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Leveraging Sports Events to Combat Grand Challenges by Integrating Social Value into Sports Events Marketing: A Case Study of Run Rome the Marathon 2024 and its Collaboration with Banco Alimentare Roma

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ABSTRACT

This research explores the relationship between perceived social value (PSV) and behavioral intentions (BI) within the context of participatory sports events, specifically focusing on the 2024 edition of Run Rome the Marathon. The study develops a comprehensive model to assess social value by incorporating a "social cause" dimension, addressing a notable gap in the literature. It aims to explore practical implications on how sports events can be used as strategic tools to combat grand challenges, such as food waste and poverty, while also benefiting event organizers. The collaboration of Run Rome the Marathon with Banco Alimentare Roma, a social cause partner, provides an ideal setting to examine this relationship. Through the examination of four key hypotheses, the research explores the impact of PSV on BI, the role of social causes, and the moderating effect of awareness and personal attitudes. The study investigates four key hypotheses, focusing on the positive impact of social value on behavioral intentions, the role of social causes, and the moderating effect of awareness and attitudes. Using structural equation modeling (SEM) and a longitudinal approach, the research demonstrates that PSV significantly influences BI, highlighting the importance of integrating social and environmental initiatives within events. The findings suggest that sports event organizers who prioritize social responsibility can simultaneously drive participant engagement and achieve better business outcomes. However, while the direct effect of awareness on PSV was not confirmed, its moderating role indicates that more effective communication strategies are necessary. This study opens new avenues for using sports events as platforms to address grand challenges while offering practical insights for enhancing their social impact.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In a landscape where every industry is being scrutinized through their impact on diverse grounds due to pressuring effect of sustainability and grand challenges alongside increasing trends of responsibility concepts, exploring sports events industry with the intersection of sports, society and marketing becomes not just a scholarly pursuit, but a necessity.

This necessity principally stems from sustainability concerns due to grand challenges such as hunger, pollution and food waste as also addressed by United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals since they affect communities socially, economically and environmentally in a global scale (Ferraro et al., 2015). Moreover, factors such as the increasing scale of sports events, their participative nature and the categorization of the industry as 'Entertainment' which might cast a cloud on priorities of its stakeholders catalyze these grand challenges and put more pressure on previously mentioned grounds. According to previous studies, sports events can create significant environmental pressure as it was the case in 2016 Rio Olympics that estimated to have released over 3.6 million tons of CO2 equivalent while 2012 London Olympics estimated to have created 61,000 tons of waste (Goldblatt, 2020; Kaminsky, 2023). Notably, the percentage of food waste can take up to half of the waste generated at mass sports events (Rozhdestvenskaya et al., 2021). Additionally, although increased volunteerism, community development, social interaction, host image and sports involvement can be examples of social value brought by sports events; disruption of community life and additional load brought up onto locals can be demonstrated for significant negative social impacts (Máté, 2018; Wallstam et al., 2019). Hence, diving into the value creation process of sports events and finding tools to relieve their stress from vulnerable parties are prerequisites for the sustainable continuation of this industry.

On the other hand, the responsibility concept for businesses can complete the equation alongside sustainability and grand challenges. This concept can be tracked in the literature with different names such as CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility), ESG (Environmental, Social and Governance) and CSV (Creating Shared Value) that are becoming more prominent day by day including sports events industry making these concepts a significant part of the core marketing strategies of businesses (ESG and Sustainability in sports, 2024; Jackman, 2024). According to the report of Statista, the Sport Events market has an expected revenue of US$33.77bn in 2024 with

an expected annual growth rate of 2.95%. Hence, understanding these concepts and exploring their impact on marketing strategies are valid concerns within the sports events industry.

The academic discourse on sustainability in the events industry can be traced back to the early 2000s. These discussions initially focused on sustainability reporting in special events, where stakeholders were encouraged to be accountable for their impact (Sherwood et al., 2004), and the analysis of the first trial of BEST (Business Enterprise for Sustainable Travel) to develop sustainability-conscious workforce for events (Presbury et al., 2004). In the subsequent years, the literature has also explored the sustainability aspects of sports events, with case studies of the World Ski Championship in St. Moritz (Johnsen et al., 2004) and the FA Cup Final (Collins & Flynn, 2008) providing early examples of detailed analyses in this domain.

Alongside these works, the literature has also addressed the reporting of sports events' outcomes, such as emissions and waste (Costello et al., 2017), the development of tools and standards for sustainable event management (McCullough et al., 2023), and policy development procedures (Hall, 2012). An economic perspective has also been applied to the outcomes of sports events. Detailed evaluations are gathered for the 2004 Athens Olympics with its benefits such as economic return and job creation meanwhile negative consequences like unequitable distribution and cost overruns were analyzed as well (Kasimati, 2003; Flyvbjerg & Stewart, 2012). The similar studies were done for 2010 FIFA World Cup in South Africa as well to understand economic advantages and disadvantages brought by these type of mega sports events (Pillay & Bass, 2008; Cornelissen, 2011). Although the social dimension is more abstract than economic and environmental impact, the literature also addressed the social dimension of sports events. Researchers explained how sports events can help social integration of diverse groups and nurture communities while they can also promote important social values such as gender equality and social justice (Máté, 2018; Wallstam et al., 2019). Naturally, concerns regarding distribution of these benefits between residents were brought up highlighting the necessity to better understand social dynamics of sports events (Horne, 2007).

Parallel to these studies, the literature has also discussed the concept of "Grand Challenges," defined as "complex, uncertain and evaluative problems with their impacts extend beyond the boundaries of a single organization or community" (Ferraro et al., 2015). Ferraro et al. (2015) explored the common traits of actions that can effectively address grand challenges, such as their

ability to correspond to the given nature of these challenges and develop them under ‘Robust Strategies’.

Lastly, the literature has also focused on the sports events industry from a marketing perspective, with numerous sources examining the measurement of sports event quality and its effect on customers' behavioral intentions (Theodorakis & Alexandris, 2008; Murray & Howat, 2002; Kelley & Turley, 2001; Tzetzis et al., 2014). The influence of physical environment (Hightower et al., 2002) and sport nostalgia (Cho et al., 2019) on the behavioral intentions of sports attendees have also been explored. Additionally, the effects of destination image, event image, and other similar factors on behavioral intentions are also prevalent topics in the literature (Min & Lee, 2022; Milovanović et al., 2019). The literature on social responsibility within sports events encompasses various perspectives. Chung (2018) advocated for a systematic approach to analyzing the Social Responsibility of Sports (SRS) to maximize its impact, while Sánchez-Sáez et al. (2020) addressed the measurement of CSR perceptions in small and medium-sized sports events. Inoue and Havard (2014) delved into the determinants and consequences of the perceived social impact of sports events. Hautbois et al. (2019), worked on research exploring the clustering of participants based on perceived social impact; meanwhile Tjønndal (2018), worked on the engagement motives of stakeholders, including social factors. Additionally, Scheinbaum and Lacey (2015) conducted a quantitative analysis to explore the alignment of event social responsibility with participants' values, potentially triggering positive behavioral intentions. Similarly, Yamashita & Muneda (2021), analyzed the relationship between perceived social benefits and support intention.

As elaborated previously, the existing literature has extensively covered sustainability aspects in sports events, including environmental reporting and social values such as sports involvement and community development additional to the research regarding social responsibility practices and their perception. However, a notable gap exists in leveraging sports events as a proactive solution to address grand challenges, shifting the focus from mitigating after-effects to creating value. This gap underscores the need to transform this value creation process into a strategic marketing approach by understanding participants' responses to such initiatives. Hence, this research seeks to question how the perception of social value within sports events, encompassing initiatives to address grand challenges as well as broader social responsibility efforts, influences the behavioral

intentions of participants. Parallelly, this thesis hypothesizes that perceived social value in sports events positively affects behavioral intention toward the event.

The methodology employed in this thesis involves conducting a quantitative analysis within a case study framework focusing on the 'Run Rome the Marathon 2024' event. A survey will be distributed to the participants of the marathon to collect relevant data, followed by a statistical analysis to test the formulated hypothesis. The selection of 'Run Rome the Marathon 2024' as the case study is based on its partnership with 'Banco Alimentare Roma', an organization dedicated to addressing grand challenges such as food waste and hunger through effective initiatives. This partnership offers a valuable opportunity to investigate the social impact of the event and its influence on participant behavior using quantitative methods.

This study has the potential to benefit stakeholders in the sports events industry by providing information on how social value and initiatives addressing grand challenges influence participant behavior. Event organizers can use this knowledge to enhance event appeal and engagement, while corporate sponsors can make strategic decisions to align with socially responsible events. Participants will benefit from tailored experiences, leading to more meaningful engagements. Overall, this research aims to fill a gap in the literature and improve the strategic planning and marketing of sports events for sustainable community impact.

In the subsequent chapters of this thesis, literature review, methodology, results, discussions and conclusions will be covered.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Sports Events

According to Chalip (2006), sports events are “planned occurrences that bring people together for the primary purpose of participating in or watching sporting activities. These events can vary significantly in size, scope, and impact, ranging from local amateur competitions to major international tournaments.”; while Getz (2008) adds main pillars into definition and states as special events centered around sports competitions or exhibitions, which draw in spectators, participants, and media coverage intending not only competitive purposes but also to celebrate sports culture and can substantially affect the host community economically, socially, and culturally. At this point, defining sports events as special events ranging in size, participation nature and scope, focused competitive purposes and sports culture with their diverse economic, social and cultural effects would be acceptable.

As mentioned, sports events can have diverse characteristics based on their size, participation nature and impacts. These events can vary from small-scale local tournaments like regional championships to large-scale international tournaments like the Olympic Games. For the classification of sports events based on their size, Getz and Page (2016) identify four main types:

1. Local/Regional Events: Smaller-scale competitions with up to 5,000 participants and 10,000 spectators.

2. Major Events: Larger events with 5,000 to 50,000 participants and 10,000 to 250,000 spectators.

3. Hallmark Events: Iconic events closely associated with a specific location, with 50,000 to 250,000 participants and 250,000 to 1 million spectators.

4. Mega-Events: The largest events, with over 250,000 participants and more than 1 million spectators, such as the Olympic Games and FIFA World Cup.

Muller (2015) presents a more quantitative definition, proposing that mega-events should have a minimum media audience of 1 billion, spectators of 1 million and internation visitors of 100,000. Dynamics and benefits of these events vary within the scale. Although small-scale sports events have limited reach; community development, sports participation and social inclusion are

significant examples of their outcomes (Misener & Mason, 2006). Hallmark events play a mediator role between host communities and fan base generating substantial revenue thanks to their cultural value. UEFA Champions League Final or Kentucky Derby are examples of these hallmark events (Getz & Page, 2016). Mega-events like Olympic Games and FIFA World Cup, placed at the end of the scale are pictured with its extensive reach, global media coverage and substantial requirements for hosting (Muller, 2015). These events bring significant economic and social benefits, engage millions of spectators and leave a long-lasting legacy behind on the host city or country (Preuss, 2019). Therefore, intense bidding wars are often encountered while host cities and countries try to demonstrate their capabilities to reap the potential benefits.

Further categorization can be done with the participation nature of sports events distinguishing them participative or audience-based events, each with distinct characteristics. Participative sports events are the ones where individuals or teams can actively compete thanks to their primary focus on active involvement (Taks et al., 2020). These events can be local community races as well as major marathons and professional tournaments, offering opportunities for skill development, social interaction between participants and personal achievement (Getz, 2012). On the other hand, audience-based sports events are organized to involve spectators featuring high-profile professional competitions with the showcase of elite athletes such as international soccer matches (Taks et al., 2020). These events emphasize entertainment, spectacle, and fan engagement, utilizing media coverage and large-scale venues to create an immersive experience (Maguire, 2005). Both types of events play significant roles in the sports ecosystem, nurturing a sense of community and contributing to the cultural and economic vibrancy of their host locations (Chalip, 2006).

Sports events are a fundamental component of the broader entertainment industry, often overlapping with sectors such as tourism, media, and recreation. The entertainment industry encompasses a vast array of activities designed to entertain and engage audiences, and sports events are a vast subset of this category due to their ability to attract large audiences and generate substantial revenue through ticket sales, broadcasting rights, sponsorships, and merchandising (Getz, 2008). Additionally, the sports events sector is closely linked with the tourism industry, as many events attract visitors from outside the local area, contributing to the economic impact through spending on accommodation, dining, and other travel-related services (Higham & Hinch, 2009). The media industry also plays a critical role, as the broadcasting of sports events reaches

global audiences, enhancing visibility and engagement (Boyle & Haynes, 2009). Thus, while sports events are primarily categorized under entertainment, their influence expands into multiple industries, underscoring their multifaceted economic and social significance. The sports events industry has been significantly growing in recent years, with the expected global market revenue of US$33.77 billion in 2024 growing at an annual rate of 2.95% (Statista, 2024). This trend can be explained with various factors, including the increasing popularity of sports, the increasing demand for live entertainment and experiences, and the ease of travel and accessibility to major events (Weed, 2008). Additionally, the globalization of sports has contributed to the widespread appeal and participation in these events, as fans can now engage with their favorite teams and athletes from around the world (Giulianotti & Robertson, 2007).

The diversity of sports events, ranging from small-scale local tournaments to international mega-events, highlights the industry's multifaceted nature and the significance of understanding its various components. By analyzing the characteristics, impacts, and trends within the sports events industry, researchers and industry stakeholders can develop strategies to maximize the benefits and mitigate the challenges associated with these events, ultimately improving the overall experience for participants, spectators and host communities. Therefore, it is an important duty to understand the following concepts and their relation to sports events industry to better manage sports events.

2.2 Sustainability

Sustainability is a multifaceted concept that encompasses economic, social, and environmental dimensions. According to the Brundtland Commission's report "Our Common Future" (1987), sustainability is defined as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." This definition highlights the importance of balancing current resource utilization with the preservation of opportunities for future generations. The United Nations further explains this concept in the "Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development" (2015), which underscores the integration of inclusive and sustainable economic growth, social inclusion, and environmental protection. This comprehensive approach highlights the interconnectedness of various domains and the necessity of comprehensive strategies to ensure long-term well-being and equity for all. Hence,

sustainability is not merely an environmental concern but a broad framework for nurturing abiding development across multiple sectors.

The entertainment industry, including film, music, sports, and live events, is increasingly acknowledging the importance of sustainability. This sector's significant environmental footprint, from energy-intensive productions to substantial waste generation, necessitates a shift towards more sustainable practices. According to Hoad and Rosson (2019), sustainable initiatives in the entertainment industry include reducing carbon emissions through energy-efficient technologies, implementing zero-waste strategies, and promoting sustainable sourcing of materials. The integration of sustainability into entertainment extends beyond environmental considerations to encompass social and economic dimensions as well. For instance, initiatives such as promoting diversity and inclusion in media content and providing fair wages and working conditions for industry workers are crucial for achieving holistic sustainability (Jones & Comfort, 2019).In the context of events, sustainability involves the implementing various considerations such as environmental, social, and economic into the planning, implementation, and legacy of events to ensure their long-term viability and positive impact on host communities (Getz, 2009). The sports events industry, a major subset of the entertainment and event sector, faces unique sustainability challenges and opportunities. Large-scale sporting events, such as the Olympics and World Cup, have historically generated significant environmental and social impacts, including high carbon footprints and social displacement (Mallen & Adams, 2017). However, recent efforts have been made to mitigate these effects through comprehensive sustainability strategies. These include the adoption of green building standards for event venues, extensive recycling programs, and the use of renewable energy sources.

The current stance, previously mentioned, in the sports events industry regarding sustainability is not agreed overnight. It took some decades for the literature to expand and elaborate to provide a more comprehensive understanding of their complex nature. Early studies in the early 2000s focused on sustainability reporting in special events, encouraging stakeholders to be accountable for their direct impacts (Sherwood et al., 2004). Simultaneously, researchers analyzed the first trial of BEST (Business Enterprise for Sustainable Travel) to develop a sustainability-conscious workforce for events (Presbury et al., 2004). These foundational works underline the need to address the environmental, social, and economic implications of events. Later, the literature

evolved from generic foundations to deeper analyses of direct and indirect impact of these sports events. These studies provided a more nuanced understanding of the comprehensive impacts on economic, environmental and social grounds beyond the easily measurable direct effects.

