

**THE EXPERIENCE OF THE PRESS OPERATIONS TEAM
IN A MULTISPORT EVENT:
THE CASE OF “PATRAS 2019”
MEDITERRANEAN BEACH GAMES**

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SUMMARY

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IN A MULTISPORT EVENT:
THE CASE OF “PATRAS 2019” MEDITERRANEAN BEACH GAMES**

(Under the supervision of Athanassios Strigas, Associate Professor)

Sports journalists are an essential element of any sport organization. In a sport event, particularly in the case of a Multisport Event, journalists play a fundamental role as with their work, they have the responsibility not only to entertain, but also to inform people about what is happening within the world of sports. Previous work in the literature (Billings & Hardin, 2015; Bradshaw & Minogue, 2020) show that, having a strong Press Operations team inside the Organizing Committee, can have a positive impact on the satisfaction level of the accredited journalists and therefore can influence the media to present a positive image of the event to the public. The aim of the current study is to examine how Press Operations team could be a strategic lever for the successful outcome of the Multisport events. To this end, in this study, the case of “Patras 2019” Mediterranean Beach Games will be examined.

Keywords: Press Operations, Management, Multi Sport Events

CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION	7
2. LITERATURE REVIEW	10
3. THE CASE OF “PATRAS 2019” MEDITERRANEAN BEACH GAMES.....	24
3.1 The history of the Mediterranean Games.....	24
3.2 The World Beach Games	25
3.3 The birth of the Mediterranean Beach Games (MBG)	26
3.4 The “Patras 2019” Mediterranean Beach Games.....	27
3.4.1 The election of the city	27
3.4.2. The venues	28
3.4.3 The sports	29
3.4.4 The athletes.....	30
3.4.5 The structure of the Organising Committee	30
3.4.6 The Press and Media Operations	34
4. METHODOLOGY	36
5. RESULTS	38
5.1 Organising Committee	38
5.2 Journalists	47
5.3 Volunteers	57
6. DISCUSSION	62
7. CONCLUSION.....	65
REFERENCES	68
APPENDICES	74

“When an organization enjoys an optimal professional relationship with members of the media, it can be said that the organization has already achieved half of its objectives.”

(Rubén Acosta Hernandez, Report to the FIVB Congress)

1. INTRODUCTION

According to Bose (2012), "...sport is simultaneously a global phenomenon and a local and personal one. It is simultaneously a gigantic commercial business and a gigantic voluntary enterprise. Sport fulfils all of these conflicting roles in global society through a multi-layered and mutually dependent relationship with the media and other commercial interests." (p. 5). Therefore, as stated by the author, there is no plain definition of what modern sport means, thus there are no plain solutions to its numerous problems.

Following Duarte (2009) "Nowadays it is scarcely possible to think about sporting events without invoking images of reporters, TV cameras, satellite broadcasts and lots of advertising. In fact, for advertisers, sports events have become a major business; and the recent strategies of companies like the betting company Bwin.com show how much business is still to be generated in and around sports activities and events" (p.740).

For these reasons, sports journalists are an essential element of any sport organization. In a sport event, particularly in the case of multisport event, journalists play a fundamental role as with their work, they have the responsibility not only to entertain, but also to inform people about what is happening within the world of sports.

Previous work in the literature (Billings & Hardin, 2015; Bradshaw & Minogue, 2020) show that, having a strong Press Operations team inside the Organizing Committee (OC), can have a positive impact on the satisfaction level of the accredited journalists and therefore can influence the media to present a positive image of the event to the public.

The aim of the current study is to examine how Press Operations Team could be a strategic lever for the successful outcome of multisport events. To this end, in this study, the case of "Patras 2019" Mediterranean Beach Games (MBG) will be examined.

The MBG include only water sports and beach sports, with the aim of bringing together young athletes of the Mediterranean Sea, having the opportunity to participate in sport events in an atmosphere of mutual understanding, friendship and solidarity, in which every country is a "whole" without ceasing to be a "part".

The Patras MBG were held from 25 to 31 August 2019, with 26 countries. The sports included in the programme were the following: Aquathlon, Beach Handball, Beach Soccer, Beach Tennis, Beach Volley, Beach Wrestling, Finswimming, Canoe Ocean Racing, Open Water Swimming, Rowing Beach Sprint, Water Skiing. The Patras MBG took place in three venues: “Hera”, “Artemis” and “Pepanos”.

This study intends to investigate the following research hypothesis: to what extent the Press Operations team support the organizational success of a sporting event?

The first part of the project will refer to a review of the literature on previous works dedicated to Press Operations in major events. Subsequently we will analyze the works dedicated to the presence and satisfaction of journalists with respect to major events. This chapter will contain a review of the literature, referring to the previous contributions on the topic of journalist management.

In particular, using the main bibliographic research databases, we searched for the jobs using the following search keys: press operations, media relations, public relations, sport communications, journalists, press operations in big sport events, volunteers.

In the chapter the previous works will be organized by sections. First it will begin with the works dedicated to sports communication, then with those relating to journalists and events. Finally, the works referring to the future challenges of the press operations sector and to volunteers.

The second part will consist of the analysis of the case study, i.e. the Press Operations in “Patras 2019”. First of all we will describe the operation of the office, then we will proceed with the interviews with the Head of the Press Operations, the employees who worked in the office and the volunteers who helped the journalists.

The third part will consist of interviews with journalists who took part in the event.

We will try to build a varied sample to interview, considering journalists from different continents, different countries, different types of newspapers (daily, weekly, monthly, website), different sports interests.

The research project will be carried out according to the qualitative research methodology. In particular, we will follow the case studies method (Yin, 1984) to analyze Press Operations in a specific context, that of the MBG “Patras 2019”.

Then, the interview methodology will be used to investigate the concrete case. The views of the individuals involved in the research will be collected through a questionnaire and the answers will be analyzed subsequently.

The main limitation of the current research is about the number of persons interviewed. For a variety of reasons, it was difficult to contact the whole Press Operations team, all the accredited journalists and all the Press services volunteers, so as to have a much bigger sample to analyze. A future development of the research could be to increase the number of people involved in the analysis.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

At the beginning of the 21st century the relationship between sport and the media is the defining commercial connection for both industries. The media has transformed sport from an amateur pursuit into a hyper-commercialized industry, while sport has delivered massive audiences and advertising revenues to the media. The coverage of sport on television in particular has created a product to be consumed by audiences, sold by clubs and leagues, bought and sold by media organizations and manipulated by advertisers (Nicholson, 2007). At the end of the 20th century, Real (1998, quoted by Nicholson, 2007), noted that ignoring sports media in contemporary society ‘would be like ignoring the role of the church in the Middle Ages or ignoring the role of Art in the Renaissance’. In other words, sport media is an omnipresent feature of contemporary societies and without the ability to analyze sport media we cannot hope to understand the societies in which we live”. However, sport journalism is not just about covering live events and groin strains. It is also about capturing the personalities behind sport, and investigating the broader issues that underpin how sport is run and governed (Bradshaw & Minogue, 2020).

As noted earlier, the Media is highly dependent on continuous sport production. In every news market, proprietors and spectators dread the end of major competitions and tournaments, worrying as to how they are going to retain audience interest. If sport is not, precisely, omnipresent, it is remarkably conspicuous – and most of the time, especially during global mega events like the World Cup and the Olympics, almost impossible to avoid (Rowe, 2011).

For these reasons, media relations have always formed an aspect of sport, and the historical connection between sport, communications and what we now understand as the promotional industries of advertising, marketing and public relations is both long and strongly interlocked with the operational activities of most sports administrators, teams, leagues’, governing bodies, athletes and associated agencies (Boyle & Haynes, 2014).

According to these authors, “...unpicking the complexity of these interrelationships is no easy matter” (p. 2). The nexus around which sport engages with media and communications has become even more complex since the development of the

Internet and what Hutchins and Rowe (2012: 5), have labelled ‘networked media sport’ – ‘the movement away from broadcast and print media towards digitized content distributed via networked communications technologies’. More recently, the evolution of mobile social networked media has given a more direct public voice to athletes who are cosseted from mainstream media outlets by agents and communications managers, but at the same stroke, are given a new freedom of expression through sites and applications such as Facebook and Twitter to engage with their fans.

Following the framework of Boyle & Haynes (2014), according to which “Sport has long been a medium through which marketing communications have sought to capture an audience for commercial services and goods, and for participation in a sport itself” it could be asserted that “sport is simultaneously a global phenomenon and a local and personal one. It is simultaneously a gigantic commercial business and a gigantic voluntary enterprise. [] Sport fulfils all of these conflicting roles in global society through a multi-layered and mutually dependent relationship with the media and other commercial interests. There is no simple definition of what modern sport stands for and therefore no simple solutions to its many problems (Bose, 2012).

Media relations have therefore always formed an aspect of sport, and the historical connection between sport, communications and what we now understand as the promotional industries of advertising, marketing and public relations is both long and strongly interlocked with the operational activities of most sports administrators, teams, leagues’, governing bodies, athletes and associated agencies. Sport has always helped drive the uptake of new communications technologies, and the practices of journalists, broadcasters and public relations professionals has often had to fit with the culture of sport in quite distinct and unique ways. With the rise of social networked media we might want to ask if this remains the case. Has the evolution of the Internet and the digital cultures that have been inspired and created from it, transformed the ways in which sport now engages with the media. Or, are their continuities in what sport delivers to networked media sport, in terms of its cultural and economic value.

