



**SPORTS
MANAGEMENT
SCHOOL**

**IMPACT OF CRISES
ON THE ORGANISATION
OF MAJOR INTERNATIONAL
SPORTS EVENTS**

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Given the time and energy we have put into creating and drafting this white paper, it can and should be very inspiring. I trust that the findings we have gathered and shared with you in this white paper will provide you with some additional information, analysis and insights.

We are grateful to the many people who have contributed to our work and especially to the two analysts and observers, Vincent Chaudel and Wulfran Devauchelle from the Observatoire du Sport. They participated in the drafting of the different items, targeted the relevant stakeholders to interview and carried out complementary investigations to validate the preliminary studies carried out by the students of Bachelor 1 (year 2020-21)

Our deepest gratitude goes to the experts we interviewed, notably Magali Tezenas du Montcel, Pauline Ranvier, Virgile Caillet, and Jean-François Lamour.

We were fortunate to benefit from the support of the Sports Management School's pedagogical team, notably Pascal Galantin, Marie Logeais, Adèle Chevallier and Eve Parchowski. A big thank you to the whole marketing team Florian Rippert, Marie-Edith Dorsinville and Julia Medot

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Finally, we would like to thank all the Bachelor 1st year students (promotion 2020-2021) who worked on the quantitative and qualitative questionnaires of this first white paper as part of their market research studies.

FOREWORD

IMPACT OF CRISES ON THE ORGANIZATION OF THE MISE

Today, Major International Sports Events are at a turning point.

Even before talking about a crisis in the world of sports, we must consider this era and our civilization from a different perspective than the one of our prestigious forbearers, and notably the great French reformer, the Baron Pierre de Coubertin.

Towards the end of the 20th century, the Olympic revival was anchored in a global, unifying and philosophical approach. The tremendous growth of sports, its globalization and its professionalization made the Major International Sports Events (MISE) true icons, whose agendas could not be questioned, except during the world war.

In this framework, and for many years during the past century, competitions and major sports organizations, as well as the victories of sportsmen and women inherent to their participation, have been strong signals from a political, ideological, diplomatic and geostrategic point of view. This is notwithstanding the real security issues that have profoundly transformed the development and organization of large-scale events with respect to the protection of athletes and spectators.

The globalization of the practice of sports, the rise of the media and digital broadcasting networks, as well as the use of sports organizations as an effective tool of «Soft Power», have given the 21st century a new vector of expression for the hosting countries, as well as for the participants, television viewers or spectators. Sports events are thus caught in the grip of deep political and geostrategic constraints, as evidenced by the recent «diplomatic boycott» of the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom for the Beijing Games in 2022. And where will this leave the FIFA World Cup in Qatar in December 2022, when there are already rumblings of pressure, protests and opposition to a host that is suspected of all kinds of wrongdoings?

As a result, the manifestation of crisis is nowadays intrinsic to major international sports events, and the issues at stake are definitely multifaceted and unpredictable. Sport has now gone beyond the strict framework of competitive events, and it is true that the stadium environment is perhaps the last place where one can hoist a flag in the colors of a country without being immediately suspected of nationalism.

Sport is at a crossroads and so are its major events. This paradigm shift is a strong signal of what the future *modus operandi* of sharing will be. Of what the Olympic spirit of the third millennium will be like. Of what the great venues of the European and international competitions, confronted with the emergence of markets and countries in quest of recognition, will represent.



Jean François Lamour

French politician

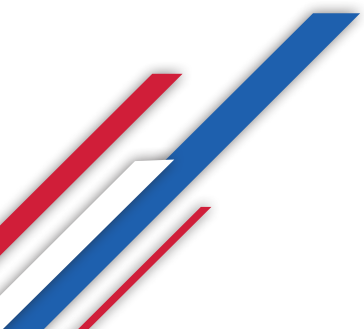
Former Minister of Sport and Youth (2002 then 2004 to 2007)

Vice President at OVALTO

Two-time Olympic saber champion (1984 and 1988) and flag bearer of the French delegation in 1992

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INTRODUCTION

The health crisis that has affected all sectors of activity, most of all the sports sector, has not spared the education sector. The year will have brought about the transformation of sports practices but also the transformation of learning methods, which have become much more experiential.

The consequences of a new crisis in the world of sport are numerous and diverse after the invasion of Ukraine by Russian troops on February 24, 2022, the exclusion of Russia from the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022, the relocation of the Champions League final, the military engagement of several Ukrainian athletes or the sudden stop of sponsorship of Russian brands.

The Sports Management School (SMS), a business school specialising in sport business, welcomes sports enthusiasts who are pursuing higher education, at either Bachelor's or MBA level, and intending to enter the world of sports business professionally. Throughout this period, the school has adapted its teaching methods.

It was on observing that a health crisis such as this can generate transformations (either positive or indicating difficulties) that we proposed that our students write this white paper. Our training is based on the practical application of the skills and knowledge acquired during the courses, through real practical cases. This marketing, event or managerial application allows our students to be confronted with the reality of the field. In this context, the first-year Bachelors students carried out a market study in April 2021, which led to the drafting of this white paper.

This period marked by COVID-19 has challenged many stakeholders in sport. Whether participating in a local activity or engaging in an international competition, all event organisers have undergone upheaval and had to adapt.

Over the next four years, France will host the 2023 Rugby World Cup and the 2024 Olympic Games in Paris. Therefore, it seemed legitimate for us to write this first white paper on the subject of Major International Sports Events (MISE).

To clarify our methodology, after conducting a benchmark to identify the threats that could weaken a Major International Sports Event (MISE), 8 crises were selected for more in-depth studies. The eight crises identified (Economic, Marketing, Media, Social, Health, Political, Sports and Practice) were the subject of quantitative questionnaires and initial interviews with experts. As part of our pedagogy, the students gave an oral presentation on their analyses and initial conclusions to our partner, the Observatoire du Sport.

This first "field" experience was finalised by additional interviews to bring some perspectives of how the different crises have evolved and thus propose some lines of thought.

These reflections are the beginnings of research that we hope to pursue in coming years, both in France and internationally. By leveraging the different campuses of the Sports Management School (Italy, Egypt, Morocco, Spain and Switzerland), we will be able to analyse, compare but also follow the evolution of the different crises identified during Major International Sports Events organised in different countries.

We would like to thank all the first-year Bachelor students (year 2020-21) for their contributions to the writing of this first edition of the white paper, the sports stakeholders who granted interviews, namely Yohan Penel & Pascal Bildstein (French Federation of Badminton), Mamignan Touré (professional basketball player), Pauline Ranvier (Olympic fencer), Virgile Caillet (Union Sport Cycle), Antoine Aubour (UTMB) and L'Observatoire du Sport Business - Vincent Chaudel, Wulfran Devauchelle and Mathieu Sauvajot for their analyses, syntheses and data contributions.

David Mignot - Academic Dean of the Sports Management School, Paris campus

MAJOR INTERNATIONAL SPORTS EVENTS (MISE), A MUCH BROADER TERM THAN IT APPEARS

By logical reflex, we often consider that the Olympic Games and Football World Cup are the most revealing examples of MISE organised throughout the world because of their tremendous influence and economic power. However, according to the official definitions in force, MISE are not limited to what could be called “international giga-events”.

In fact, in the institutional definition used notably by the Institut Régional de Développement du Sport, MISE are “major competitions of international or continental level grouping together high-level sports disciplines and giving the right to a title, a world ranking or belonging to an official circuit”. It therefore appears that criteria of attendance or media coverage do not apply to the categorisation of these events. It is therefore not surprising to find no fewer than 27 competitions in the official list of Major International Sports Events organised in France between August 2021 and August 2025, as published by the Ministry of Sport:

LIST OF THE NEXT MAJOR INTERNATIONAL SPORTS EVENTS TO BE HELD IN FRANCE BY 2025

2021			
World Championship	Gliding	Montluçon	August 7 to 21
European Championship	Water Skiing Wakeboard	Toutainville	Septembre
World Championship	Gliding GP Formula	Château-Arnoux-Saint-Auban	September 5 to 11
European Championship	Basket-Ball 3x3	Paris	September 10 to 12
World Championship	Sport Bowls	Martigues	September 14 to 18
European Championship	Petanque	Alberville	September 19 to 26

2022			
World Championship	Figure Skating and Dance	Montpellier	March 22 to 27
World Championship	Judo for the deaf	Versailles	April 21 to 24
Les Gymnasiades	School Summers Game	4 towns Normandie	May 14 to 22
Championnat du monde	Canoeing and Kayaking	Treignac	May 30 to July 3
Coupe du monde	Para Tir	Châteauroux	June
Caribbean Games		Guadeloupe	June
Championnat du monde	BMX Cycling	Nantes	July 26 to 31
Championnat du monde	Kayak Polo	Saint-Omer	August 13 to 21
Championnat du monde	Cycling Mountain Bike	Station des Gets	August 24 to 28

2022			
Championnat du monde	Golf (amateur teams)	Île-de-France	August 29 to September 11
Heroes Military Games	Centre National des Sports de la Defense	Île-de-France	September 7 to 13
Championnat du monde	Track cycling	Montigny-le-Bretonneux-St-Quentin-en-Yvelines	May 14 to 22
Championnat du monde	Pelota	Biarritz	October 16 to 22

2023			
World Championship	Ski	Méribel-Courchevel	February 6 to 19
Virtus Global Games	Sport adapté	Vichy	June 4 to 10
World Championship	Rugby	9 villes françaises	September 8 to October 21
Motocross des Nations	Motocyclisme	Ernée	September 25 and 26

2024			
World Championship	Olympic and Paralympic Games	Paris, île-de-France, Marseille	July 26 to August 11 then August 28 to September 9
World Championship	Adapted Sport Tennis	Anancy	To be announced

2025			
World Championship	Cyclo-cross (Cycling)	Liévin	February 1 st and 2 nd
World Championship	Badminton	Paris Aréna II	August

(Source: Interministerial Delegation for Major Sports Events)

¹ List available on the website: <https://sports.gouv.fr/grands-evenements/delegue-interministeriel/evenements/article/calendrier-des-gesi-2018-2024>

It should be noted that this list does not include recurrent events (taking place every year, except in exceptional cases) of international scope, such as the French Open or the Tour de France, which nevertheless have all the characteristics to be considered as MISE.

In this respect, an interesting analysis that provides an overall view of the MISE by classifying them according to two dimensions (recurrence of the event and media coverage of the sport) is that of the value chains of sports events established by the French Centre National pour le Développement du Sport (CNDS).

In this analysis, a typology emerges with the following four categories:

1. **“Iconic events”** which are distinguished by:

- Being organised recurrently/cyclically within the territory;
- The high media profile of their sport.

2. **“Mainstays”**, which are characterised by:

- Being organised recurrently/cyclically within the territory;
- Less media coverage of their sport.

3. **“Star events”**, which can be identified by:

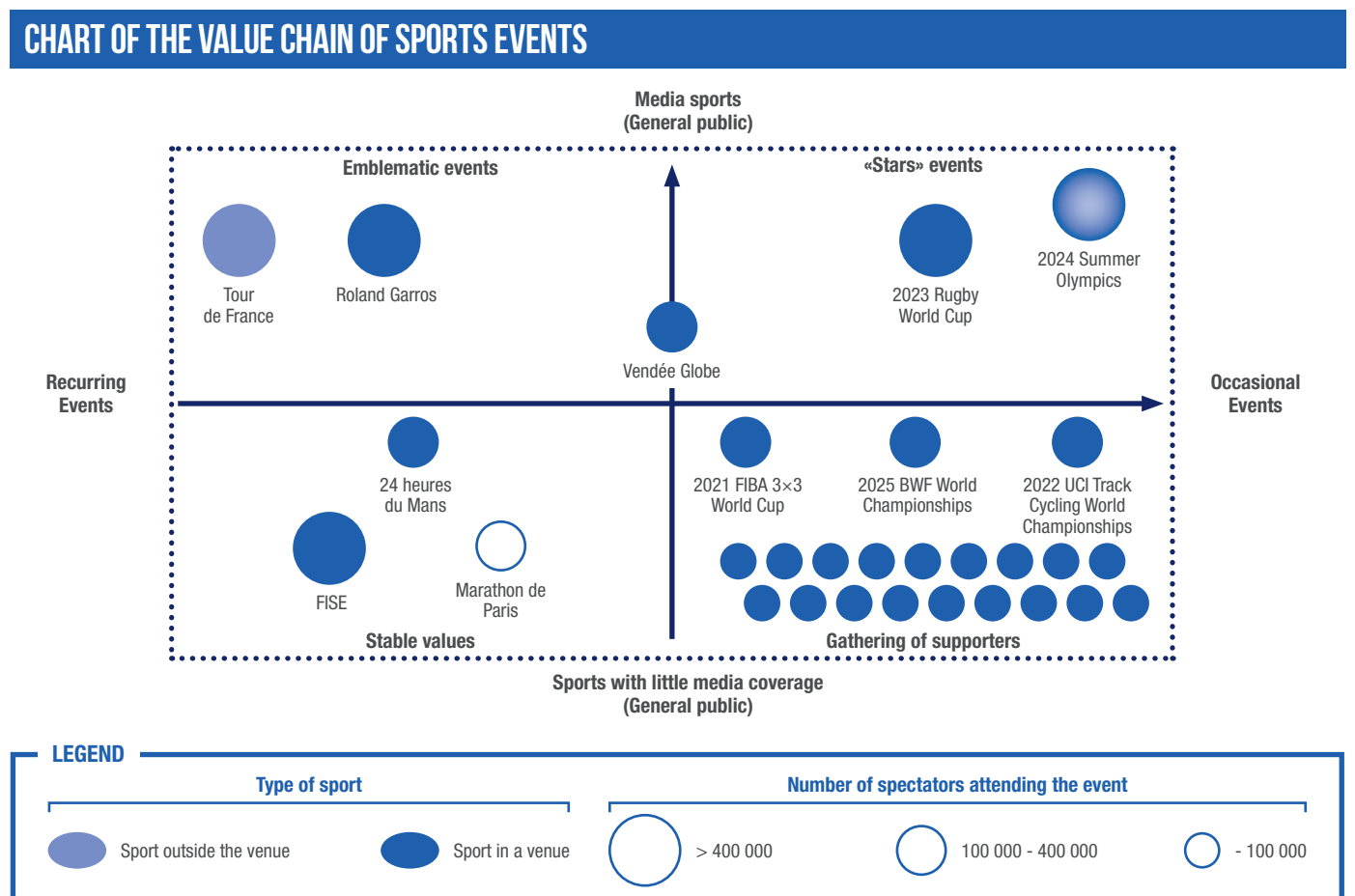
- Being organised occasionally within the territory;
- The high media profile of their sport.

4. **“Gatherings of enthusiasts”**, which include the majority of MISE as defined by the French Délégation Interministérielle aux Grands Événements Sportifs. These sports events are characterised by:

- Being organised occasionally within the territory;
- Less media coverage of their sport.

Applied to the list of forthcoming Major International Sports Events organised in France between now and 2025, this matrix allows us to characterise the different types of sports events present on the territory for the 2021-2025 cycle.

² https://www.sports.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/rapport_-_evenementiel_sportif_vfinale_logo.pdf



MISE AS EXCEPTIONAL SHOWCASES FOR HOST COUNTRIES

Economically, the world MISE market represents nearly €50 billion per year according to data advanced by the French Government³. However, in addition to this economic dimension, which must necessarily be placed in perspective given the organisational costs associated with such events, the hosting of major international sports events is often a key issue for States for many reasons:

- They are a showcase for their know-how, a reflection of a country's ability to shine outside its borders with engineering and creativity recognised throughout the world;
- They are major drivers of social cohesion within the population;
- They help to boost the attractiveness of and employment in the areas specifically concerned by the hosting of the event;
- They represent a real opportunity to stimulate economic activity and job creation in a multitude of key sectors: sports equipment, facilities, architecture, construction and public works, infrastructure management, event organisation, ticketing, energy, transport, flow management, security, digital economy, etc.

As a sign of the awareness of the importance of sport and MISE, both economically and diplomatically, in September 2019, the government announced the creation of the "France Sport Expertise" Economic Interest Grouping, whose main objective is to promote French know-how in the organisation of MISE.



The word 'sport' can go beyond the meaning of what is strictly competitive. It also encompasses the meaning of national prestige, the question of the budget, the meaning of the sport prestige, the notion of soft-diplomacy, and the irrationality of some decisions.

THIERRY ZINTZ

Advisor to the Rector for the 600th anniversary of the Catholic University of Leuven (1425-2025) and the Leuven Foundation
Member of the Education Commissions of the International Olympic Committee and the World Anti-Doping Agency

³ <https://www.gouvernement.fr/action/gesi-l-art-des-rencontres-sportives>

CRISES ARE A RECURRING PHENOMENON WITH MULTIPLE CAUSES

MAJOR INTERNATIONAL SPORTING EVENTS

POTENTIAL CRISES WITH DIVERSE MOTIVES



ECONOMIC CRISIS

A sudden slump in economic activity that can lead to imbalances between production and consumption, often resulting in increased inequalities between populations.

POLITICAL CRISIS

A period of conflict between a population and its government, between several political entities or between several countries, which can lead to strikes, demonstrations, social movements, riots or wars.

MARKETING CRISIS

Phenomenon that translates the fact that a product or an event does not meet the expectations of customers and consumers.