2.2.1 Environmental Sustainability

Literature on environmental impacts of sports events has a longstanding history which might have been caused by initial emphasis on environmental lens during sustainability discussions. Early literature focused on significant negative effects, often emphasizing substantial carbon footprint, waste generation and resource consumption associated with these sports events. Mallen and Adams (2008) demonstrated the scale of environmental footprint of large-scale sports events such as the Olympics and FIFA World Cup. They noted that the 2008 Beijing Olympics generated around 1.18 million tons of CO2 emissions, a statistic that included emissions from travel, construction, and event operations. Additionally, they demonstrated the typical worrisome waste generation patterns of these events, giving the 2004 Athens Olympics as an example which produced around 42,000 tons of waste and contributed significant land-fill disposal. These early results encouraged researchers to dive into literature better by scrutinizing diverse resource consumptions caused by indirect effects of sports events. Continuously, travel was recognized as one of the biggest indirect actions which plays a major contributor role in the carbon footprint of sports events. Research found that spectator travel caused almost 80% of the total carbon emissions of the 2006 FIFA World Cup in Germany, summing up approximately 2.8 million tons of CO2 (Collins et al., 2009). Similarly, food waste attracted attention as another contributor to these indirect emissions, bringing concerns alongside. Research found that large sports events can produce vast amounts of food waste, as was the case in the 2012 London Olympics where approximately 40% of the waste generated during the event was food or food-contaminated packaging (Douglas, 2011). Similarly, Rozhdestvenskaya et al., (2021) suggests the percentage of food waste can take up to half of the waste generated at mass sports events. This waste not only brings concerns as a loss of resources but also due to its contribution to greenhouse gas emissions when disposed of in landfills.

Results of previous research increased the consciousness regarding critical environmental patterns in sports events which in return encouraged the literature to look for potential solutions alongside

recognition and documentation of positive changes. ‘Greening’ sports events became popular in efforts to make sports events more sustainable. In this regard, the London 2012 Olympics attracted endorsement for its commitment to sustainability. The event achieved 28% reduction in carbon emissions in comparison to previous games where renewable energy resources and sustainable building materials were main contributors of this success (London Organizing Committee of the Olympic and Paralympic Games, 2013). The event also introduced food waste management programs which aimed to utilize food waste better by donating and composting rather than having it disposed in landfills.

Literature carries on following improvements and continuous challenges in this area. The research studied by Trendafilova et al. (2013) elaborated on major sports events and their sustainability aspects. The researcher found an improvement regarding the implication of environmental practices. For example, according to the International Olympic Committee (2017), The 2016 Rio Olympics achieved 47% recycling rate for the waste generated during the event thanks to its well-organized waste management programs. At the same time, the exact same event was criticized for not meeting certain environmental promises, such as cleanup of Guanabara Bay, demonstrating complex and challenging nature of sustainability aspect of sports events.

The advancements in reporting and visibility are clear when statistical outputs of sports events are compared over time. The 2018 FIFA World Cup in Russia is an example which had more detailed, extensive and transparent carbon footprint reporting than its previous versions which took emissions from construction, operations, and spectator travel into account, reporting a total of 2.16 million tons of CO2 emissions (FIFA, 2018). Moreover, the role of digital technologies cannot be denied in the enhancement of real-time monitoring systems and reporting of environmental impacts facilitating more responsive and effective sustainability strategies (Kaminsky, 2023). Hence, technical advancements increase measurability and scaling which can help us to understand and consecutively mitigate environmental effects of sports events.

The literature also discovers diverse potential environmental benefits of sports events alongside technical advancements in terms of reporting. These benefits can broadly be categorized within environmental awareness and behavior. Studies have demonstrated that exemplary sustainable sports events can be leveraged as a way of increasing environmental consciousness among

participants and spectators. The “Green Games” initiatives are concrete examples of this kind. Green Games started with the 2000 Sydney Olympics acting as an instrument in raising awareness and inspiring other sport events to follow its lead in terms of sustainable practices (Toohey, 2008; Costello et al., 2017; Goldblatt, 2020).

In conclusion, the literature on environmental effects of sports events seems both alarming and promising. Considering the complex nature of these events and their scale, getting alarmed would be a proper response. However, considering the promising initiatives and increasing awareness regarding the sustainability of sports events would demonstrate the positive trend in the sector on reducing environmental footprint of the sports events.

2.2.2 Economic Sustainability

Academic literature includes some efforts to better understand the economic impacts of sports events, elaborating on their potential benefits and challenges that come by hosting these large-scale competitions. FIFA World Cup and Olympic Games are some examples of these major events which attracted attention and following examination thanks to their ability to generate significant economic activity through increased tourism, merchandise sales, and broadcasting rights (The Baltic Times, 2023; Pillay & Bass, 2008). On the other hand, researchers warn against overcalculating the economic impact and suggest being careful taking into account only the direct expenditure of event-related tourists (Baade et al., 2008; Baade et al., 2010). Input-output modeling and computable general equilibrium (CGE) analyses have become common approaches for assessing the economic impacts of sports events (Feddersen & Maennig, 2012, 2013; Li & Jago, 2013). The analysis emphasized both advantages and disadvantages. The capability of sports events on triggering economic growth versus involving high opportunity costs and potential displacement of other economic activities were among those analysis (Coates & Matheson, 2009; Giraud, 2015). Moreover, suggestions were added to be careful on distinguishing the scale of these events since smaller-scale sports events could have more limited effects on host community rather than mega-events (Barajas et al., 2016; Taks et al., 2015). Over time, literature evolved with the need to analyze the economic impacts of sports events in a more comprehensive and deeper way (Baade et al., 2010; Barajas et al., 2016). Expanding the analysis of both direct and indirect effects

and adding long-term legacy and sustainability into the equation, the literature can guide event organizers and policy makers in their decision-making process on how to improve these sports events. For example, according to the research of Kasimati (2003), the 2004 Athens Olympics had significant economic return with an estimated $11 billion in direct spending and creation of over 60,000 jobs. Yet, the same event also caused high-scale cost overruns and the accumulation of debt for the Greek Government (Flyvbjerg & Stewart, 2012). The similar case has occurred in 2010 FIFA World Cup in South Africa which has brought significant economic benefits such as estimated $12.3 billion in direct spending and the creation of over 130,000 jobs (Pillay & Bass, 2008). Still, equitable distribution of these benefits was under suspicion with concerns of potential displacement of local communities (Cornelissen, 2011). These studies provided concrete examples on how sports events can benefit economically and nurture community development while also emphasizing increased risks of cost overruns and disruption of local community balance.

2.2.3 Social Sustainability

Although the social lens is not as prevalent as environmental and economic ones in sustainability context due to its abstract nature with challenges regarding measuring aftereffects, the literature has attracted increasing attention within past decades about social dimensions of sports events. The focus has been gathered on how sports events affect communities and nurture social well-being. This shift is synchronized with the shift in sustainability context where the awareness is expanded from economic and environmental effects to include also social effects. This inclusive context started to question also social sustainability which can show itself in forms of community development, inclusivity, poverty alleviation, and hunger.

Early literature on the social impacts of sports events focused on community development since sports events are well-known with their instrumental power to nurture community pride, cohesion and identity. Hence, not surprisingly, first studies have demonstrated mega events like the Olympics, or the FIFA World Cup have strong capacity to bring communities together, create a sense of shared purpose, and develop local pride (Misener & Mason, 2006). Even today, examples show that these events play a reflective role in bringing local cultures and traditions onto the global stage and helping to preserve and promote them.

With the development of literature, sports events added other missions to their portfolio such as promoting inclusivity and diversity. According to Máté (2018), since sports events encourage marginalized groups to participate in and benefit from these events, it is possible to see them as useful catalysts for social integration. Similarly, later study of Wallstam et al. (2019) also suggested how sports events could challenge and transform social norms, promoting gender equality and social justice. Moreover, another significant part of the inclusion concept which is inclusion of people with disabilities is also a hot topic in this context. Sports events have an instrumental role in promoting the inclusion of people with disabilities. Paralympics are great examples of this stance where these events have raised greater awareness and contributed to the visibility and inclusion of disabled individuals, showcasing their talents and challenging societal prejudices.

After the analysis of more obvious social effects of sports events, the literature shifted its focus to broader social issues such as poverty and hunger. Although these concepts can be discussable whether they should be categorized as economic, environmental or social; since they effect societies in a great scale where also some of the pressure comes from within the society, using social lens would also be plausible. Still all these categories intertwine and create a feeding cycle. Due to previously mentioned reasons such as scalability and measurability, primary focus of the literature about sustainability in sports events was often on environmental impacts. However, there is a growing interest in their potential to address social issues. As the borders blur, economic benefits of large sports events such as creating job opportunities and boosting local economies can help to alleviate poverty. For instance, the 2010 FIFA World Cup in South Africa reportedly created around 130,000 jobs and added approximately $5 billion to the South African economy (du Plessis & Maennig, 2011). However, the benefits are not always evenly distributed, and there can be negative repercussions, such as displacement of low-income residents and increased living costs (Horne, 2007). Hunger is another issue where sports events can relieve the local society. Recent events have initiatives to redistribute surplus food from events which help to decrease food waste and contribute food security for vulnerable populations. These programs can have significant positive impact since they create both economic, environmental and social value which even more than creating but turning negative effects into positive ones. The 2012 London Olympics had a similar program which helped to redistribute around 13 tons of food surplus to those in need,

showcasing the potential of sports events to address food security issues (WRAP, 2017). Similarly, Run Rome the Marathon collaborates with Banco Alimentare Roma for the same purpose over the years, creating additional significant social and environmental benefit for their event, making use of more than 10,000 kgs of surplus food and leftover clothes. However, the literature also highlights the challenges in implementing such programs effectively, including logistical issues and ensuring the quality and safety of redistributed food (Schulenkorf, 2012).

Participant profile is another variable focused on the literature in terms of being local or non-local since it would have contextual relation. According to studies, local participants behave more considerately and positively towards sports events rather than non-local ones. This positive trend can be attributed to a stronger sense of ownership and pride in the event, as well as a better understanding of local norms and expectations. Since local participants act in their local physical place or at least society, they approach more responsibly towards sustainable practices such as recycling, waste reduction and consumer behaviors thanks to their long-term stake in the community's well-being (Inoue & Havard, 2014). On the other hand, criticism was also raised about the promised social benefits which are not often realized. Researchers argued that previously mentioned economic benefits can be very temporary and they are not shared within local communities but rather taken by big corporations from the beginning. Additionally, the rapid inflow of visitors can push local infrastructure and resources to their limits, sometimes leading to social tensions and conflicts (Gaffney, 2013).

As with other fragments of literature, also the social aspects of sports events evolve and improve day by day within the literature. Continuous efforts are spent on creating a more comprehensive assessment technique where different social indicators and impacts can be measured for the sake of society, environment, economics and of the industry. Researchers suggest a participatory approach where local communities are involved in planning and implementation of these events can help benefit maximization and mitigation of negative impacts (Maguire, 2011). Future research is likely to focus on developing more effective strategies to leverage sports events for social good, addressing the persistent challenges of inequality, poverty, and hunger. This includes exploring innovative ways to reduce food waste and ensure food security, as well as finding mechanisms to ensure that the economic benefits of sports events are more equitably distributed.

Concluding the chapter, evolving and broadening sustainability concept with its economic, environmental and social dimensions pushes literature to identify problems better and come up with corresponding potential solutions. In the next chapter, the grand challenges concept will be evaluated due to its potential to identify today's significant problems which are pressuring on economy, environment and society simultaneously due to its invasive and significant impacts.

2.3 Grand Challenges

'Grand challenges', as also it sounds, refers to struggles, obstacles which are significantly hard to overcome. The literature has many definitions and explanations for this concept which varies from the context and remain specific to the sub context only. However, in this thesis, we will focus on the 'Grand Challenges' introduced by Ferraro, Etzion, and Gehman (2015) thanks to the increasing popularity of the concept particularly within the fields of business, management, and public policy. Ferraro, Etzion, and Gehman (2015), defined 'grand challenges' as complex, evaluative and uncertain problems that require coordinated and sustained efforts across various sectors and disciplines. Moreover, these grand challenges have key characteristics in terms of scale, scope, and the high uncertainty involved in addressing them. Climate change, global health crises, and social inequalities such as poverty and hunger can be counted as examples of grand challenges. Grand challenges are identified with several key characteristics. They are large in scale, often affecting millions or even billions of people across multiple countries and regions. They are complex and interconnected, meaning that they involve numerous stakeholders and require interdisciplinary approaches to address. Grand challenges are systemic, rooted in the underlying structures and processes of societies and economies. Finally, they are dynamic, evolving over time as new information emerges and conditions change which requires robust solutions (Ferraro, Etzion&Gehman,2015).

The visibility and urgency of grand challenges have been magnified due to increased globalization and connectivity of the current era. Globalization has led to unprecedented levels of economic interdependence, cultural exchange, and technological advancement. While these developments have brought many benefits, they have also triggered certain social and environmental problems. For instance, the rapid industrialization and urbanization associated with globalization have

contributed to significant environmental degradation and social inequality (Beck, 2018). One of the major outcomes associated with globalization is the elimination of traditional boundaries between different spheres of life, such as the economic, social, and environmental. This interconnectedness means that actions taken in one domain often have far-reaching implications in others. For example, agricultural practices planned to maximize economic output can lead to environmental degradation and social dislocation, contributing to issues such as hunger and food insecurity (Garnett, 2011).

2.3.1 Addressing Grand Challenges

To address these grand challenges, Ferrero et al. (2015) redefines robust action strategies including participatory architecture, multivocal inscription and distributed experimentation. Building upon works of Ostrom (1990), Dietz et al. (2003) and Callon et al. (2009); Ferrero et al. (2015) states that the more complex a challenge, the more heterogenous and diverse groups should be onboarded through participatory architecture. This necessity stems from the diverse worldview and perception of these groups on the same matter and the fact that keeping actors engaged in a process (prolonged engagement) is much harder than involving them in the beginning. Hybrid forums, proposed by Callon et al. (2009), a platform which supports diverse participation creating a space where actors can meaningfully engage with counterparts. Like a chess game, these occasions can be perceived like battlefields where each stakeholder tries to gain advantage. At this point Verweij et al. (2006) suggests that 'rules of the game' are needed for meaningful participation creating a norm where everyone should take different stories in circulation seriously. While Furnari (2014) highlights the importance of a structure where actors with divergent interests can interact and engage while the key challenge for the focal actor will remain to prevent premature termination and sustain engagement.

Multivocal Inscription, as Ferrero et al. (2015), builds upon terms such as interpretive flexibility (Pinch & Bijker, 1987) and strategic use of ambiguity (Jarzabkowski & Sillince, 2007; Sillience et al., 2012), defines as "…discursive and material activity that sustains different interpretations among various audiences with different evaluative criteria, in a manner that promotes coordination without requiring explicit consensus.". As Ferrero et al. (2015) cites, sustainable development concept demonstrates a good example of multivocal inscriptions as it was known as "a conscious

effort was made to conceptually link (and morally bind) environment and development" in Brundtland report (Lafferty, 1999). According to Robinson (2004) the key success of this concept has been its ability to be interpreted in diverse ways by different groups. Hence, this multivocality brought additional engagement and common grounds for more efficient discussions. On the contrary, scholars stated that failure of Kyoto Protocol stemmed exactly from same concept since it offered a mere single way of perceiving the climate change problem (Verwij et al., 2006). Moreover, in organizational studies ambiguity was found as a facilitator of diffusion of organizational forms and practices (Ferrero et al., 2015). Similarly, Jarzabkowski and Sillience (2007) demonstrated how ambiguity has been used in diverse environments to align interests of actors and persuade them to take action. In other words, multivocal inscriptions facilitate coordination within and across multidisciplinary communities that have different evaluative standards, without necessitating explicit consensus (Bechky, 2003; Bowker & Star, 1999; Mody & Nelson, 2013). Because these designs accommodate various plausible interpretations, they enable engagement with new problems that were not initially anticipated during their creation and encourage the involvement of additional stakeholders (Beunza & Stark, 2004; Kaplan, 2011). In this context, multivocal inscriptions help to involve others and invite further contributions to the ongoing process.

