

Introduction

Over the last 20 years, there has been a significant change in international sporting events and the way they are organised.

With increasing ways to follow, watch and engage with these events they have become more commercialised moving from a sporting event to an 'experience' – and in turn the practice and implementation of these experiences has evolved for events management companies. This has led to a higher degree of specialisation in sports events operations.

What this insight will tell you

- How planning around large sporting events has changed
- How social media is impacting the way people interact with these events
- How marketing around large sporting events has become more commercial
- Why sports 'packages' are increasingly popular

Michiel Aulbers

Michiel Aulbers is a member of ATPI's Global Events Team - supporting the company to grow and diversify the ATPI sports portfolio globally.



The growing role of sponsors

With a growing number of events in the international sports calendar, bigger stadiums, better infrastructure and the growing usage of social media, sports events are more accessible to the public than ever before.

This means that the sponsors 'reach' to spectators has grown, and as a consequence they have taken an increasingly structured and commercialised approach to event management.

Sponsors now begin their preparation earlier, and as a result their involvement with an event management company starts much earlier too. A familiarisation trip to visit the host-country three years before the event takes place is now common practice, ensuring that the required elements of their sponsorship programmes such as hospitality, transport and accommodation can be explored.

This advanced preparation also has a positive outcome in terms of cost reduction as all processes can be fully streamlined and tested.





Increased demand for sports events

Tickets have always been limited for large sporting events. However, as travelling has become much easier and more affordable, sports events now have a truly global reach.

Previously, sports event organisers sold their tickets largely to people from the host and neighbouring countries, but now a large chunk of tickets are allocated to supporters from overseas. For example watching Australians supporting their Field-Hockey team at the London 2012 Olympics, or the Belgians cheering for their national Football Team 'The Red-Devils' at the World Cup 2014.

Demand for travel, accommodation and other resources around such an event has increased significantly - meaning the sourcing of these programme components also begins at an even earlier stage and there is a growing need for professional support.

Professionalisation and commercialisation of sports marketing

With the growth of the internet and social media, sports events have been brought to a wider audience.

Within a split second people can share their experiences via Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram and many more outlets. This has fundamentally changed the nature of the role for marketing teams involved in sports events. Sponsors and their marketing teams are forced to carefully consider their sponsorships as they are critiqued much more publicly than ever before – there are bigger budgets, greater pressure on results and a global audience to take into account.



Marketing communication strategies



Within ATPI, our marketing teams provide support for clients' communications and their marketing communications strategy – by creating tools including websites, registrations systems and invitations to launch and manage their hospitality programmes.

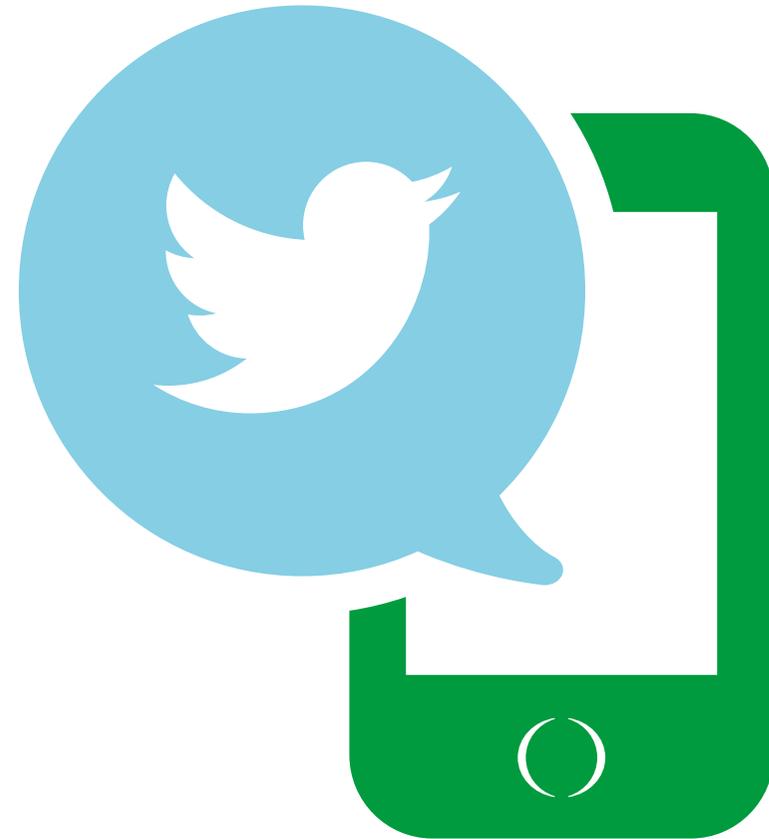
In order to produce these bespoke communications, we work in partnership with our clients, to gain a true understanding about their stakeholders and client needs.

An example is our involvement as a travel, logistics and hospitality partner of one of the sailing teams in the Volvo Ocean Race – a travelling international sports event that visits every continent. Together with the team sponsors we designed and created a client and employee invitation programme within the specific stop-over routes and neighbouring countries highlighted.

The growing use of social media and changing demographics

Sports enthusiasts are now able to view and follow sport at the click of a button, from anywhere – meaning that if they can't attend the event or watch it on TV, they can still be part of the action.

With social media evolving on a daily basis there are more channels and sites for people to follow sport, and the pressure of making sure an event runs as smoothly as possible will only increase. Otherwise people will know about it within seconds, and often before media outlets. And in the end reputation and image is key for such prestigious international projects.



Sport is no longer just local

Sport isn't refined to certain countries – it's global and people travel to see their favourite teams.

With the growing ways to watch and follow sport, people are engaging with sports events at a younger age. And it's not just the huge sporting events such as premiership football matches that are shown on TV. People are able to follow an enormous variety of sports from the Winter Olympics to the Football World Cup by streaming them online, following updates on social media, listening to the radio or following news updates.

This means that the bar is raised to make the event as memorable and spectacular as possible and not just for those attending on the day. A consequence of this development is that event organisers need to take into account the time on different continents, when scheduling large sporting events.

Sometimes an event will take place at a time or day that doesn't allow peak performance from athletes. For us as an event management company it is therefore key to monitor these developments and continuously analyse the possible consequences from a logistical and 'experience' point of view.



Love Sport!

Short trips and packages to events such as the Olympics and the Commonwealth Games have become more popular in recent years, especially appealing to those who are time poor. Longer trips suit those who choose to plan their holiday around a large sporting event and spend time in a country to absorb the culture.

Sponsors and corporates often use sports events as an incentive for their clients or internal stakeholders. A combination of a visit to two or three games at the event, plus a round-trip combined with other handpicked activities creates a truly memorable experience companies are looking for.



About the expert

Michiel Aulbers, ATPI Sports Events, is a member of ATPI's international sports team – supporting the company to grow and diversify the ATPI sports portfolio globally.

Michiel has worked on many high profile and global sports events over the last seven years. His experience includes being part of the commercial team for the London 2012 Olympics, and more recently working on events such as Sochi 2014 Olympics, Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games, Rugby World Cup 2015 and Rio 2016 Olympics.



Want to know more?

For examples of case studies and more how-to guides, visit the [ATPI Knowledge Hub](#).





ATPI is among the world's leading travel management companies. Our dynamic and innovative approach to savings and service has earned us one of the highest client retention rates in the industry.

With over 100 offices worldwide, the company has successful operations in corporate travel, corporate event management, online travel technology and specialist travel management for a number of key industries.