SOCIETAL CRISIS

A negative phenomenon with economic, social and environmental consequences for individuals insofar as they constitute a community.

MEDIA CRISIS

A set of circumstances that threaten the activity or reputation of an individual, a team, or a media (for the latter, the media crisis evokes the continuous transformations of the sector's uses and economic models).

HEALTH CRISIS

Events that actually or potentially affect a large number of people, affecting health, and potentially increasing the significant mortality or excess mortality factor.

SPORTSMAN CRISIS

A negative personal or professional situation or event occurring in the athlete's environment that ultimately impacts his/her performance.

SPORTING PRACTICE CRISIS

A downturn in the level of activity of a sport discipline that may be related to economic, behavioral and/or societal factors.

MISE AND HEALTH CRISES



The health crisis was neither foreseen nor foreseeable, and no one had control over the response. We are beginning to see some initial responses on a certain number of aspects (political, social, economic, etc.) but this crisis is unique in the modern era in that it is completely global and unprecedented.

VIRGILE CAILLET

General Delegate, UNION Sport & Cycle

COVID put the organisation of nearly all national and international sports events on hold for almost a year. Of course, this is not a first in our history, as wars have been fought before and boycott campaigns have particularly affected the holding of MISE. However, the postponement of the Tokyo Summer Olympic Games from 2020 to 2021 due to the health situation is unique in the history of the Summer Games since 1896, proving the “exceptional” character of this period:

Let the games begin (or not)!

List of the 32 summer Olympic games programmed since 1896

I 1896 Athènes	II 1900 Paris	III 1904 St. Louis	IV 1908 Londres	V 1912 Stockholm	VI 1916 Berlin Annulé	VII 1920 Anvers	VIII 1924 Paris
IX 1928 Amsterdam	X 1932 Los Angeles	XI 1936 Berlin	XII 1940 Helsinki Annulé	XIII 1944 Londres Annulé	XIV 1948 Londres	XV 1952 Helsinki	XVI 1956 Melbourne
XVII 1960 Rome	XVIII 1964 Tokyo	XIX 1968 Mexico	XX 1972 Munich	XXI 1976 Montréal	XXII 1980 Moscou	XXIII 1984 Los Angeles	XXIV 1988 Seoul
XXV 1992 Barcelone	XXVI 1996 Atlanta	XXVII 2000 Sydney	XXVIII 2004 Athènes	XXIX 2008 Pékin	XXX 2012 Londres	XXXI 2016 Rio de Janeiro	XXXII 2020 Tokyo Reporté en 2021

Source : IOC



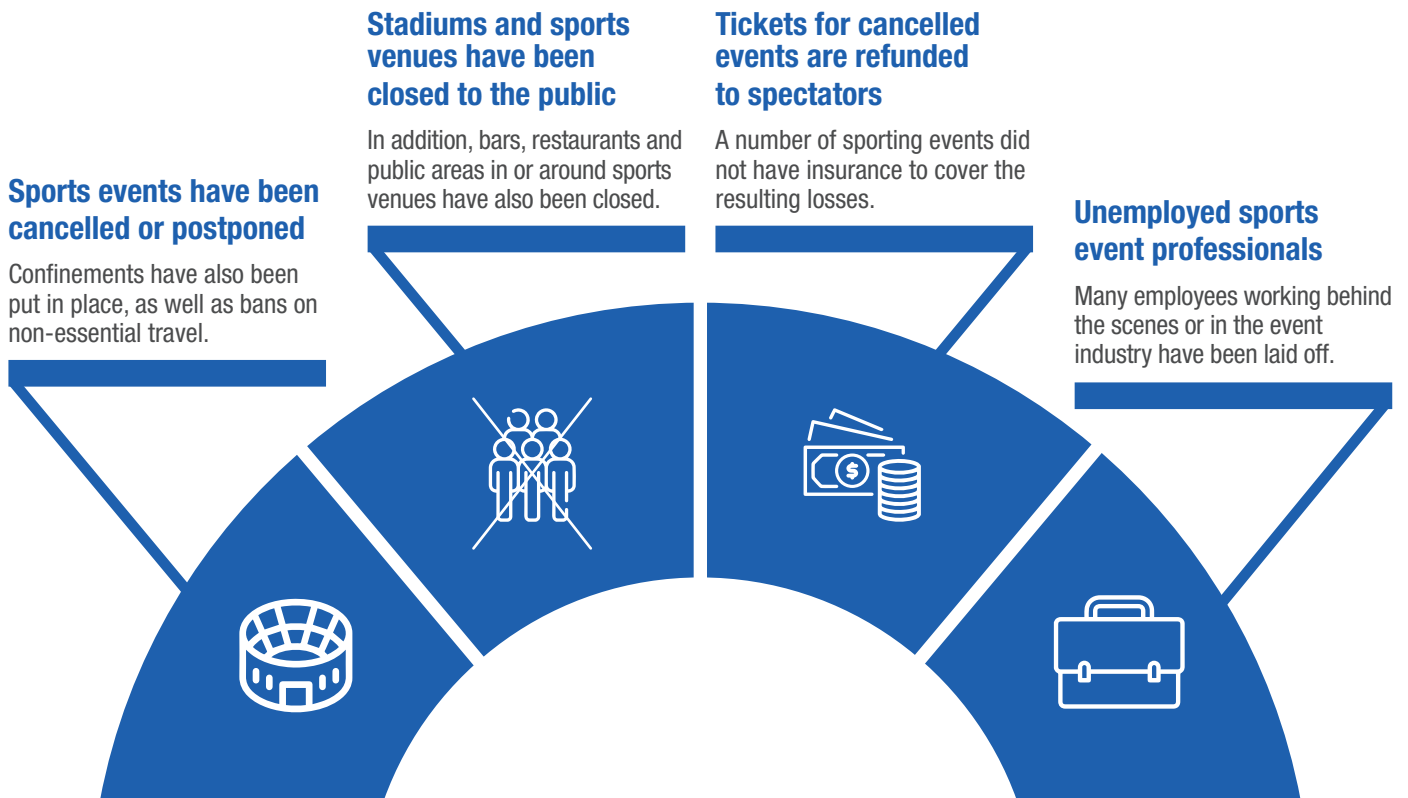
statista

Faced with this context, between closed-door events and postponed or cancelled events, the organisers first suffered, gritted their teeth and then tried to find innovative solutions to develop their projects. Today, this exceptional situation has taught the sports events and MISE sector two key lessons: the need to imagine and even anticipate any type of crisis, and to accelerate the transformation of the event organisation model.

THIS HEALTH CRISIS WAS FIRST AND FOREMOST AN ECONOMIC DISASTER FOR THE SPORTS EVENTS SECTOR

The sports sector as a whole has been deeply affected, with a cumulative loss estimated by the European Union at more than € 8.5 billion for France (where 40% of sports events were cancelled in 2021 and 20% postponed).

THE IMPACT OF THE CORONAVIRUS ON THE SPORTING EVENTS INDUSTRY



Source : Observation du Sport Business

In terms of MISE, the symbol of this economic slump is undoubtedly the Tokyo Olympic Games, which are by far the most expensive Summer Olympic Games in history, on account of being postponed by a year. In 2013, the organisers estimated the cost to be in the region of \$7.3 billion, proposing a bid that would build on many of the city's existing infrastructures that would only need to be renovated. It was this pared back presentation that attracted the International Olympic Committee at the time. But eight years later, the final bill could exceed \$30 billion according to the Japanese Organising Committee for the Games.

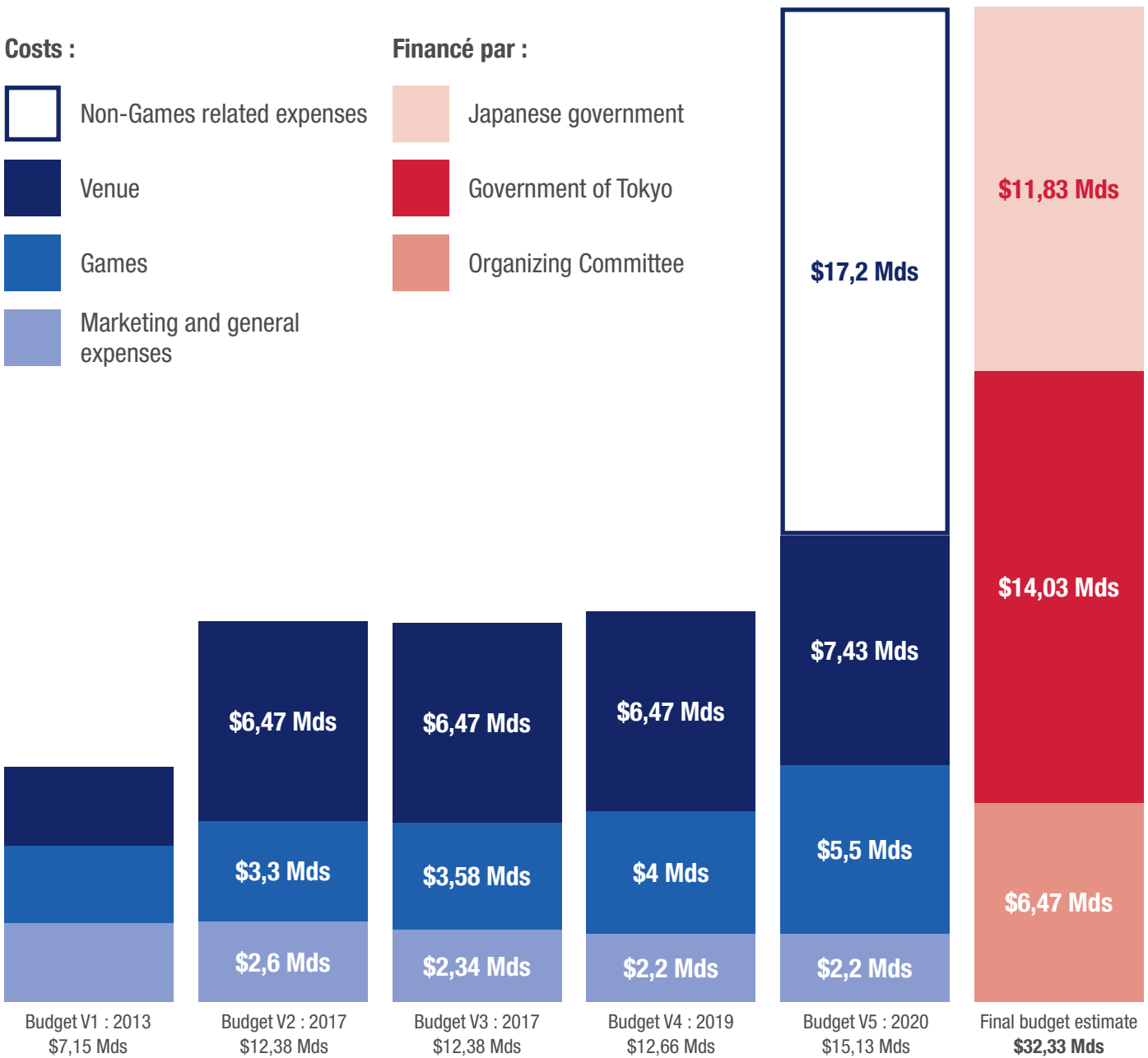
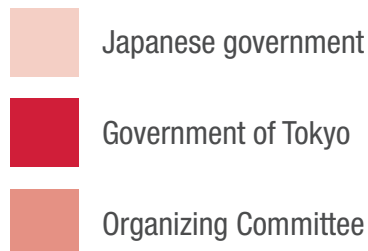
TOKYO OLYMPIC GAMES ORGANIZATION BUDGET EVOLUTION

DISTRIBUTION OF COSTS

Costs :



Financé par :



Données ICAEW 2021 - retraitement Observatoire du Sport Business
Données collectées le 23 juillet 2021. Source : Comité Organisateur de Tokyo

At the same time, over the period March 2020 - June 2021, the income of all the MISE that were able to go ahead fell because they could not host as many people as expected. For Tokyo, hosting the Games behind closed doors meant a direct loss of revenue of over €1 billion, as well as the absence of the related tourism spending for Japan. Added to this is the fact that the need to keep the Games behind closed doors, coupled with the massive rejection of the Games by the local population, led several local sponsors (such as Canon and food giant Ajinomoto) to lower their profile during the competitions, leading to the cancellation of a number of their promotional operations and thus cutting back on their financial commitments.

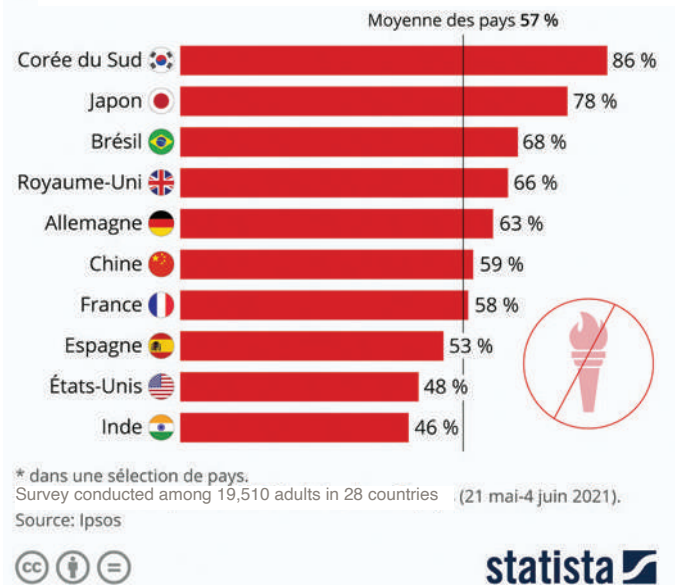
DESPITE AN IMPROVING HEALTH SITUATION, PEOPLE ARE STILL RATHER CAUTIOUS ABOUT THE CONDITIONS IN WHICH THE PUBLIC IS RECEIVED AT MASS EVENTS AND EXPECT STRONG ACTION FROM THE SECTOR ON THIS SUBJECT

It is worth remembering that while the Tokyo Games ultimately went ahead without any new outbreaks during the event, people surveyed around the world disapproved of this. For example, 78% of Japanese people were still in favour of cancelling the event less than two months before it took place. And this trend was not unique to Japan, as the majority of Brazilians, British, Germans, Chinese, French and Spaniards shared the same feeling. This was despite the fact that the event was not even open to the public.

Tokyo could mark a turning point for public opinion, however, which was reassured by the smooth running of the competition and is seeing national competitions resume in the presence of the public for most of the countries mentioned.

Tokyo Olympics: the majority of the population is against it.

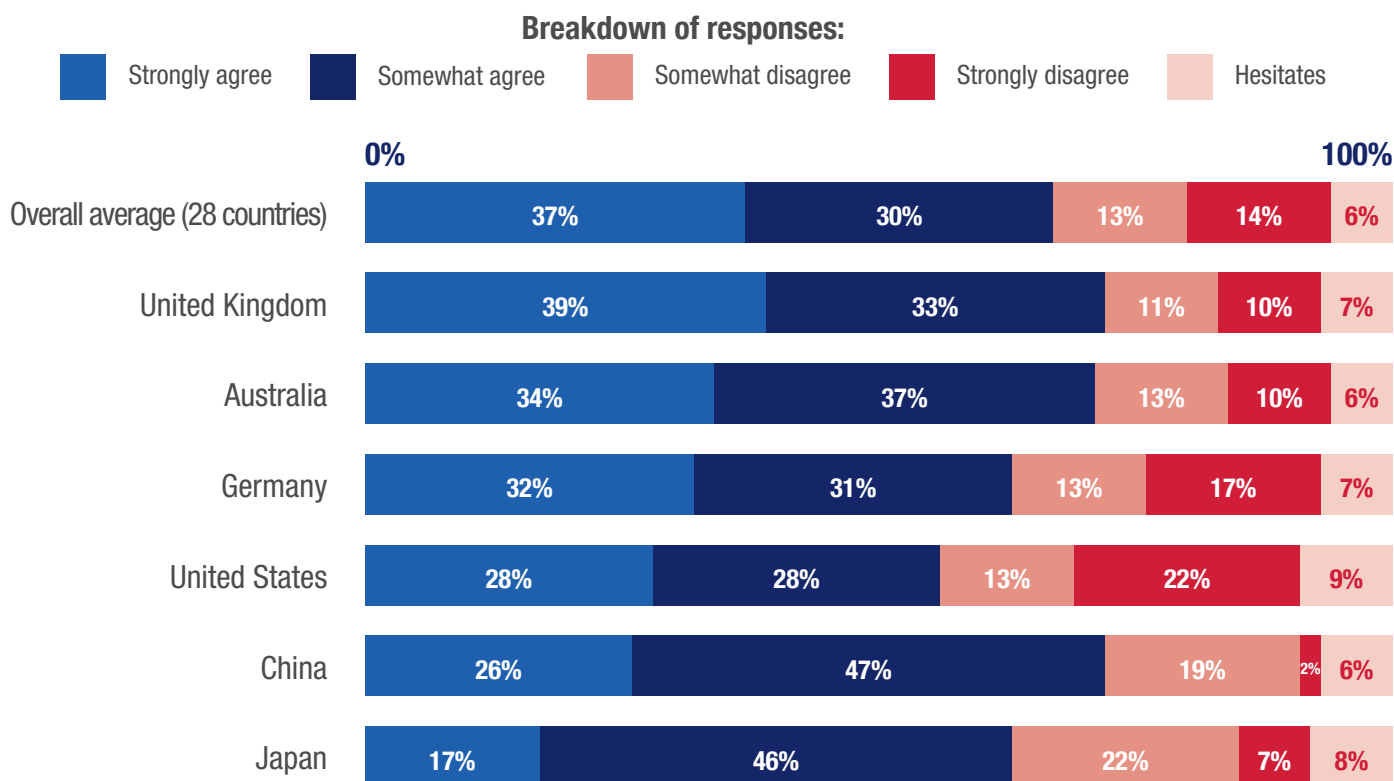
Percentage of respondents in favor of cancelling the 2021 Tokyo Olympic Games Countries' average: 57%



Nevertheless, expectations are still high as regards those organising physical events (whoever they may be and governments), and public confidence will only be regained at the cost of a certain number of commitments and investments. At the heart of the debate is, of course, depending on the country concerned, the possible obligation for people attending sporting events to be vaccinated. In April 2021, an Ipsos survey conducted on a panel of 28 countries, including France, showed that 68% of adults surveyed (54% among the French) were in favour of making vaccination compulsory to attend a live event taking place in an enclosed venue (concert, theatre, stadium).