Distributed experimentation, as Ferrero et al. (2015) builds upon concepts like small wins (Weick, 1984; Plowman et al., 2007) and experimentalist governance (Sabel & Zeitlin, 2012), is practical part of robust strategies. Since grand challenges are highly complex, evaluative and uncertain, looking for the best solution would not be a possible methodology. According to authors cited by Ferrero at al. (2015), in these circumstances 'abductions' as pragmatists name in which plausible explanations are found through observations and general principles (Bartel & Garud, 2003; Mantere & Ketokivi, 2013). Ferrero et al. (2015) defines these actions as distributed experimentation in detail: "iterative action that generates small wins, promotes evolutionary learning, and increases engagement, while allowing unsuccessful efforts to be abandoned." This strategy emphasizes the importance of bottom-up actions rather than top-down approach. Examples include regional actions to reduce GHG (greenhouse gas) emissions which proved to be efficient although the US was criticized for missing the top-down strategy. Lutsey and Sperling (2008) states that local policies are usually more responsive and innovative than resource-constrained, strict governmental policies. As was the case regarding climate change actions,

opening up the way to local policies brought citizens into stakeholder levels which resulted in small wins. In time, every small win helped to bring more resources and make the next problem more visible. Similarly, distributed experimentation allows to try different solutions simultaneously which in return make combining them depending on their efficiency possible (Ferrero et al., 2015). Instead, if all resources were put into the same experiment, it is highly possible to end up with a big failure and resilience. Hence, distributed experimentation is a method which is highly resistant to failures and has a high chance of providing solutions thanks to its inclusivity of diverse range of solutions.

2.3.2 Examples of Grand Challenges

Poverty and hunger are among the most pressing grand challenges facing the world today. According to the World Bank, as of 2024, around 700 million people live in extreme poverty, surviving on less than $2.15 per day (2024). Hunger and malnutrition are closely linked to poverty, with the United Nations estimating that approximately 811 million people were undernourished in 2020 (FAO, 2021). Food waste is another critical issue that intersects with hunger and poverty. The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) estimates that one-third of all food produced globally is lost or wasted, amounting to about 1.3 billion tons per year. This wasted food could potentially feed billions of people, highlighting a stark paradox in the global food system (FAO, 2019).

Tackling poverty and hunger involves improving access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunities, particularly for marginalized and vulnerable populations. Initiatives such as microfinance programs, which provide small loans to low-income individuals, have shown promise in empowering people to lift themselves out of poverty (Yunus, 2007). Reducing food waste is also critical to addressing hunger and improving food security. Strategies to reduce food waste include improving supply chain efficiency, enhancing food storage and preservation techniques, and promoting consumer awareness about the importance of reducing waste. Additionally, policies that encourage the redistribution of surplus food to those in need can have a significant impact. For example, during the 2012 London Olympics, around 13 tons of surplus food were redistributed to those in need, showcasing the potential of sports events to address food security issues (WRAP, 2017). However, the literature also highlights the challenges in

implementing such programs effectively, including logistical issues and ensuring the quality and safety of redistributed food (Schulenkorf, 2012).

The nature of these grand challenges with their complexity and scale makes collaboration between sectors and disciplines a mandatory instrument. To implement effective solutions, governments, businesses, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and academic entities must work together. As resources are constrained, finding the best partnerships to benefit from sectors' expertise is necessary. Public-private partnerships can provide a symbiotic relationship on this matter. The Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN) is one such partnership that brings together stakeholders from various sectors to improve nutrition and food security in developing countries (Hawkes & Ruel, 2006). As technology enters in any sector with the hope to increase efficiency, agriculture is a no-difference. Innovations and technological developments such as precision farming and genetically modified crops can help combating poverty and hunger with their potential to increase food production and reduce waste. Digital technologies can augment this efficiency by turning supply chains more transparent and traceable. A practical example can be utilization of blockchain technology to track the journey of food products from farm to table, reducing fraud and improving food safety (Tripoli & Schmidhuber, 2018).

Serious initiatives against grand challenges are being taken by significant international and global actors. The United Nations is a great example and a leader who initiates, supports and oversees national and local initiatives as well. Their Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which are 17 in total, create a broad framework to combat against grand challenges such as poverty, hunger and food waste. Elaborating on these SDGs, SDG 1 strives to eliminate poverty in any form everywhere while SDG 2 aims to end hunger, achieve food security and promote sustainable agriculture. As mentioned in previous discussions; to benefit from the concept of 'small wins', UN arranges specific targets and indicators to encourage and guide national and international efforts (United Nations, 2015). For example, SDG 2 – Zero Hunger initiative- has the goal of ending hunger, achieving food security and improving nutrition by 2030. This initiative includes efforts to increase agricultural productivity, promote sustainable food systems, and reduce food waste. Despite continuous efforts, results are not always stable and have positive trend as was the case in Sub-Saharan Africa as of 2020 due to conflicts, climate change and economic instability (FAO, 2021). Efforts to minimize food waste are also gaining momentum. In the European Union, the

Farm to Fork Strategy aims to reduce food waste by 50% by 2030. This strategy includes measures to improve food labeling, promote the redistribution of surplus food, and enhance the sustainability of food production and consumption (European Commission, 2020).

2.3.3 A Case Study: Associazione Banco Alimentare Roma ODV

The food bank 'Associazione Banco Alimentare Roma ODV' (ABAR) is founded by a group of seventeen volunteers in 1990 with the goal of providing food aid to people in need in Rome and Lazio Region. It has continued its services for over 30 years thanks to its hardworking volunteers considering most people are contributing as volunteers. ABAR collects significant portion of its donations from Italian and European authorities while also gets support from the market thanks to its innovative methods (Daood & Calluso, 2023). These methods aim to increase food surplus ratio within food donations to decrease food waste combatting poverty and hunger. In fact, ABAR was the first organization managed to recover and distribute food surplus in Italy thanks to usage of innovative digital technologies.

ABAR has diverse programs to continue its activities. Every year, it organizes a food donation day, called '*raccolta di solidarietà*.' Where supermarkets open a stand and encourage their customers to support and donate to ABAR in return gaining recognition for their socially responsible activities. In 2019, ABAR managed to onboard 314 supermarkets and 222 charities, involving more than 2700 volunteers, and managed to collect 230 tons of donated food (Daood & Calluso, 2023).

In 2012, ABAR decided to create an app to recover surplus food from food operators to redistribute the most deprived ones (Daood & Calluso, 2023). Since it was first in its field, it took much time and effort to create such an app but in 2014 ABAR managed to launch BeeAPP with metaphors to the most hardworking animals and their connection to their communities. In this app, ABAR was playing the bridge role between food producers and frontline charities to ensure surplus food is reaching to people in need instead of getting disposed with a system bringing value to both sides either as tax exemption or basic life resource. In three years, 26 tons of food was redistributed thanks to BeeAPP (Daood & Calluso, 2023). However, problems regarding logistics, management

of stakeholders' requests and ensuring safe food for people in need increased significantly. Frequent donations with higher portions of perishable food, struggle to onboard frontline charities and ensuring their active participation became problematic and excessively time consuming for the staff of ABAR. Consequently, ABAR decided to improve this application. After the complexity and heavy load on ABAR volunteers were clearly seen, ABAR decided to simplify the app.

Thanks to voluntary involvement of other experts, in 2019, ABAR created 'e-Cibo' meaning 'e-Food' where 'e' represents both online and surplus (*eccedenze in Italian).* In this version, mitigating role of ABAR was tried to be minimized and active involvement and healthy competition between stakeholders emphasized (Daood & Calluso, 2023). With e-Cibo, frontline charities were able to book based on calendarization and similarly the process was simplified also for donors which was also now possible to login to the system from any smart device with different user accounts. On the other hand, ABAR struggled to bring stakeholders on board since some of donors and frontline charities started to communicate and arrange donation activities privately. Budget restrictions and other problems within the association made it impossible to take action until 2021. In 2021, human resources of ABAR started a new launch preparation for the new platform, reaching potential stakeholders with multichannel, and inclusive top-down and bottom-up approach. In time, efforts have paid off and they managed to onboard initial stakeholders. Still, ABAR's mission continued to train stakeholders on regulations, how to use the platform and other procedural details. In time, stakeholders adapted the platform and ABAR was responsible for ensuring smooth continuation of activities. Thanks to all efforts, 64.72 tons of food surplus with the collaboration of 23 supermarkets and 30 frontline charities were recovered only by the end of 2021 around Rome (Daood & Calluso, 2023).

During the evaluation sessions of e-Cibo, the problem regarding recoverability of small donations of small food businesses by frontline charities was obvious. Frontline charities were struggling to collect frequent and small-size donations from food operators because it was much more inconvenient and costly to them than picking bulk donations once a month from ABAR's storage. To address this problem, the team came up with the idea of including people in need as active actors into this supply chain, changing their status from passive receiver to active ultimate beneficiaries for picking up donations. They created a new program called 'Stasera Offro Io' ('Tonight Is on Me' in English) where assisted people shifted to invited ones who can collect

donations from small food operators like butchers, bakeries and fishmongers. This program foresees significant reductions in food waste while encouraging people in need to act for themselves to exit from deprivation and providing food operators with a noble cause to contribute into society. This platform still had frontline charities involved to keep operations smooth. They manage and register 'guests' for the fair evaluation of conditions and they support the processes internally with their volunteers to ensure all donations are recovered and redistributed. Involvement of volunteers as also guests into the platform provides privacy since the donors are not able to differentiate between volunteers and people in need. The platform provided mapping details to help logistics of guests and easy connection with any smart device to onboard as many guests as possible. Stasera Offro Io was ready by 2021 and after first trials it gained momentum enabling involvement of both new guests and donors. 2000 donations of food surplus equating 21.367 euros were recovered by mid-2022 thanks to involvement of 30 donors, 84 guests and 10 volunteers (Daood & Calluso, 2023). Currently ABAR aims for the expansion of this project to contribute to larger communities and fight with wider-scaled food waste.

In detail, the initiatives of ABAR, especially Stasera Offro Io project demonstrates clear practical examples of robust strategies. Participatory architecture is evident in the involvement of diverse stakeholders, including small food operators, frontline charities and people in need. The project aims to onboard diverse actors without discriminating them based on their authority, economic power or size. Instead of traditional donation practices which opt for bulk donations from major stakeholders like supermarkets or municipalities, involving smaller stakeholders like an ordinary neighborhood butcher with weekly donations was a significant innovation. Further distinction came with the inclusion of people in need as ultimate beneficiary since this shift gave them a task, a role to actively participate in the process instead of just waiting for others to decide and act for them. This inclusion and redefinition of roles could create significant and effective impacts thanks to participatory architecture of this project. Multivocal inscription, as interpretive dimension of robust strategies, can be seen in implementation and management process of initiatives of ABAR. In all the projects. BeeAPP, e-Cibo and Stasera Offro Io, feedback and evaluations from stakeholders were gathered in addition to the critical observation of the staff. Although some issues were not easily recognizable by individual stakeholders, careful examination of the staff with a holistic view helped ABAR to understand dynamics and problems. Moreover, training sessions

held by ABAR to frontline charities and donors helped them to understand different perspectives and challenges being faced by different actors, helping them to improve their platforms with each new launch. Distributed experimentation, practical dimension which distinguish significantly success of this type of initiatives, helped ABAR to implement different projects, improving them gradually after experimentation helped them to achieve continuous and accumulative positive outcomes. Onboarding a few actors at a time and keeping the projects geographically restricted until the system is stabilized was a strategic decision of ABAR. This strategy enabled better management of actors by recognizing their demands and challenges meanwhile measuring the potential of the project for expansion in terms of both size and geography. It helped ABAR to experiment with various conditions and platforms to better analyze their relative effects, helping them to develop and choose the most effective platform at the end. On the contrary, if the initiative was designed to be implemented in whole Italy at once with extensive inclusion of donors and frontline charities, it could create a huge mess with an extra barrier for the future implementation of such an initiative. However, the ABAR was implementing the initiative slowly while experimenting only in Rome and onboarding a few actors at a time. This method helped ABAR to understand best practices and challenges of the process, which in return also gave them time to improve the project. Hence, it is not a surprise that all these initiatives created significant positive impacts demonstrating how robust strategies can practically combat with grand challenges.

As articulated by Ferraro, Etzion, and Gehman (2015) and elaborated on the case study of ABAR, combatting grand challenges requires coordinated efforts and significant stakeholders. At this point, leveraging the advantages of today such as technology, digitalization and globalization can help us to create interconnected and more efficient tools and help us to create a more equitable and sustainable world. During all these changes and adaptations in the literature of sustainability and grand challenges, the other branch of literature about social responsibility has been evolving to correspond these nuances. Next chapter will explore these harmonious social responsibility concepts to understand dynamics better in the focused mechanism.

2.4 Social Responsibility

Like any concept in literature, social responsibility concepts have also seen significant developments and shifts in the past decades thanks to increasing awareness and interconnectedness between environment, society and businesses. The initial understanding was based on corporate actions which benefited society. However, this narrow understanding left its place to a more comprehensive framework that considers extensive issues in terms of ethics, environment and economy. This chapter will explore three key social responsibility frameworks: Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), Environmental Social Governance (ESG), and Creating Shared Value (CSV). Each concept will be elaborated and the transition from one to another will be analyzed. Before CSR, social responsibility ideas were present in various forms but often related to philanthropic efforts and ethical business practices. As these concepts evolved, they began to include more structured approaches to ensure that businesses contribute positively to society while achieving sustainable growth. This progression highlights the increasing importance of society, environment and governance on corporate strategies.

2.4.1 Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

CSR is the initial milestone of social responsibility concepts in the business field. It creates a bond between businesses and ethical behavior, sustainable development and community engagement. Its roots can be traced back to mid-20th century where businesses understood they are not independent entities but a part of society and environment which requires broader responsibilities rather than aiming only profit maximization. Howard R. Bowen, often considered the father of CSR, defined it as "the obligations of businessmen to pursue those policies, to make those decisions, or to follow those lines of action which are desirable in terms of the objectives and values of our society" (Bowen, 2013). Another influential definition by Carroll (1979) describes CSR as "the social responsibility of business encompassing the economic, legal, ethical, and discretionary expectations that society has of organizations at a given point in time.". At this point, it would be plausible to define CSR as businesses integrating social and environmental concerns, expanding ethical concerns broader, into their strategies, operations and interactions with their stakeholders. This integration ideally would bring positive outcomes to society and the

environment instead of negative ones. The practices of CSR vary within business fields due to diverse challenges and specific operations each sector has. In the manufacturing sector, sustainable consumption, production and waste management activities are frequently found. Companies like General Electric and Siemens have invested heavily in green technologies and sustainable manufacturing processes (Porter & Kramer, 2006). In the financial sector, CSR can be found as ethical financial practices, increasing transparency and financial inclusion. Banks such as HSBC and Barclays have implemented policies to ensure responsible lending and have committed to financing projects that support sustainable development (Scholtens, 2009). The retail sector, represented by companies like Walmart and IKEA, often focuses on supply chain sustainability, fair labor practices, and community engagement. These companies have made significant strides in promoting sustainable sourcing and improving the working conditions of their suppliers (Maignan, Ferrell, & Hult, 1999).