For the purpose of the present study, it is interesting to underline the work of Tamir, Limor and Galily (2014), according to whom modern day sports are not just entertainment for the masses. They are also a “religion” with hundreds of millions of

believers throughout the world (Price, 2001); they are fertile ground for political activity on both the international and national levels (Strenk, 1980; Riordan & Kruger, 1999; Murray, 2003; Harif, 2011). Sport is also a giant industry, encompassing countries and nations, shifting enormous sums of money annually. In short: Sport is both international and a part of everyday life. It shapes relationship at every level: diplomatic, cultural, economic, organizational, community and interpersonal (Le'tang, 2006).

Who are the target audiences to which public relations mechanisms are directed, and what are their modes of operation? The list of target audiences can be long and varied and include the general public, customers and consumers, the organization's employees, shareholders and investors, suppliers and service providers, donors and volunteers. Essentially, the different target audiences can often be defined as "sphericules". The accepted definition of a "sphericule", a term coined by media researcher Gitlin (1998), is "...a public sphere of a social minority or community with a unique way of life" (Limor, Adoni, & Mann, 2007, p. 367). If we broaden the definition to include common issues or areas of interest, the ramifications are that a person may simultaneously be a member of several public sphericules. The most commonly known mode of operation of public relations is called media relations, which is defined as the transfer of information to the mass media so that they publish it and bring it to the general public's knowledge. We should keep in mind that the distinction between an "advertisement" and "PR material" is that an advertisement is paid for; PR material is published without the PR professional or the organization they work for paying for the publicity.

As a generalization, one can say that public relations, directed at the target audiences- and essentially, at the "personal space" of each individual belonging to a certain target audience-can be managed in one of two central channels. One is the mass media channel, and the other-the direct channel, in which contact with the target audience is not made via mass media channels. The first channel includes utilizing newspapers, television, radio and large websites on the internet; the second channel, however, includes a variety of means, including conferences and assemblies, personal meetings, direct mailing, text messages, email and, of course, social media. It is possible to

make contact with target audiences in a combination of ways and channels, using both the mass media as well as other means.

Since the beginning of their history, printed newspapers discovered the public interest in sport. Just three decades after the appearance of the first daily newspaper, in 1733, the first coverage of a sports competition was published. Gradually, the media increased the coverage of sports news and thus contributed to increasing public interest. As the public interest increased, the newspapers broadened their coverage and so forth (Weingarten, 2003). In addition to the coverage on the news pages of the newspapers, over the years, columns, supplements and even special newspapers dedicated entirely to sport were added. The birth of the radio in the 1920s, of the television that followed in its wake, and later of the internet, reinforced sports coverage and increased public interest in it even more. Live broadcast enabled television channels to “create” media events, especially contests, as defined by Dayan and Katz (Dayan & Katz, 1992), between groups or individual athletes. Broadcasting rights at sports events became a necessity, enlisted by advertising and public relations to advance sales. As the demand for this product increased, it grew in value, and consequently, so did advertising and PR in this area.

Media consumers read newspapers, watch television and listen to the radio because they are interested in the content. Sports content is desired and consumed. Broadcast and print media which dedicate time and space to sports coverage utilize public relations to bring their activity to the attention of wider audiences. Public relations will contribute, for example, to increasing the number of viewers of a television broadcast, and a high rating translates into higher profits. However, the media is not just an agent for transmitting information and content to the audience. In many cases, they are also the creators of the content—or agents who purchased the rights to them—and they need public relations to increase awareness of the contents and raise public interest in them, to enable them to sell them to other media channels. The vast public interest in sport also encourages the media to sponsor sports events—an action that is purely a PR move—to win the desired public response.

Focusing on the media, Billings & Hardin (2015), explore the biggest sporting event in the world through the lens in which most people witness it: the media. Traversing nations and media formats, contributors offer insights into the way the Olympics is

conveyed to the masses and the impact arising from the mass consumption of Olympic media in its plethora of dimensions. The book gleans insight from past Olympic media analyses but focuses on the role media played within the 2012 London Summer Olympics. Using a variety of methodologies, the book underscores how the Olympic Games are more than just a sporting event but should be understood a vast mosaic of images and events that shape public understandings of nations, society, and the values that undergird such renderings.

Wenner and Billings (2017), examine the diverse ways that media influences our understanding of the world's most important sport events, bringing together many of the most influential scholars in sport and media studies. Their book sheds new light on how these events have been changed by the media, and have, in turn, adapted to media to further their brand's cultural influence. In addition, it presents original case studies of major events including the Olympics, FIFA, rugby and cricket World Cups, Tour de France, Super Bowl, World Series, Monaco Grand Prix, Wimbledon, and many more. In a very basic sense, Media makes things larger than life. This is true in the case of the sports mega-event as well. Much supported in the work of Debord (1967/1995), the commodified spectacle that the sports mega-event has become would not be possible without media. So wedded are the two that Horne and Manzenreiter (2006, p. 2) have observed that "...an unmediated mega-event would be a contradiction in terms". Thus, we begin our approach to the sports mega-event by drawing on two relevant concepts from media studies, the intertwined and complementary notions of the "media event" and "super media."

Budapest 2024 bidding committee (later the bid was withdrawn) commissioned SportBusines to compose a report titled: "The future of Olympic Games Media Consumption" (2017), which examined what the future holds for the Olympic Games, with particular reference to the changing habits and attitudes of young people. It was based on nationally representative surveys of 13 global markets. They asked respondents questions on their broad feelings about the Olympics, what media they used to consume the 2016 Olympics, their thoughts on social media coverage of the Olympics, and their expectations for the impact of Virtual Reality and Augmented Reality on their sports consumption habits.

According to the Report's results "...conventional TV was by far the main method, with an average of 73% of the adult population across the 13 markets watching the Games at some level. TV coverage of the Games was widely regarded as interesting and compelling by both the adult population and the 18-24 age group, across the 13 markets. Digital and social media coverage was also highly regarded across the world, albeit at a lower level than TV coverage among the adult population and 18-24-year-olds". Regarding the Social Media consumption, the authors underlined that "...Social Media has become a major force in the Olympic Games, not only among 18-24 year-olds, but also among the adult population as a whole". Ma Guoli, vice-chairman, Le Sports (year/) suggested that "...social media is more important for the Olympic Games than other sports, other sports concentrate on only one sport, so normally the people who touch this sport are the sports fans or fans of these types of events. The Olympic Games has 28 sports on at the same time and serving Olympic fans means you need to know 28 sports fan groups."

Based on interviews with leading sports journalists and grounded in the authors' experience and expertise in both the sports journalism industry and sports media research, Bradshaw and Minogue (2020), provide in-depth insight into the editorial and ethical challenges facing sports journalists in a fast-changing media environment. The book considers how sports journalism's past has shaped its present and explores the future trends and trajectories that the industry could take. The far-reaching consequences of the digital revolution and social media on sports journalists' work are analyzed, with prominent sports writers, broadcasters and academics giving their insights. While predominantly focused on the UK sports media industry, the book also provides a global perspective, and includes case studies, research and interviews from around the world. Issues of diversity – or a lack of it – in the industry are put into sharp focus. As stated by Bradshaw & Minogue (2020), "Sport journalists might still get the best seats in the house when they are covering live games or tournaments from the stadium, but for every sports journalist there in person, there are likely to be dozens more working remotely producing a live text commentary and combing through social media feeds about the event. And those who are there in the flesh won't be sitting in the press box with their feet up, unhurriedly pondering the opening

line of their 950-word report – or indeed doing anything else approximately loafing....”

In addition the authors consider that except for written match reports, spoken commentary, live text commentary and post-match interviews that have to be distributed, sports journalists are involved in delivering an array of social media content – photos and videos via Instagram, Snapchat stories, WhatsApp Broadcast Lists, Twitter updated. These social media platforms will constantly develop, some will fade, but it is an undeniable fact that the real-time 24/7 news cycle that the digital era has foreshadowed is here to stay.

Another way in understanding the impact of networked media sport is to look at the practices of sports journalism, both in the everyday work of the journalist, and the narratives and forms of content they produce. Digitisation has impacted on journalism at a range of levels. Structurally journalism organisations are struggling to find viable business models to sustain funded professional journalism, in an era in which news content can appear ubiquitous and often free at the point of consumption (Boyle & Haynes, 2014).

Sherwood et al., (2017), explore the construction of the sport media agenda from arguably the most important sport news sources: sport media relations managers. In particular, this paper asked: how does media staff in sports organisations influence the production of news? To answer this question, this paper is based on a qualitative, observational study of a professional Australian Rules football club in Australia, involving interviews, observations and document analysis. Research within a professional Australian Rules football club found that the club delivered high-quality information subsidies that met sports journalists’ news work requirements. However, media access was almost solely limited to these information subsidies, which are highly subjective and negotiated, which in turn allowed the professional football club to significantly control the subsequent media agenda.

According to Parent (2008), “...there are a few evolution frameworks presented in the sport event management literature”. Burbank et al., (2001), and Yarbrough (2000), have provided more specificity by mentioning-albeit in passing-planning, implementation of plans/pre-games activities, games time, and post-games modes. In addition, Hall (1992), suggested four organizing committee phases: planning,

organizing, leading, and controlling. This is, in effect, a project management approach to event management (cf. Mingus, 2002), and a variation of Evolution and Issues Framework. Henri Fayol's early work on management functions suggests: 1) forecasting and planning; 2) organizing; 3) commanding; 4) coordinating; and 5) controlling (Pugh & Hickson, 1997).