68% OF RESPONDENTS AGREE THAT VACCINATION SHOULD BE MANDATORY FOR ANYONE WISHING TO ATTEND A PUBLIC EVENT IN A VENUE (STADIUM, CONCERT HALL...)

Do you agree that large public venues, such as concert halls and stadiums, should require a vaccine passport?



Données Morning Consult - Retraitement Observatoire du Sport Business
Ipsos - Survey conducted from March 26 to April 9, 2021 with 21,021 respondents worldwide aged 16 to 74.

But more widely than the «simple» subject of vaccination, it is systematic actions reinforcing the health measures for receiving the public in venues that are expected with, in order of importance (in addition to the mandatory wearing of masks):

- The provision of disinfectants in the corridors of venues with the obligation to use them;
- Taking temperatures at the entrance to public facilities;
- The installation of air filtration systems;
- The development of “cashless” means of payment;
- The introduction of progressive entry locks for the public (similar to what airlines do).

Although organisers of French MISE have shown a strong capacity for resilience by managing to maintain the 2021 editions of the French Tennis Open, the Tour de France and the Vendée Globe, it comes at the price of a certain number of efforts to avoid any overcrowding. This was confirmed by Amélie Oudéa-Castéra, Director General of the French Tennis Federation, at the time of Roland Garros 2021: “We are still working to have a customer journey that is as well organised as possible, and a communication campaign is encouraging the public to spread out their arrival times to avoid congestion at the various access points.”

It is also thanks to the help of the public authorities, made possible by a renewed dialogue with the sport’s stakeholders, which has resulted in compensation for the loss of ticketing revenue of more than 100 million for the entire sport events sector.



One of the positive points to come out of this crisis is that the public authorities realised that there was a genuine economic sector in sports, that was much broader and more established than they thought, and perhaps most importantly, that the French needed sports. It is also because this crisis has forced us to express our demands, arguing in favour of them and backing them up with reliable figures. A sector should know how to demonstrate what it is and know its own weight, to be taken seriously and listened to by a government.

VIRGILE CAILLET

General Delegate, UNION Sport & Cycle

WHILE THERE IS OPTIMISM THAT UPCOMING MISE WILL TAKE PLACE UNDER NORMAL AUDIENCE CONDITIONS, THE SPORTS EVENT SECTOR WILL NOT BE SPARED A TRANSFORMATION OF ITS MODEL AND INCREASED DIGITALISATION OF THE SPECTATOR/VIEWER EXPERIENCE.

Despite some reluctance in a part of the population, there are positive signs that indicate a renewed climate of confidence and a resolute focus on a better future. The opening of ticketing for the 2023 Rugby World Cup to be held in France reflects this feeling. Within a few hours, all of the first 310,000 tickets were sold, with sales peaking at 1,000 tickets per minute, proving that the interest of the local population, and especially of sports fans, in attending major sporting events has not disappeared.

While the threat of major new health crises will always hang over the heads of MISE, they must now place experiential innovation at the heart of their future value proposition. Paradoxically, it is the prolonged cessation of activity that has already prompted some of them to take a step back and look at this subject.



This year has allowed us to innovate enormously, especially in digital and technology, which are part of the company's assets. We are fortunate to already have a Research and Development Department with a team of 4-5 IT developers who produce technological solutions for the outdoor business.

For example, 2020 was an opportunity to strengthen the strategic partnership with the WWF by developing a technological solution that would allow the world's trail running population to record their tracks around their homes to generate mileage and thus create a fundraising event. The initiative was called "UTMB® for the Planet". This indirectly generated around €100,000 for the WWF through the charity runners.

ANTOINE AUBOUR

Marketing, Communication & Media Director chez UTMB

A necessary transition to a model favouring a high-quality approach, guided by new technologies, is central to all reflections. The aim is to focus on viewers by giving them a special experience close to that of real spectators, thanks to 360-degree cameras, virtual reality and augmented reality. This has already been proposed by FirstVision (a Spanish start-up) which, during Euroleague basketball matches, places this type of camera on the body of referees or athletes, allowing spectators to watch the game from the athletes' perspective.



Photo credit: First Vision

And the development of 5G offers even greater opportunities for MISE. The idea of having that feeling of sporting events taking place right in your own home is no longer so utopian as BT Sport has shown with its "5G Edge-XR" augmented reality project developed in 2020:

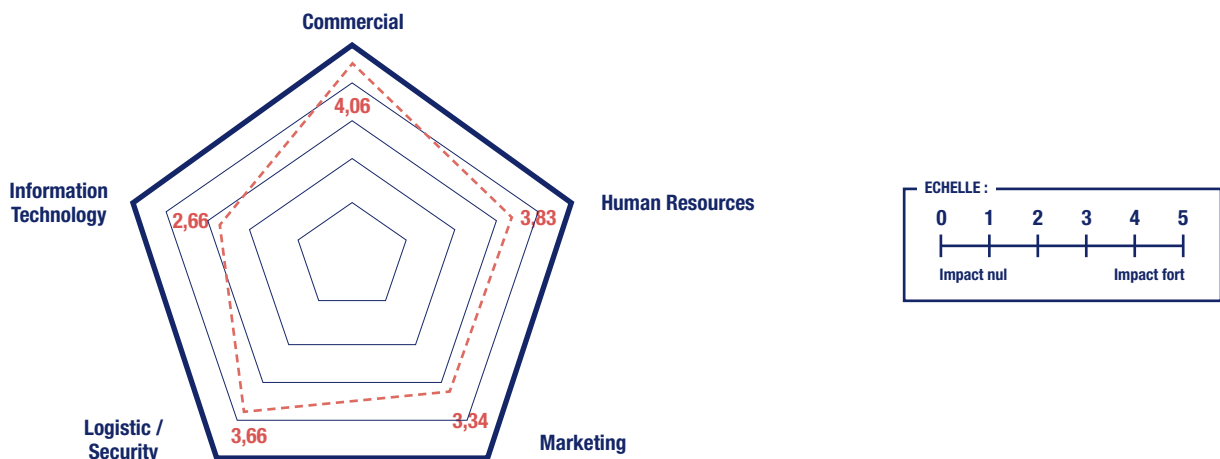


"5G Edge-XR" project by BT Sport - Photo credit: BT Sport

As a result, the funding model for MISE may also change. In addition to traditional TV broadcasts, these additional services (data, 360-degree camera, virtual reality, augmented reality, etc.) could be offered to a public of fans (for an additional "pay per view" fee) to see and experience the events in a completely different way. This is a way of offsetting the loss of ticket revenue that would result from the organisation of future MISE behind closed doors.

WHAT DO SPORT BUSINESS PROFESSIONALS THINK?

Can the health crisis have an impact on the following aspects of Major International Sports Events?



Marked by a closed Tokyo Olympic Games, the sport business professionals considered⁴ that the Commercial function of MISE (score of 4.06/5) is the one most affected by a health crisis.

⁴ Survey conducted in November 2021 among a sample of 487 sport business professionals

MISE AND ECONOMIC CRISES

While crises can be of various kinds, there is one that spares no one: economic crisis. As was the case in Brazil for the Rio Olympic Games, going through these particularly difficult periods implies making choices and limiting expenditure, or else creating heavy deficits that will generate short-term tensions with the local population. Consequently, some sectors of activity, which are less essential to economic activity, are more severely affected than others, and sport falls precisely into this category.

While people's views on the importance of the sports sector to society vary and perceptions of the sector have changed over the years, the COVID crisis only served to highlight the extent to which sport is still not seen as a priority by many governments.

Being non-essential to economic activity, those involved in sport are also the first to be affected when it comes to budget cuts and spending reductions due to economic crises.

IS SATISFYING AN ABSENT AUDIENCE IN TIMES OF ECONOMIC CRISIS AN IMPOSSIBLE EQUATION FOR THOSE INVOLVED IN THE WORLD OF SPORT?

If the world of elite sport is among the first victims in times of crisis, it is as much for the reasons mentioned above as for the interdependence of its various sources of income.

Households are less willing to go to sports matches or international sports events because they have to limit their expenses. As a result, ticketing revenues, which are essential to the economic equilibrium of the sports world, are directly affected in times of economic recession. As for merchandising revenue, there is a mechanical correlation between the number of products sold and the number of spectators at sports events.

Faced with a smaller audience and consequently less visibility, sponsors are also legitimately questioning their commitment to clubs and athletes and may review their investments downwards, or even go so far as not to wish to renew their partnerships.

Although the consumption capacity of households decreases in times of crisis, they still need entertainment more than ever. Sport, and especially MISE, remains a necessary social outlet. A survey conducted by the Sports Management School in 2021 among a panel of 1,300 respondents also underscored the fact that 60% to 70% of French people are in favour of hosting such events in France, even in the event of an economic crisis.

Paradoxically, the interest tends to be as high as the risk of "bad buzz" with the general public if the expenditure is not reasonable. One of the specificities of MISE is of course their particularly high cost, and the difficulty in times of economic recession is to be able to maintain them without making reckless expenditures, which might then be perceived as inappropriate and counter-productive.

The Olympic Games seem to have been a poor example in this respect for many years. Beyond their inability to be profitable since 1988, and a certain tendency to build infrastructures whose usefulness proves only to be ephemeral, but whose cost is felt for many years, these have been organised on several occasions by countries in financial difficulty, or even on the verge of a crisis.

In 2004, Greece hosted the Olympic Games despite a debt standing at 102.90% of its GDP. As is often the case, the initial budget provided by the host country, in this case around €2.5 billion, was not sufficient and the Athens Games ended up costing just over €10 billion. The rest of the story is known, as Greek debt soared the following year, probably leaving the local population with unforgettable memories of the 2004 Games but for all the wrong reasons.

Fortunately, most MISE also have the particularity of being less impacted overall than the so-called local sports events. The explanation for this lies in their ability to complete their organisational budget as far in advance as possible.



The federation's strategy for years has been to start making provisions as soon as we know we have been awarded a major international competition. Here, it is all the more important because we have very little visibility of the future. Today, we don't even have visibility on the month of September in terms of badminton practice, or on the month of October in terms of the organisation of major events.

YOHAN PENEL

President of the French Badminton Federation

Sponsorship agreements are signed between one and four years before the event takes place, as is the case for the Olympic Games, for example, and it is very difficult to break them, for both legal and economic reasons. Ticket sales are also usually open a year in advance and tend to sell almost all the tickets right away. As for TV rights, this is generally the most secure source of revenue, contracted years before the event.

If we take a closer look at the case of Tokyo 2020, which was affected by both a health crisis and an economic crisis, we can see that Japan was able to maintain the organisation of this event thanks to the support of the IOC, which has guaranteed income regardless of the economic context.

However, it should be noted that not all MISE are equal as they deal with the economic crisis. Firstly, according to the distribution of income; those whose income from TV rights weighs more than ticket sales have an undeniable advantage; but also according to their ability to complete their budget as far in advance of the event as possible.

A MOMENT OF REFLECTION... AND FOR OPPORTUNITIES

A crisis is above all characterised by a slowdown, a period of doubt during which it is more necessary than ever to understand the needs of the public and identify new trends. It is therefore preferable to see this as an evolution of the market, where the opportunities are certainly less numerous but do exist.

Of course, it is always possible to attempt to revive the sports industry by subsidising it, which is what was done in France in August 2021 through the Pass'Sport system, which aimed at encouraging young people to join clubs and associations. This is a classic solution, which can benefit from the 2024 Olympic Games effect before its time, and which affects an entire generation, or even two, and can possibly partially revive the sector, but it has a high cost (€100 million in this case). The solution relies more on opportunism than on real interest, because these new practitioners can disappear as quickly as they appeared if the grant is not renewed the following year.

Thus, from a marketing as well as an economic perspective, it can be much more interesting to turn to emerging or even neglected sports. The rise of eSports is a perfect example. Although the phenomenon has long been perplexing and dismissed as a generational phenomenon, the fact is that interest has been growing for a decade now, and certain particularities mean that it is little or not at all affected by economic crises, with 2021 being the best example.

On November 7, 2021, the finals of the Stockholm PGL Major took place, a sort of World Cup for Counter-Strike (an online team-based FPS) where players and spectators from all over the world gathered. The cancellation of the 2020 Major, which was supposed to take place in Brazil, could have jeopardised the survival of the competition, as many federations have experienced, but this did not occur. The prize money promised to the winners of the tournament was simply doubled from 2019, from one to two million dollars. In other words, while the Majors experienced a slowdown, they demonstrated their ability to bounce back.

At first glance, however, the eSport business model does not seem very innovative and is based on the same pillars as so-called classic or traditional sports, namely sponsorship, broadcasting rights, ticketing and merchandising. Nevertheless, the sponsors have the particularity of representing approximately 60% of revenues, and it seems that these sums are set to increase again in coming years, to the point of passing the 70% mark, which would be enough

to largely offset any losses from ticket sales, but above all, a colossal amount, for a market currently weighing more than \$1 billion, and which should reach \$1.6 billion by 2024.

The success of eSport can certainly be explained by its particularly democratic nature: the most popular games are free and therefore accessible, nearly 80% of French people now have a computer, and competitions, both at amateur and professional level, can be followed free of charge via streaming platforms such as Twitch, which nonetheless offer anyone the possibility of financing players, either via an occasional payment during a match or as a monthly subscription.

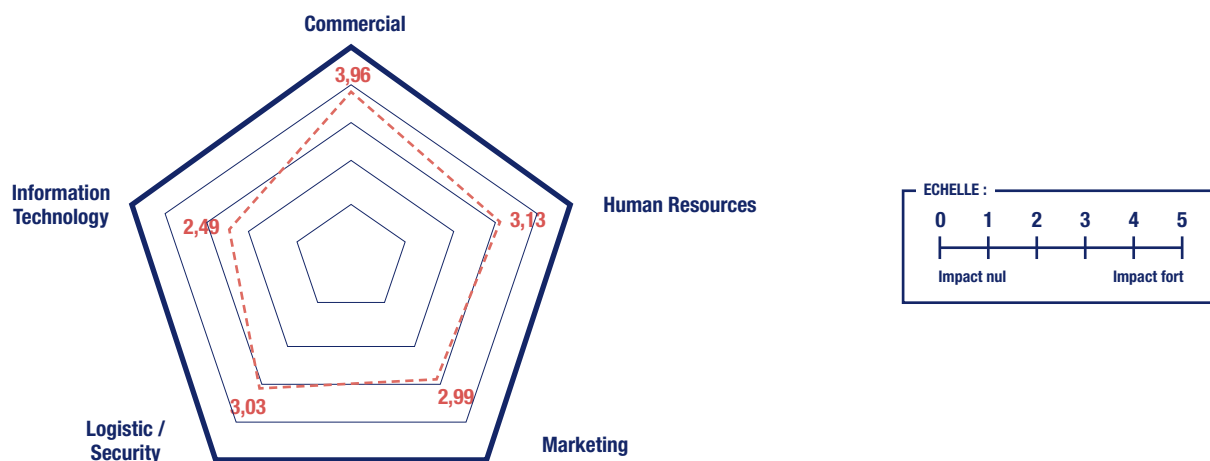
Another reason for the success of this new discipline could be the fact that it particularly touches the younger generations, namely Generation Z, and very soon, Generation Alpha, along with its economic model, which is classic but still in line with the times, and seems to be particularly “crisis friendly”, due to its virtual nature, which is almost like the “freemium” model.

Finally, it is important to understand that a period of crisis can be an opportunity to recall the weight that the sports industry and its most iconic events (MISE) represent for a nation. Often perceived as secondary by a large part of the general public, this industry is not limited to a handful of professional athletes, as is all too often thought. It accounts for more than 448,000 jobs in France alone, spread across 112,000 companies and 360,000 non-profit associations, generating €91 billion per year. Thus, when the economy slows down, the sports industry must continue to exist for its players, but also the general public.

Of course, like the rest of society, inequalities exist and some organisations get through the crisis without batting an eyelid while others go under, thus widening the gaps, but the facts show that solutions exist. Those who can adapt will generally be able to bounce back from crises, and those who can innovate will in turn become major players to be reckoned with.

WHAT DO SPORT BUSINESS PROFESSIONALS THINK?

Can the economic crisis have an impact on the following aspects of Major International Sports Events?