Alongside the mentioned sectors, entertainment and sports industries also acknowledge CSR and integrate it through different initiatives. In the entertainment industry, thanks to its potential to increase awareness, CSR shows itself often as promoting diversity and inclusion, supporting charitable causes, and using media platforms to raise awareness about social issues. For example, Disney has committed to reducing its environmental impact through initiatives aimed at waste reduction and energy efficiency, while also supporting various children's charities worldwide (Disney, 2019). Similarly, in the sports industry, again thanks to its characteristics which have strong ties with communities and well-being, CSR initiatives on these touchpoints can be found. Moreover, sports organizations and events have the unique ability to mobilize large audiences and lead positive social change. The International Olympic Committee (IOC) has integrated CSR into its mission by promoting sustainability, inclusivity, and ethical conduct in the Olympic Games (IOC, 2020). Similarly, professional sports teams like FC Barcelona and the New York Yankees engage in numerous community outreach programs, focusing on youth education, health, and social inclusion (Babiak & Wolfe, 2009).

As mentioned previously, the early social responsibility concept was often philanthropic as was the case also for CSR. Early practices were based on charitable donations and community service. The philanthropic activities of Cadbury and Johnson & Johnson can be given as examples of early CSR activities. Cadbury, in the late 19th century, built a model village for its workers, providing

housing, healthcare, and education, reflecting its commitment to social welfare (Smith, 2003). Johnson & Johnson, following the Tylenol crisis in the 1980s, demonstrated its commitment to consumer safety by recalling millions of products, setting a precedent for ethical corporate behavior (Velasquez, 2011). Later, as expectations from society increased, the businesses had to internalize and expand their CSR policies in a way to include also environmental sustainability, human rights and corporate governance. This change helped to shift CSR from voluntary actions to more structured strategic initiatives because businesses acknowledged that if CSR is embedded into their core business strategies, it can drive long-term value and competitive advantage. This strategic integration often involves setting measurable goals, engaging stakeholders, and reporting on CSR performance through sustainability reports (Porter & Kramer, 2006). For instance, Unilever's Sustainable Living Plan aims to decouple business growth from environmental impact while increasing positive social impact. This initiative includes goals such as improving health and well-being for more than a billion people, reducing the company’s environmental footprint, and enhancing the livelihoods of millions through its value chain (Unilever, 2018). Consequently, additional support to CSR came with the rise of global CSR standards and frameworks. Organizations such as the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) and the United Nations Global Compact provide guidelines for companies to report on their social and environmental impacts transparently and consistently. These frameworks help ensure accountability and comparability across industries and geographies (KPMG, 2017).

Alongside CSR practices, perceptions of society evolved in time as well. In the beginning, CSR initiatives were criticized because they were seen as a public relations benefit rather than a genuine social good. Actually, this was an understandable approach since businesses also needed time to acknowledge and internalize CSR. Later with the increased transparency and internalization of CSR, society started to trust and have higher expectations. Today, consumers, employees, and investors increasingly expect companies to act responsibly. Moreover, research finds that this expectation also directs actions of consumers since brands with higher commitment to environmental and social causes have stronger consumer support (Cone Communications, 2017). This differentiation does not stay only on the consumer side but also affects stakeholders like employees and investors. Employees, millennials and Gen Z in particular, prefer to work for companies that align with their values and show genuine social responsibility (Deloitte, 2019).

Investors recognize that responsible companies are better positioned to manage risks and capitalize on opportunities (Eccles, Ioannou, & Serafeim, 2014).

In conclusion, CSR has undergone significant transformation since its early definitions by scholars like Bowen and Carroll. It has expanded across various business sectors, adapting to the unique challenges and opportunities within each industry. In the entertainment and sports industries, CSR has taken on unique forms, leveraging their broad influence to drive positive social change. The evolution of CSR from philanthropic efforts to strategic initiatives reflects a growing recognition of the interconnectedness between businesses, society, and the environment. As these social responsibility concepts have expanded and become more internalized, CSR has increasingly evolved into more inclusive frameworks such as Environmental Social Governance (ESG) and Creating Shared Value (CSV). These newer frameworks embody a more holistic approach, integrating social, environmental, and governance factors into core business strategies, and fostering a more responsible and inclusive global economy.

2.4.2 Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG)

ESG was born to measure the sustainability and ethical impact of a company evolving from CSR. ESG criteria are a set of standards that socially conscious investors use to scrutinize potential investments. According to the World Economic Forum (2020), ESG encompasses "criteria that are used to evaluate a company's commitment to sustainable and ethical practices in the areas of environmental responsibility, social impact, and governance structures." Another definition by the Global Sustainable Investment Alliance (GSIA) states that ESG aligns "the consideration of environmental, social, and governance factors alongside financial factors in the investment decision-making process.". At this point, it would be plausible to define ESG as an evaluative framework which integrates environmental, social and governance dimensions into business operations and investment decisions to achieve long-term sustainability, ethical governance and positive social impact.

The origins of ESG can be traced back to the mid-20th century but it gained main attention in the early 21st century. The origins of ESG are rooted in socially responsible investing (SRI) practices

that began in the 1960s and 1970s when investors started to exclude stocks or entire industries from their portfolios based on business activities such as tobacco production or involvement in the South African apartheid regime (Sparkes & Cowton, 2004). The term "ESG" was first officially introduced in a 2004 report titled "Who Cares Wins," which was a partnership between the United Nations Global Compact and financial institutions to advise the integration of ESG factors in capital markets. Thanks to increased awareness about global sustainability concerns and recognition that businesses can be and must be a part of solution increased popularity of ESG in the 2000s. Unlike CSR framework which takes philanthropic actions and corporate actions into its core, ESG provided a framework that is more structured and measurable. ESG criteria are integrated into financial analyses and investment decisions, making it a valid mechanism for investors who aim to realize both financial returns and positive societal impact (Eccles & Klimenko, 2019).

Although both CSR and ESG have the same goals about promoting ethical and sustainable business practices, it is possible to distinguish them with several key characteristics. ESG criteria are broader and measurable, focusing on a company's performance in specific environmental, social, and governance areas rather than being voluntary and acting ethically beyond profit maximization. Investors use ESG metrics to ensure their investments go to companies which act effectively in previously mentioned areas. This helps investors to analyze risks and explore opportunities better. This focus on quantifiable outcomes and financial integration makes ESG a more robust and effective framework in the investment community. The need for ESG derived from the growing complexity, interconnectedness of global challenges and evolution of sustainability concept. As mentioned previously, the initial environmental focus of sustainability changed in a way to include a wide range of social and economic factors. It is understood that centralized efforts to cut down environmental impact, minimize waste, conserve energy and protect ecosystems are not enough to achieve sustainability and must be complemented with other social and economic initiatives which are equally significant. Today, sustainability encompasses human rights, economic sustainability, and social equity. This expanded view reflects the recognition that environmental health, social well-being, and economic stability are interconnected and mutually reinforcing. Issues such as poverty, hunger, and food waste are now integral to the sustainability agenda, highlighting the need for comprehensive strategies that address these grand challenges

holistically (Sachs, 2015). At this point, ESG provides this holistic perspective, considering a wide range of factors from carbon emissions and resource use to labor practices and corporate governance structures (Friede, Busch, & Bassen, 2015).

ESG practices can be found in different forms across industries due to the diverse characteristics of each one. The financial sector utilizes ESG for improving investment strategies to manage risks and identify sustainable investment opportunities. For example, BlackRock, the world's largest asset manager, announced in 2020 that it would prioritize ESG factors in its investment strategies, citing the importance of sustainability for long-term returns (Fink, 2020). In the technology sector, ESG is used to address issues such as data privacy, cybersecurity and ethical AI development. Tech giants like Microsoft and Google have made serious commitments to sustainability, including achieving carbon neutrality and investing in renewable energy projects (Microsoft, 2020). Retailing is another significant sector worldwide, adopting ESG frameworks to improve supply chain management and labor practices. Companies like Patagonia and IKEA have established robust ESG frameworks to ensure their products are sourced sustainably and their workers are treated fairly (Chkanikova & Mont, 2012). In terms of entertainment, the industry improves inclusion and diversity aspects alongside ethical content creation and environmental impacts. For instance, Netflix has committed to achieving net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by the end of 2022, reflecting its dedication to environmental responsibility (Netflix, 2021). The sports industry follows a similar curve. Moreover, the sports events industry is also internalizing ESG initiatives with the hope to mitigate negative effects of these events while driving positive ones thanks to its unique capabilities. For example, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) has made sustainability a central pillar of the Olympic Games. The IOC's Sustainability Strategy, launched in 2016, aims to ensure that the Olympic Games are managed in a way that minimizes environmental impact, promotes social inclusion, and fosters economic development (IOC, 2020). The 2020 Tokyo Olympics showcased several ESG initiatives, such as using renewable energy to power the event, sourcing materials for medals from recycled electronics, and implementing measures to reduce carbon emissions. These efforts reflect a broader trend in the sports industry towards integrating ESG principles to create more sustainable and socially responsible events (Tokyo Organizing Committee of the Olympic and Paralympic Games, 2021). FIFA is another organizational body which has a strong stance regarding the matter and aligns ESG criteria into its

planning and execution steps. For example, the 2022 World Cup in Qatar demonstrated initiatives such as sustainable stadium construction, water conservation and community engagement. Energy and water efficiency in stadiums were manifested during realization and utilization of stadiums as community centers after the event was a manifestation about having a long-term social value (FIFA, 2020). The English Premier League (EPL) has also embraced ESG principles, with clubs implementing various protocols to promote sustainability and social responsibility (Premier League, 2024). For example, Arsenal FC has installed solar panels at its training ground, while Tottenham Hotspur has created a zero-to-landfill waste management system at its stadium explaining their sustainability initiatives through their websites. These initiatives not only reduce the environmental footprint of sports events but also engage fans and communities in sustainability efforts. Moreover, the goal of making sports events carbon-neutral or carbon-positive helped to increase popularity of 'green games. Popular sports events such as the Super Bowl and NFL are some examples of this. As one of the largest sporting events in United States, Super Bowl, has implemented some sustainability initiatives in terms of waste reduction, recycling programs and carbon-offsetting. The NFL has also partnered with local organizations to leave a positive legacy in host cities through community projects and environmental programs (NFL, 2020).

Like sustainability and CSR perceptions, perceptions regarding ESG have also evolved over time. In the beginning, ESG was perceived as a niche framework for socially conscious investors. Later, due to increased concerns over global sustainability challenges, ESG has become mainstream. Today, most of the stakeholders- consumers, employees and investors included- would like to see strong ESG stances of companies. As we discussed previously, consumers are more supportive to sustainable and ethical companies. A 2020 survey by Nielsen found that 66% of global consumers are willing to pay more for sustainable goods, reflecting the growing demand for responsible business practices (Nielsen, 2020). Similarly younger generations prefer to be employees of companies which align with their values and show commitment to ESG practices (Deloitte, 2020). Investors too have a similar approach. According to the GSIA, sustainable investment now accounts for over a third of all professionally managed assets globally, highlighting the importance of ESG in investment decision-making (GSIA, 2020). This shows the similar approach of investors and their acknowledgment about the fact that companies with stronger ESG performance have advantages in managing risks, capitalizing on opportunities and achieving long-term success.

Similar schema also represents sports events dynamics as well. As found out by Scheinbaum and Lacey (2015) the alignment of event social responsibility with participants' values can potentially trigger positive behavioral intentions.

In conclusion, originating from socially responsible practices, ESG evolved to promote sustainable and ethical business practices with environmental, social and governance considerations. This evolution reflects the acknowledgment of interconnectedness and interdependence between businesses, society and environment requiring a systematic and holistic framework to address global challenges. Industries adopt ESG in diverse methods while sports events provide unique benefits with is potential to drive sustainability and social responsibility. Since the demand for sustainable and ethical practices for businesses seems to be requiring greater velocity, it would be appropriate to expect increasing importance of ESG in the future. The next chapter will delve into the concept of Creating Shared Value (CSV), which has gained attention for its focus on practical actions and its unique approach to society as an active stakeholder for effective outcomes.

2.4.3 Creating Shared Value (CSV)

Porter and Kramer introduced CSV in their seminal 2011 Harvard Business Review article. CSV is an influential concept thanks to its emphasis on the interdependency between business success and social progress. This concept challenges the traditional notion that companies must choose between economic performance and social responsibility. CSV defends that corporations can generate economic value and drive innovation alongside growth by addressing societal needs and challenges. This mechanism of CSV makes it distinguishable from CSR and ESG by integrating social improvement into core business strategy rather than treating it as a peripheral or compliance issue. CSV redefines social responsibility actions as strategic opportunities to gain competitive advantage and create value both for the company and society; unlike CSR and ESG have which have subtle referrals to social responsibility as burdens or sacrifices. While CSR often involves philanthropic activities that are separate from the business's primary operations, and ESG focuses on meeting regulatory and stakeholder expectations, CSV has the goal of exploring business opportunities parallel to solving societal issues. This integration of social and economic goals leads

to more sustainable and scalable solutions, as it leverages the resources, expertise, and efficiency of the private sector.

Potential and practical efficiency of CSV concept are thanks to its approach to society as an active stakeholder instead of passive observer or receiver as in other concepts. This role distribution and mechanism help companies to explore new opportunities like new markets, increased productivity and improved market position while addressing societal problems. For example, if a business tries to improve its health and nutrition scales in its food products, it would not be only challenging a significant social problem but also would be creating a loyal customer base which would bring other potential business benefits as well. This participatory approach involves society in the value creation process, fostering a sense of ownership and collaboration that enhances the overall impact.

Robust strategies, essential for tackling grand challenges as mentioned previously, require participative architecture, multivocal inscription, and distributed experimentation. CSV exemplifies these traits through its inclusive and adaptive approach. Participative architecture, structural component, in CSV involves engaging various stakeholders, including customers, employees, suppliers, and communities, in the innovation process. Moreover, it distributes an active role to society as collaborators of businesses. This engagement ensures that developed solutions are relevant and effective, as they are informed by the diverse perspectives and needs of those involved. Multivocal inscription, interpretive dimension of robust strategies, refers to the incorporation of multiple voices and viewpoints in decision-making. CSV encourages businesses to listen to and collaborate with different stakeholders, ensuring that their strategies are not only economically viable but also socially beneficial. Moreover, since social problems have diverse and complex layers, expecting highly efficient solutions from private companies or actors who do not experience those problems from firsthand would not be plausible. Hence, this inclusive approach helps in identifying real problems, potential synergies and innovations that might be overlooked in a more insular decision-making process. Distributed experimentation, the third and practical element of robust strategies, involves testing and refining solutions in various contexts and environments. CSV promotes this through its focus on local clusters and ecosystems. By developing localized solutions that address specific social and economic challenges, companies can experiment with different approaches, learn from their experiences, and scale successful

models. This iterative process enhances the adaptability and resilience of the business strategies, making them more effective in addressing complex and dynamic challenges.

Examples of CSV in practice demonstrate how these robust strategies are implemented across different industries. In the business sector, companies like Nestlé have redefined their value chains to create shared value. Nestlé's initiative to work closely with farmers to improve agricultural practices not only enhances the quality and sustainability of their raw materials but also improves the livelihoods of the farmers, creating a positive cycle of economic and social benefits. In the entertainment industry, recognition of CSV is increasing as well. For example, film production companies are investing in local communities where they shoot movies supporting education and infrastructure development. This not only creates a positive social impact but also builds a supportive environment for future projects, reducing costs and improving logistical efficiency.