Taking a different approach, Getz (1993), suggested that the stages of an organizing committee are as follows: origin, informal organization, emergence of leadership, formal organization, and professionalism. He also argued that the community support, size of the organization, and resources increase as the organizing committee moves through these stages. However, exceptions to this claim are evident if one considers the typically varying support residents provide to organizing committees. Masterman (2004), offered stages for an event's overall planning process: objectives, concept, feasibility, bid, implementation planning, handover, evaluation, and feedback. Similarly, Shone and Parry (2004), proposed the following management activities: objectives and getting started, planning, organizing and preparing the event, implementing (running the event), and divestment/legacy.

As noted by Frawley (2017), "... the mega event and the project management literature suggests that sport mega-events are shaped and influenced by a range of internal and external organizational characteristics" (p.3) while as stated by Malfas, Theodoraki and Houlihan (2004), "sport mega-events display two central characteristics. First, these events are shaped by external organizational factors such as: extensive global media coverage; international tourists attracted to attend the events; and the types of impacts that result from hosting such events (Cashman, 2006). Second, sport mega-events are influenced by the complexity of internal organizational factors such as: the scale and scope of the event; the event duration and preparation time; and the number of athletes, officials, fans and media that attend the event (Chappelet & Bayle, 2005)"

One problem in the management of a big event is how to allocate limited resources in Media Operations. According to Parent and Ruetsch (2013), "...when planning for any event, the reality is that you'll have a finite amount of money and time to work with... Some of the big decisions you will face in the planning phases are what services and facilities to focus on and what to leave out.... So, what are factors to

consider?” Consider your client group – the media – and what they need to do their job. Some services are non-negotiable, such as internet connectivity”. This is due to the fact that the Media cannot do their work without it, even though they may be offered free meals and free goods. Connectivity is of major importance for them, and there are varying degrees on how this is supplied. As a matter of fact, in past Olympic Games, Media were charged a fee for internet service, although nowadays, the trend goes more towards a free service. This is why most major events offer an exclusive network for media to confirm a quick and reliable service. Internet connectivity is arguably the foremost critical service to deliver.

The two most prominent ways in which public relations is practiced in sport are media relations and community relations (Mullin, Hardy & Sutton, 2014). Media relations programmes focus on building relationships with members of the mass media to maximize positive publicity and minimize the negative one.

Community relations programmes are structured to allow members of the sport organizations to come in direct contact with their constituent. Here, another public relations objective is very important – crisis management. Mass media represents both a promotor for the sport organization, and an “enemy” in the actual or potential case of wrong doing. Be it true or not, the PR department has to react and must act as soon as mass media starts running images and information in the disadvantage of the sport organization. A quick response ensures that the public will also receive the sport organization version before forming an opinion about the situation at hand. Once the public makes up its mind, this opinion is very hard to change, even if it’s based on false information.

According to Duarte (2009), nowadays it is scarcely possible to think about sporting events without invoking images of reporters, TV cameras, satellite broadcasts and lots of advertising. In fact, for advertisers, sports events have become a major business; and the recent strategies of companies like the betting company Bwin.com show how much business is still to be generated in and around sports activities and events.

Following to Schwarz et al., (2010), sport facilities of all shapes and sizes are an ingrained part of sport management culture.... A sport facility manager understands that utilizing public relations is critical to success, as it is the management function that helps to evaluate public attitudes, articulate policies and procedures of an

organization that may be of public interest and execute programmes of action to acquire public understanding and approval. The most important relationship is with the media. Media relations are the activities that involve working directly with individuals responsible for the production of mass media including news, features, public service announcements and sponsored programmes.

According to Ghasemi (2019), the development of modern sport is bound up with processes of sponsorship and cultural transformation associated with the media. Many experts believe that media have had the main role in professional sport promotion and publicity. Media has had the main role in local and national identity by their sports delegates in different events. The importance of media and sponsorship in athletic sport make some national and international federation try to attract the media and their audiences for more sponsorship and greater potential for negotiation with them.

Media plays an important role in the marketing efforts of different corporations that sponsor sports and athletes. For this purpose, different media acts and effects in different ways. Advertisers usually consider sports TV programming an effective media vehicle to reach target audiences, especially sports fans. Increasing competition to attract audience attention has not only stimulated the development of creativity and visual technology in the advertising industry but also the rising efforts on planning the right media outlets to reach the target market. Historically, television broadcasting was the main source of revenue for elite sports teams, leagues and sports federations. This is now changing because the Internet creates new possibilities for the distribution and consumption of sporting events. Social media is creating new forms of communication between fans, athletes, teams and sponsors. Social Media, today, is among the 'best opportunities available' to a brand for connecting with prospective consumers, it is the medium to socialize. The new media win the trust of consumers by connecting with them at a deeper level. Community social networking websites are the method to interact socially. Social Media has witnessed an exponential growth in the new millennium. In the present information age, social media marketing has become a part of doing business. Social Media Marketing (SMM), is a form of internet marketing that implements various social media networks in order to achieve marketing communication and branding goals.

According to Șerbănică and Constantinescu (2016), sports are performed and managed in three parallel arenas: local, national, and international. Like any other industry involving large sums of money and passions and interests, it needs sales and marketing advancement mechanisms. Moreover, “Hopwood (2005) emphasizes that public relations practice in sport is not always obvious, yet to the contemporary sports business, it has much to offer. In addition, according to Tamir, Limor & Galily (2015, p.99), the public relations in the field of sports are used by countries, local authorities and municipalities, political parties, politicians, owners and investors, clubs and teams, athletes, sports agents, mass media, sports advancement organizations, sponsors, advertisers, coaches, referees, sports officials, athletes unions, fan organizations, gambling companies, health product manufacturers, service providers, electronics companies (including computer and content manufacturers), stores, police and emergency services, merchandise manufacturers, sports memorabilia collectors, artists (primarily singers), universities and colleges and various one-time interest groups.

Many sport organizations use public relations as a tool to establish brand awareness and identity and promote their products or services. Others use public relations to demonstrate social responsibility. Because of these multiple functions, public relations expertise is particularly important for sport management professionals (Stoldt, Dittmore & Branvold, 2012). For a sport organization, the target audience for public relations actions is represented by: – internal public – employees, volunteers, shareholders, affiliated athletes; – sports consumers, especially fans and spectators; – sponsors; – the Educational System; – commercial organizations doing business with the company (here we include suppliers and distributors); – governmental institutions; – leagues and federations; – the community in which it operates; – mass media. The main objective of public relations is to conserve a favorable image for the sports organization, thus, although mentioned last in the above classification, the relationship with mass media is becoming very important. Through it, the company can send the message more easily, without paying advertising space within commercial breaks. For a very long time, public relations were actually assimilated to free publicity (uncommercial), precisely in the idea that promotes the company and its products without paying this from the promotional budget. Thus, public relations are a

powerful promotional tool, capable of generating substantial publicity for the sports organization. Although the practice of public relations is diverse within sports, practitioners must possess certain basic skills.

In sports, the relationship with mass media is a crucial one, considering that it represents, first of all, the means by which sporting events are “delivered” to viewers. Secondly, the information included in news casts are seen by the public as being objective, thus generating more trust. The disadvantage here is represented by the fact that, precisely because they want to remain impartial, sports news cannot be controlled by the sports organization, especially if the press sees the opportunity of broadcasting a scandal.

After the Covid 19 Pandemic, the media relationships became more challenging. On this point it is interesting to report the idea of Lucia Montanarella, Head of Olympic Games Media Operations at the International Olympic Committee (IOC), about social distancing and remote interpretation in media operations strategy for “Tokyo 2020”. Montanarella talked with the AIPS communication team (www.aipsmedia.com). To establish the importance of the media in the Olympic Movement, Lucia’s first port of call in her presentation was the Olympic Charter, where rule 48, which is dedicated to the media, states: “The IOC takes all necessary steps to ensure the fullest coverage by the different media and the widest possible audience in the world for the Olympic Games.” She also emphasized that all the technical requirements regarding the media facilities and services are reflected in the Host City Contract.

It is the responsibility of the IOC Media Operations to make sure that the Games have all the services and facilities that meet the needs of the press. From establishing guidelines – news access rules - that will define what sort of coverage each media group can do of the Games, to managing the press accreditation process, to liaising with the Olympic Broadcasting Services (OBS) with regards to the delivery of the host broadcast operations.

Knowing that the online and digital era has brought a new wave of reporting, Montanarella disclosed that there is a working group tasked with reviewing the accreditation categories to accommodate the new media saying that “...we need to be evolving also with our accreditation process.” She adds: “...so what we're looking at is

to try to have a new revised accreditation categories for “Paris 2024”, which will take into consideration the media industry needs for the online organizations.”

Baum and Lockstone (2007), analyzed volunteers concluding that their research could contribute significantly to a wide range of other academic and political debates, for example the understanding of the dynamics of a host community and its sense of ownership of mega sporting events as well as the contribution that volunteering can make to developing the human capital resident within a city or community. Ingerson (2001), notes, the role of volunteers is widely recognized as contributing an important economic and cultural dimension to the effective operation of mega sporting events. Public recognition of the contribution of volunteers to major sporting events is widely heralded. Kemp (2002, p. 110), for example, reports this with respect to the 2000 Sydney Olympic Games: “...without the personal investment of the volunteers, these mega-events could simply not have been arranged. This fact was nowhere more recognized than at the conclusion of the Sydney Olympic Games when volunteers were given the chance to take up free tickets to the Olympic closing ceremony and later when the central business district of Sydney was closed for half a work day to provide the volunteers with their own ticker-tape parade”.