The unfortunate experiences (from an economic point of view) of the Athens and Rio Olympic Games have led sport business professionals⁵ to consider that the commercial function of the MISE (score of 3.96/5) is the one most affected by an economic crisis.

⁵ Survey conducted in November 2021 among a sample of 487 sport business professionals

MISE AND MARKETING CRISES

No large-scale sporting event today can exist without the support of partners. Partners who see MISE as a field of media exposure, celebrity and popularity, often without equivalent, to enhance their brand and which they are ready to pay a lot of money for. But this relationship of economic dependence, which began in the late 1970s and has been strengthened since, is not without its threats. For both parties, associating one's image with that of a partner, however popular, also means exposing oneself to any type of reputational crisis or "bad buzz" that may affect that partner.

Increasingly publicised, if not more numerous, they are often unpredictable and their consequences can be dramatic for an event. The key now is not to know how to avoid them for a MISE, but to be able to adapt, assume and even bounce back from a marketing crisis.

THE MARKETING CRISIS AS A PRODUCT CRISIS IS ABOVE ALL A CRISIS SUFFERED BY THE PARTNER MORE THAN BY THE SPORTING EVENT

The failure of a partner due to the weaknesses of its product penalizes it directly. In 2019, for example, when the Nike shoe of Zion Williamson, a future NBA star, broke in the middle of a university game and he injured his knee, the consequences were significant for the Portland-based company: the American brand fell on the stock market in the wake of the incident by 1.06% (which is equivalent to a loss of valuation of \$1.2 billion) and it had to apologise in a press release on social media.



Zion Williamson reacts after falling as his shoe breaks in the first half of a game in Durham, North Carolina on Feb. 20, 2019.

Photographer Streeter Lecka/Getty Images

Nike is obviously anything but an isolated case, and one of its direct competitors is used to all kinds of "bad buzz", because of its sometimes dubious innovations or the quality of its products. We can mention the 2016 Euros where the Puma jerseys were tearing like paper, and the equipment manufacturer had to deal with the wrath of internet users. The explanation was simple: poor quality fabric had been used, and only one batch was defective... probably not enough to convince the public.



The trick is to know how to bounce back from a mistake, which Adidas did quite skilfully in 2017. A series of Montpellier football shirts included an embarrassing misspelling of "Montpelier" on the crest. The typo did not go down well with the fans, but the equipment manufacturer took it with a sense of humour, first reimbursing the aggrieved customers before deciding to send the jerseys in question to the inhabitants of... Montpellier (Vermont, USA). This is how to subtly make up for a blunder and carry out a great communication operation across the Pond, where interest in football is growing.

In 2019, Paddy Power, the Irish sports betting company and sponsor of Huddersfield Town (English D2), also got the message right and bounced back from a somewhat misguided attempt at buzz. During a pre-season match, the brand had the idea of displaying its name prominently all over the jersey to ironically denounce how invasive sponsoring could be, while actually intending to leave the real jersey immaculately blank as soon as the season started. The joke cost the firm £50,000, as the size of the space reserved for sponsors is regulated and cannot exceed a certain size. Paddy Power shot back in a statement, denouncing the League's lax approach to dealing with racism: "On 1 August, the FA fined Millwall £10,000 for chanting racist abuse. Today the FA fined Huddersfield Town £50,000 for wearing a fake shirt in a pre-season friendly".

If a faulty product can sully a reputation, so can a slip-up in communications, and sometimes this may stem from an unexpected source. As a sponsor of Euro 2020 and a major backer of sports for decades, Coca Cola certainly saw this event as a perfect opportunity to showcase itself. After all, what could harm the famous soda brand that so many of the public love? The culprit was Cristiano Ronaldo. An idol of football fans and more, the Portuguese footballer pushed bottles of Coke away from him in the middle of a press conference, before urging viewers to drink "water". Opinions differ on the consequences of this act, but the fact is that it coincides perfectly with a temporary fall in the brand's stock market, and being denigrated in this way by one of the most popular sportsmen of the 21st century is never good for the image.



At a Euro 2020 press conference, Cristiano Ronaldo dismisses bottles of Coca Cola.

But then again, athletes are not always to blame and some sponsors have an unfortunate tendency to shoot themselves in the foot. Adidas is a specialist in this respect. On the occasion of the Boston Marathon in 2017, the brand with the three stripes sent an email to all the runners, with the message "Congratulations, you survived the Boston Marathon" a good intention, but at the wrong time and especially in the wrong place. In 2013, the same race had been the scene of an attack in which three people were killed and 264 injured. The brand then hurriedly apologised on the networks.

The equipment manufacturer repeated this in 2019. During an operation to promote Arsenal's new shirt, a system on Twitter allowed users' profile names to be automatically displayed on the back of the London club's shirt, but some of them hijacked this original idea, creating accounts with identifiers with racist connotations. It was an example of a good idea misused and turned into a fiasco.



A few years ago, the Federal Council of the French Sailing Federation categorically refused a major partnership with the Total Oil Company following an oil spill in Brittany. External events, whether political, economic or more cyclical, can have an impact on partnerships and therefore indirectly on events.

DIDIER BESSEYRE

President of the 3 instances: French Federation Company Sport / EFCS European Federation Company Sport / WFCS World

THE MARKETING CRISIS IS NOT ALWAYS A PARTNER'S FAULT

Sometimes it can also be changing regulations that affect the world of sponsorship, putting certain sporting events directly at risk. In France, the most famous example concerns the impacts of the Evin Law. Introduced in 1989, this law prohibits all tobacco and alcohol advertising at sporting events, and the adaptation of MISE to it was difficult. Many French motor sport federations, for example, found themselves in trouble with their international counterparts, who threatened to boycott events taking place in France.

Some major sporting events even had to change their name, the Heineken Cup (rugby) became the H Cup in France, and the Guinness Six Nations tournament is now called the Six Nations tournament.

This change in regulations also led some car races to change their name, before stopping for good due to the forced withdrawal of sponsors, such as the Raid Gauloises, which became the Raid World Championship, and the Camel Trophy, which became the Land Rover G4 Challenge.

But of course, unforeseen events can just as easily impact the marketing strategy put in place by a federation in the context of an event, or more broadly, for the whole season, like COVID. In this context, a real climate of uncertainty has been created, affecting the practice of sport daily and discouraging potential future sportspeople from coming to register and setting up new partnerships.

FOR MISE, THE CHALLENGE IS TO PREPARE AS WELL AS POSSIBLE, IF NOT TO BE PREPARED FOR EVERYTHING

By definition, the problem with crises is that they are rarely predictable, and the same is true of marketing crises that can hit the organisation of a MISE. But the advantage of these marketing crises, unlike the health crisis episode, is that MISE are used to it.



We have the marketing crisis scenario during the event phase, for which we have an extremely detailed crisis procedure. The teams are fully trained. For example, we have a rehearsal of the crisis scenarios on 9 August including the authorities, internal teams and experts. This is a tried and tested procedure. While there are thousands of scenarios and it is impossible to identify them all, the global crisis management procedure is a subject which is very well prepared and on which we are very much supported.

ANTOINE AUBOUR

Marketing, Communication & Media Director at UTMB

While it is therefore necessary to be prepared to react to this type of event, it is above all necessary to limit as far as possible the effects that such a situation could have from a contractual point of view, by establishing a stable and solid legal framework. Of course, any relationship must be based on trust between event organisers and their associates or partners, as it seems almost impossible to achieve the objectives expected by each without it. Nevertheless, it is likely that in most cases this will not be sufficient, and will need to be supported by an adequate articulation of legal instruments to secure and stabilise this relationship.

THE CHOICE OF SPONSORS ALSO DETERMINES THE IMAGE OF THE MISE BRAND

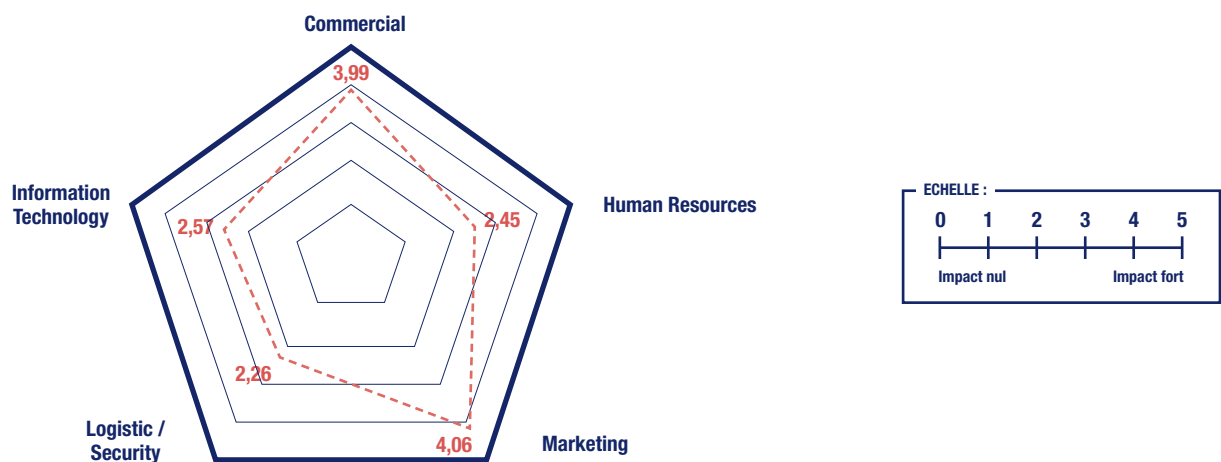
To limit any risk of “bad buzz” linked to its partners, MISE can no longer avoid selecting their partners and putting the notion of “purpose” at the heart of their partnership approach.

Underneath this term lies a recent concept, but one that we will have to take into account in the years to come. The most poetic will speak of the soul of a brand, of its ability to work for the common good, but the most down-to-earth will see it above all as a new form of marketing, enabling an entity to endow itself with values with which a proportion of consumers can identify, to which they can adhere, consequently making them more willing to consume the goods and services of the latter. These purposes are often based on so-called societal values. And many companies seem to be willing to take a step forward in terms of purpose-driven marketing, as they are no longer just partnering with sports players, but with events.

The Tokyo Olympics may have started this trend, like their partnership with P&G. Often singled out for the pollution it generates, the American company took charge of recycling plastic waste during the competition to highlight its ecological purpose, and the next Olympics may well repeat the operation on a larger scale. With a strong focus on sustainability and the environment, and a willingness to leave a legacy, Paris 2024 wants to make history and live up to the climate agreements signed in the same city in 2016. A great opportunity to shine, for any company wishing to provide purposes, but whose legitimacy will have to be demonstrated once again, so that the magic will truly work for the greatest number.

WHAT DO SPORT BUSINESS PROFESSIONALS THINK?

Can the marketing crisis have an impact on the following aspects of Major International Sports Events?



As the name suggests, sport business professionals⁶ consider that the communication/marketing function of MISE (score of 4.08/5) would be the most affected by a marketing crisis. Perhaps they were influenced by the cancellation of the marketing agreement between Barcelona and the NFT marketplace Ownix, following the arrest of one of the directors for fraud. This shows how important it is to protect the brand of a major club or MISE from any risk of “bad buzz”.

⁶ Survey conducted in November 2021 among a sample of 487 sport business professionals
























MISE AND MEDIA CRISES

Sport and media are two worlds that are closely linked by history, as modern sport was born almost at the same time as the mass media. The British were the first to launch a newspaper devoted solely to sport at the beginning of the 19th century, while in France, Eugène Chapus launched the newspaper Le Sport in 1854. Above all, thanks to the media, images and radio reports, the major sporting events understood the resonance of the media sphere with the general public. It is this presence that awakens a sense of belonging that leads us to support a team or an athlete and that makes us follow or subscribe to the media covering an event. For the media, MISE are a chance to reach out beyond their own borders to an audience that is not limited to hardcore sports fans. As infinite fields of communication always offering something new to tell or announce about their organisation or progress, their live coverage gives the broadcasting media an exceptional intrinsic value, often greater than to that of other competing events.

AN UNBREAKABLE BOND THAT HAS BEEN STRENGTHENED OVER TIME THROUGH MONEY

Now the main financier of major international sporting events, the broadcasting rights acquired by the media have become the economic lifeblood of MISE. This has been weakened, however, due to a media sector that has had to continually transform itself, confronted for decades with changing uses and economic models. At stake for the media is the need to reach a more demanding audience of sports fans who have gone from being simple spectators/viewers, to consumers, to content creators who consume media in all its forms (internet, television, print media, radio):

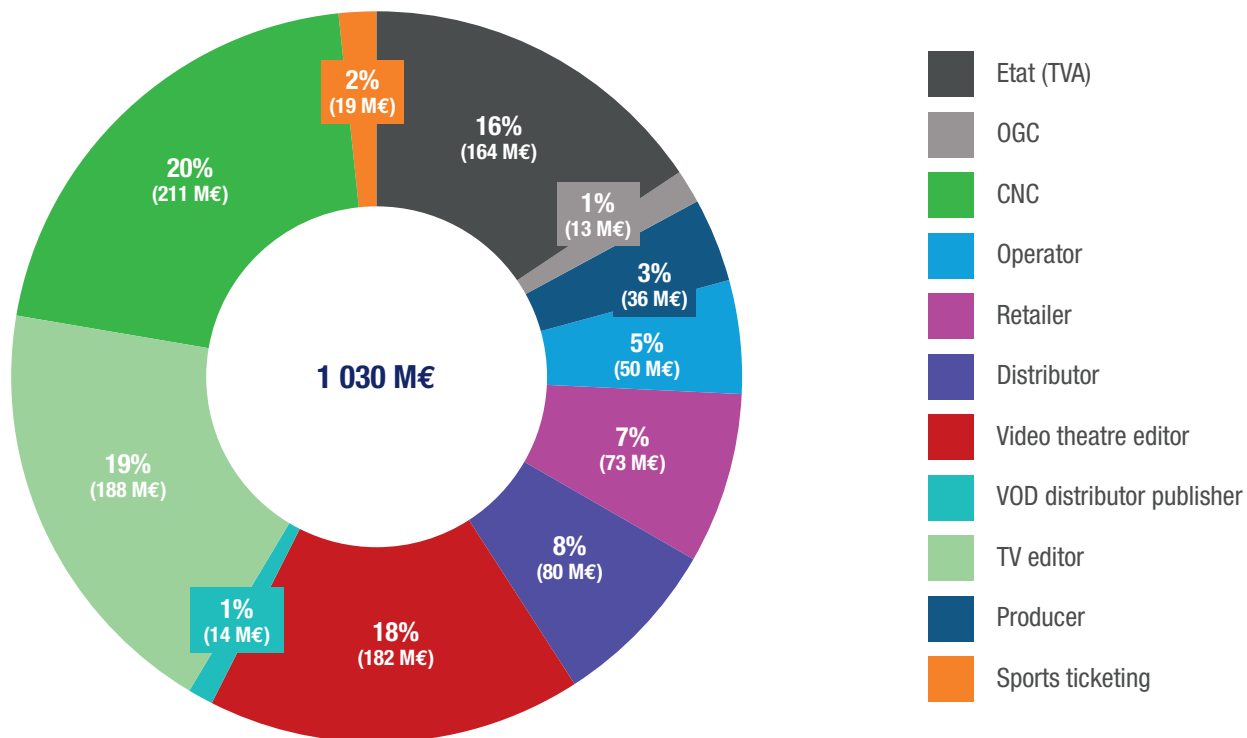
EVOLUTION OF THE PROFILE OF SPORTS FANS OVER TIME.

	ERA OF LOCAL FANS 1850-1950	ERA OF WORLDWIDE FANS 1950-2020	ERA OF FLUID FANS 2020 AND BEYOND
DETERMINANT FACTOR	 Sport Business	 TV broadcasting	 Social networks  Smartphone
TEAMS	 Local	 Worldwide	 Dynamics
MEDIA	 Radio  Newspapers  TV	 Satellite  Cable  OTT	 Transmedia
BEHAVIOR	 Spectator	 Consumer	 Creator
FOLLOWERS	 Team	 League  Team	 League  Team  Athlete

Source: Sports Innovation Lab data, PWC Sports Outlook Report

In a media world increasingly dominated by the power of social platforms, where everyone is able to participate in conversations in the network space, the editorial thinking of the media is systematically commented on and criticised. In a way, we are witnessing a crisis of the truth conveyed by the media, and thus a shift in editorial power. In this world where anything can be broadcast, a significant portion of the content is based on all kinds of beliefs that do not emanate from the media sphere.

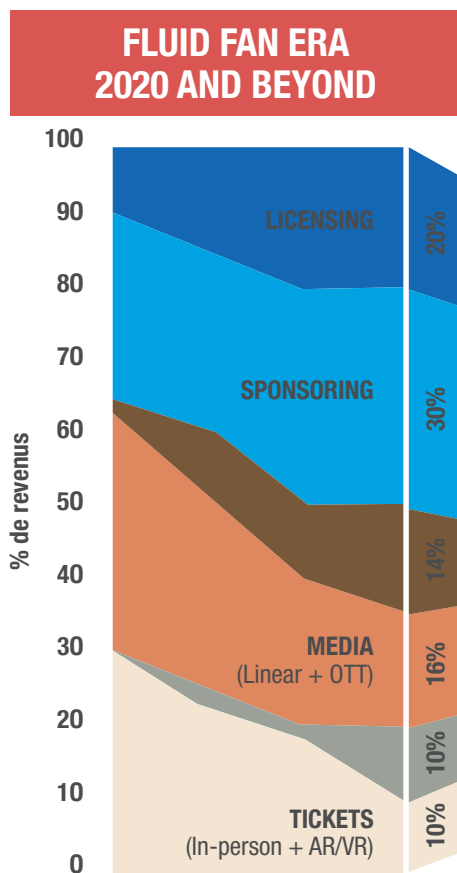
ASSESSMENT OF THE SHARE OF LOST ECONOMIC EARNINGS FROM ILLICIT ACTIVITIES BY TYPE OF ACTOR (%)



Another element of the crisis suffered by the rights-holding media and their MISE allies is the explosion of piracy. According to a report by HADOPI (the high authority in charge of fighting piracy on the internet), more than 3.4 million people watch illegal sports broadcasts every month in France. Piracy may represent a loss of revenue of €1 billion in 2019 in France across all entities.