The sports industry offers compelling examples of CSV, particularly in the context of sports clubs and events. Many sports clubs are opening free courses and training programs for young people, providing opportunities for physical activity and talent development. These initiatives have a dual benefit: they contribute to the health and well-being of the community while also identifying and nurturing potential new talents who might become future stars in the sport. Additionally, sports events often incorporate community engagement activities, such as charity runs or youth clinics, which enhance the social impact of the event and build a stronger connection with the community. Similar to the concept of CSV, which emphasizes the integration of societal benefits into business strategies, football clubs are increasingly adopting impact-driven sustainability models that not only address societal issues but also enhance corporate reputation. For example, Borussia Dortmund’s social impact initiatives, including their support for youth education and environmental sustainability, reflect a strategic approach to shared value creation. By engaging with local communities and prioritizing social responsibility, these clubs are able to generate both social and economic value, much like CSV aims to achieve (Mazzù et al., 2024). Some other notable examples from the sports industry are FC Barcelona's "Masia 360" program, which focuses on the holistic development of young athletes, including their education and social integration. This program not only produces well-rounded individuals but also strengthens the club's brand and reputation, attracting fans and sponsors who value its commitment to social responsibility. Similarly, The Manchester United Foundation runs a variety of community programs aimed at

improving the lives of young people. Their "Street Reds" initiative provides free football sessions and alternative activities for young people aged 8-18, encouraging positive engagement and physical activity. This program not only benefits the participants by promoting a healthy lifestyle but also helps the club build a strong, community-focused brand. The National Football League's (NFL) "Play 60" campaign is another similar initiative which encourages kids to be active for 60 minutes a day to help reverse the trend of childhood obesity (NFL, 2020). This initiative includes community events, school programs, and partnerships with local organizations. The program's success is evident in its widespread adoption, with over 73,000 schools and 38 million kids engaged since its inception. Like, The NBA's global social responsibility program, NBA Cares, has provided more than 5 million hours of hands-on service and created over 1,500 places where kids and families can live, learn, or play. Programs like these not only help address social issues but also enhance the league's reputation and connection with fans. Parkrun is another organization which organizes free, weekly, 5 km timed runs in over 20 countries. These events promote physical activity and community spirit, attracting over 6 million registered participants. Parkrun's inclusive approach encourages people of all ages and abilities to participate, fostering a sense of community and well-being. Other notable examples from sports events include the New York City Marathon Charity Program and Run Rome the Marathon Charity Program. The New York City Marathon, one of the world's largest and most popular marathons, includes a robust charity program. In 2019, runners raised over $45 million for various causes. This event not only raises significant funds for charities but also highlights the social impact of sports events, drawing attention to important issues and engaging a global audience. Similarly, Run Rome the Marathon Charity Program is a significant initiative that underscores the social impact of sports events. This marathon collaborates with many charities including Banco Alimentare Roma, a food bank dedicated to redistributing surplus food to those in need. In recent events, Run Rome the Marathon participants and organizers have contributed to the collection and redistribution of thousands of meals alongside creating significant fundraisers. For instance, in the 2023 marathon, over 64,000 kilograms of food, drink and clothing were saved and distributed to various charitable organizations, providing essential support to underprivileged communities (Corriere dello Sport). This collaboration not only highlights the marathon's commitment to social responsibility but also showcases the potential of sports events to foster community welfare and sustainability.

In conclusion, CSV represents a paradigm shift in how businesses approach value creation, emphasizing the symbiotic relationship between economic success and social progress. By integrating social issues into core business strategies, companies can develop innovative solutions that are more sustainable and impactful. This chapter has elaborated on the concept of CSV, differentiating it from CSR and ESG, and highlighting its practical efficiency through examples from various industries. Moving forward, the focus will shift to the market side of sports business and sports events, examining marketing strategies and behavioral analyses within the sports industry, supported by insights from academic literature. This transition will provide a comprehensive understanding of how businesses can leverage both social responsibility and market dynamics to achieve long-term success.

2.5 Marketing & Sports Events

Understanding participant behavior and dynamics of sports events has been the subject of extensive academic research with the goal of improving marketing of sports events. Early literature was not specific to sports events but became more inclusive in time. Early models on service quality and participant behavior with different dimensions were mostly constructed on SERVQUAL model created by Parasuraman et al. (1988), for service and retail environment. This model identifies five key dimensions: tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. Research applying this model has found that high service quality positively influences participants' behavioral intentions and overall satisfaction with sports events (Brady & Cronin, 2001). Another model introduced and developed by many researchers was REQUAL which had a four-factor structure like SERVQUAL (Crompton et al, 1991; Mackay and Crompton, 1990). Assurance, reliability, responsiveness and tangibles were considered and tested for public recreation services in USA, yet remained geographically restricted. Another model, QUESC, was developed by Kim and Kim (1995) and tested by Papadimitriou and Karteroliotis (2000) to evaluate quality of sports centers but similarly could not expand due to validity problems. Later, many models were developed in literature regarding fitness centers, recreational, environmental centers and so on. In time literature developed more specific models for the evaluation of sports events with some distinctions based on their nature. TEAMQUAL (McDonald et al.,1995), nine-

factor service quality model developed by Kelley and Turley (2001), and SPORTSERV (Theodorakis et al., 2001) are exemplary models for spectator sports events. The SPORTSERV model extends service quality framework to the sports context, emphasizing the unique aspects of service delivery in sports events and their impact on customer satisfaction (Duncan & Moriarty, 1998). Additionally, the influence of the physical environment on attendees' behavioral intentions has been a focal point of research. Hightower et al. (2002) found that the physical setting of a sports event significantly affects participants' satisfaction and their likelihood of future attendance. Furthermore, the role of nostalgia in sports marketing has gained attention, with Cho et al. (2019) demonstrating how nostalgic feelings can enhance attendees' emotional connections to events, thereby influencing their behavioral intentions.

In addition to service quality and physical environment, recent studies have examined sports participation measurements and trends, particularly regarding the social impact of participative sports events. Taks et al. (2015) explored how community engagement and social cohesion are fostered through participative events. While Hautbois et al. (2019) tried to elaborate on the social impact of a participative sport event by clustering participants with their perceived benefits. They have found 3 distinct clusters with diverse perceptions: Performance Focused, Self-Challengers and Happy Loafers. Performance focused cluster had high ambition and motivation dimension while social bonding or host city related dimensions were relatively lower. Self-challengers were the youngest cluster with a significant ratio of participants from closer distance seeming also more occasional runners. This cluster was most receptive to social bonding which liked to connect with the community and other participants. Researchers suggested that the evolution of sports events into more unformal activity-based gatherings creating small communities can be shown as a supportive cause for this case. Last cluster, happy loafers were identified as participants who perceived the event as sports tourism thanks to their significant response to city related dimension meanwhile having mostly positive response in all the other dimensions as well. As this research demonstrates, participative sports events can enhance social capital within communities, leading to increased satisfaction among participants. Moreover, understanding expectations, reasoning and perceived benefits of participants can guide sports organizations significantly to increase social value and please its participants. Similar studies are done by Tjønndal (2018) about the engagement motives of stakeholders and Yamashita & Muneda (2021) about the relationship between perceived social benefits and support intention in a more peculiar environment, in para-

sport event. Tjønndal (2018) found that positive social interactions and community benefits derived from participation in sports events significantly enhance residents' support intentions, suggesting that fostering a sense of community and social cohesion through sports can lead to greater local engagement and advocacy for future events. Meanwhile, Yamashita and Muneda (2021) found that both community benefits and cultural/educational benefits from spectating wheelchair basketball tournaments positively influenced spectators' subjective well-being, which in turn significantly affected their support for parasport events. Their research revealed that the perceived social benefits of these events enhance residents' overall quality of life, indicating that local engagement in parasport can foster a more inclusive society and increase support for future events.

On the other hand, literature has increasingly addressed the unsustainable aspects of mega-events, particularly concerning urban planning and human rights issues. Muller (2015) discusses the negative social impacts of mega-events, including displacement of communities and increased living costs, which can detract from the overall satisfaction of local residents. Similarly, Preuss (2019) emphasizes the need for comprehensive evaluations of event legacies, considering both positive and negative outcomes on host communities.

In parallel, the discourse on social responsibility within participants' behaviors in sports events has gained prominence. Chung (2018) advocated for a systematic approach to analyzing the Social Responsibility of Sports (SRS) to maximize its impact, highlighting the need for sports organizations to align their social initiatives with participant values. Sánchez-Sáez et al. (2020) addressed the measurement of CSR perceptions in small and medium-sized sports events, emphasizing that positive CSR initiatives can enhance participants' loyalty and satisfaction. Inoue and Havard (2014) explored the determinants and consequences of perceived social impact, finding that attendees are more likely to support events that they perceive as contributing positively to their communities. Moreover, Scheinbaum and Lacey (2015) conducted a quantitative analysis to explore the alignment of event social responsibility with participants' values, suggesting that when sports events resonate with attendees' personal beliefs, it can trigger positive behavioral intentions and enhance overall satisfaction. In recent years, the integration of sustainability efforts into marketing strategies has become a key trend in the sports industry. As observed in leading football leagues, impact-driven initiatives not only address environmental and social concerns but

also help sports organizations create a strong connection with their fan base. This strategic shift towards socially responsible marketing is evident in the case of Borussia Dortmund, where their comprehensive sustainability program has enhanced both fan engagement and brand reputation (Mazzù et al., 2024). Such examples demonstrate the increasing importance of sustainability in shaping the future of sports marketing.

The evolution of research on participant behavior in sports events reflects a shift from a focus on physical environments to a broader understanding of social and abstract dimensions. This transition is evident in the changing marketing strategies employed by sports organizations as well. Historically, marketing in the sports industry emphasized physical attendance and merchandise sales. However, as consumer expectations have evolved, sports clubs have begun to implement more socially responsible marketing practices. Previously mentioned NFL PLAY 60 program from NFL is a concrete example of this kind (NFL, 2020). In recent years, sports organizations have increasingly recognized the importance of integrating social responsibility into their marketing strategies. For instance, Nike's partnership with FC Barcelona, which began in 1998, not only focuses on product sales but also emphasizes community engagement and sustainability (Flockler, 2023). This partnership has evolved to include initiatives aimed at promoting social causes and enhancing the club's connection with its fans. The timeline of marketing strategies in the sports industry reflects this evolution. In the early 2000s, marketing efforts primarily centered on traditional advertising and sponsorships. However, as digital marketing emerged, organizations began to leverage social media and influencer partnerships to engage fans more effectively. By the 2010s, the focus shifted towards creating immersive experiences and fostering community connections through grassroots initiatives. Today, sports organizations are increasingly adopting holistic marketing strategies that prioritize social impact, sustainability, and consumer engagement.

In conclusion, the literature on sports event marketing highlights a dynamic field that continues to evolve in response to changing consumer behaviors and societal expectations. As researchers and practitioners alike seek to understand the complex interplay between sports events and their broader social implications, the integration of social responsibility into marketing strategies will likely play a crucial role in shaping the future of the sports industry.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Hypotheses Development

As the literature review demonstrates, it is important to go beyond mitigating after-effects and create net positive value through sports events, as they represent great opportunities but also significant threats on common grounds if managed poorly. Therefore, this thesis aims to prove the potential of sports events in combating grand challenges through internal value creation processes, which can be utilized as strategic marketing tools by understanding participants' responses to such initiatives.

To provide practical evidence, the primary research question addressed is how the perceived social value—encompassing initiatives to address grand challenges as well as broader social responsibility efforts—impacts the behavioral intentions of participants. In line with this, the central hypothesis of the study is as follows:

H1: Perceived social value within sports events has a positive impact on the behavioral intentions of participants.

While this remains the primary hypothesis, the research also seeks to explore the following dynamics:

H2: The 'Social Cause' component within the perceived social value has a significant and direct effect on participants' behavioral intentions.

This hypothesis posits that participants who recognize and value the social causes championed by the event are more likely to exhibit positive behavioral intentions. This hypothesis aims to distinguish the effect of social cause elements within perceived social value to better understand dynamics.

H3: Attitudes towards social and environmental responsibility may moderate the relationship between perceived social value and behavioral intentions.

This hypothesis explores whether participants' attitudes towards social and environmental responsibility influence the strength of the relationship between perceived social value and

behavioral intentions. Those with stronger beliefs in social responsibility are expected to show a more pronounced positive relationship between perceived social value and behavioral intentions.

H4: Awareness of concrete social responsibility acts to combat grand challenges, associated with the event, enhances the perceived social value, which in turn positively influences the behavioral intentions of participants.

This hypothesis suggests that when participants are aware that the event actively supports specific social responsibility initiatives, their perception of the event's social value increases, thereby strengthening their behavioral intentions. This hypothesis aims to prepare a ground for strategic sports events marketing while encouraging sport events' organizers to actively take part in combatting grand challenges.

By examining these additional hypotheses, the research aims to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the factors that influence participants' behavioral responses to sports events designed to address grand challenges and promote social responsibility.

3.2 Selection of the Sport Event

As mentioned in the previous chapters, sports events can be categorized with their nature, scale and size. In this research it was desirable to choose a participative sport event to better understand social dynamics since these events cover bigger portion of social dimension such as community bonding, host image and well-being of society while in audience-based sports events, spectatorship and entertainment dimensions are more prevalent. Moreover, choosing a bigger event in terms of size and scale would provide better insights thanks to the diversity of participant profiles. Hence, instead of regional and small-scale sports events, choosing a major event which would have a high number of participants from different geographies including both locals and international ones with diverse backgrounds and characteristics would help analysis better. Moreover, due to logistical concerns and procedural complexities, choosing an event in Italy which would be also open to include such questionnaires within the event environment was necessary. Furthermore, the

sport event also had to have a social dimension and social responsibility initiatives to be able to measure variables better for the evaluation.

At this point, thanks to the recommendation of my Supervisor Prof. Antonio Daood (currently President of Associazione Banco Alimentare Roma, ABAR), Run Rome the Marathon seemed a plausible option thanks to its significant participant number, which has more than 30,000 participants, its location being in Rome and would provide insights also about host image as well as its dedication for social causes such as charity programs and a social cause which was #Runforwater in 2024. Another distinct quality of this event was its collaboration with ABAR where ABAR was entitled to collect excessive food, water and leftover clothing during the marathon and redistribute people in need creating great social value. This collaboration was highly interesting since it was fighting against grand challenges like hunger, poverty and food waste while the methods they use had characteristics of 'Robust Strategies' (Ferrero et al., 2015) and CSV pillars. Onboarding municipality, organization committee, marathon participants and volunteers for this cause demonstrates participatory architecture of this collaboration and it helps to create bigger scaled output at the end. Understanding each stakeholders' needs and distributing proper roles that help each stakeholder to work on their agenda is an example of multivocal inscription. In this collaboration, giving ABAR permission to collaborate while creating value for society and the event, organizing other charity programs and getting support from local authorities are examples of this kind. Distributed experimentation in this collaboration shows itself as iterative and careful expansion of ABAR's activities for this event. ABAR has been collaborating with the Run Rome the Marathon for some years, excelling in their collaboration and operations every year with increased and diversified donations. This collaboration carries also traits of CSV since it enables simultaneous value creation for diverse actors encouraging them to continue this collaboration. This collaboration brings new donations to ABAR, better reputation and social cause to the Run Rome the Marathon, extra relief to local authorities since the cause aims also social contribution, assumably positive feelings to participants as well since they are a part of the donation process and the most importantly value to society and environment since this collaboration reduces poverty and food waste. Parallelly, since ABAR was a part of the charity program, it would have a stand to promote its project during preparation days where distributing questionnaires to participants would be possible with necessary permissions. Considering all these

connections, Run Rome the Marathon seemed the perfect opportunity to analyze the effect of perceived social value in sport event on participants' behavioral intentions. Run Rome the Marathon being a repetitive annual event is another advantage that could help further research and temporal analysis regarding the topic.

3.3 Experiment Design

Experimental design is used in this thesis to better understand causal relation between variables where perceived social value within the sport event considered as independent variable and behavioral intentions of participants are dependent variables with potential effects of other additional variables. The experiment is planned to be a quantitative one via distribution of a survey to the marathon participants to provide analytical results. To create the survey, similar studies and their scales were analyzed to decide optimized flow and scales to be used in the survey. After discussing potential experiment designs such as between subject and within subject designs, it seemed plausible to choose within subject design where each participant takes both experiment conditions aiming to eliminate the effect of individual differences and analyze better the impact of stimuli and temporal change. Since understanding dynamics between social cause and behavioral intentions is another significant goal alongside the main research question, the stimulus is decided to be an informative text about ABAR and their collaboration with the Run Rome the Marathon mentioning their purpose and success in the previous editions of the marathon. Hence, the survey is planned to have following order: introduction, initial part where perceived social value and related behavioral intentions are measured, the informative part to stimulate participants, second part where variables are re-measured after stimuli and finally control variables and demographic questions. Being as precise as possible to enable smooth conduct of the experiment is prioritized.

To measure each variable, it was necessary to find scales and the following strategy is followed to obtain them.