Likewise, the official brochure for the 2006 Commonwealth Games in Melbourne formally recognizes the contribution of its “Unsung Heroes” by listing all 14,500 of them by name and state over 12 pages of the publication.

Green and Chalip (2004, p. 49) note that: “... volunteers have become essential to the delivery of sport and recreation services, adding several hundred dollars of value per capita to the contribution that sport and recreation make to gross domestic product...volunteers have become particularly vital for the delivery of special events, as most events now depend to some degree on volunteers for event planning and operations”.

With regard to time-bound mega sporting and cultural events, the literature on volunteering is relatively recent, although the contribution of, for example, Elstad (1996); Farrell, Johnston and Twyman (1998); Chalip (2000); Moragas, Moreno and Paniagua, 2000; Kemp (2002); and Green and Chalip (2004) is evidence of an emerging field of study. At the same time, there is rather wider discussion of

volunteering within the wider, participant sports environment (for example, Andrew, 1996; Amis & Slack, 1996; Cuskelly, 1995).

Starting from these works in the continuation of our thesis we will develop the research to validate the starting hypothesis.

3. THE CASE OF ‘PATRAS 2019’ MBG

3.1 The history of the Mediterranean Games

The Mediterranean Games (MG) is the most significant multi-sport event – after the Olympic Games and the Universiade – which is held every four years and in which participate the countries bordering the Mediterranean Sea. The Games are held with the help and support of the International Committee of the Mediterranean Games (ICMG).

The idea of organizing Games for the Mediterranean countries was inspired by the President of the National Olympic Committee of Egypt and Vice-President of the International Olympic Committee (IOC), Mohamed Taher Pasha, with the significant support of Ioannis Ketseas, the IOC member for Greece. During the Olympic Games of London in 1948 – a period full of tension as a consequence of the 2nd World War, Taher Pasha presented the project to the IOC members, thus promoting peace, friendship and unity through sport. The IOC approved the idea and the two men’s dream became reality. The first Mediterranean Games were hosted in Alexandria, Egypt in 1951 becoming the meeting place of three continents: Africa, Asia and Europe. (<https://ICMG.org.gr/mediterranean-games/>)

Since then, despite the conflicts, particularly political ones, the Mediterranean Games are always held every four years in summer, bringing together young athletes from the Mediterranean countries in an environment which bears the values of the sport, its dynamism and fraternity. All these athletes, driven by the same conviction that overcoming their perceptual limitations and focusing on the greatness with devotion, against personal constraints and challenges, give the sporting achievement its full significance. This is another message of the Mediterranean.

It is also to be noted that, since 1979, the Mediterranean Games have been the only occasion for the periodical gathering of all the countries of the northern and southern Mediterranean coasts, in a friendly and solidary ambiance aiming to reinforce the ties between the Mediterranean peoples regardless of the considerable diversity in their linguistic, religious and cultural worldviews.

According to the last edition of the Games in “Tarragona 2018”, the sports of the MG are the following: Aquatics (Swimming, Paralympic swimming, Water polo), Archery, Athletics, (Athletics, Paralympic athletics), Badminton, Basketball, Bowls, Boxing, Canoeing, Cycling, Equestrian, Fencing, Football, Golf, Gymnastics (Artistic gymnastics, Rhythmic gymnastics), Handball, Judo, Karate, Rowing, Sailing, Shooting, Table tennis, Taekwondo, Tennis, Triathlon, Volleyball (Beach volleyball, Volleyball), Water skiing, Weightlifting, Wrestling.

The editions of the Mediterranean Games are presented in the Appendix A.

3.2 The World Beach Games

The World Beach Games is an international multi-sport event inspired and launched by the Association of National Olympic Committees (ANOC). According to the ANOC official website *“It is a young and inclusive event which combines the informality and vibrancy of the beach with elite sport to create a fun and highly-attractive Games. It is also unique, as the only truly global festival of youth-centric beach, water and action sports, created specifically for the benefit of the NOCs and their athletes. With a focus on youthful and dynamic sports, the Games was designed to offer NOCs unrivalled opportunities to connect with new athletes and a new generation of sports fans. Sustainability and accessibility are at the heart of the Games concept, with an emphasis placed on minimising environmental impact by using existing and temporary infrastructure and keeping hosting-budgets low. All of the world's 206 National Olympic Committees (NOCs) have the opportunity to qualify for the Games guaranteeing that it is a truly global event, unlike any other”*.

The games take place every two years. The first edition was planned to be held in San Diego, United States, from 10 to 15 October 2019, but due to challenges with securing the necessary sponsorships, San Diego lost its hosting duties. The ANOC published a brief statement regarding the cancellation, stating that it intends to bring the games to another city which *“provides the best possible environment for NOCs and their athletes. The games will take place in 2019 and ANOC is currently in discussion with*

a number of cities that have the financial guarantees necessary and a proven track record to host a world-class event," the organization said in the statement."

On June 2019, ANOC distributed a press release announcing that the World Beach Games would be relocated to Doha, Qatar, stating that *"Work has been continuing to ensure our inaugural ANOC World Beach Games is a universal, elite event, with more world-class athletes from around the world qualifying every week. The Games was conceived with the needs of NOCs and athletes in mind, and ANOC is in no doubt that the decision to relocate the inaugural edition to Qatar makes prudent financial and sporting sense. We are delighted to have established a partnership with the highly experienced team at the Qatar Olympic Committee, backed up with the enthusiastic support of the Qatar government"* (<https://www.anocolympic.org/anoc-press-release/qatar-announced-as-host-of-2019-anoc-world-beach-games/>).

Thus, the inaugural edition of the World Beach Games was held in Doha, Qatar from 12 – 16 October 2019 and were a huge success (<https://m.gulf-times.com/story/681651/Inaugural-edition-of-QOC-Beach-Games-a-huge-success>).

3.3 The birth of the Mediterranean Beach Games (MBG)

On 20 October 2012 in Mersin, Turkey, the International Committee of the Mediterranean Games decided to organise the Mediterranean Beach Games every four years, beginning from 2015. The Games include only sports practiced in water and on the beach, with a focus on uniting young athletes of the Mediterranean Sea. These athletes have the opportunity to take part in sport events in an atmosphere of mutual understanding, friendship and solidarity, in which every country is a "whole" without ceasing to be a "part". The athletes who compete in the MBG come from three different continents, Africa, Asia and Europe.

The city of Pescara, Italy, was the first city to host the Mediterranean Beach Games from 28 August to 6 September 2015, with the participation of 24 countries-members of the ICMG. In fact, the city of Abruzzo was awarded the Games by the ICMG Assembly, which met in Mersin, beating the candidacy of Marseille (38-31): 24 countries voted, in addition to the IOC members who were present. At the end of the

voting procedure, the President of the ICMG, Amar Addadi, the President of CONI, Giovanni Malagò and the Mayor of Pescara, Luigi Albore Mascia, signed the agreement relating to the assignment of the event. According to the Italian local newspaper “Newstown” (<https://news-town.it/sport/8244-pescara-dal-28-agosto-al-6-settembre-prima-edizione-dei-giochi-del-mediterraneo-su-spiaggia.html>), the Mayor of Pescara Marco Alessandrini explained about the Pescara MBG: *“After the great success of the “Pescara 2009” Mediterranean Games, we want to make the first edition of the Beach Games equally memorable, a great multidisciplinary sporting event through which to enhance the fundamental values of peace and friendship between peoples of the Mediterranean and relaunch the city as a place of vacation and summer fun, so one of the slogans that will accompany the event will be ‘until sunset and beyond’...”*

The first edition of the MBG was held with success with the participation of 900 athletes, from 24 National Olympic Committees, in 11 sports.

3.4 The “Patras 2019” Mediterranean Beach Games

3.4.1 The election of the city

The city of Patras, Greece was elected to host the 2nd Mediterranean Beach Games during the General Assembly of the ICMG, which was held in Tarragona, Spain on 13 October, 2017. According to the biggest regional website “The Best”, (<https://www.thebest.gr/article/460118->) before the election, the Mayor of Patras, Kostas Peletidis, addressing the members of the ICMG, said: *“...on behalf of the Municipality of Patras, I would like to inform you that the decision to ask you to entrust our city with the organisation of the Mediterranean Beach Games, is a unanimous decision of the Municipal Council, all the bodies and residents of our city. I want to assure you that we will not prove you wrong, if you give our city the opportunity to host the event. Before, during and after the games, you will meet a hospitable city, capable of undertaking and carrying out such sporting events of this level. We are confident that we can contribute to the development of the Mediterranean Beach Games and the cooperation of our peoples. Thank you”*.

Right after the election of city of Patras, the then Deputy Minister of Sports, Giorgos Vassiliadis, in his statement highlighted his full support in the organization of the 2nd Mediterranean Beach Games of 2019: “... *By organising these games we also send a message that Greece is returning strong to host an important international sports event, which will bring multiple benefits to the local community and economy. We are pleased to be given the opportunity to prove to the entire Mediterranean family and the world that after several years of recession, Greece is back on its feet*”.

After the announcement of the decision by the General Assembly of the members of ICMG, the Mayor of Patras, signed the contract related to the assignment of the games.