Source: 2020 Hadopi Report - Study of the economic impact of the illicit online consumption of audiovisual content and sports broadcasts

AS THEIR SPHERE OF INFLUENCE HAS BEEN PROGRESSIVELY REDUCED, THE MEDIA HAVE USED THEIR POSITION AS THE MAIN BACKER OF MISE TO SHAPE THE SPORTS PRODUCT ACCORDING TO THEIR EXPECTATIONS AND TO MAXIMISE THE VALUE OF THE EXCLUSIVE RIGHTS



Source : Sports Innovation Lab

Representing 30% of the sports industry’s funding revenue and even more in the case of MISE or the international sports movement (more than 70% of the IOC’s revenue comes from broadcasting rights, for example), the media do not hesitate to make demands which, in some cases, can distort sport rules or the format of events. One of the most common examples of this is the setting of timetables according to the audience and not the interest of the athletes. Proof of this is the American group NBC, which has been broadcasting the Olympics since 1964 and which, given its successive record deals (€5.5 billion for the exclusive American rights to the Olympic Games from 2021 to 2032, for example), did not hesitate to put pressure on the Beijing Olympics in 2008 to have the swimming finals scheduled in the morning in China so that they could be broadcast in the evening in the United States during prime time. Some of them, such as swimmer Pieter Van den Hoogenband, three-time Olympic champion, did not hesitate to express their dismay in front of the world’s cameras: *“This is the proof that NBC is running the world of sport. We are the puppets in an American show!”*

In Rio in 2016, before the opening ceremony, the channel went so far as to ask the IOC (but without finally obtaining permission) to change the order of the teams’ parade by demanding that it be in alphabetical order in English instead of Portuguese. Again in 2021 in Tokyo with the France/USA basketball final was organised at 11:30 am still under the pressure of the broadcasting giant NBC, which was thus able to offer the final of its national team, in prime time, at around 10:30 pm on the other side of the Atlantic.

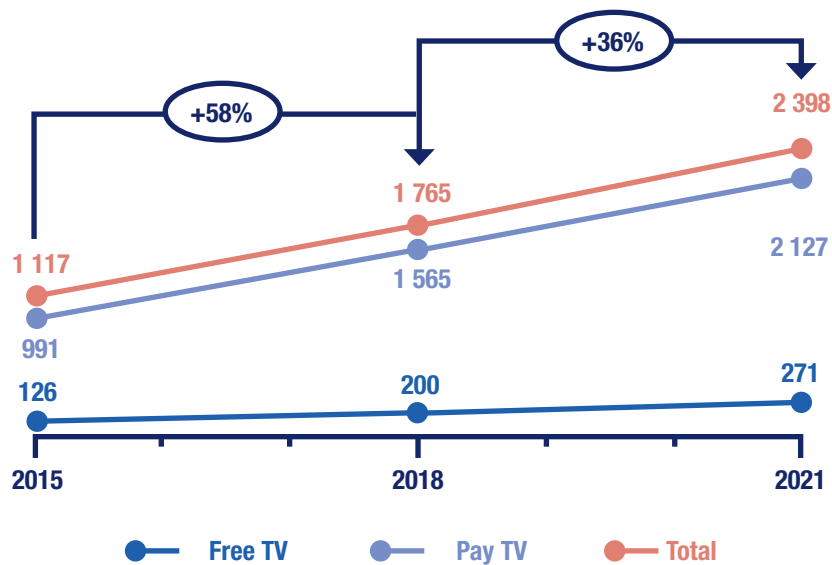
The system works financially speaking, because despite a 42%⁷ drop in TV audiences in Tokyo compared to 2016, the NBC channel, which achieved advertising sales of more than \$1.2 billion during the Rio Olympics, announced that this last edition of the Olympics would be the most lucrative in its history.

COVID IS THE LATEST CRISIS THAT HAS MADE THE MEDIA SPHERE MORE FRAGILE, PUTTING MISE AT SYSTEMIC RISK WITH REGARD TO THEIR FINANCING MODEL

Today, however, the equation remains increasingly complex for media groups faced with a general decline in audiences. At the same time, they are seeing the costs of acquiring the rights to events increase.

⁷ This decline is also explained by the fact that many hours of content were broadcast by NBC on its “Peacock” paid video streaming service.

ESTIMATED EVOLUTION OF FREE TV AND PAY TV EXPENSES FOR SPORTS RIGHTS ACQUISITION IN FRANCE (M€)



Source: 2020 Hadopi Report - Study of the economic impact of the illicit online consumption of audiovisual content and sports broadcasts

If people anxious about the pandemic and its consequences have never watched out for news as much as during the last two years, it is clear that only the general and news media have benefited in terms of audience. For the sports media, the primary vehicles for coverage of MISE, the main consequence has been that they have been decimated.



A media crisis has as much impact on the way an event is covered as on the way it is consumed.

VINCENT DAVID

VP of programming at Eurosport

Within these structures, the decrease in advertising revenue has gone hand in hand with the disappearance of major events. As a result, 2020 was the worst year for the company SAS L'Equipe in France, with an announced deficit of more than €16 million, while at the same time in the United States, most of the specialised media (ESPN, Sports Illustrated, etc.) have been implementing staff reduction plans.

In order not to suffer the financial backlash linked to financially asphyxiated purchasers whose investments in the audiovisual rights market are destined to decrease over time, MISE must now build their media model actively, rather than having it imposed on them.



We are accompanied by a pool of consultants and experts to define our media model for the years to come and that of the UTMB World Series: its storytelling, production and distribution.

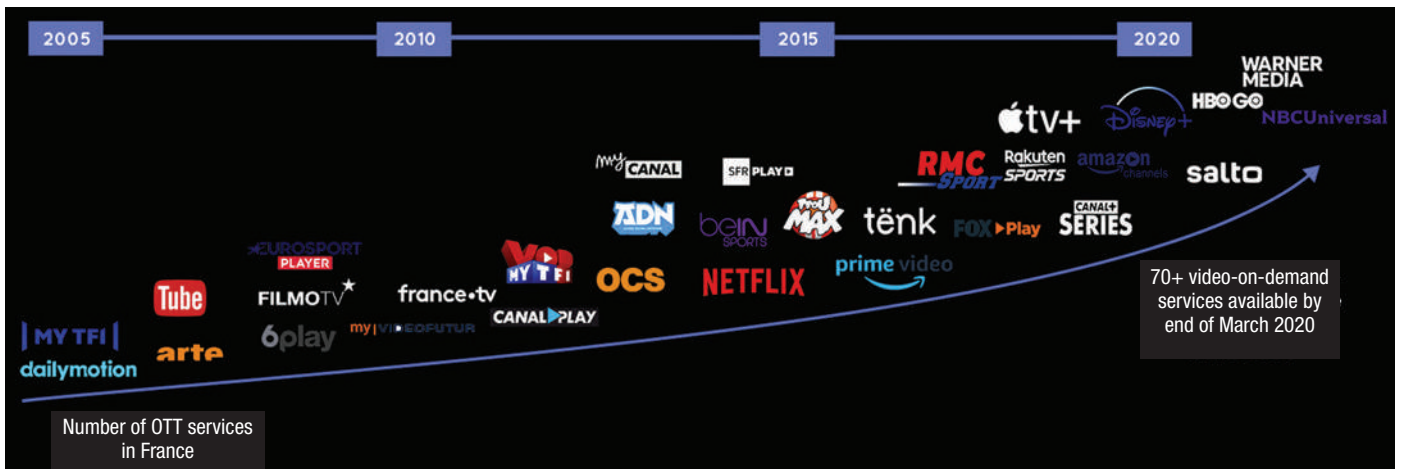
The time is right, not least because the rights distribution value chain is undergoing profound change.

ANTOINE AUBOUR

Marketing, Communication & Media Director at UTMB

The time has now come for those events that can to develop the sale of live content by signing agreements with the increasingly numerous and powerful streaming platforms (of which there are currently more than 70 in France).

YEAR OF THE INTRODUCTION OF THE MAIN OTT SERVICES IN FRANCE (TVR, VÀD, VÀDA..)



Source: Hadopi 2020 Report - Study of the economic incidence of illicit online viewing of audiovisual content and sports broadcasts

Amazon has already proved its concept and started to position itself on the broadcasting of recurrent MISE, as shown by the agreement signed with Roland Garros (which binds the two parties until 2023 for the exclusive broadcasting of matches played on Simonne-Mathieu court, and those in the evening sessions on Philippe-Chatrier court).

In parallel, hybrid distribution models should be favoured, combining value generation (through streaming platforms in particular) and visibility generation (through traditional media).

Finally, for MISE, whether or not they are dependent on live broadcasting of their event, the challenge is above all to concentrate on storytelling, which is fundamental for capturing audiences and developing a captive audience. This is the price they will pay to keep their destiny in their own hands.



We have enormous potential for storytelling, territories of expression that are unique landscapes. Human stories of pros and amateurs who put in 47 hours of effort in the mountains, knowing that they have to make huge personal sacrifices to go training.

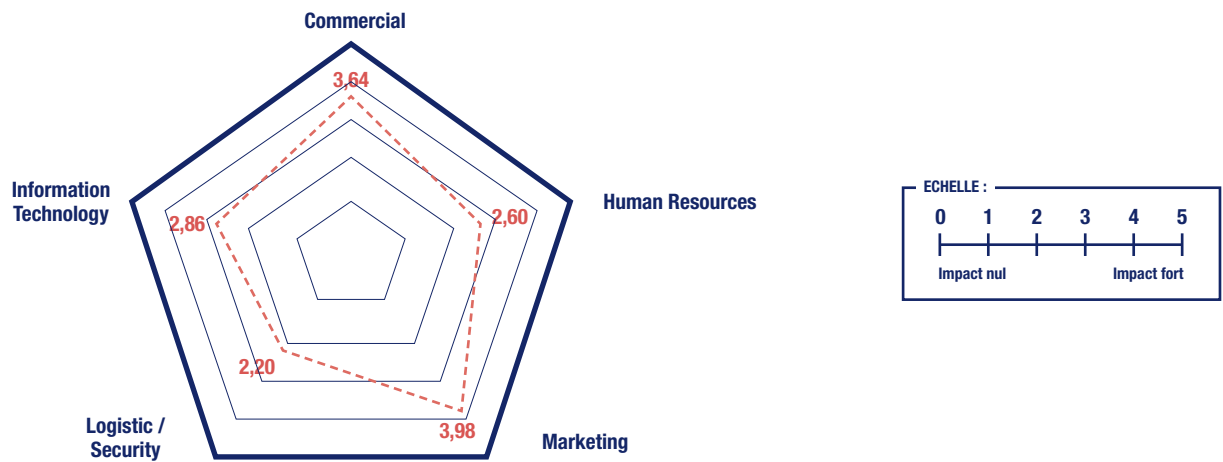
There is also a lack of hero professional athletes. We lack a face and an embodiment of our sport and this is also something we need to work on.

ANTOINE AUBOUR

Marketing, Communication & Media Director at UTMB

WHAT DO SPORT BUSINESS PROFESSIONALS THINK?

Can the media crisis have an impact on the following aspects of Major International Sports Events?



The exponential development of social networks, their influence, and the difficulty or even inability to control them largely explain why sport business professionals have identified⁸ the communication function of MISE (score of 3.98/5) as the one that would be most affected by a media crisis.

⁸ Survey conducted in November 2021 among a sample of 487 sport business professionals

MISE AND POLITICAL CRISES

The challenges of organising the Football World Cup or the Olympic Games are such that it is easy to understand that the political world has every interest in investing in the organisation of MISE to benefit from their media, societal and sometimes economic impact.

The past has shown that MISE are also important tools to demonstrate a country's national strength or to generate a sense of patriotic pride. And in line with this phenomenon, major sporting events have quickly become another battleground where countries try to demonstrate the superiority of their system and increase their global influence. The most popularly known example is certainly the Berlin Olympics (1936) where Adolf Hitler used the Games to prove the superiority of the Nazi regime, despite efforts that were partially undermined when a Black American, Jesse Owens, won four gold medals.



Photo credit: Bettmann Archive/Getty Images

But what should be the role of sports when it comes to political crises? And above all, can it remain apolitical in the sense of being independent of the political and economic powers, as advocated by Henri Sérandour in 2007, then President of the French National Olympic and Sports Committee?

THE AMBITION OF THE BIGGEST INTERNATIONAL SPORTING EVENTS IS TO BE NON-POLITICAL⁹

Historically, the international sports movement has always been outspoken in its desire not to interfere in the national or international political arena, demanding in return the “non-interference” of political decision-makers in the decisions of sporting powers.



Athletes are also citizens, some have a great influence on young people, in particular, they should use their voice to put forward certain causes, however, the Olympics are not necessarily the place to do this

PAULINE RANVIER

Professional fencer, women's silver medallist at the Tokyo Olympic Games

The Olympic Charter recalls this in its fundamental principles: “Recognising that sport occurs within the framework of society, sports organisations within the Olympic Movement shall apply political neutrality. They have the rights and obligations of autonomy, which include freely establishing and controlling the rules of sport, determining the structure and governance of their organisations, enjoying the right of elections free from any outside influence and the responsibility for ensuring that principles of good governance be applied.”

Baron Pierre de Coubertin himself recalled that Olympism was not a system, but a state of mind. He wanted the Olympics to be apolitical, timeless and non-discriminatory (although on this last specific point, the fact that he declared that women had no place in these competitions did not seem to corroborate this).



The Olympic Charter

⁹ Standing outside any political struggles.

The Olympic Charter also prohibits any form of political use of the Olympic Games: “The IOC’s role is to oppose any political or commercial misuse of sport and athletes.” (Mission no. 11 of the International Olympic Committee).

The political independence of IOC members is required at a ceremony during which new members undertake “not accept from governments, organisations, or other parties, any mandate or instructions liable to interfere with the freedom of their action and vote” while taking the following oath:

« It is an honor to have been chosen as a member of the International Olympic Committee and I fully accept the responsibilities that this position entails. I pledge to serve the Olympic Movement to the best of my ability. I will respect the Olympic Charter and accept the decisions of the IOC. I will always act independently of commercial and political interests as well as racial and religious considerations. I will fully comply with the IOC Code of Ethics. I undertake to fight against any form of discrimination and will devote myself in all circumstances to promoting the interests of the International Olympic Committee and the Olympic Movement. »

IOC's Olympics Charter – Page 35

FIFA, for its part, advocates the same position as the IOC, stating in its code of ethics a duty of neutrality for its member countries:

14 PRINCIPLE OF NEUTRALITY

1.

In their relations with governmental authorities, national and international organizations, associations and groups, persons to whom this code applies must not only observe the general rules of conduct set out in Art. 13 above, but also remain politically neutral in accordance with the principles and objectives of the FIFA, the confederations, federations, leagues and clubs, and in general act in a manner consistent with their function and integrity.

2.

Any violation of this article shall be punishable by a fine of at least CHF 10,000, as well as a ban on carrying out any activity relating to soccer for a maximum of two years.

Fifa's Code of Ethics, 2018 Edition – Page 20

But unlike the Olympic Charter, the FIFA Charter takes a stronger stand on its political role. It advocates the implementation of development programmes, the fight against such politicised issues as racism and discrimination, and the promotion of peaceful international relations. All these elements demonstrate its awareness of its political aspect. This is logical, given that FIFA is the largest grouping of countries in the world, which gives it enormous weight and undeniable potential repercussions on the member countries, especially on the countries hosting the events.

While some may have criticised FIFA's highly symbolic decision in 2012 to authorise the wearing of women's headscarves during matches, it can pride itself on having positively moved the lines since, in 2019, the Saudi federation set up a women's football development department and announced the launch of a women's league in 2021.

THE DESIRE TO MAKE SPORTS EVENTS IMPERVIOUS TO POLITICAL CRISES AND THE POLITICAL SPHERE REMAINS UTOPIAN

On the face of it, the apolitical character of major international sports competitions such as the Olympic Games or the Football World Cup is, therefore, an immutable principle. However, this only applies at the theoretical level, as these are competitions between athletes before they are competitions between countries. Therefore, the official ban on political interference in the Games is about athletes, not States. As Pascal Boniface (French geopolitologist) reminds us, *“the former, who will soon become ambassadors wearing shorts, are bound by a duty of reserve, while States remain free to determine their political line and the International Sports Movement, whether in the acceptance or exclusion of national delegations or the choice of host city or cities, will make decisions according to geostrategic criteria. As soon as you bring together citizens from different countries for a competition, the event is necessarily political.”*

It is no coincidence that the leading heads of state and government are present at major international sporting events. Moreover, as Pascal Boniface points out, the entire Olympic movement is the direct and indirect result of geostrategic calculations and dealings, from the choice of host cities and participating (or excluded) nations to the closing ceremony and the rivalries between nations inside the stadium.

