verification of the questionnaire allowed for the inclusion of the pilot studies in the actual research and the use of an identical questionnaire in the second stage. The questionnaire was addressed to people directly responsible for a given event, i.e. general managers, directors or managers responsible for the coordination and management of a sports event.

4. Structure of the dissertation

The dissertation consists of an introduction, five chapters and an ending. The first three chapters are cognitively theoretical and are based on the conducted literature studies covering domestic and foreign compact literature, articles in national and foreign scientific journals, as well as internet sources. The last two chapters are its empirical part. They contain a description and analysis of the research carried out and present the conclusions drawn from them.

The first chapter concerns the theoretical analysis of issues related to the role of relations in managing an organization. Based on the literature on the subject, the types, functions, features and roles of relations in building the company's strategy will be presented. This part of the dissertation will also describe network relationships and their place in organizational management. The following sections of the chapter will present the stakeholders, their features, types and relations between them.

The second chapter will deal with the essence of sports events, and thus the characteristics of the sports market. In connection with the subject of the work, the stakeholders of sports events will be discussed in detail. This chapter presents the division of external stakeholders proposed by the author (Figure 2). The economic, social, political and cultural aspects of the organization of events will be presented there. Based on the conducted literature studies, the conditions resulting from the professionalization and commercialization of sports events that contemporary sports event organizers face will also be presented.

Chapter three focuses on the organizational issues of sports events. First, the literature on the organizational structures of sport will be reviewed. The goals and rationale for the activities of sports events organizers will be presented, depending on the sector of the economy. Based on the conducted literature studies, selected processes of organizing sports events will be presented and discussed. Then, the author of the dissertation will present an original model of the organization of sports events (Figure 3).