3.3.1 Scaling Perceived Social Value

Social value within sports events can be attributed to diverse concepts. Sport involvement, self-acceptance, social bonding, community development, host image are existing concepts in the literature. For this thesis, the focus is social cause and social responsibility efforts within sports events. However, having only this concept as the measure of perceived social value would undermine the impact of other concepts and manipulate the real perception of participants. Accordingly, it was desired to have a comprehensive perceived social value scale which includes diverse factors. Unfortunately, an all-inclusive and coherent scale that would match with characteristics of chosen sport event could not be found. Hence, creating a scale by getting insights and partial items from other scales followed as the strategy meanwhile at least two statements per item are obtained to provide reflective results.

Sport involvement is a significant social value concept for participative sports events since they encourage society to be more active physically. To scale this component, three items from the paper of Hautbois et al. (2019) were adapted as follows: 'I increased my physical activity in the last few months in order to run this marathon.', 'Run Rome the Marathon was my main motivation to keep myself physically active.' and 'I started to run with the goal of running the Run Rome the Marathon.'. Self-acceptance and social bonding concepts are also important pillars of participative sport events because they bond people with society and help them to get new identities by participating in diverse groups through these events. For this component, three items under social value scale were adapted from the work of Crespo Hervás et al. (2020) as follows: 'The marathon helps me to obtain appropriate social and relationship value.', 'The marathon helps me to interact with others.' and 'The marathon helps me to reinforce my status as a Marathon runner.'. Considering Run Rome the Marathon is taking place in one of the most touristic cities in the world, measuring host image as another component would be plausible. Two items were chosen from the city image factor of Parra-Camacho et al. (2020) stating: 'The marathon improves the reputation of the city as a destination for sporting events.' and 'The marathon shows the capacity of the city to welcome sporting events.'. Most important component of the perceived social value scale comes from the social cause and social responsibility efforts since the goal is to provide evidence on this type of value creation process can be utilized as marketing strategy to combat grand challenges. Noted as literature gap lack of sources on this regard, it was not possible to find also

scale to utilize in sports events environment in terms of social cause and responsibility efforts encompassing grand challenges. At this point, with the guidance of my thesis supervisor, following three-item scale has been created: ‘The marathon event contributes building a supportive community among participants and local residents.’, ‘The marathon event supports a meaningful social cause.’ and ‘The marathon has a social value thanks to its commitment to social responsibility.’. The scale is designed to have 5-point Likert scale ranges from ‘strongly disagree’ to ‘strongly agree’.

3.3.2 Scaling Behavioral Intentions

Behavioral intentions of participants to sports events are comprehensive motives. Literature has some exemplary scales in terms of word of mouth (WOM herein after), loyalty and willingness to pay (WTP herein after) and it is also important to understand these dynamics in our case study. Moreover, with the underlying idea that people might be more prone to spend during the event with the effect of perceived social value thanks to concepts like charitable spending, it was decided to include internal expenditure as another category of behavioral intention (Fechner et al., 2021; Lee et al., 2017).

For the WOM, three items from the scale of Zeithaml et al. (1996, as cited in Tzetzis et al., 2014) were adapted as follows: ‘I will encourage friends and relatives to attend this event.’, ‘I will recommend this event to other.’ and ‘I will talk positively about this event to others.’. For loyalty, ‘intention to re-attend' scale of Tzetzis et al. (2014) is adapted with following items: ‘I plan to attend this event in the future.’, ‘I will try to attend this event in the future.’ and ‘There is no doubt that I will attend this event in the future.’. For WTP, 2 statements from the work of Hightower et al. (2002) are adapted as follows: ‘I would continue to participate Run Rome the Marathon if the prices increase.’ and ‘I would pay a higher price to participate Run Rome the Marathon than I would pay to participate other marathons.’. Moreover, to better analyze the degree of this willingness, another conditional question is added which pops up only if the participant has answered at least one of the WTP statements positively asking additional percentage they could pay to participate the marathon. For the internal expenditure, no scale is found to be adapted or

adopted. Hence, with the guidance of my supervisor, following scale is created: ‘I am willing to spend on food and beverage options provided at the marathon.’, ‘I am interested in purchasing merchandise (e.g., apparel, souvenirs) available at the marathon.’ and ‘I expect the pricing of internal items (food, beverage, merchandise) at the marathon to be reasonable given the event's offering.’ Like the perceived social value scale, behavioral intentions are also kept as 5-point Likert scale to keep consistency.

3.3.3 Finalizing Survey

Upon the finalization of scales, the survey is created by using Qualtrics and other control variables are added at the end of survey alongside demographic questions. Previous participation is asked to understand if the pattern or awareness diverge in time. Attitude, in detail questions regarding seriousness of food waste and poverty as problems and self-perception about being socially responsible are asked to distinct cause sensitivity and perceived self-responsibility. Other demographics are asked to understand participant profile and understand diverse expectations, awareness levels and behavioral intentions of different age groups, effect of being local or non-local and event type categorization such as marathon runners, fun run and relay race participants. All sections with more than one-item in their constructs had randomization to avoid any potential patterns that can mislead participants.

Although the survey seemed complete, repeating the same questions before and after the stimuli made the survey long, around 8 minutes. Moreover, repetitiveness would risk incomplete answers due to participants’ probable short span of attention in such a crowded and chaotic environment where everyone would be rushing. Hence, it was opted to ask participants if they would like to change their answers after the stimuli (info about ABAR and collaboration) to increase efficiency. Adding another question to rate the value of the given info is placed right after the stimuli to measure perceived effect of the stimuli. This aimed to account for those who might appreciate the information but choose not to change their previous answers due to it not being impactful enough or due to convenience. With the latest reduction, the survey became 5-minute long one.

For the language, since the literature was in English, the survey is created in English initially. Considering also the international reach of the event, it was necessary to keep an internationally accepted language. However, expecting many Italians as participants, it was necessary to translate also in Italian. Later, upon the approval of this initial version, translation of questions and other components is conducted through an AI based translation tool and following scrutinization of native Italian speakers.

3.4 Conducting the Experiment

Run Rome the Marathon 2024 took place on 17th of March. 15th and 16th were preparation days where participants were required to pick up their kits and numbers from Palazzo dei Congressi. The organization of the location was arranged in a way to include sponsors, collaborators and charities from the charity program. Participants needed to do a circle inside the building to pick up their kits and then they would arrive in the corridor with stands of charities. ABAR's stand was also there alongside many other charities. The survey is conducted at the stand of ABAR by asking marathon participants if they would like to help this thesis by answering a survey. Upon their agreement, a smart device, tablet, computer or telephone is given to them while waiting for them to finish the survey privately. This strategy was intentionally designed to minimize incomplete responses and confusion, which would likely occur if participants were asked to fill out the survey at their convenience using a distributed QR code or link.

Distributing the survey came with several challenges. Despite clearly stating that the survey would only take 5 minutes, participants often became frustrated or bored, expecting a quick verbal survey rather than a written one. Many attendees arrived in groups of 2-10 people, making it difficult to convince everyone to participate, especially with limited devices available, leading some to leave, saying they were in a hurry. Being located near other charities also posed a problem, as people assumed I was asking for donations or trying to sell something, causing many to walk away without listening. Language barriers added another layer of complexity, as some international participants didn't speak English or Italian, making it chaotic to translate even with the computer's support for automatic page translations. Additionally, older participants struggled with navigating smart

devices, and those without reading glasses required extra assistance. The most significant challenge, however, was that many participants were missing necessary attention which caused concerns regarding successful receiving of stimuli. This led them to shortcut the survey or choose random answers out of frustration because they thought questions were repeating themselves without purpose. Despite these hurdles, I persevered through two tough days, working over 8-hour shifts each day, and successfully gathered over 300 responses from participants with diverse backgrounds.

4. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

4.1 Tool Selection

Initially, SPSS was considered for the data analysis due to its familiarity from LUISS coursework, its user-friendly interface, and the availability of a university-provided license. However, upon clarifying the hypotheses and diagramming the potential model, it became apparent that the complexity of the model exceeded the capabilities of SPSS. The model involved multiple layers, including subcategories that measure Perceived Social Value (PSV), which subsequently influence Behavioral Intentions (BI). Additionally, Behavioral Intentions were predicted by four subcategories, with Attitude identified as potential moderators in these relationships and Awareness with potential effect on PSV. Given the intricate nature of this model, a Latent Variable Structural Equation Model (LVSEM) was deemed necessary for confirmatory analysis.

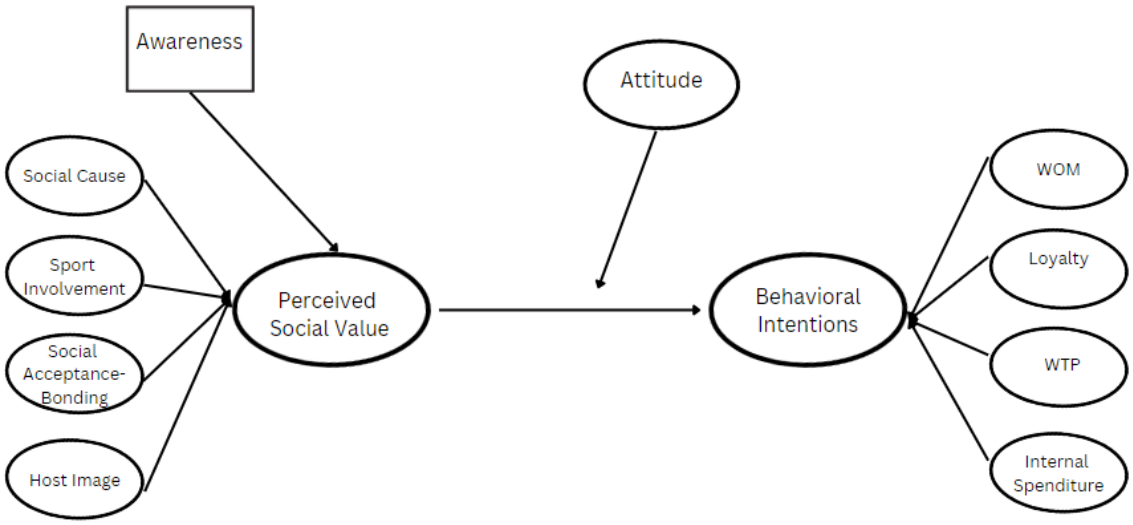

Figure 1: Visualization of Comprehensive SEM Model Based on Hypotheses

Consequently, R was selected as the analytical tool due to its support for Covariance-Based SEM (CB-SEM) through the 'lavaan' package and its flexibility in handling complex statistical models. The choice of R was further supported by its open-source nature, making it accessible without additional cost. Several models were constructed and refined through iterative processes to optimize the analysis and more accurately test the hypothesized relationships. The following

sections detail the step-by-step analysis and present the results obtained through this rigorous approach.

4.2 Data Cleaning & Preparation

In the data cleaning and preparation process, the initial dataset consisted of 322 responses. Upon reviewing the dataset, it was observed that several responses were incomplete, with participants leaving the survey unfinished. Additionally, the dataset included trial responses submitted during the testing phase of the survey. To ensure the integrity and quality of the data, all incomplete responses and trial entries were identified and removed. After this cleaning process, the final dataset consisted of 314 valid responses, which were used for further analysis.

For nationality and age questions inside demographic session, re-coding was necessary. For nationality, 2-digit codes are used to recode data column since participants responded to the question in diverse ways including 2- and 3-digit codes or writing full country/nationality name. To get better insights in terms of age, age brackets are created to better represent data.

4.3 Descriptive Statistics

4.3.1 Gender Distribution

The gender distribution of the respondents shows a significant majority of male participants. Out of the 314 valid responses, 65.3% identified as male (205 respondents), while 32.8% identified as female (103 respondents). A very small percentage of respondents identified as non-binary/third gender (0.3%, or 1 respondent), and 1.6% preferred not to disclose their gender identity (5 respondents).

4.3.2 Age Distribution

The age distribution of participants presents a wide range, from 18 to 59 years old, with a mean age of approximately 32.25 years and a standard deviation of 9.426, indicating a moderate spread of ages around the mean. The most common age (mode) is 26 years, with a median age of 29.5 years, indicating that half of the participants are younger and half are older than this age.

The histogram of age distribution demonstrates that the majority of participants are in their mid-20s to early 30s, with notable peaks around the ages of 26 and 30. The age category distribution further clarifies this, showing that the largest age group is between 24-30 years old, comprising 37.3% of the respondents. This is followed by the 31-40 age group, which accounts for 24.8% of the sample, and the 18-23 age group, representing 17.2% of the participants. Smaller proportions are observed in the 41-50 and 51-60 age categories, which make up 15.6% and 5.1% of the sample, respectively.

This demographic breakdown suggests that the majority of participants are young adults, which may have implications for their behavioral intentions and perceived social value in the context of the study. The relatively even distribution of age categories also allows for a diverse range of perspectives within the analysis.

4.3.3 Nationality Distribution

The participants of the study represent a diverse set of countries, with a significant proportion hailing from Italy. Specifically, 104 participants, or 33.1% of the total sample, are Italian. This is reflective of the event's location in Rome, making it unsurprising that a large number of respondents are from Italy. The second-largest group of participants is from the United Kingdom, comprising 14.3% of the sample, followed by France (8.6%) and Germany (7.3%). Other European countries, as well as some from North and South America, Asia, and Africa, are also represented, though these constitute smaller percentages.

The nationality distribution highlights a broad international representation among the participants, with a noteworthy concentration of Italians, likely influenced by the event's Rome-based setting.

This demographic mix provides a rich context for understanding the participants' perceptions and behaviors in the study.

4.3.4 Event Distribution

The survey captured data from participants across three event types: Relay Race, Fun Run, and Full Marathon. The majority (77.7%) participated in the Full Marathon, followed by the Relay Race (12.7%) and Fun Run (9.6%).

Gender distribution varied across events, with the Full Marathon attracting more males (83.2% of male respondents) compared to females (65% of female respondents). The Fun Run had a more balanced gender mix, with more females participating (20 females vs. 10 males).

Age distribution showed that Full Marathon participants were generally older, with most in the 24-30 and 31-40 age categories. The Fun Run attracted younger participants, while the Relay Race had a more even age distribution across younger categories.

4.3.5 Survey Language

Regarding the language of the survey, 68.8% of respondents completed the survey in English, while 31.2% did so in Italian. This distribution reflects the international nature of the event and the survey, catering to both the local Italian participants and the broader international audience. The choice of survey language likely corresponds with the nationality distribution, with a significant number of participants from Italy and other English-speaking countries.

4.3.6 Prior Participation

The survey asked participants if they had taken part in previous editions of the Run Rome the Marathon, offering three possible answers: "No," "Yes: Once," and "Yes: More than once." The

results indicated that a significant majority, 79.6% (250 out of 314), had not participated in the marathon before. Only 11.5% (36 participants) had joined once, while 6.7% (21 participants) had taken part more than once. Additionally, 2.2% (7 participants) did not provide an answer.

When analyzing the data by nationality, we explored whether Italian participants were more likely to have previously participated in the event compared to non-Italian participants. Among the 102 Italian respondents, 76 (74.5%) had not participated before, 16 (15.7%) had joined once, and 10 (9.8%) had taken part more than once. These numbers suggest a relatively high level of repeat participation among Italians compared to other nationalities.

For non-Italian participants, the trend varied slightly but the general pattern showed fewer instances of repeat participation. For example, from the United Kingdom, out of 45 participants, 40 had not participated before, 3 had joined once, and 2 had participated more than once. Similarly, in France, of 24 participants, 22 had not participated before, while 1 had joined once, and 1 had participated more than once. In Germany, out of 22 participants, 19 were first-time participants, 2 had joined once, and 1 had participated more than once. In Spain, 8 out of 10 participants were new, with 2 having participated once. From the United States, out of 13 participants, 11 were new, 1 had joined once, and 1 had participated more than once. In countries like Belgium, with 6 respondents, all indicated that they had not participated before.