Boniface notes that after the First World War, sports took on an “increasingly important role and became a kind of diplomatic instrument at the service of States, a source of power with the capacity to change the behaviour of internal and external actors, which is, in fact, the very concept of soft power. It is interesting to note that sports policy was controlled at the time by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, and thus considered an important cog in determining the actions of the state vis-à-vis international society. The permission to participate in the Olympics, for example, is indicative of political power relations. Following their defeat in the First World War, Austria, Germany, Hungary, Turkey and Bulgaria were excluded from the 1920 Games in Antwerp. Germany could not even participate in the 1924 Olympic Games in Paris. To show that Germany’s punishment was over, it was awarded the Olympics in 1931, before the rise of Hitler. Germany and Japan were again excluded from the Olympics after the Second World War. Japan would host the Games in 1964, a sign of its full reintegration into the international community. And there are many examples of this, whatever the major international sporting event.



The 1980 Olympic Games in Moscow were boycotted by over 60 countries in response to the USSR's invasion of Afghanistan and the risk of history repeating itself loomed over Sochi in 2014. Time Magazine & Bloomberg Businessweek

INTERNATIONAL SPORTS BODIES AND MISE CAN NO LONGER HIDE BEHIND THE MYTH OF THE SEPARATION BETWEEN SPORT AND POLITICS

Pressed by the growing and increasingly frequent statements made by athletes and the apparent desire of some to be able to engage in socio-political struggles, the actors of the International Sports Movement will soon have no choice but to review their position on the subject.

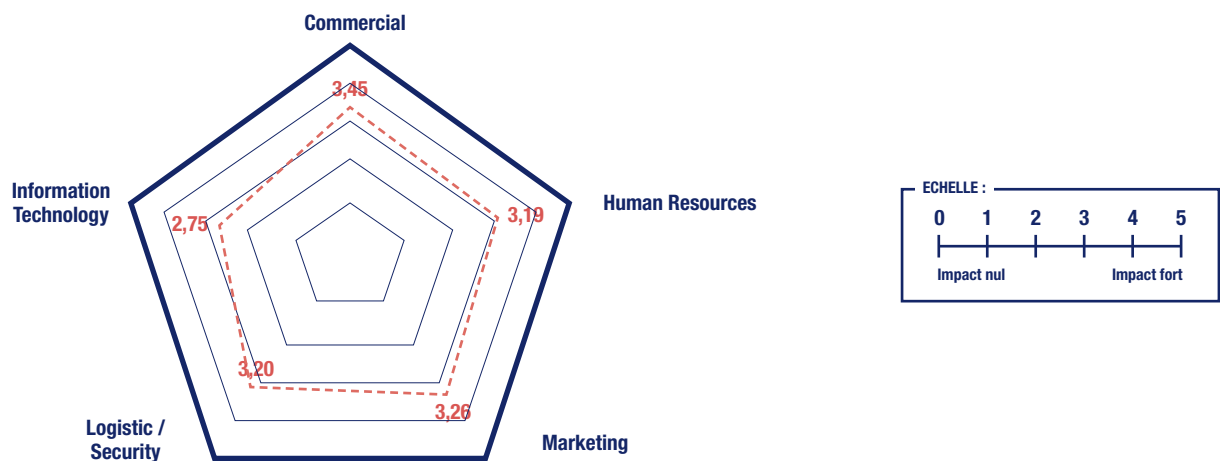
For in recent years, athletes who have been silenced for too long have taken the lead in bringing about important changes. In 2016, for example, American NFL quarterback Colin Kaepernick launched the “Take a Knee” protest movement to denounce racial and social injustice in the United States, a practice that has since taken on a particularly global reach and was seen on the fields of football games at the Tokyo Olympics (without the players and referees involved receiving any punishment, proof that things are changing).



Photo credit: Nhat V. MeyerBay Area News GroupTribune News Service via Getty Images

WHAT DO SPORT BUSINESS PROFESSIONALS THINK?

Can the political crisis have an impact on the following aspects of Major International Sports Events?



The example of the Football World Cup in Qatar and all the debates and social pressures that have chilled more than one sponsor has certainly led sports business professionals to consider¹⁰ that the commercial function of MISE (score of 3.45/5) is the one that is most affected by a political crisis.

¹⁰ Survey conducted in November 2021 among a sample of 487 sport business professionals

MISE AND SOCIETAL CRISES

Societal issues have rapidly become one of the major challenges of recent years and can no longer be dissociated from major international sporting events. Let's be honest: which countries in the 20th century considered that MISE facilities such as the Olympic Games should be as much a part of the urban landscape as they are useful beyond the framework of the organised competition? How many people argued that women's sport should receive as much media coverage as its male counterpart, even though its audience power was less? Not forgetting, of course, other particularly significant societal considerations revolving around the mental health of athletes, equal pay for sportsmen and women or the fight against racial discrimination as in the Black Lives Matter movement.

The fact is that societal issues can no longer be seen as secondary. Their consideration has become compulsory for any organising body which has to be involved in the acts in order not to leave the impression that economic and media criteria are the only ones that prevail in its eyes. It is now clear that neglecting these issues is not only a loss of opportunity to shine more brightly but also a risk that the reputation of major events will be tarnished forever. A trace that MISE and their organisers, already under a barrage of criticism, certainly do not want to leave.

WHEN THE MISTAKES OF THE PAST WEIGH ON THE PRESENT AND HANDICAP THE FUTURE

At a time when sustainable development has become an imperative, it is unimaginable to continue creating gigantic infrastructures whose usefulness is only ephemeral. There are numerous examples of this. Of course, the abandonment of structures built during the 1930s in Berlin can be forgiven, as the stakes were elsewhere at the time and the context so particular. The same applies to those built in Sarajevo in 1984, a victim of history in the years that followed. But what about the much more recent ones, in Sochi or Rio in particular?

The Russian example is perhaps the most divisive in this regard. All of the venues that hosted the most expensive Winter Olympics in history in 2014 cost almost €36 billion. An investment that is supposed to be profitable in the long term (the climate being such that the Sochi region can welcome tourists who want to go to the beach in the summer and ski in the winter) but which, in reality, is confronted with the reality of investors who are struggling to repay the colossal sums borrowed.



*Swimming pool used for the 2016 Summer Olympics in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil -
Photo Credit: PILAR OLIVARES / REUTERS*

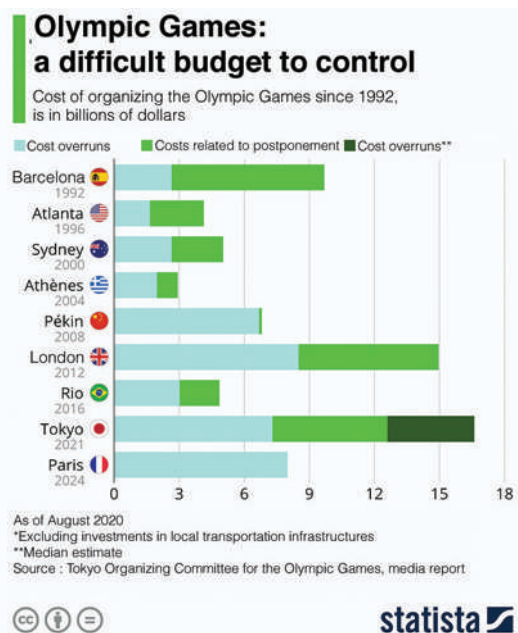
Over in Brazil, the aftermath of Rio 2016 is one of failure. Presented as sustainable, originally meant to be converted into schools or even luxury flats, etc., the structures have now mostly been abandoned or even closed to the public for safety reasons. A few concerts and festivals have been organised in the vicinity, but very few, too few to consider that the construction of such a site is still justified, barely 5 years later. As far as housing is concerned, only a handful of flats are actually occupied, as prices have skyrocketed following the financial crisis, leaving the vision of a mixture of condominiums and a ghost town.

Particularly criticised for their staggering cost (all the more so considering that nearly a quarter of the population lives below the poverty line) and tainted by corruption scandals, the first South American Olympic Games will not be remembered as a model of sustainability, although they at least had the merit of accelerating the development and urbanisation of the south of the Rio region.

And it is certainly not the only large-scale event to leave an economic legacy that is catastrophic, as many of the cities that have organised the Olympic Games over the last 30 years have generated colossal budget overruns, which were ultimately borne by the local populations:

Of course, the Olympics are not the only MISE that can be singled out. Aside from sustainability, the future Football World Cup in Qatar, planned for 2022, has been in the eye of the storm for several years now, and for good reason: more than 6,500 workers are said to have died on the construction sites, as part of the construction of the stadiums and other infrastructures meant to welcome the future spectators.

The humanitarian disaster has been denounced by certain Scandinavian countries such as Norway and Denmark, which are calling for a boycott of the competition - a belated measure, but one that could become a milestone if such a situation were to be repeated in the future. And a situation which also shows that societal issues are closely linked to political life and that these two types of crisis often coincide.



SOCIETAL ISSUES AS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR VALUE CREATION TO BE SEIZED BY MISE

However, it would be a mistake to see societal concerns only as a threat to sports event organisers. The MISE that were able to integrate these into their organisational approach can become models and precursors. By anticipating and seriously considering all these dimensions, they can also aim to capture more media attention and reach a wider spectrum of economic partners.



“Today, unfortunately, we have not yet developed our image and values enough in badminton. Our international partners still want a lot of visibility and are using sport and badminton to revitalise their image and put business first. We are happy for Total to participate in our event, but of course, we would like them to improve their actions on a daily basis.”

PASCAL BILDSTEIN

Communication, Marketing & Events Director, French Badminton Federation



Recipients of recycled P&G products used to make sportswear for the Tokyo 2021 Olympics - Photo Credit: Procter & Gamble

Overall, the Tokyo Olympic Games were a success in this respect, as a form of societal marketing was put in place on several levels. From the manufacture of medals using recycled telephone components to that of uniforms using plastic bottles, to the recovery of aluminium used to build makeshift housing following the 2011 earthquake to make the Olympic torch, Japan has clearly played the renewable card, strongly supported by certain multinationals constantly seeking to enhance their image, such as Coca-Cola and Procter & Gamble (P&G).

In another striking example, the entire Japanese population was mobilised to reduce the CO2 emissions produced during the competition, by covering the walls of buildings with plants to limit the use of air conditioning, for example, or by encouraging the reuse of frying oil as a fuel substitute for cars.

«We want to address the issue of climate change and therefore manage resources appropriately throughout the Olympic Games. By engaging the general public [...], we hope that we can raise awareness of these sustainability issues even after the Olympics and that this effort will continue and become a legacy for the future,» said Yuki Arata, Senior Sustainability Director of Tokyo 2020.

Moreover, if we are to believe its various actors, environmental ambitions will be at the heart of the concerns within the framework of the organisation of Paris 2024: «The world of sport is challenged by these threats: nature being their playground, athletes observe the degradation of rivers, mountains and oceans on a daily basis and sporting organisations, a key link in the territories, are acutely aware of the upheavals such degradation causes. But above all, given sport's incredible power to inspire the public, the world of sport must take its place on the front line of this struggle.» we can read in the manifesto.

EQUAL PERFORMANCE BONUSES, A SOCIETAL RECOGNITION EXPECTED BY WOMEN'S SPORT AND WHICH IS GRADUALLY TAKING PLACE IN MAJOR COMPETITIONS

It is a fact that women's sport is undoubtedly given less prominence than its male counterpart in the media and its ability to generate revenue for organisers is impacted. Nevertheless, the trend is that more and more competitions and major events have adopted the principle of equal awards for male and female athletes, in the interests of fairness:

SPORTS TIMELINE

Competitions that have adopted an equality of bonuses Sportsmen / Sportswomen

1950

- 1952 : Horse Riding - Dressage World Cup

1960

- //

1970

- 1972 : Horse Racing
- 1973 : Tennis - US Open
- 1979 : Badminton - World Tour Finals

1980

- 1982 : London Marathon
- 1986 : Ironman - World Championship
- 1987 : Volleyball - Beach Volley World Championship
- 1988 : Bowling - World Championship

1990

- 1995 : Figure Skating - World Championship
- 1997 : Athletics - World Championship
- 1997 : Sledge - World Championship

2000

- 2001 : Horse riding - World Cup
- 2002 : Skeleton - World Cup
- 2006 : Archery - World Cup
- 2006 : Table Tennis - World Championship
- 2006 : Skiing - World Cup
- 2007 : Diving - World Championship
- 2007 : Water Polo - World Championship
- 2007 : Climbing - World Cup
- 2007 : Swimming - World Cup
- 2008 : Judo - World Championship

2010

- 2011 : Bobsleigh - World Cup
- 2012 : Canoeing - World Cup
- 2013 : Cycling - World Championship
- 2013 : Taekwondo - Grand Prix
- 2017 : Squash - World Championship
- 2018 : Wrestling - Ranking Series
- 2018 : Cricket - Big Bash League
- 2019 : Hockey - Pro League
- 2017 : Surfing - World Surfing League

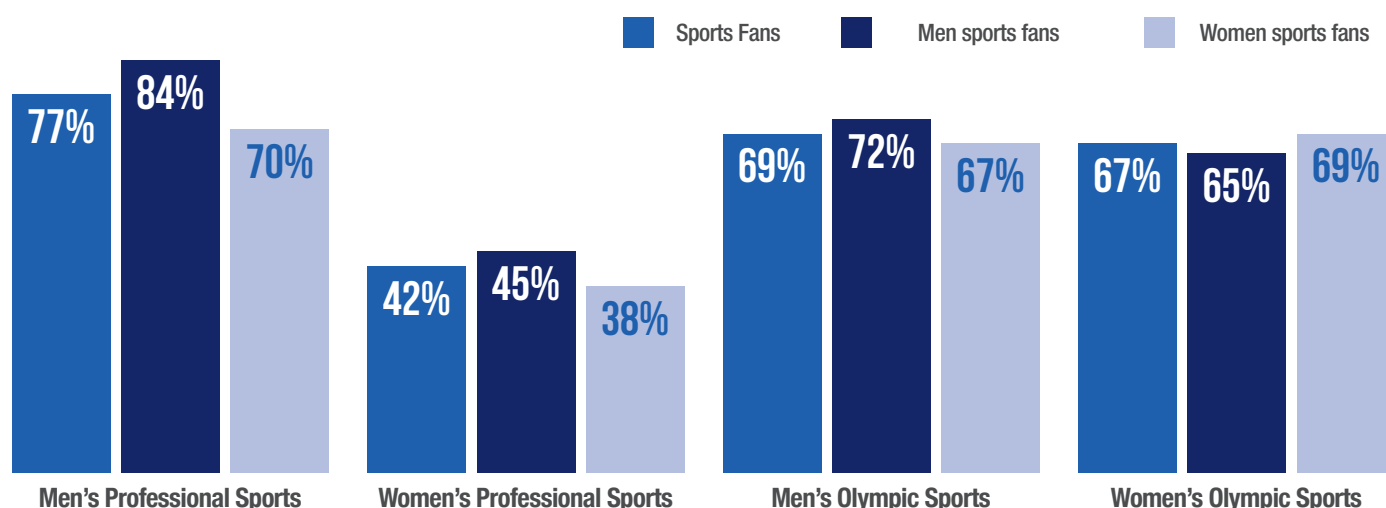
2020

- 2020 : High-flying diving - World Series

Although the societal question associated with image issues is at the heart of this progress, it should be remembered that the media and economic potential of women's sport is real. This is particularly the case for the disciplines marked with the Olympic seal. One example is the Tokyo Games, where the interest of American sports fans in women's disciplines was equivalent to that of men's disciplines (as opposed to the so-called "Professional" sports).

SPORTS FANS ARE EQUALLY INTERESTED IN WOMEN'S AND MEN'S SPORTS DURING THE OLYMPIC GAMES

Percentage of respondents who said they were interested in each of the following types of sports:



Morning Conseil data - Sports Business Observatory reprocessing

Survey conducted May 12-15, 2021 among 1,499 sports fans in the United States, with a margin of error for the responses shown ranging from +/-4% to +/-5%.

It is also worth noting the effort made by the IOC in terms of parity of participants: this edition had the particularity of presenting a men's and a women's category for each discipline (a first) and of counting 49% of women among the participants (as well as +40% within the framework of the Paralympic Games, which is a new record).

Meanwhile, World Cup organiser FIFA is "behind" on this subject and will have to become more involved in these issues in the future. This awareness will be raised as much by the progressive expansion of women's football and its economic potential, as by the stance taken by particularly committed athletes such as Megan Rapinoe, an American footballer and two-time world champion, who went to the White House at the beginning of 2021 to discuss the issue with US President Joe Biden.

THE LEGACY OF THE MEGA-EVENTS AT THE HEART OF A MORE SENSIBLE AND REASONED APPROACH

Societal considerations have therefore become a prerequisite for the organisation of future large-scale sporting events. To reduce the bill associated with their organisation (particularly in terms of infrastructure construction), major events could henceforth systematically depend not on one city, but on an entire nation, or even several countries, to spread the costs, as in the case of the 2003 Rugby World Cup in Australia and New Zealand, the 2020 Euro Cup distributed among twelve countries, or the future Brisbane Olympics in 2032, which will be located throughout the state of Queensland. However, the issue of the growing ecological "bill" associated with this type of organisation remains to be addressed.