The MBG of Patras were held from 25 to 31 August 2019 and 26 countries-members of the ICMG participated. Portugal and Kosovo, which did not participate in the MBG of Pescara, were among the participating countries.

The programme of the Patras 2019 Mediterranean Beach Games comprised of 11 sports: Aquathlon, Beach Handball, Beach Soccer, Beach Tennis, Beach Volley, Beach Wrestling, Finswimming, Canoe Ocean Racing, Open Water Swimming, Rowing Beach Sprint and Water Skiing.

3.4.2. The venues

The MBG of Patras took place in three venues: “Hera”, “Artemis” and “Pepanos”.

According to MBG website (<https://www.mbgpatras2019.gr/venues>), the venue of Hera was named after the goddess of women, marriage, family, and childbirth in ancient Greek religion and myth, one of the 12 Olympians and the sister-wife of Zeus. A temple of Hera existed in the area of the Venue during ancient times. The venue was situated at the Ayia Plaz (beach). Ayia is a district of Patras but also a bay and a cape. It is a densely populated district but also rich in natural environment. At the venue of Ayia were held the water sports. The venue of Artemis was named after the goddess who in the ancient Greek religion and myth, was the goddess of the hunt, the wilderness, wild animals, the Moon, and chastity. The Artemis venue was located at the South Park, specifically on both sides of the Nautical Club of Patras installations and hosted the sand events.

The venue of Pepanos was named after the Greek athlete of swimming, Antonios Pepanos, born in 1866 in Patras. At the time he was recognized as the top swimmer of the country and took the lead in all the local matches he had participated in. In 1896, at the 1st Modern Olympic Games in Athens, he was declared second Olympic champion in 500 meters swimming. According to the sports schedule of the Organising Committee, the swimming pool discipline of finswimming took place at Pepanos venue.

The slalom discipline of Water Skiing was held in Lake Stratos, at a distance of 100km from Patras. Stratos Lake is the National Water Ski Center, of the Hellenic Water Ski and Wakeboard Federation. At Stratos Lake several national and international Championships have taken place, successfully. In 1999, the European Youth Ski Championship and in 2000, the top event of the sport, the World Youth Championship were held.

3.4.3 The sports

According to the official website of “Patras 2019”, 11 sports took place in Patras, in 10 fields of play (<https://www.mbgpatras2019.gr/sports>).

The sports that were held in the water took place at the venue “Hera”.

Those sports were: Rowing Beach Sprint which took place from 25 to 27 August 2019, the Canoe Ocean Racing in 28 August, Aquathlon in 31 August, Finswimming – Open Water Categories in 28 August, Open Water Swimming from 29 to 30 August, and Water Ski from 29 to 31 August 2019.

The sports that were held on the sand took place at the venue “Artemis”.

Those sports were: Beach Handball which was held from 25 to 28 August, Beach Soccer from 28 to 31 August, Beach Tennis from 25 to 27 August, Beach Volleyball from 28 to 31 August and Beach Wrestling from 30 to 31 August 2019.

Finswimming – Swimming Pool Categories took place at the venue “Pepanos” from 26 to 27 August 2019. Moreover, in the perimeter of the Aquatics Center there was the training field for Beach Handball, Beach Tennis, Beach Volley and Beach Soccer. In addition, in the 2nd MBG there was an exhibition sport, Aquawalking which was held on 30 August. The Aquawalking, (i.e. walking in water), event was held at the "Hera" Venue. Three teams (Italy, France and Tunisia) and 29 athletes and officials.

3.4.4 The athletes

According to the official website of the MBG Patras 2019 (<https://www.mbgpatras2019.gr/entries>), 26 countries members of the ICMG participated in the games: Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Cyprus, Egypt, Spain, France, Greece, Italy, Kosovo, Libya, Lebanon, Morocco, Malta, Montenegro, Monaco, Republic of North Macedonia, Portugal, Slovenia, San Marino, Serbia, Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia and Turkey.

In the MBG of Patras 651 athletes participated 426 (65%) men and 225 (35%) women, with a difference of -14.68% (112 less than those who participated in Pescara 2015).

Greece registered the biggest national delegation with 111 athletes (63 men and 48 women), and the sport with the largest number of athletes participating from all countries was beach handball (149 athletes: 99 men and 50 women).

Greece ranked first in the medal standing with 46 medals, Italy second with 39 medals and France third with 32 medals. In the MBG of Pescara, Italy was the top country on the medal table, with 70 medals. Both MBG editions were crowned with success (<https://www.ilpescara.it/sport/giochi-del-mediterraneo/pescara-chiusi-giochi-del-mediterraneo-sulla-spiaggia-2015.html>).

3.4.5 The structure of the Organising Committee

In accordance with the official site of the 2nd MBG, the Organising Committee (OC) was first established on 23 February 2018 and the decision was published in the Government Gazette on 12 March 2018, under OGG 857. As stated in the Government Gazette of March 12, 2018: “The Committee's work is the preparation of an organizational plan of action in order to secure the best preparation and organisation of the MBG in Patras in 2019.”

Even though the city of Patras was elected to host the 2nd MBG in June 2018, in the following two years, little was done to ensure the timely preparation of the Games. The OC had to tackle some serious issues and problems. Despite various obstacles, such as late organization and lack of funds, with the support and strenuous efforts of the OC and all the stakeholders involved, altogether against the relentless time, Patras accomplished what seemed to be impossible.

During the Press Conference of the OC “Patras 2019” in 21 August 2019, the Greek Deputy Minister of Sports, Lefteris Avgenakis, pointed out that: *“...the 2nd Mediterranean Beach Games are a challenging bet, and their success, in spite of the various problems that we have inherited, already is and will be a fact. Backed by the tireless efforts of the Organizing Committee and everyone involved in the Games, and against merciless time, the project for which we are thankful to the ICMG for trusting us to implement starts next Sunday. This trust may have been jeopardized along the way, but in the end we are certain that everyone will be smiling at the time of the Closing Ceremony. It is my duty to publicly congratulate the Organizing Committee that undertook the implementation of this difficult project, and although they had not officially assumed their duties through a state decree, they kept working without pay without losing pace at any moment, because they believe in this event. Because all of them, employees, volunteers, and executives are servants to the ideals of volunteerism and sport, that is why we all thank them from the bottom of our heart. I would like to reassure every citizen that his or her participation in this sporting feast will decisively contribute to its success, while support of any kind from local bodies is something the Games cannot do without. Our government, and myself in particular, as responsible for Sports in Greece, will attend the Games during all those days, in order to watch them, enjoy them, and provide solutions to any problems that could arise – although I do not think there will be any”*.

The Seceratry General of the ICMG, Iakovos Filippousis, underlined that: *“...it is a pleasure for the International Committee of Mediterranean Games to see the Games return to Greece after 28 years, since Greece is one of the ICMG’s founding members. It is also quite important that Greece is back on the map of countries able to organize large-scale intercontinental sport events, and we are certain that our country will continue its long tradition to successfully organize such events in an excellent way.*

The 2nd Mediterranean Beach Games have broken every participation record, as far as athletes, judges, and visitors are concerned. However, the most important thing for us is that all 26 Mediterranean countries will participate. The Games will be broadcast by many foreign channels in cooperation with Greek state TV, and also in

full by the Olympic Channel, a fact that, considering the popularity of modern digital media, will promote the Games as well as the city itself.

It is with great joy that we will welcome in Patras Chiefs of State, such as Prince Albert of Monaco who will attend the Opening Ceremony, and also Prime Ministers, former Prime Ministers, members of the International Olympic Committee, and in general people who will honor Patras with their visit” (<https://ICMG.org.gr/i-synentefxi-typou-gia-tous-mesogiakous-paraktious-agonis-tis-patras/?lang=el>).

Indeed, with regard to NOCs participation the “Patras 2019” MBG broke all previous records. Records were also broken in terms of athletes’ and judges’ participation, as well as of visitors in the city of Patras. The most important thing was that all 26 Mediterranean countries took part. In addition, the Games were broadcast on many foreign television networks in collaboration with state television. The full programme was also broadcast on the Olympic Channel, something that happened for the first time in the history of the Mediterranean Games and along with the impact of the digital media resulted in the promotion of the Games and of the city itself.

Following the Olympic Games model, the “Patras 2019” OC work was to cover the different areas in the Games' organization. Thus, the focal tasks for the Committee were the following:

- To treat equally every sport on the programme and make sure that competitions are in full conformity to the rules and regulations of the International Sports Federations (IFs);
- To select or create the necessary facilities: competition venues and stadiums as well as training halls and warm-up areas;
- To accommodate not only the athletes but also the officials of the participant countries;
- To organise medical services;
- To organize smooth transportation during the Games, tackle issues and solve problems;
- To organize the Press Operations team in order to offer services to the accredited media so that they provide to the public the best possible information on the Games; last but not least;

- To organize events which are related to culture. This is a considerable component of the celebration of the Games.

In order for the “Patras 2019” OC to meet the requirements of the MBG’ organization they appointed the following Directors

(https://www.mbgpatras2019.gr/?section=2453&language=en_US):

- General Director
- Project Team Coordinator
- Venue & Sports Director
- Site Manager VOP Manager
- Sports Director /SPT Director
- Marketing Director
- Accommodation Director
- Volunteering Director
- Press & Office Services Director
- Brand, Identity & Look of the Games Director
- Accreditation Director
- Technology Director
- Security Director
- Protocol Director
- Director of NOC Relations and Services
- Food Services Director
- Medical Services Director
- Human Resources Director
- Cultural Actions Director
- *Transport Director*

Summarizing the figures of the second edition of the MBG in Patras, according to the official site of the ICMG, the Games were crowned with absolute success:

There were four venues, three in Patras (“Artemis” at South Park, “Hera” at Ayia Beach, “Pepanos” Pool and one in Agrinio, (Stratos Lake).