The data shows that Italians are more likely to be repeat participants compared to non-Italians, suggesting that the marathon holds strong local appeal. A considerable portion of the Italian respondents had attended the event more than once, while the majority of non-Italian participants were first timers. These findings provide useful insights for understanding the dynamics of participation and may inform future marketing strategies. By engaging past local participants, there could be potential for boosting repeat registrations. Meanwhile, international marketing efforts might focus on attracting new participants, as non-Italian attendees are more likely to be first-time participants in the marathon.

4.3.7 Awareness and Impact of Stimuli

In assessing the participants' awareness of the event's social responsibility initiatives, a significant portion of respondents were initially unaware of the partnership between Banco Alimentare Roma and the marathon. Specifically, 261 participants (83.4%) were unaware of this collaboration before being provided with additional information.

After receiving the information, participants were asked to rate its perceived value on a scale from 1 to 5 (with 5 being extremely valuable). Most respondents rated the information positively, with 41.9% giving it a 4 (valuable) and 27.5% rating it a 5 (extremely valuable). The overall mean rating was 3.88, indicating a generally favorable view of the information's value. Interestingly, while those already aware of the partnership tended to rate the information slightly higher (mean = 4.04) compared to those who were not aware (mean = 3.84), the difference was not statistically significant ($p = 0.171$). This suggests that while the information was well received by all participants, prior awareness did not strongly influence their perception of its value.

Following the awareness and value questions, only a small number (17 participants) indicated a desire to change their previous answers regarding the marathon, suggesting that the awareness of the social initiative had a limited immediate impact on their responses.

4.4 Hypotheses Testing

Given the multiple hypotheses set forth in this study, it is essential to approach the testing process systematically. We begin by establishing a baseline Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) framework that encompasses the core constructs of Perceived Social Value (PSV) and Behavioral Intentions (BI), along with their respective subcomponents. This foundational model serves as the starting point for our analysis, providing a clear understanding of the relationship between PSV and BI. Following this, the model is expanded and detailed incrementally to test each specific hypothesis, allowing us to explore the nuances and interactions predicted in the theoretical framework. Through this step-by-step approach, we ensure that each hypothesis is rigorously tested within the context of an increasingly sophisticated model.

4.4.1 Impact of Perceived Social Value on Behavioral Intentions

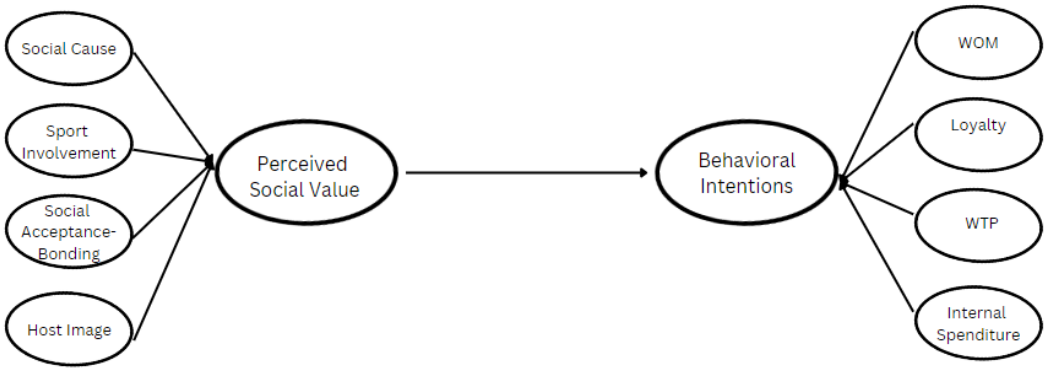

Figure 2: Visualization of SEM Model for H1

To test the first hypothesis, which posits that Perceived Social Value (PSV) positively influences Behavioral Intentions (BI), the data were structured by defining both PSV and BI as higher-order latent variables within the SEM model. Each of these higher-order constructs was represented by several subcomponents, which, in turn, were measured by observed indicators. Specifically, Perceived Social Value was comprised of four latent subcomponents: Social Cause, Sport Involvement, Self-Acceptance and Social Bonding, and Host Image. These subcomponents were measured by three, three, three, and two observed indicators, respectively. Behavioral Intentions included Word of Mouth (WOM), Willingness to Pay (WTP), Loyalty, and Internal Expenditure, with each subcomponent measured by three, two, three, and three observed indicators, respectively. The SEM model was structured to evaluate the direct impact of the higher-order latent variable PSV on BI, encapsulating all related subcomponents and observed indicators.

The hypothesis was supported by the SEM analysis, demonstrating a significant positive impact of Perceived Social Value on Behavioral Intentions. The model fit indices indicated an acceptable fit, with values such as CFI and TLI above 0.9 and RMSEA within an acceptable range, confirming the robustness of the model (See Appendix 1A). Specifically, the standardized path coefficient from PSV to BI was found to be 0.676, which was statistically significant ($p < 0.001$) (See Appendix 1B). This suggests a strong positive relationship, confirming that PSV significantly and

positively impacts BI. As a result, Hypothesis 1 is accepted, confirming the beneficial effect of perceived social value on participants' behavioral intentions.

The factor loadings for the subcomponents of Perceived Social Value onto the higher-order construct indicated that all subcomponents significantly contributed to the overall construct of PSV, with Social Cause (0.90) and Self-Acceptance and Social Bonding (0.91) having the highest factor loadings, while Sport Involvement (0.59) and Host Image (0.82) showed relatively lower loadings. These findings suggest that these two subcomponents play a particularly important role in shaping the perceived social value of the event. The high loading of Social Cause signifies a strong association between the event's social responsibility aspects and the overall value perceived by participants. This implies that Social Cause not only constitutes a significant part of PSV but also indirectly influences Behavioral Intentions through its contribution to PSV. Similarly, the high loading of Self-Acceptance and Social Bonding highlights the importance of social connection and personal acceptance in enhancing the overall perceived value, which reinforces the positive impact on Behavioral Intentions.

The factor loadings of the subcomponents onto the higher-order Behavioral Intentions (BI) construct were as follows: Word of Mouth (WOM) had a factor loading of 0.79, Willingness to Pay (WTP) had the highest at 0.90, Loyalty demonstrated a loading of 0.80, and Internal Expenditure had a loading of 0.69. These findings indicate that all subcomponents were critical to the overall construct of Behavioral Intentions, with WTP (0.90) and WOM (0.79) being particularly significant. The high loading of WTP suggests that participants' willingness to financially support the event or cause is a major indicator of their overall behavioral intentions, highlighting the importance of economic support as a reflection of positive intentions toward the event. WOM, with a substantial factor loading, reflects participants' inclination to recommend the event, further emphasizing the overall impact of PSV on promoting positive sentiment and encouraging future participation. Although Loyalty and Internal Expenditure showed slightly lower loadings, they still exhibited considerable influence, indicating that repeat participation and additional spending are also key behaviors driven by perceived social value.

These distributions of factor loadings across both PSV and BI subcomponents suggest that the scales used were robust and well-suited for capturing the latent constructs (See Appendix 1C). The

consistency of factor loadings across most indicators reinforces the reliability of the higher-order constructs and supports the validity of the hypothesis that Perceived Social Value positively impacts Behavioral Intentions. Significant loadings of subcomponents such as Social Cause within PSV and WTP within BI provide deeper insights into the specific aspects of the event's social value and participant behaviors that are most influential.

4.4.2 Direct Impact of Social Cause on Behavioral Intentions

In this analysis, the relationship between Social Cause, a subcomponent of Perceived Social Value (PSV), and the subcomponents of Behavioral Intentions (BI): Word of Mouth (WOM), Willingness to Pay (WTP), Loyalty, and Internal Expenditure, was examined. To explore these relationships, another Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was employed, where BI was decomposed into its subcomponents, and each was regressed directly on Social Cause. This approach allowed for a more detailed examination of how each type of behavioral intention is influenced by the event's social responsibility aspects.

The original model, which treated BI as a higher-order latent variable, was adjusted for this analysis. Instead of treating BI as a single construct, its subcomponents were modeled individually and regressed on Social Cause. By removing BI as a higher-order construct, an attempt was made to better capture how each specific behavioral outcome is affected by the event's social responsibility aspects.

The model demonstrated acceptable fit indices. The chi-square statistic was found to be 377.618 with 193 degrees of freedom ($p < 0.001$). The Comparative Fit Index (CFI) was 0.918, and the Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) was 0.901, indicating good model fit. The Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) was observed at 0.055, with the 90% confidence interval ranging from 0.046 to 0.063. The Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) was recorded as 0.063. These results suggest that the model represents the data well (See Appendix 2A).

In terms of the relationship between Social Cause and the BI subcomponents, several key findings were observed (See Appendix 2B). First, a significant positive effect of Social Cause on WOM

was identified. The standardized path coefficient was recorded as 0.568, indicating that the social responsibility aspects of the event have a significant impact on participants' likelihood of recommending the event to others. This suggests that participants who value the social responsibility aspects are more inclined to engage in positive word-of-mouth behavior.

The relationship between Social Cause and WTP was found to be non-significant, with a standardized coefficient of 0.062 and a p-value of 0.404. This indicates that, while participants may appreciate the social responsibility of the event, this appreciation does not significantly influence their willingness to pay more for participation, suggesting that other factors may play a more prominent role in their payment decisions.

A moderately strong positive effect of Social Cause on Loyalty was observed, with a standardized coefficient of 0.256 and a p-value of 0.000. This suggests that participants who recognize the event's social responsibility aspects are more likely to show loyalty by attending future events or recommending it to others. The relationship between social cause and loyalty highlights the potential of social responsibility initiatives to foster stronger participant commitment.

Finally, a significant positive effect of Social Cause on Internal Expenditure was identified, with a standardized coefficient of 0.294 and a p-value of 0.001. This indicates that participants who value the event's social responsibility aspects are more likely to spend money within the event, such as on food, merchandise, or other offerings, suggesting that social responsibility can positively impact participants' spending behavior.

Based on these findings, it can be concluded that the hypothesis H2, which states that the Social Cause component within the PSV has a significant and direct effect on participants' behavioral intentions, is confirmed. Social Cause was found to have a significant positive effect on WOM, Loyalty, and Internal Expenditure, while its effect on WTP was not significant. Thus, it can be inferred that the event's social responsibility aspects significantly influence several behavioral intentions, though not all behavioral outcomes are equally affected.

4.4.3 Moderation of Attitude on the Relationship Between Perceived Social Value and Behavioral Intentions

To test H3, which suggests that attitudes towards social and environmental responsibility moderate the relationship between Perceived Social Value (PSV) and Behavioral Intentions (BI), an SEM model was developed. The hypothesis aimed to explore whether participants' attitudes toward grand challenges and their self-perception regarding social responsibility could change the strength of the relationship between the perceived value of an event and their future behavioral intentions. To measure the moderating role of attitude, a latent variable called Attitude, composed of three indicators was introduced into the model. The higher-order latent variables of PSV and BI were retained in the model, with their relative subcomponents.

The SEM model was tested in two stages: initially, the model was run without interaction terms to capture the direct effect of PSV on BI, and then interaction terms between the subcomponents of PSV and Attitude were created to test for moderation effects. These interaction terms were generated using the indProd() function, which created product terms for all relevant indicators of PSV and Attitude. The resulting terms were incorporated into the dataset, allowing the final model to include both the direct effects of PSV on BI and the interaction terms between PSV and Attitude. The model fit was evaluated and showed an acceptable level of fit with a Comparative Fit Index (CFI) of 0.914, a Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) of 0.893, and a Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) of 0.055, indicating a reasonably well-fitting model.

The results of the analysis confirmed again that the direct effect of PSV on BI was statistically significant, with an estimate of 0.523 ($p < 0.001$). This finding reinforces the notion that perceived social value positively influences behavioral intentions, such as participants' likelihood to support or engage with the event. However, the interaction terms testing the moderation effect of Attitude on the PSV-BI relationship were not consistently significant. For instance, the interactions between Social Cause and Attitude, Sport Involvement and Attitude, as well as Self-Acceptance and Social Bonding and Attitude, did not show statistically significant results. Although some interaction effects demonstrated marginal significance (p-values around 0.08-0.09), they did not meet the conventional significance threshold ($p < 0.05$), suggesting that attitudes towards social and

environmental responsibility do not strongly alter the relationship between perceived social value and behavioral intentions.

In conclusion, while the direct effect of PSV on BI was confirmed, the moderating role of Attitude was not supported by the data. Therefore, H3, which posits that attitudes towards social and environmental responsibility moderate the relationship between PSV and BI, cannot be accepted based on these results. Although perceived social value has a direct positive impact on behavioral intentions, the attitude does not appear to significantly change this relationship.

4.4.4 Impact of Awareness on Perceived Social Value and Behavioral Intentions

To investigate the relationship between awareness of social responsibility acts and the participants' perceived social value (PSV), which in turn influences their behavioral intentions (BI), we employed a comprehensive approach. Since this relationship could potentially be moderated by awareness and could vary over time, multiple analytical techniques were applied to ensure robust findings. These techniques ranged from a longitudinal SEM model, moderation analysis, and direct effect examination to linear regression analysis.

Conducting a longitudinal analysis was the first step to understand how the introduction of information stimuli about social responsibility acts affected participants' responses. To do so, a within-subject analysis was designed, comparing pre- and post-awareness data for the same participants. This approach required the duplication of each participant's data to reflect both pre- and post-stimuli conditions. For participants who did not change their responses after exposure to the stimuli, their answers were kept the same for both conditions. A new variable was introduced to differentiate between the two conditions, indicating whether the response was from the pre- or post-awareness phase.

We used a structural equation modeling (SEM) approach to assess the impact of awareness on the relationship between PSV and BI across these two phases. The SEM model focused on the latent constructs of PSV (comprising Social Cause, Sport Involvement, Self-Acceptance Social Bonding, and Host Image) and BI (comprising WOM, WTP, Loyalty, and Internal Expenditure). The results

indicated that awareness stimuli did not significantly alter the PSV-BI relationship, though the model showed good overall fit indices (Appendix 3A).

Following the longitudinal SEM analysis, the direct effect of awareness on PSV was examined using two methods: SEM and linear regression. For the SEM model, the analysis tested whether awareness had a significant impact on the latent variable PSV and whether this subsequently influenced BI. The model suggested that awareness did not have a significant direct effect on PSV (estimate = -0.019, p = 0.675). Fit indices from the SEM model are detailed in Appendix 3B, which show the model had acceptable fit.

For further validation, a linear regression analysis was conducted. In this model, we created a proxy for PSV by averaging its four subcomponents. The regression results confirmed the findings from the SEM analysis, as awareness did not significantly predict PSV (estimate = 0.00464, p = 0.913), further confirming the lack of direct effect (Appendix 3C).

Given the hypothesis that awareness could enhance the impact of PSV on BI, we tested a moderation model using SEM, where awareness was treated as a potential moderator. The moderation analysis produced significant results, indicating that the relationship between PSV and BI was indeed moderated by awareness. The interaction term between awareness and PSV was significant, with awareness enhancing the effect of PSV on BI when included in the model (Appendix 3D).

Across the various analytical approaches, the key findings suggest that while awareness does not directly affect the perceived social value (PSV), it moderates the relationship between PSV and behavioral intentions (BI) confirming H4 partially. The longitudinal SEM analysis confirmed that participants' perceptions of social value and their corresponding behavioral intentions were not directly impacted by the stimuli. However, the moderation analysis revealed that awareness amplifies the effect of PSV on BI, supporting the notion that awareness of concrete social responsibility acts enhances the overall effectiveness of PSV in driving participants' behavior. The figure above visualizes the final SEM model, showing the moderation effect of awareness on the PSV-BI relationship.