To understand all these issues within their organisational framework, and in particular those linked to sustainable development, MISE no longer hesitate to involve the local population. This is notably the case for Paris 2024, which wanted to develop "sustainable" proposals around three societal themes: "Sport & Society", "Economic & Territorial Development" and "Games, Celebration & Participation".

In concrete terms, this means a commitment to reduce the carbon footprint by 55% compared to the previous Olympics, combating all forms of pollution, particularly noise and light pollution, and ensuring that all the energy used will be renewable (with figures).

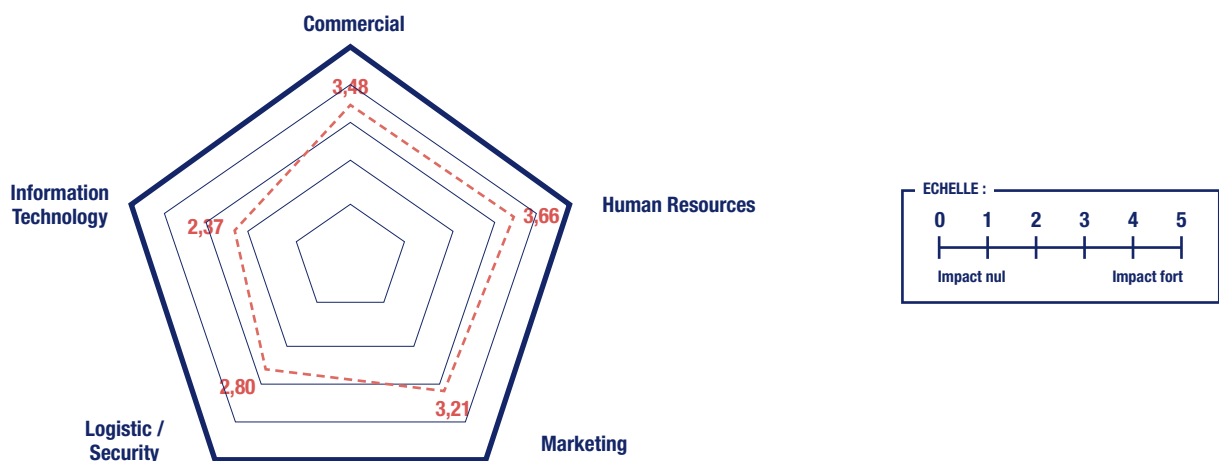
Similar reasoning applies to infrastructure, where Solideo, a company in charge of building the Olympic, Paralympic and media villages, aims to create permanent elements, 100% made from recycled materials, and to transform them into eco-districts.

Finally, the 2024 Paris Olympics have committed to being inclusive and supportive by signing an agreement in November 2016, entitled “Impact 2024”, aiming to define various programmes to facilitate social and professional integration: “The objective is to integrate the principles of inclusiveness into all the economic acts linked to the implementation of the Games,” said Etienne Thobois, CEO of the 2024 OCOG.

In concrete terms, while the objective is to promote the professional integration of all the inhabitants of the Ile-de-France region, Seine-Saint-Denis seems to be one of the major targets, due to its high unemployment rate and the youth of its population. Insofar as future projects are subject to public procurement law, Solideo could indeed introduce clauses in its calls for tenders to favour integration and Social Solidarity Economy companies, thus enabling the 2024 Olympics to contribute to the construction of the Paris of tomorrow.

WHAT DO SPORT BUSINESS PROFESSIONALS THINK?

Can the societal crisis have an impact on the following aspects of Major International Sports Events?



Sport business professionals¹¹ ranked MISE Human Resources (score of 3.66/5) as the function most likely to be affected by a societal crisis. Upstream, this type of crisis can result in the loss of the organisation of a MISE, as in the case of Marseille, which lost the organisation of the America’s Cup following a waste workers’ strike.

¹¹ Survey conducted in November 2021 among a sample of 487 sport business professionals

MISE AND SPORT CRISES

Who has never, at least once in their life, felt joy or even pride at seeing your country win a major sporting event? Who has never felt that deep happiness that overwhelms you when you achieve a sporting performance, that goal you set for yourself whatever your level?

As an emotional roller coaster, sport is unfortunately not just a succession of victories, trophies and fulfilment for the athletes who practice it and for the public who support them. The reality of an athlete's life or career is often punctuated by painful moments caused by injuries, psychological distress or simply underperformance. All these elements can push athletes to extreme behaviour simply for fear of failure, often to the detriment of their physical or mental health.

DOPING INTRINSICALLY LINKED TO THE MODERN HISTORY OF MISE

Since the end of the 1980s, the media, financial and even political stakes resting on the shoulders of athletes have been such that the prospect of failure can push some to cross the red line by using prohibited substances. There are many examples, but their impact on sporting events varies according to the extent of these practices and the associated consequences. An isolated case of doping clearly does not have the same impact as the revelation of a widespread scandal, nor the same repercussions for the sporting events that are supposed to host the athletes concerned. The most striking example in recent years is undoubtedly that of Russian sport since the revelation in 2014 of a widespread doping affair led to the suspension of 118 Russian athletes from the 2016 Rio Olympics (see box below).

RUSSIAN DOPING AS A STATE SCANDAL

To understand why Russian athletes had to compete under a neutral banner at the Tokyo Games, we must go back to 2014.

It all started in December when runner Yuliya Stepanova was suspended. Her husband, a former employee of a Russian anti-doping agency, Rusada, denounced the culture of doping and cheating in Russia, prompting the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) to launch an investigation.

A year later, the conclusions were clear: the allegations had been proven, the culture of winning was such that Russian athletes, coaches and doctors would stop at nothing. Doping was said to be widespread and the Russian Athletics Federation corrupt, which led to its suspension. In 2016, Grigory Rodchenkov, former director of the Moscow anti-doping laboratory, went on to expose Russia's system for doping athletes without being caught. WADA denounced a "secure state doping system", "directed, controlled and supervised" by the Russian Sports Ministry, "with the active assistance of the FSB, the Russian secret service".

As a result, in 2017, the International Olympic Committee suspended the Russian Olympic Committee and only clean athletes were allowed to participate in the Pyeongchang Winter Games, although under a neutral flag.

The story does not end there because, in 2019, Russia feigned transparency and sent samples to WADA... but the data was falsified. The repercussions were not long in coming, and the Russian Federation was excluded from all international sporting competitions for four years.

Denouncing an international conspiracy, Russia appealed, and the CAS finally decided to lighten the sanction, thus depriving the Russian athletes only of the Tokyo 2020 and Beijing 2022 Games. Likely, this will not be enough to put an end to State doping in Russia in years to come.

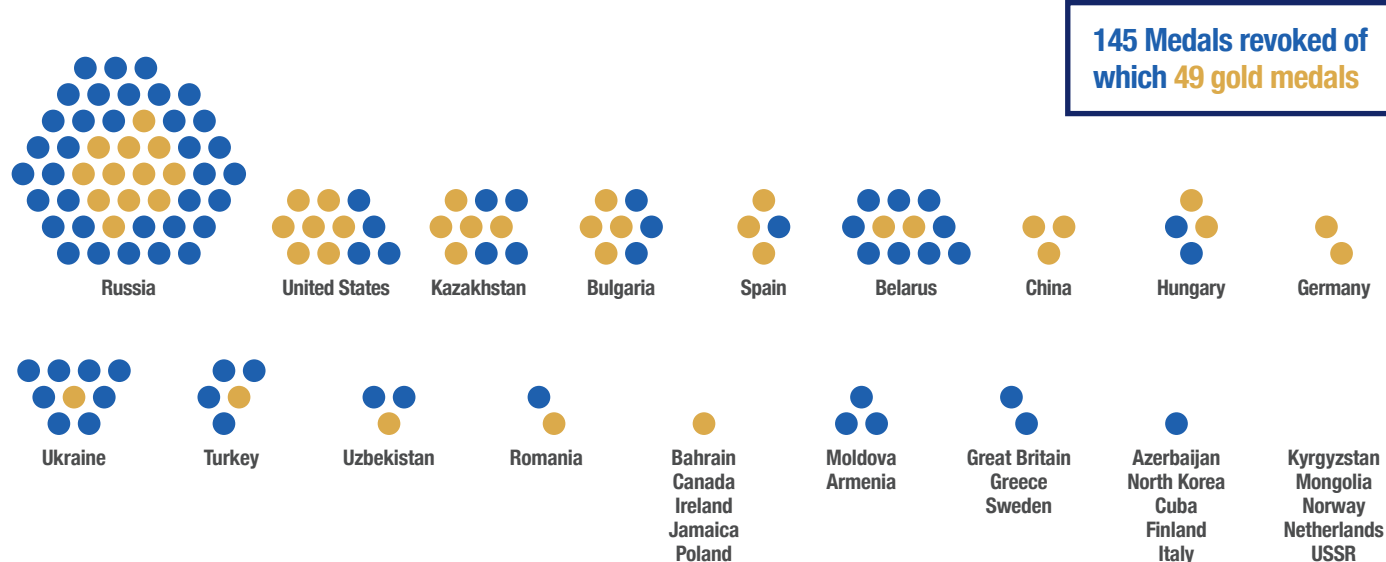


ROC athletes receiving the silver medal in the men's volleyball final – Tokyo 2020 - AI / Reuters / Panoramic

Now an integral part of the history of MISE, doping, whether mass or isolated, generates ongoing sporting crises that have a strong impact on the image and credibility of the events concerned. Despite continued support from the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA), these events can often only react to these cases after the fact by sanctioning the guilty parties in their sport. Since 1968, no fewer than 145 medals (including 49 gold) have been withdrawn for doping at the Summer and Winter Olympic Games.

NUMBER OF MEDALS REVOKED FOR DOPING AT THE OLYMPIC GAMES

According to a count of the AFP since the first case in 1968



Every athlete should be tested officially and not informally to prove their innocence. Teams under neutral banners should not get their country's points back, if we take fencing as an example, the Russians under the "ROC" banner had the points obtained by Russia, but in the end, nothing had changed except their name. More drastic measures are necessary.

PAULINE RANVIER

Professional fencer, women's silver medallist at the Tokyo Olympic Games

AT ISSUE IS A SOCIETY THAT DOES NOT SUPPORT THE RIGHT TO FAIL

While abuses unfortunately seem to be so common, the fault is not always entirely with the athletes. There have certainly been specific cases of athletes declaring that they had been doped without their knowledge (remember the case of Seiji Komatsu, a Japanese kayaker who admitted in 2018 that he had poured a doping product into the drink of one of his rivals to have him disqualified), but the fact is that the pressure on athletes is sometimes so great that the possibility of failing does not appear to be an option, at the risk of attracting the wrath of the public, sponsors and the media.

The experience of the French contingent this summer in Tokyo is the perfect reflection of this. Always keenly awaited, especially in times of crisis when every nation feels the need to shine, Les Bleus dropped overall, with a modest 10th place in the general ranking. Faced with such a disappointment, particularly on the part of athletes who were supposed to perform, incomprehension and even anger on the part of observers quickly gave way to a desire to restructure several federations (athletics in particular) with a view to the 2024 Paris Olympics. French athletics (in the doldrums, according to the media), football (“the shame of these Olympics”) and swimming were each the focus of criticism in turn, a phenomenon increased tenfold by the power of social networks.

But this case is not specific to France. We could also mention the 2014 World Cup in Brazil, the country where football reigns supreme, which saw the nation and the Auriverde press lynch its national team following the debacle of its semi-final elimination against Germany. Accused of not knowing how to handle pressure, several Brazilian players, including their captain, Thiago Silva, had to receive psychological treatment after this episode.

While such a failure had unsurprising consequences in sporting terms (the sacking of the coach and sidelining of several players from the national team), it also indirectly contributed to the rise in social discontent present at the time. Ironically, while the elections went well in that year, in 2015 Brazil experienced an unprecedented wave of protests linked to the Petrobras scandal, which led to the impeachment of Dilma Rousseff (President of the Federal Republic of Brazil) in 2016.

Another older but also more tragic case is that of Colombian footballer Andrés Escobar. In 1994, he scored an own goal in a match with the United States at the Football World Cup, causing his country’s elimination. Lynched by the local media, he was murdered two weeks later in the car park of a bar on the outskirts of Medellín by an individual who allegedly shouted “goal” as each of the twelve bullets was fired.



Tears of Thiago Silva – Credit: Panoramic

INJURY AS A SWORD OF DAMOCLES HANGING OVER THE HEADS OF ATHLETES AND EVENT ORGANISERS

Among the most common causes of a sports crisis for an athlete, one that can ruin a career, is of course injury. More or less serious and more or less frequent depending on the athlete and the discipline, they are part of the daily life of athletes and there are many examples. But they are also particularly feared by MISE organisers in disciplines where they are directly responsible for protecting the health of athletes:



What matters most to us is managing the safety and health of our participants. Some of them run for 50 hours in the mountains, at night, at life-threatening altitudes. A month and a half ago, 22 Chinese (out of 100) participants died in a trail running race in the mountains because of an unexpected cold spell. Avoiding a “crisis” due to a lack of safety is a major issue for all organisations in our trail running and mountain environment.

ANTOINE AUBOUR

Marketing, Communication & Media Director at UTMB

History has shown that unsafe conditions at certain sporting events can have dramatic consequences. How can we forget Monica Seles? The tennis player born in ex-Yugoslavia was stabbed in the middle of a match in 1993 by an unhinged German tennis fan. This was followed by more than two years of depression for the sportswoman, then a failed return to the courts. The case could have had a much more tragic outcome, and for which the WTA bore the consequences. Since then, the security of athletes in stadiums has been tightened, starting with their distance from the public.

High-risk disciplines such as Formula 1 have been terribly marked in their history by tragic accidents (such as the driver Ayrton Senna, three-time world champion, who lost his life during the San Marino Grand Prix at the age of 34), and have not hesitated to take measures such as the driver's protective halo to reduce the effects of accidents, which were unpopular yet proved their effectiveness when we look back at the Romain Grosjean accident.

IN THE HEALTHY BODY OF THE ATHLETE IS A MIND THAT IS NOT ALWAYS HEALTHY

Aware of their media aura and the role they have to play in addressing various societal issues (parity, inclusion, environment, etc.), athletes no longer hesitate to take up an issue that was long left unspoken: mental injury.

And this year, the magnitude of this topic has taken on a whole new importance, first through Naomi Osaka. During the 2021 Roland Garros tournament, the Japanese athlete alerted the public by declaring that she did not wish to participate in press conferences to preserve her psychological health. As a result, the athlete was initially threatened with exclusion from the Paris Major and fined \$15,000 (approximately €12,500). Faced with the extent of the debate generated by her statements and the reaction of the organisers, she decided a few days later to withdraw from the competition via a statement on social networks, citing the need to protect herself:

"I think the best thing for the tournament, the other players and my well-being is for me to withdraw (from the tournament) so that everyone can focus on tennis again," she stated.

A few weeks later, gymnast Simone Biles followed in her footsteps at the Tokyo Olympic Games, also crushed by the media pressure: "We have to protect our mind and body and not just do what the world wants us to do," she stated to the press. "I'm less confident in myself. It was a couple of days when everyone tweets about you and you feel the weight of the world. We are not just athletes. At the end of the day, we are human beings and sometimes we just have to take a step back."

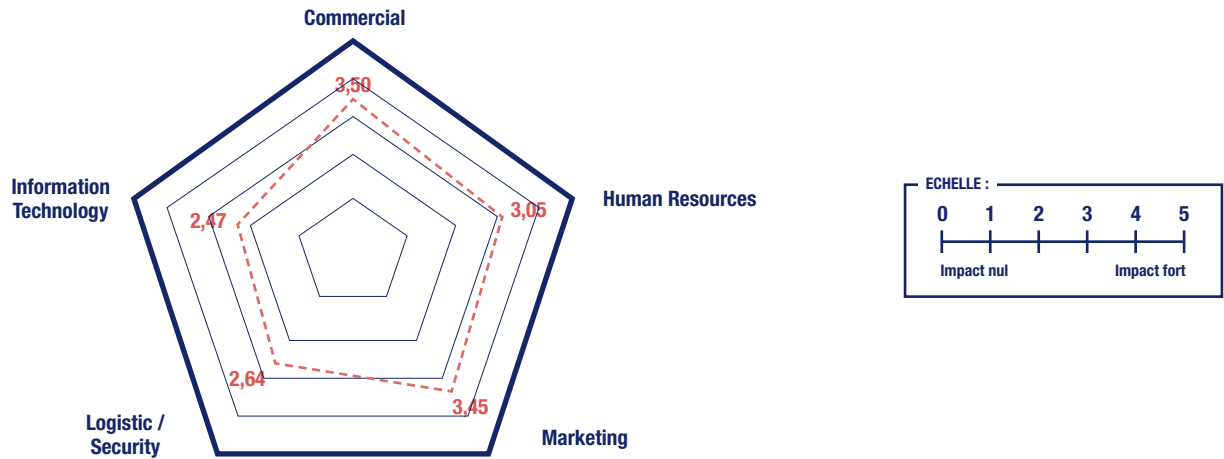
The impact of the two sportswomen concerned made it possible, perhaps for the first time, for the general public (but also for the organisers of sports events) to accept the fact that physical fitness was no longer the only parameter to be taken into account in the career of a professional athlete, even though this problem is far from new.