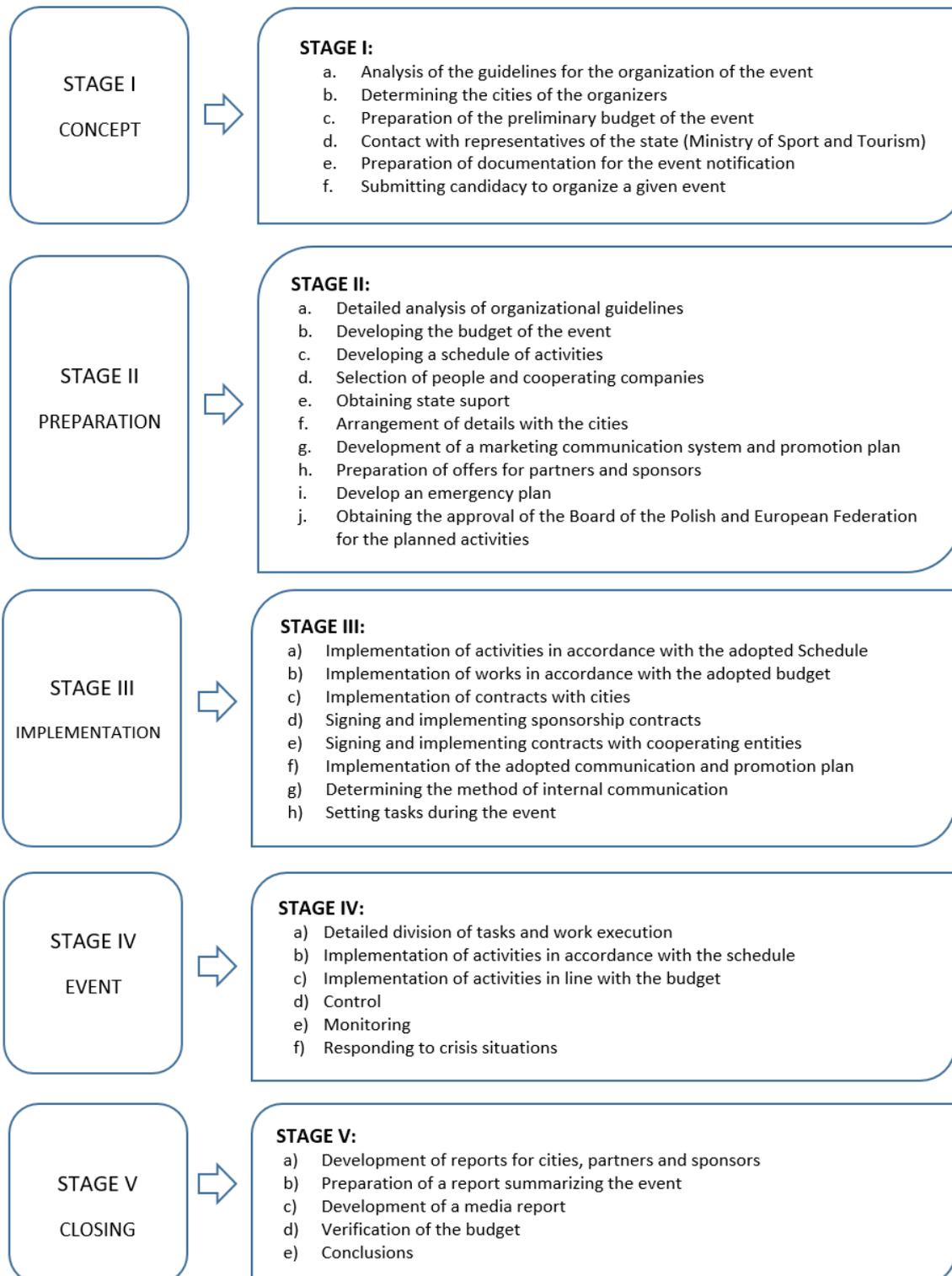


Figure 3. The process of organizing a sports event

Source: Own study.

Chapter four will contain some of the results of empirical research. First, the organization and methodology of the research will be described. The results of research on entities interested in sports events as well as their expectations and role in the organizational process of a sports event will be presented.

In the last chapter of the dissertation, the results of the research presenting the characteristics of connections and the variability of relations with external stakeholders of sporting events at a given stage of the organization and the resulting difficulties will be presented. This section will also include ways to build relationships between sports event organizers and external stakeholders. The issue of the importance and influence of stakeholders on the various stages of a sports event will be analyzed, as well as changes in the decisions of the organizers under their influence. There will also be a presentation of a model approach to the process of organizing sports events, taking into account relations with external stakeholders at individual stages. The chapter will conclude with recommendations for business practice.

5. Research outcomes, conclusions, and recommendations

Based on the empirical research, key groups of external stakeholders were identified, depending on the range of the event. This made it possible to define the structure of stakeholders of sports organizations, depending on the range of the event. The organizers of regional and national events cooperated with a similar group of entities as the organizers of international events. The demonstrated differences concerned stakeholders who are associated only with international events, e.g. international media; international federations. Organizers of regional and national events, who have smaller budgets, do not cooperate with artistic agencies, marketing and PR companies or stakeholders with which cooperation was associated with additional financial outlays. The organizers of these events more often try to use their potential and their good relations so far, which is why they cooperate more often with sports clubs and promote events in social media than organizers of international events.

Partner relations, in the opinion of the surveyed sport managers, significantly affect many organizational aspects. They facilitate the work, speed up many procedures, and shorten the time needed to deal with a given topic. On the other hand, surveys have shown that most stakeholder groups strongly influence the success of a sports event and are of

great importance in the organization of subsequent editions of sports events, so it is worth shaping such relations with a long-term perspective. According to the respondents, the stability of these relationships, depending on the type of stakeholders, may change, which makes it difficult to manage them.

The results of the research carried out by the author justify the conclusion that building relationships with stakeholders from each group is so important that, despite the difficulties, it should be carried out in a continuous and systematic manner. The activities of the organizers who build a network of relationships should focus primarily on key groups of stakeholders that will contribute to the achievement of the goals set. Assessment of the degree of difficulty in cooperation enables the identification of potential threats and conflicts. Research has shown that key entities are business and public stakeholders. At the same time, these are the entities with which, according to the respondents, cooperation is the most difficult. This may be explained by financial issues, because entities from these groups are sponsors, local authorities, state authorities, i.e. entities financing sports events on a promotional or subsidy basis.

The process of organizing a sports event proposed by the author of the dissertation was the basis for the analysis of the presence of the most important stakeholders, their impact and importance at various stages of the event organization. It turns out that both the structure and the impact force, as well as the ways of shaping relations with stakeholders at different stages of organizing an event, change. Therefore, it is necessary to consciously and purposefully manage the network of connections in such a way as to fully use its potential.

The research results presented in the dissertation may constitute a kind of direction of activities for the organizers of sports events, facilitating their concentration on key stakeholders at a given stage of organizing a sports event. Shaping relations with stakeholders in the organizational process certainly requires further successive verification by researchers, especially in the field of the sports market. According to the author of this dissertation, the role of reports, their significance and influence on the process of organizing a sports event should be widely known to the organizers of sports events. It seems very interesting in the future to prepare empirical research in the field of a detailed analysis of the impact of relations on the process of organizing subsequent events and to compare the occurrence of difficulties between the first and the next sports event.

Research on the differences in the process of organizing a sports event depending on the budget of a given event seems to be equally interesting.

Summing up, it should be confirmed that the correct shaping of relations with stakeholders affects the process of organizing a sports event and contributes to the implementation of the planned goals and organizational success of a given event. The organization of sports events taking into account the importance and influence of stakeholders has a chance to become a permanent direction of research in the future.

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