There were two training fields, 2 non-competition venues, 6 temporary fields.

In the MBG programmeme, there were 11 official sports and one exhibition sport (aquawalking).

Twenty-six countries with 651 athletes, including 426 (65%) men and 225 (35%) women participated in the games.

There were 207 Technical officials (Technical Delegates, Head Referees, International and National Officials); among them 11 TDs, 5 HRs, 64 ITOs as well as 127 NTOs.

Regarding ticketing, 12.082 tickets were sold while in four sporting events tickets were sold out: on the opening ceremony and the closing ceremony, as well as the beach volley finals and the Aquathlon.

Concerning medal awarding, 345 medals were awarded in 55 ceremonies. With regard to volunteering, some 1.120 volunteers (63% women and 37% men) offered their assistance at the games.

Moreover, 25.000 portions of food were provided during the games and 484 rooms have been used for accommodation in 22 hotels.

As far as the Media is concerned, 146 media representatives covered the Games (67 journalists, 24 photographers and 54 accredited television crew with rights ie the ERT, the Ionian TV and the Olympic Channel).

There were 70 hours of HD TV coverage and live streaming in 40 countries via the Olympic Channel while 50.000 people visited the official website of the Games.

To conclude, 191 vehicles were used to transport athletes, referees and judges.

3.4.6 The Press and Media Operations

Traditionally, the Press Office is at the forefront between an organization and the media. Its principal task is producing media content and managing relations with the media.

The skills of the press operations team must include: listening and monitoring, creativity, agility, capability of developing content production, public management and media relations. These skills can be delivered as separate job roles, or by multi-skilled individuals. For the press officers, it is essential that they get up to speed with the current developments, the hot topics and top stories in the news and on social media. (<https://wadds.co.uk/blog/2017/07/26/build-news-room-press-office-modern-media-environment>).

The Press – Media Operations team of the Mediterranean Beach Games “Patras 2019” worked in order to provide a range of services and facilities that responded to the requirements of the world’s press which arrived to Patras in order to cover the MBG.

The Press and Media team had the following structure: Press and Media services Director, Press Coordinator, Press Office Manager, Web Manager, Web Designer and Social Media Manager. The abovementioned Directors and Managers were responsible to their specific areas and their task was to oversee, monitor and assess the performance of the Press Operations department.

(https://www.mbgpatras2019.gr/?section=2453&language=en_US)

The MBG Press Operations organizational structure is defined in an organisation chart, which demonstrates a clear assignment of roles and responsibilities and is reported in the Appendix B.

4. METHODOLOGY

In order to examine how the Press Operations Team could be a strategic lever for the successful outcome of the MBG “Patras 2019” the three main categories of individuals involved in the Press Operations sector were interviewed, i.e. MBG employees who worked in the Press Operations Department (13 individuals), journalists who participated in the MBG (8 individuals) and volunteers who assisted the journalists and contributed to the Press Operations services (6 individuals).

The main purpose of the research project was to build a varied sample of interviewees not only deriving from the Organising Committee (OC) – such as the employees who worked in the Press Operations and the volunteers who assisted the work of journalists – but also including journalists from different continents, different countries, different types of media (daily, weekly, monthly, website), different sports interests etc.

The views and opinions expressed by the persons involved in the research were collected through personal semi-structured interviews (questionnaires), which were sent to them via email; According to Malhotra and Bricks (2006), as well as to Wilson (2003), personal interviews are used as a method to collect primary data in the qualitative research. Their main advantages are the following:

- They give the necessary space and time to the respondents to develop their ideas and opinions.
- The answers of the participants are not affected by the presence of other participants as in the focus groups.
- They are easy to arrange.
- The cost of conducting the research is relatively low.
- The correspondence between answer and question is easier, unlike what happens at the focus groups.

The abovementioned interviews took place through the internet; more specifically, questionnaires were sent to the interviewees by email, along with a cover letter which explained the purpose of the research.

The questions focused on the different areas of interest and the questionnaire aimed to gather complete and accurate information in order for the present's study hypothesis to be confirmed. The answers will be analyzed subsequently.

The research work will include interviews with "Patras 2019" MBG, Press Operations team, journalists present in Patras and volunteers who worked with journalists.

The interviews will be carried out via email, sending a questionnaire to the interviewees and asking them to respond.

The questionnaire will be anonymous; therefore, the respondents will not provide any personal data.

The questions contained in the questionnaire exclusively concern the professional life of the journalist and nothing was asked about their personal interests, their political or religious beliefs.

Journalists were contacted by email. The addresses were requested from the Organizing Committee and were kept by the author of the research only for the time necessary to complete the work. Once the research project was completed, the addresses were deleted.

5. RESULTS

5.1 Organising Committee

The first group of people to whom we addressed our questionnaire was the employees of the BMG “Patras 2019” of the Press Operations department.

The questionnaire addressed to them is included in the Appendix C.

The answers are listed and analyzed below.

Regarding the first question, the work force which was responsible for the Media services during the MBG of Patras had a considerable experience in the field, as the majority of the components of our sample were active in the field of Sports Media for more than 15 years. In particular, three of the interviewees replied that they were in the profession for more than 30 years (30, 33 and 35 years respectively), three interviewees responded they were in the profession for more than 25 years (24, 25 and 28 years respectively) and three interviewees answered they were in the profession for more than 15 years (15, 18 and 19 years respectively). The aforementioned individuals represent the hardcore of experience that has allowed journalists to be managed in the most effective and consolidated way.

Along with them, the core team envisaged a part of novelty with people new in the sector who brought a breath of innovation to the organization. In fact, four interviewees stated that they were active in the field of sports, for less than one year: two months, five months and five months respectively. Therefore, it could be asserted that with the right mix of experience and innovation journalists can be treated in the best possible way.

In the second question particularly interesting was the analysis of the incentives which pushed the individuals to become a part of the Press operations team. On one hand, the majority of the interviewees (seven out of 13) responded that they got involved out of the love and passion they nurtured for sports. This is the classic motive that makes a person work with joy and satisfaction and also cope with long periods of work without excessive pressure or fatigue. On the other hand, there was no lack of a more opportunistic motive, which of course is all part of the game and makes the

questionnaire very realistic. In four cases (1/3 of the respondents), the answer involved economic aspects; either the individual chose the job because they wanted to earn money, or because as they were unemployed they decided to dive into adventure in order to find a job. Finally, two individuals replied that their motive was to find experience in the field of sporting events. These are obviously people who quite recently started working in this field in order to enrich their resume and enhance their professional skills.

To better analyze the background of the persons involved, it is fundamental to understand their journey in the field. To this end, with the question number three we asked them to tell us about the sporting events in which they had previously participated. Only in four cases (1/3 of the interviewees) the answer was that MBG “Patras 2019” was the first major event of the career. However, in nine cases out of 13, major sporting events had already been tackled and experienced firsthand.

Scrolling through the list of events already experienced, one understands the level of the workforce experience and skills.

Six interviewees replied that they had participated in Olympic Games in the past, the largest sporting event, which represents the maximum of experience requested.

There were also individuals who responded that they had participated in world championships, European championships or other international sporting events such as European Games or Mediterranean Games.

In order to understand in what context the individuals were involved (fourth question) we asked them to tell us about the department in which they worked. Half of the interviewees (seven out of 13) stated that they were included in the Press Operations team, therefore they were in direct contact with the accredited journalists and had to examine and resolve problems and issues which had arisen. Four interviewees were active in the Social Media environment, thus interfacing with content production. It therefore becomes clear, that within the Press Operations department, the various stages which created added value from the journalists’ point of view were carefully examined: Press Operations and Media Relations. The first ensure that the journalists

are able to resume their work unhindered and the second are responsible of ensuring the information dissemination regarding the event.

In addition, there were three interviewees who worked at social networking services, which is considered as an additional pillar of the communication area.

It was also very interesting the fact that two persons were active not at the Media center, but directly at the sports venues. One was present at the Hera venue and another was responsible of setting up the mixed zone.

With the fifth question we tried to analyze the responsibility level of every single interviewee, thus trying to figure out whether they had other employees under their command. The sample was divided exactly in half. Seven of the interviewees did not have any persons under their management level, which means that they had not assumed roles of responsibility. On the contrary, six respondents stated that they did not have anyone below them in the hierarchy. One person said that had 12 employees under their command, one mentioned that had three and another declared that had two volunteers below them. Hence, the aspects that rise are two: the proportion of the force works in the office environment was variable and the volunteers were still considered an integral part of the office. This last aspect gives further support to the choice of involving volunteers in our analysis.

Lastly, the individual in charge of the Press Operations clarified the overall numbers of the organization, declaring that under their command there were 29 persons and 65 volunteers. Thus, the proportion between the two categories was more than one to two. Within the personnel services division, there were at least five types of employment: journalists, translators, photographers, monteurs and commentators.

With question number six it was sought to analyze if the Press Operations department was involved with the general organization of the Games and the everyday operation management of the event. From the respective responses, we can confirm that two interviewees of the team were also involved in everyday meetings of the MBG Executive Board.