This lesson shows us that MISE should no longer limit themselves to their simple role as organisers and regulators of the athletes. By listening to them, they must enable them to be a link in the organisation to develop competition formats.



WHAT DO SPORT BUSINESS PROFESSIONALS THINK?

Can the sportsman crisis have an impact on the following aspects of Major International Sports Events?



In the eyes of sports business professionals¹², the commercial function (score of 3.50/5) is the one that would be most affected by a sports-related crisis. This is probably the case in Russia which, following the “State doping” scandal, has been sanctioned by the sports movement. Under these conditions, it is difficult for a sponsor to associate its name with the performances of Russian athletes.

¹² Survey conducted in November 2021 among a sample of 487 sport business professionals

MISE AND PRACTICE CRISES (ALTERNATIVE PRACTICES AND NEW SPORTS)



Who would have thought that breakdancing would be present at the 2024 Paris Olympic Games? That 3x3 basketball would coexist with its 5-a-side counterpart at the Tokyo Olympics? Probably not the walkers of the men's 50 km, which has been on the programme since 1932, but who have just participated for the last time in the biggest international sporting event at the Tokyo Games.

ALTERNATIVE PRACTICES AND “NEW SPORTS”: TOOLS FOR WINNING OVER NEW GENERATIONS

For the international sports movement and related major sporting events, the stakes for “new sports” (skateboarding, surfing, breakdancing, to name but a few) as well as for alternative practices (very often derived from classic sports such as 5-a-side football, 3-a-side basketball or 7-a-side rugby) are enormous. These activities, which propose new rules, forms and values, develop and are structured in parallel with (or even in opposition to) the existing offer. The challenge for the international sports movement is therefore as much to “encapsulate” them in the mould of a regulated framework as to progressively integrate them into the circuit of major international sports events to benefit from their natural seductive power. A number of so-called “alternative” sports events are now organised by private companies (Redbull or Vans to name but two).

And the international sports movement has understood this. For example, in 2014, the International Olympic Committee, through its 2020 strategic plan (known as the Olympic Agenda), encouraged organising committees to propose new sports in the Olympic programme for their event. As a result, Paris 2024 has chosen sports that it describes as young, creative, spectacular and in tune with the times, such as surfing, climbing, skateboarding and breakdancing, three of these four disciplines having already been included in the Tokyo Games programme. Tony Estanguet (President of the Paris 2024 Olympic Games Organising Committee) makes no secret of the fact that the desire to change the programme of sports present at the Games is a response to the need for the international sports movement to “connect with the sports that are successful all over the world to give the Games a more urban, more natural and more artistic dimension”.



I assume that 3x3 is a discipline that has its place at the Olympic Games, it is a discipline that is growing and I am very happy that it will be at the next events. It is also a huge communication and development lever that will open people's eyes because not everyone is aware that 3x3 will be at the next Olympics.

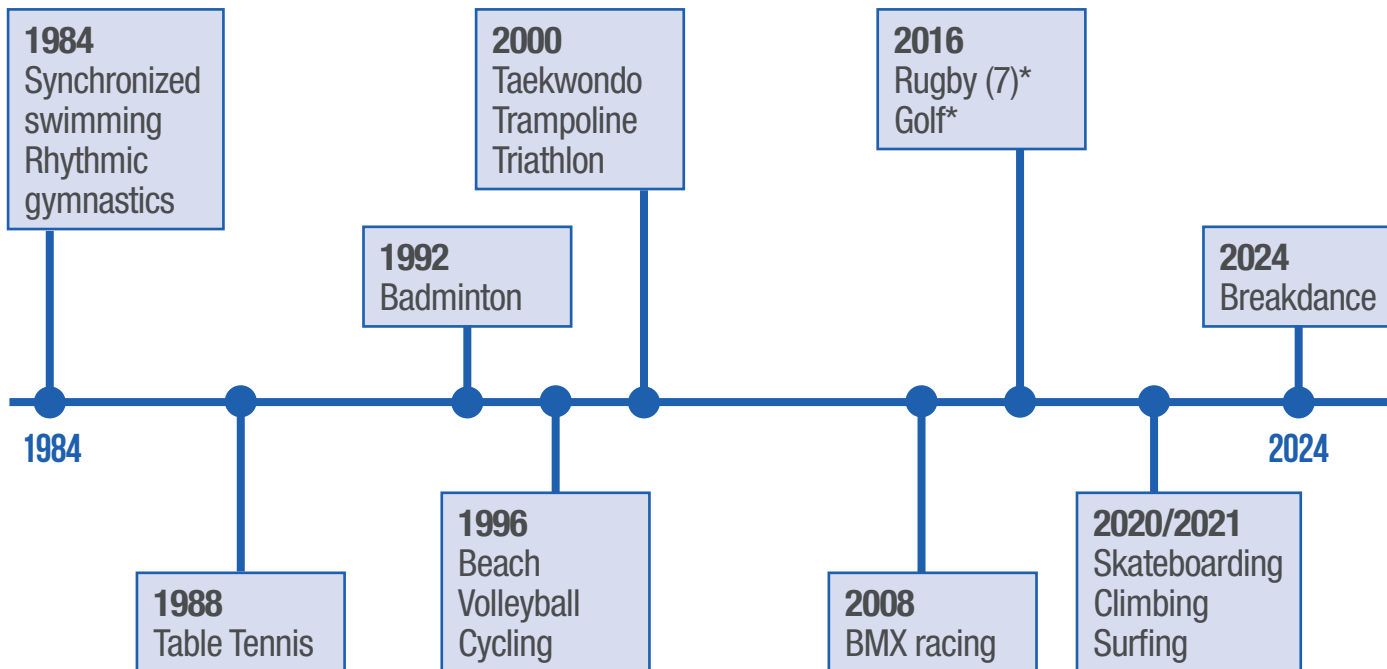
MAMIGNAN TOURÉ

French 3x3 Basketball Team at the Tokyo Olympics

It is not surprising that of the last 12 summer disciplines to become Olympic, more than half were not so-called traditional sports.

WHEN SPORTS BECAME OLYMPIC

Current sports of the Summer Olympic Games by year of insertion.



DonnéesStatista - Retraitement Observatoire du Sport Business

*Ré-introduits

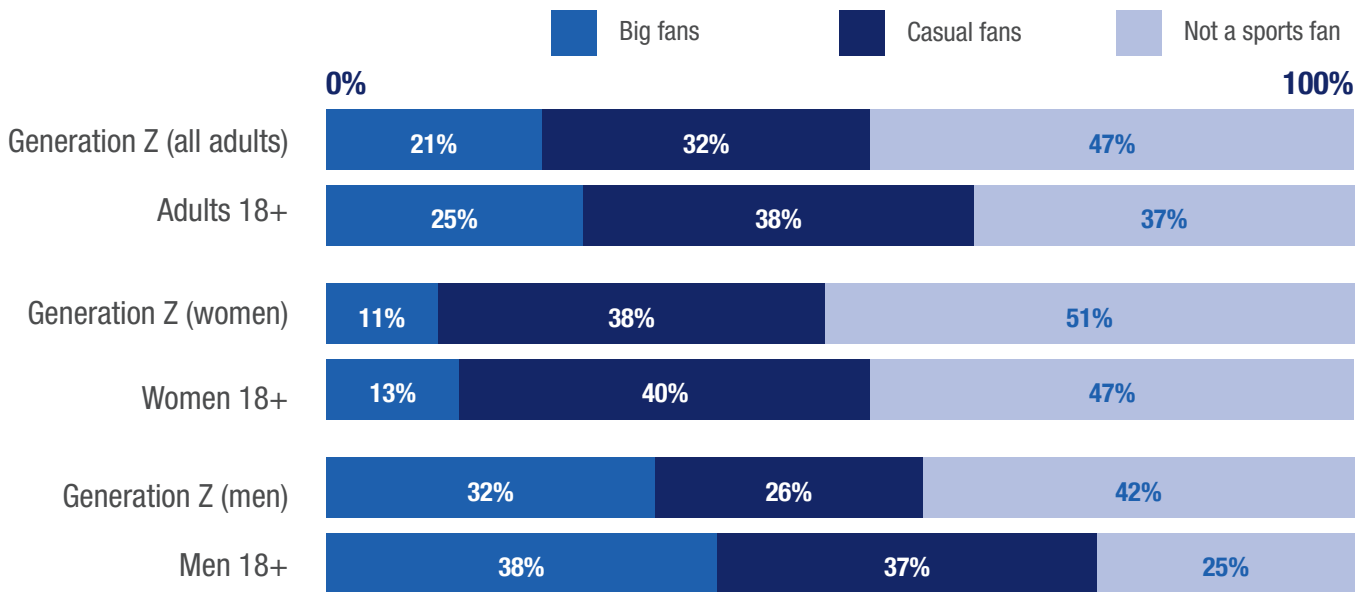
Ne comprend pas les sports actuellement abandonnés ou abandonnés en 2024.

Source : olympics.com

At stake is the attention of Generation Z (those born between 1995 and 2010), who are tending to move further and further away from the sporting sphere. This distancing is reflected firstly in terms of **interest**, as highlighted by a survey by the American firm Morning Consults, which shows that 53% of people belonging to Generation Z self-report as “sports fans”, compared with 63% of all adults.

GENERATION Z

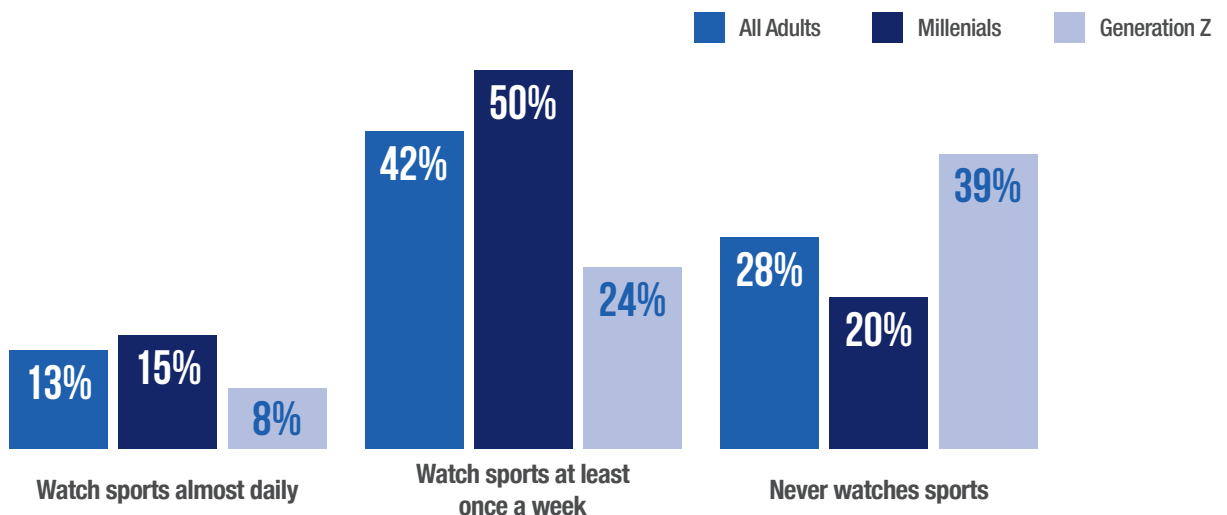
Less of a sports fan than previous generations



As a result, the **media consumption** of sporting events by these generations is directly affected. The most telling example: members of Generation Z are half as likely as Millennials (all those born between the early 1980s and late 1990s) to watch live sport on a weekly basis.

GENERATION Z

Less of a sports fan than previous generations



Morning Conseil data - Sport Business Observatory reprocessing

Survey of 1,000 Generation Z youth, ages 13-23, conducted August 21-23, 2020 with a margin of error of +/- 3%.

Survey of 2,200 U.S. adults, August 28-31, 2020 with a margin of error of +/- 2%.

The idea of developing alternative practices as new sports, therefore, responds above all to the need for international sports organisations and the major international sports events that they legislate to offer disciplines with a much more hedonistic logic than their forebears, to better meet the expectations of these new generations. A generation that wants to practice and follow sports with simplified rules, more fun and with strong cultural roots, as confirmed by 3x3 basketball athlete Mamignan Touré:



I think that the strength of 3x3 basketball and an alternative practice in general is its capacity to go beyond the simple sport discipline and to have a strong cultural anchorage ("From the street to the Olympics", we could say for 3x3 basketball) to reach those who are not interested in traditional sports.

Being very rhythmic and telegenic, 3x3 basketball appeals to the public. And for organisations, it has the advantage of requiring less infrastructure, which makes it easier to use.

MAMIGNAN TOURÉ

French 3x3 Basketball Team at the Tokyo Olympics

COVID AS A DRIVER OF ALTERNATIVE PRACTICES IMPOSED UPON PRACTITIONERS

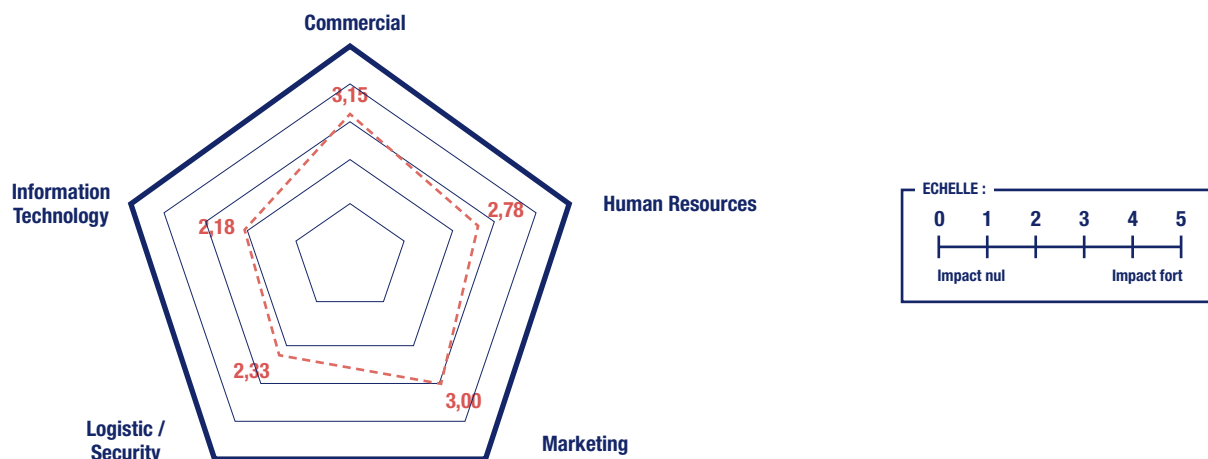
However, alternative practices and new sports are not always the result of popular will. They may also occur in response to a specific crisis, and it has to be said that COVID has been particularly conducive to this phenomenon. Indeed, the health context forced the usual resumption of team sports, combat and contact sports and sports to be adapted because their rules of play or the spaces in which they are practised increased the risks of contagion. In June 2020, the French Ministry for Sport published a guide entitled "Playing differently - alternative practices"



Now, it would be surprising if from these imposed alternative practices (such as non-contact boxing) came new disciplines that we will find on the programme of a future major international sporting event, but only the future can tell.

WHAT DO SPORT BUSINESS PROFESSIONALS THINK?

Can the sporting practice crisis have an impact on the following aspects of Major International Sports Events?



For sport business professionals¹³, even though the Commercial function of the MISE (score of 3.15/5) is also the one that would be the most impacted, it should be noted that it is the phenomenon that "worries" them the least.

¹³ Survey conducted in November 2021 among a sample of 487 sport business professionals

CONCLUSION

The work of the SMS Paris community and ample feedback from sports business professionals illustrate the extent to which the COVID-19 pandemic has raised questions for MISE on the capacity of their organisation to find the agility to deal with any kind of crisis. Certainly, before the 2020+5 agenda, the IOC is trying to anticipate some of the crises studied, but many parameters are extremely difficult to imagine, all the more so as the time between the applications, award and organisation of these MISE is tending to get longer. Both Los Angeles and Brisbane have 11 years to prepare for the next summer games, while Argentina, Chile, Paraguay and Uruguay have positioned themselves to host the 2030 World Cup. Spain and Portugal are also thinking about it, perhaps even joining forces with Morocco for a “two-continent” bid. And if there is any doubt about the geopolitical dimension of such a MISE, China is also seeking to position itself for 2030 or 2034. Of course, whether in environmental, security, commercial or media terms, so many events may occur in the next decade that MISE organisations are “doomed” to develop different crisis scenarios to which they will have to find responses.

ABSTRACT

The Sports Management School, a multi campus business school specializing in Sports Business, has adopted an academic structure linking theory and practice from the very start.

Throughout their studies, students carry out numerous real life assignments related to partners, brands or current events.

The health crisis that shook the world around the Coronavirus totaled more than 47 million searches on Google in France between January and March 2021.

Confronted with this pandemic, the students of the Sports Management School worked on the development and organization of a market study. This study was carried out in April 2020 and its main objective was to define the term «crisis» and identify the most significant issues.

A more precise breakdown of the word «crisis» led us to analyze crises in a more specific area, the Major International Sports Events (MISE).

Our first white paper is devoted to the identification of the different forms of crises and analyzes them through the organization of the MISE. This was accomplished via the distribution of quantitative questionnaires, interviews with experts of the sport business, surveys, and observations on the repercussions engendered by the crises. This led to a number of possibilities for consideration.





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