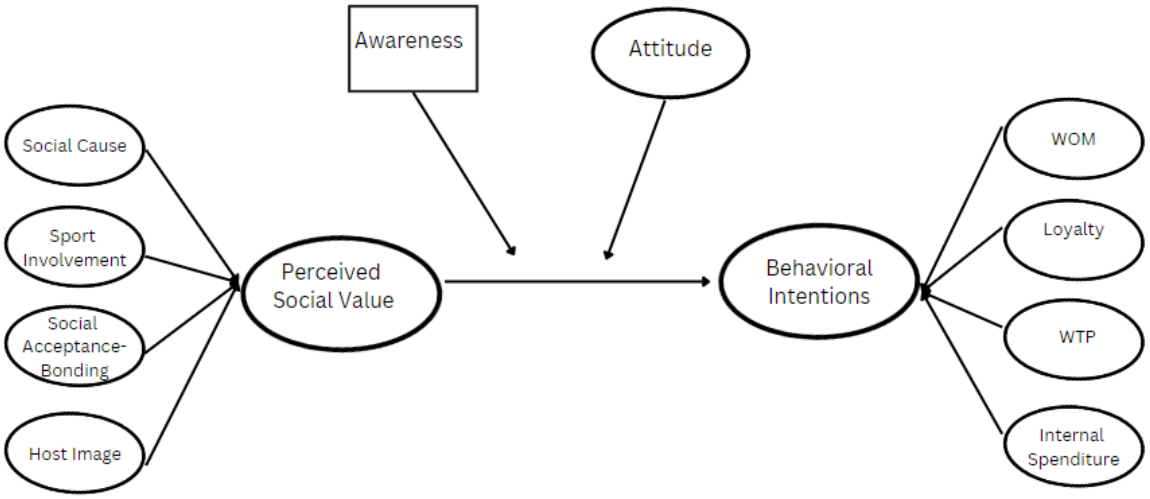

Figure 3: Visualization of SEM Model Based on Results

5. THEORITICAL AND PRACTICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

This research contributes both theoretically and practically to the understanding of how perceived social value (PSV) and social responsibility initiatives can influence participants' behavioral intentions (BI) in the context of sports events. One of the most significant contributions of this thesis is the development of a comprehensive model that incorporates the "social cause" dimension into the evaluation of social value, which has been underexplored in the literature. By conceptualizing PSV in a more holistic manner, this model enables researchers and practitioners to measure not only the personal and social benefits derived from sports events but also the broader societal impact of these events, particularly in terms of addressing grand challenges such as sustainability or social inclusion.

The results of this research provide support for three of the four hypotheses, each with important theoretical and practical implications. First, H1, which posited that PSV positively influences participants' BI, was strongly supported. The findings demonstrated a significant relationship between social value and behavioral intentions, providing robust evidence that the more social value participants perceive in an event, the more likely they are to engage in positive behaviors, such as loyalty, word-of-mouth recommendations, and willingness to pay. Theoretically, this underscores the importance of PSV which is a holistic concept with diverse components as a key driver of behavioral intentions in participative sports events. Practically, it suggests that sports event organizers can enhance participant engagement and generate better business outcomes by increasing the perceived social value of their events. This can be achieved by incorporating initiatives that add meaningful social and environmental benefits, which in turn could foster stronger connections with participants and lead to long-term success.

The second hypothesis, H2, brought an innovative perspective by introducing the "social cause" dimension to the social value construct for the first time in the literature on sports events. This aspect of the research is particularly valuable, as it emphasizes how sports events can be leveraged to combat grand challenges such as climate change or poverty. The results showed that the social cause significantly and directly affects behavioral intentions addition to its significant contribution to the overall perceived social value suggesting that participants value the integration of social responsibility initiatives within the event. This finding has significant theoretical implications by

demonstrating that sports events can be strategically used to address grand challenges. Practically, it means that organizers who align their events with broader social causes not only contribute to addressing global issues but also benefit by enhancing the perceived value of their events. As a result, these initiatives could become more common in business practice, as event organizers recognize the dual benefits of achieving social impact and improving business outcomes.

H3, which examined the relationship between participants' attitudes and their behavioral intentions, also proved to be significant. While this was an expected finding, it still serves as an important theoretical contribution. It reinforces the idea that personal attitudes regarding grand challenges, even in the context of sports events, significantly influence participants' behaviors. This finding has practical implications for event organizers as well. Since participants' attitudes shape their engagement with an event, organizers should consider tailoring their marketing strategies to appeal to specific participant profiles. For instance, campaigns that highlight the social and environmental benefits of the event could enhance the attitudes of participants who are already inclined to support such causes. Alternatively, organizers could create more informative campaigns aimed at increasing awareness of the social challenges the event addresses, which could shift participants' attitudes and further enhance their engagement.

The final hypothesis, H4, which explored whether awareness of social responsibility initiatives directly enhances PSV, was only partially supported. While the direct effect of awareness on PSV was not significant, the moderation analysis revealed that awareness played a significant moderating role. This suggests that while awareness alone may not directly impact the perceived value of the event, it becomes crucial when combined with other factors. Theoretically, this highlights the importance of fostering awareness among participants regarding social responsibility initiatives to enhance their overall perception of the event's value. Practically, it guides event organizers to focus not only on implementing these initiatives but also on effectively communicating them to participants. By increasing awareness through more engaging and interactive communication strategies, organizers can maximize the positive outcomes associated with their events. This finding also aligns with the broader literature on behavior change, which emphasizes that awareness often needs to be accompanied by compelling messaging and engagement to drive meaningful shifts in behavior and perception.

In conclusion, this research provides important theoretical and practical contributions to the literature on social value and behavioral intentions in sports events. By developing a more comprehensive model of social value that includes the dimension of social cause, the research addresses a significant gap in the literature and provides a framework for understanding how sports events can serve as platforms for addressing grand challenges. Furthermore, the findings support the notion that perceived social value significantly influences participants' behavioral intentions, offering event organizers a strategic tool for enhancing both social impact and business outcomes. Although the direct effect of awareness on social value was not confirmed, the moderating role of awareness suggests that effective communication and engagement strategies are essential for maximizing the benefits of social responsibility initiatives. This research paves the way for further exploration of the complex dynamics between social value, awareness, and behavioral intentions, offering valuable insights for both academics and practitioners in the field of sports event management. The next chapter will address the limitations encountered during this study, providing a more critical reflection on the challenges faced and areas for improvement in future research.

6. LIMITATIONS

Despite the strong contributions to the literature and practice, this study faced certain limitations that warrant discussion. One of the main challenges related to the partial support for H4, which posited that awareness of social responsibility efforts enhances the perceived social value (PSV). Several factors may explain this outcome, including challenges with the reception of the stimuli provided during the study. Despite the high perceived value of the information, the fact that only a few respondents chose to change their answers after being exposed to additional information suggests that the stimuli might not have been sufficiently engaging or impactful. While the information aimed to raise awareness of the social responsibility efforts associated with the event, its immediate effect on participants' perceptions and behaviors was limited. This highlights the necessity for more engaging or interactive communication strategies to effectively convey such initiatives and create a meaningful shift in attitudes and behavior.

Several potential explanations may account for this limited response. The chaotic environment during data collection, along with the brief interval between the pre- and post-stimuli measures, likely hindered participants' ability to fully process and integrate the new information. Participants' attention was likely divided, and they may not have had enough time to reflect and modify their perceptions of the latent variables being measured, such as PSV. The rapid repetition of the survey also contributed to confusion, as many respondents inquired why the survey was being repeated, indicating that they had not fully grasped the purpose of the exercise.

Moreover, the repeated measures design required participants to answer the same questions in quick succession, with only a brief exposure to the additional information about social responsibility initiatives. This setup likely did not allow participants to fully internalize and reflect upon the stimuli, which could explain why many of them retained their original responses. Consequently, the replication of most answers in the post-stimuli section of the survey was necessary, as participants did not exhibit significant changes in their perceptions.

Another limitation stems from the context and timing of the study. Participants completed the survey before the event itself, which posed a challenge in evaluating an experience they had not yet undergone. Some respondents raised concerns about their ability to assess the social impact of

the event before experiencing it, suggesting that a post-event analysis might have yielded more nuanced insights. After this chapter on limitations, the following section will discuss future research directions to address these challenges and explore further opportunities in the field.

7. FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

There are several potential avenues for future research that could build upon and expand the insights gained from this thesis. One important direction is to conduct similar analyses with a longer time interval between pre- and post-event measurements. This would provide participants more time to fully absorb and reflect on the information, which could lead to more meaningful changes in their perceptions. In fact, one participant suggested that it was challenging to evaluate the event before experiencing it, indicating the importance of giving participants adequate time to form opinions. Conducting the survey after the event may address this issue by allowing for a more accurate reflection of participants' experiences and perceptions.

Another promising direction is to pursue a temporal analysis of the same event, tracking trends across different editions of the event. As participants become more familiar with the event, their perceptions and behaviors may shift over time. This is particularly relevant given that around 20% of the participants in this study had participated in the event at least once before. A longitudinal study tracking these repeat participants could offer deeper insights into how familiarity with the event influences their perceived social value and behavioral intentions. Such a temporal approach would allow researchers to observe evolving trends, providing a richer understanding of the long-term impact of participatory events.

Additionally, this study has introduced a more comprehensive measurement of social value, alongside behavioral intentions, which was previously lacking in the literature. This framework can serve as a foundation for future research aiming to take a more holistic approach to understanding the impact of sports events. By including social cause aspects and their influence on behavioral outcomes, future studies can now better capture the complex dynamics between social responsibility and participant engagement.

While this research focused on a participative sport event, it is crucial to consider that audience-based sports events may exhibit different characteristics. These events often have much larger scales, especially in the case of mega-events or hallmark events and attract a diverse range of attendees. Understanding the social value in these contexts is equally important, as these larger-scale events can have a substantial societal impact. Future research should explore whether the

model developed in this study is applicable to audience-based events and how different scales of engagement may alter social value perceptions and behavioral intentions.

Finally, future studies could also focus on the perspectives of event organizers. By understanding how organizers perceive the social value they aim to create, researchers can complete the equation and gain a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics at play. This would not only shed light on the alignment between organizer objectives and participant perceptions but also help identify areas where communication and strategy can be improved to maximize the event's impact. Exploring both sides of this relationship is essential to fully grasp the potential of sports events as strategic tools for addressing societal challenges.

8. CONCLUSION

This research provides significant theoretical and practical contributions by developing a comprehensive model to assess perceived social value (PSV) in sports events, with particular emphasis on the inclusion of a social cause dimension. The findings offer strong support for key hypotheses, confirming that PSV has a direct and positive effect on behavioral intentions (BI). This provides event organizers with a strategic tool to enhance participant engagement and loyalty by incorporating initiatives that address grand challenges such as food waste and poverty. The study's demonstration that social causes positively influence BI is groundbreaking, particularly in its potential to encourage event organizers to integrate social responsibility into their business models.

While the relationship between participants' attitudes and BI was expected, the research reinforces the theoretical importance of personal attitudes in shaping behaviors, even in sports events. Practically, this finding suggests that organizers should consider tailoring marketing strategies to appeal to participant profiles that prioritize social and environmental causes. For instance, more informative campaigns can shift attitudes and improve participant engagement. The partial support for the role of awareness in influencing PSV highlights the importance of fostering greater awareness through more engaging and interactive communication strategies. Though awareness did not have a direct effect on social value, it served as a crucial moderator in enhancing the relationship between PSV and BI.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: Details of H1 Testing

Appendix 1A: Model Fit Indices of H1 Model

Model Fit Index	Value	Acceptable Threshold
Chi-square (χ^2)	421.361	-
Degrees of Freedom (df)	200	-
P-value (Chi-square)	0.000	$p > 0.05$
Comparative Fit Index (CFI)	0.901	> 0.90
Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI)	0.886	> 0.90
Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA)	0.059	< 0.08
Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR)	0.069	< 0.08

Appendix 1B: Path Coefficients (PSV to BI)

Path	Standardized Coefficient (β)	Standard Error	z-value	P-value	Interpretation
Perceived Social Value → Behavioral Intentions	0.676	0.097	6.312	< 0.001	Significant positive impact

Appendix 1C: Factor Loadings Across Both PSV and BI Subcomponents

High Order Latent Variable	Subcomponent	Observed Indicator	Factor Loading	Standard Error	z-value	P(>|z|)
Perceived Social Value						
	Social Cause		0.902	0.055	0.055	< 0.001
		Social_Cause_1	0.543	0.049	10.397	< 0.001
		Social_Cause_2	0.521	0.047	10.479	< 0.001
		Social_Cause_3	0.559	0.039	9.101	< 0.001
	Sport Involvement		0.592	0.131	4.517	< 0.001
		Sport_Involvement_1	0.551	0.074	9.484	< 0.001
		Sport_Involvement_2	0.852	0.125	5.955	< 0.001
		Sport_Involvement_3	0.497	0.118	11.442	< 0.001
	Self Acceptance-Social Bonding		0.906	0.158	5.734	< 0.001
		Self_Acceptance_Social_Bonding_1	0.63	0.053	8.818	< 0.001
		Self_Acceptance_Social_Bonding_2	0.52	0.045	10.102	< 0.001
		Self_Acceptance_Social_Bonding_3	0.45	0.064	11.543	< 0.001
	Host Image		0.823	0.116	7.097	< 0.001
		Host_Image_1	0.448	0.038	9.533	< 0.001
		Host_Image_2	0.48	0.036	7.529	< 0.001
Behavioral Intentions						
	WOM		0.786	0.032	24.563	< 0.001
		WOM_1	0.565	0.024	10.348	< 0.001
		WOM_2	0.643	0.021	7.456	< 0.001
		WOM_3	0.635	0.02	7.029	< 0.001
	WTP		0.311	0.15	2.073	0.038
		WTP_1	0.587	0.108	5.231	< 0.001
		WTP_2	0.949	0.258	0.661	0.509
	Loyalty		0.452	0.161	2.807	0.005
		Loyalty_1	0.842	0.027	5.642	< 0.001
		Loyalty_2	0.732	0.024	8.052	< 0.001
		Loyalty_3	0.803	0.038	10.07	< 0.001
	Internal Expenditure		0.554	0.162	3.42	3.42
		Internal_Expenditure_1	0.618	0.084	8.621	< 0.001
		Internal_Expenditure_2	0.667	0.089	7.86	< 0.001
		Internal_Expenditure_3	0.464	0.06	10.014	< 0.001

APPENDIX 2: Details of H2 Testing

Appendix 2A: Model Fit Indices of H2 Model

Fit Index	Value
Chi-Square	377.618
Degrees of Freedom	193
P-value (Chi-square)	0.000
Comparative Fit Index (CFI)	0.918
Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI)	0.901
Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA)	0.055
Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR)	0.063

Appendix 2B: Regression Weights Table of H2 Model

Behavioral Intention Subcomponent	Standardized Path Coefficient	Standard Error	P-value
Word of Mouth (WOM)	0.568	0.085	0.000
Willingness to Pay (WTP)	0.062	0.093	0.404
Loyalty	0.256	0.107	0.000
Internal Expenditure	0.294	0.101	0.001

APPENDIX 3: Details of H4 Testing

Appendix 3A: Model Fit Indices of H4 Longitudinal SEM Model

Fit Indices	Values
CFI	0.905
TLI	0.891
RMSEA	0.057
RMSEA 90% CI Lower	0.051
RMSEA 90% CI Upper	0.062
SRMR	0.065
Chi-Square	801.52
p-value	0
AIC	33711.8
BIC	34377.71

Appendix 3B: Model Fit Indices of H4 SEM Model for Direct Impact

Parameter	Estimate	Std.Error	P-value
PSV on Awareness	-0.019	0.045	0.675
BI on PSV	0.628	0.069	0
BI on Awareness	-0.075	0.184	0.686

Appendix 3C: Regression Result of H4 Linear Regression Model

Metrics	Values
Estimate for Awareness	0.00464
p-value	0.913
Adjusted R-Squared	-0.00158
Residual Standard Error	0.5262

Appendix 3D: Model Fit Indices of H4 Moderator SEM Model

Fit Index	Value
Chi-Square (χ^2)	762.115
Degrees of Freedom	221
P-value (Chi-square)	0.000
Comparative Fit Index (CFI)	0.876
Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI)	0.858
Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA)	0.063
90% Confidence Interval for RMSEA	0.058 - 0.067
P-value RMSEA ≤ 0.050	0.000
P-value RMSEA ≥ 0.080	0.000
Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR)	0.063