In the first case, the interviewee mentioned that: "...I mostly had collaboration with the CEO of the OC about press releases. In addition, I had every day meetings with

the working group of press operations and the senior managers of each department. I was also present at the Main Operation Center during the Games”.

In the second case the respondent stated that: “... *I participated in some meetings where we were discussing problems and issues and were trying to find solutions so that the organization could have the best possible outcome in terms of communication*”.

With the question number seven we tried to reconstruct the internal organization of the Press Operations department.

In fact, the answer of the Director of the BMG Press Operations was extremely enlightening, therefore, it is reported in full:

«The press sector was organized on two axes. The first concerned the period until the start of the games and the second was related to the requirements of Games Time, ie the full and by all possible means media relations and general publicity on the one hand and the services to the Media representatives on the other. The responsibility of the Press and Media services team was high because there was a long delay and mistrust, as to whether the games would actually take place, there was zero information and communication-advertising. So they had to organize a network of activities that would be able to create a positive buzz about the games and attract volunteers in the first place, in addition to future supporters, sponsors and spectators. In the first period the Press and Media services team designed and implemented the following:

- *Informing the public (of Patras mostly) that the games would indeed be held.*
- *Information through press releases and the official web-site of OC for the activities of the project team, the progress of the preparation, the assessments by CoCom and ICMG, the history of the games, the sports that would be held, the continuous changes of the location of the Venues, etc.*
- *The full personnel recruitment was completed 2-3 days before the start of the games and thus the organizational structure took a certain form, with distribution of responsibilities to specific people, daily meetings and planning of day, week, etc.*

- *From the beginning, strong emphasis was put on social media and the substantial extroversion and promotion of the games began with methodical work.*
- *Four Newsletters and a Media Guide were published.*

At the same time the Press team had daily preparation so as to be ready when the games started.

A key issue was the television broadcast of the games (inside and outside Greece) and the cooperation with ERT (the national broadcaster), which was basically solved with a lot of stress at the last minute. It should be noted here that the important finals were broadcast live by Olympic Channel which was a great success, something that happened for the first time. In total, all the finals and other matches, medal ceremonies and of course the opening and closing ceremonies were broadcast by ERT and the Ionian Channel as well as Live streamed on the official website of the MBG “Patras 2019”».

Another senior manager of the BMG Press Operations added that: “...there was a department of 10 people divided in the two venues. Every journalist was responsible for the coverage of a specific sport. At the end of the day, a summary was uploaded to the site, as well as interviews with athletes and officials”.

The Manager in charge of the Venues underlined that: “...the press office team was divided in three venues with three Media managers in each one”.

As far as the individual offices were concerned, the replies varied. For instance, one said that: “...the general director collaborated with the senior managers and the deputy director assigned tasks for journalists, social, website, etc”.

Another stated that: “...in the press office there was the chief officer, the main journalist, an IT engineer, one person in charge of the social media and myself”.

Someone else mentioned that: “...there was the director, a senior media manager and journalists”.

Another one pointed out that: “...we were separated in three different venues: each journalist was responsible for 2-3 sports. Announcements, results, interviews, topics were our main daily activities”.

With regard to the operations performed, also in this case, in each office, the tasks were of varied nature and specific. For example, one respondent explained that: *“...we translated and uploaded reports, accurately and swiftly”*.

The second to last clarified that: *“...we prepared Press releases for the website and social media, we were responsible for social media coverage, any services and assistance to accredited journalists and photographers”*.

The last one said that: *“...there were Info managers, writers, reporters and translators at the venues”*.

With the question number eight we tried to comprehend which kind of services was provided to the journalists.

In this case too, the answers were varied. By reviewing them, the work done at the Department can be easily understood.

The first one stated that: *“...foreign journalists could read reports of all events without having to be there in person, as numerous events took place at the same time”*

The second reported: *“...we provided the programmeme of the Games, results, we facilitated journalists' work (e.g. media center, internet connection, mixed zone) and in general we did everything in order to make their work easier”*

The third one explained that: *“...we prepared reports on the games, flash quotes, session previews, session reviews, sport history, sport rules, interviews, photo coverage, official press releases etc. Also, monthly publication and distribution of Media Bulletins”*

Another pointed out that: *“...we had direct contact with journalists about Media accreditation, facilitated them during their accreditation pick-up”*.

Someone else stressed that: *“...the website was designed for the needs of journalists, we assisted/trained journalists on how to upload their articles and correct mistakes”*

The next mentioned: *“Whenever asked by journalists we provided assistance, also we helped each other a lot, accreditation, workplaces (Offices, WiFi, photocopiers, refreshments and meals, information i.e. such as results, statistics, announcements, photos, Cooperation with every person in charge (Venue managers, OC, security, etc.) for the solutions of any problem”*

The second to last denoted that: *“...row material, athletes' CVs, stories, career highlights, athletes' quotes, posts on official website and social media”*

The last one concluded that: *“...the website was designed for the needs of journalists, I trained journalists how to upload their articles and corrected mistakes”*

In addition, it was the two Managers who clarified things better.

The first declared that: *“...I mainly projected the image of the event at all stages or at least the ones that were worthy for the people to know. I uploaded at the site and the news what the journalists wrote with the respective photographic material on fb, Instagram and LinkedIn. Of course, I was present at important meetings and I made the relevant posts in order for a daily user to see what exactly was happening at any time. Finally, I found content that we made together with the creative department”*.

The second added that: *“...initially we had prepared a Media Guide, which contained all the information. For the city, the organizing committee, the participating countries, the facilities, the trips to and from them, for the access of the journalists / photographers, for the mixed zones, the competitions, the general programme of the games, useful telephones. Also, in the press working area, we provided an organized workplace with electricity and internet, while there was a press stand with all the above facilities. The website of the games was fully updated and there was free photographic material”*.

With the ninth question, we asked how relations between journalists and press operations team were built. In this case as well, let us consider the responses of the interviewees from which it becomes evident that journalists were treated according to their media category or specialisation:

One said that: *“...there was a limited number of Media to deal with. At the end of the day they were satisfied because they had all data in appropriate time”*

Another mentioned that: *“...all journalists had the same treatment, special assistance to foreigners and major news agencies which formed the general picture of the games”*

Someone else mentioned that: *“...according to their media category/specialization we provided the relevant services”*

The next stated that: *“...it was like a school, I got in touch with a field that I had never imagined. Now I love the media world that is multifaceted. We created image, news with immediacy with people. As a social media manager, you create engagement with the audience”*

Another declared that: *“...the Media were informed from the website, continuous press releases, special column (gallery) where they could take photos; social media were constantly updated”*.

The last one reported that: *“...TV crews had no right to film as they were non-right holders. Also, the interviews on TV took place in front of a special backdrop with the sponsors that were present at the facilities. In addition, radio broadcasts were allowed”*.

The whole procedure was summed up in the words of the Director of the Press Operations department: *“...we offered our services according to the journalists’ interests: as the press office is the front line between an organization and the media, we treated each media type according to their interests: the newspaper wanted stories, the TV journalists wanted videos and a variety of them. Everything had to be done fast and decisions should be made quickly so if there were no experience things would get bad”*.

The last two queries (10 and 11) concerned the most recurring question or the most curious incident.

Here are the most significant replies received about the most recurring questions:

- *“Programmeme and results”*
- *“Rules and the progress of the events, because the event had several sports that are not well known”*
- *“About accreditation and pick-up procedure, travel issues to and from the venues, tickets to the opening and closing ceremonies as well as tickets to high demand events”*
- *“How can I insert a photo in the post? Does the post show in the homepage correctly? Or, Why does it not show in the homepage?”*
- *“Where to eat, when do the games start, even though the programmeme was on uploaded in English and French”*

- *“Wifi passwords, how to get results, rankings through website”*
- *“Details about some athletes because they did not have the necessary information”*
- *“Quotes, stories, competition programmeme, statistics, relevant material”*
- *“Particularly transportation routes to and from the venues. Also, the daily schedule of the games. Questions about accreditations especially about attending the opening and closing ceremonies. Questions about internet access and general information about the event”.*

Regarding the most curious incident, interesting albeit different answers were provided:

One said that: *“...when ENR (non-right holders) tried to cover live the Opening Ceremony. The crew entered in the arena many hours before the ceremony, put the camera on the media tribune, left and tried to enter again as a journalist, with match ticket of journalists. We understood what was happening and asked them to take the camera out of the arena”.*

Another stated that: *“...the visit of Albert II the reigning Prince of Monaco who is also IOC member”.*

Someone else stated that: *“...every day air-conditioning cut off at 15.00 so the heat was terrible but then it was fixed”.*

Another offered the response: *“None”.*

The next one mentioned that: *“...the sudden visit of the Minister of Sport, Avgenakis and of the Prince Albert of Monaco, which resulted to hectic rhythms of work”.*

Some other stressed that: *“...we made an effort to familiarise the public with some sports not so well known. We were impressed by the response of the public, especially for Finswimming, and the fact that the Olympic Channel also asked for all the finals of this particular competition”.*

Another respondent highlighted that: *“...on the second day of the games, a journalist sent us an interview from little volunteers who were my kids!”*

The second to last participant pointed out that: *“...80% of the facilities and the M.P.C. was set up in 5 days. It was a miracle achieved by a multiskilled and highly competent staff”.*

The last one specified that: “...one of our duties was to stop anyone non-right holder who tried to cover the games. Usually there was good cooperation but one time there was a big misunderstanding and things got out of control so the calmer colleagues had to intervene in order to prevent unpleasant situations”.

5.2 Journalists

The second group of individuals who answered our questionnaire was the accredited journalists who covered the MBG for their respective Media organization.

The questionnaire addressed to them is included in the Appendix D.

Their answers were the following:

Regarding the first question, the journalists who arrived to Patras were anything but inexperienced. On the contrary, journalists with a long experience in the sector were present at the MBG. All eight interviewees involved in the analysis, declared that they had been active in sports journalism for more than 11 years. Five of the abovementioned journalists had 11, 12 and 13 years of experience, one 47 years, another more than 30 years in the field. Many years of experience mean greater competence in describing the event, but also higher requirements to be met by the Press Operations team. The more experienced a journalist is, the more they ask questions and request different kinds of services in order to facilitate their work. These are important challenges that the Press Operations team had to tackle.

Concerning the second question, eight journalists who participated in the interviews came from six different countries (Greece, Cyprus, Italy, Malta, Tunisia and San Marino) and thus making the sample universal – stated that they had covered a number of major sporting events in the past. The “Patras 2019” M.B.G were neither their first big event in sports, nor a new event to be covered.

Scrolling down on the answers of the interviewees, it is easily understood that the journalists who had been sent to Greece had already covered various multi-sport events such as Olympic Games – summer and winter editions – Mediterranean Games, European Games, Commonwealth Games, Games of the Small States of

Europe, European Youth Olympic Festivals, Universiades. Therefore, the case of the MBG of Patras was not a new event for the reporters who were present. In fact, due to their rich experience they were able to make meaningful comparisons with other multi-sport events.

Another element which comes to light from the analysis of the data is that specialists from different sports arrived in Patras. In fact, some of them mentioned they had covered World Championships in athletics, swimming, skiing, handball or basketball. Last but not least, there were several journalists who had already taken part in previous MBG editions and hence they could be able to make a direct comparison of the Patras edition with those held in the past.

When it comes to journalists it is interesting to understand the motivation that prompted them to be present in Patras; hence question number three. Three of the interviewees who replied to the questionnaire were sent by their chief editor: two were sent by their respective National Olympic Committee as Press Officers of the national delegation. The other three decided independently to attend the event. However, the two had an agreement with their director, thus they were able to find space for their reportage in the newspaper, while the third arrived in Patras with a specific task: evaluate the services performance provided to the journalists. The answers of the later interviewee are particularly relevant for the purposes of our analysis.

In the fourth question, the six motives mentioned in the answers of the interviewees are all completely different and are as follows:

The first said that: *“...it was the most important international sporting event held in Greece during 2019”*

The second stated: *“I was sent by national delegation to cover the Games”*

The third pointed out: *“Because I had never covered the MBG before. After the unforgettable Mediterranean Games of Tarragona, I wanted to experience emotion on the sand of Patras”*

The fourth mentioned: *“Coming also from a Mediterranean country I feel that it is a duty for me as AIPS Europe President to be present”*

The fifth explained: *“I was responsible for the media coverage of the beach handball championship, so I decided to go to Patras to cover the MBG handball”*

The sixth affirmed: *“Because I particularly appreciated the first edition in Pescara”*

The seventh answered: *“I was appointed by the Executive Committee of the NOC Cyprus as NOC Media representative”*

The last one declared: *“In 2018, Swimbiz.it started to cooperate with Fipsas, the Italian federation of sport fishing and underwater sports, as media partner. Live stage at events such as Lignano 2018, Kas 2018 or Patras 2019 was part of that cooperation”*

Therefore, there was one who considered that the MBG of Patras was the principal sporting event of 2019 in Greece, another who had covered the Games in Pescara (2015) or Tarragona (2018), another one who felt the need to be present given their assignments, another who was a specialist in a single sport on the agenda (in this case, the Beach Handball), another who was working for a web journal focused on aquatic sports and cooperated as a media partner, and another who had simply been sent by their National Olympic Committee.

Regarding the fifth question, in Patras it was confirmed a trend which exists in all sporting events: not all journalists were present in Patras during the entire period of the Games. Four out of eight stayed in Greece and covered the games in full while the rest of them stayed only for two, three or four days, just to cover specific sports.

In the case of a limited presence of the journalists at the Games, the requests have a limited response time and the issues must be resolved immediately. This brings extra pressure to the Press Operations team. At the same time a limited presence means that on some days there are fewer journalists. Hence, the Press Operations team can have more free time.

In the sixth question the answers were varied. Three interviewees replied that they had covered all sports. Three answered that they had covered only some of them, in particular those that concerned the athletes of their own country, or those that took place at the same venue. Finally, two said that they had covered only the sports of

their choice. Thus, it is confirmed the trend that journalists have different interests and are specialists in different areas. In this way, the Press Operations team had to show flexibility and capacity to adapt quickly to various situations in order to have a widespread presence and at the same time they had to be prepared for all the sports on the programme.

Also, with regards to the workplace, in the seventh question, the eight interviewees provided different answers. Four of them stated that they had written their articles at the MPC, two had written at their hotel and the last two said that they had written at the sport venues. This indicates that the Press Operations team not only did they have to be present at the MPC but also at the venues so as to meet the increased Media requirements. The fact that journalists work at the hotel, may mean that these persons are keen on moving to different venues – during the day – in order to attend the sporting event and then return to their hotel room to write their opinion and evidence-based reports. As far as the Press Operations team is concerned, the fact that journalists work at their hotel means that the team must have a widespread presence in different places during the whole day.

As far as the eighth question is concerned, the comments provided concerning the MPC were varied.

One said: *“The service very good, similar to all the big international sporting events. The staff was professional and helpful”*

Another stated: *“I was stationed at the beachfront stadiums. The service was excellent”*

Another one mentioned: *“The Press Operations team was very professional. All my questions were answered”*

Some other acknowledged: *“Thanks to the responsible for the MPC who with his experience also as Executive Committee member of AIPS Europe, the facilities provided were all up to standard and I am sure that the accredited media had all what they needed at best”*

One said: *“I think they were good. As long as a good weblines, clean WC and some bottle of water are guaranteed, I think a journalist can be satisfied”*

Another replied: *“Very good”*

The second to last added: *“The services provided at the MPC were normal”*

The last one commented: *“I had never been at the MPC but asked the Media and Press Services Director for help on a few occasions. He was great”*

The answers provided by the interviewees confirm that the opinions are subjective and impossible to compare. In the same way, they highlight the fact that someone has never worked at the MPC; hence the importance of offering high quality services also at the venues. In general, all respondents expressed satisfaction in terms of services provided by the Press Operations team.

As all journalists have been experts with a long and varied career in sport journalism, it is of particular importance the comparison they were asked to make with other sporting events. Here are their responses in the ninth question:

The first one stated: *“Services were similar to major international sporting events. It would be better if the MPC was at a building rather than a pop-up tent, to avoid the heat”*

The second said: *“The services were excellent. What stood out was the warmth and willingness of the hosts”*

The third one highlighted: *“The best thing about MPC was the position which was close to the venues, even though the place was very hot. The staff was always polite; they were asking if I needed something and explained how I could get to visit other places in the city”*

Another mentioned: *“The most positive aspect was that both the media hotels and the competition venues were all close and this helped much for going from one venue to the other”*

Someone reported: *“There was no delay in accreditation procedures, the accredited press was treated with a positive attitude by the organizers, transportation operated precisely according to the programme. The latter could have 25% denser routes”*

Another one gave a detailed answer: *“Patras 2019 certainly provided all the essential services of a sport event. If I have to find something that could be improved, I’d say shuttle bus service. It was generally good, with a couple of exceptions. We had travelled with the Italian finswimming team, so we used their same bus transport from*

the airport to the city. Unfortunately, the bus driver got lost: I think he had been wrongly told to take us to the competition venues and had not been given the hotel's address. Based on my experience, minor or major blackouts in communication like this are among most frequent risks during such events. It wasn't a big problem for me, but can be annoying for athletes and delegations. Shuttle bus service between hotels and venues was certainly efficient, but I remember a day when we and the Italian team had to wait more than a hour for the bus to arrive. It was a very hot day, we had to wait under the sun, without nothing to cast shadow, nor a chair to sit, nor a chance to have a bottle of water. Again, this wasn't a big problem for me, but it certainly was (and dangerous too) for the tired athletes who waited with us. I even explained it to a member of the event's organization staff, but she said it was simply impossible that our bus had not yet come in an hour. In the end, me and the chief director had to call a taxi to come back to the hotel"

The second to last thought that: *"The services provided to MBG Patras had many deficiencies"*

The last one pointed out: *"I particularly appreciated the kindness of the staff and the good wifi connection"*

As a result, there was not a univocal answer. On the one hand, there were those who commented on the perfection of the services, on the other hand, there was one who highlighted the shortcomings and deficiencies in the services provided. As in life, even in this case, this is the exception that proves the rule. As a result, it can be assumed that in seven out of eight answers the criticism was positive. In fact, the location of the MPC which was in central position, in relation to the venues and the hotels, as well as the good Wi-Fi connection was very much appreciated by the journalists. At the same time, one mentioned that it would have been better if the MPC had been in a building rather than a tent.

Of course it would be impossible to satisfy and please everyone, however, the answers obtained show to what extent the services provided were appreciated.

In the tenth question, three out of eight journalists mentioned only sport aspects in their articles, while the rest wrote also about other organizational aspects. Those five journalists stated that they expressed positive views (this is proved by question no 14,

where the interviewees were asked to provide an article they had written about the MBG of Patras). One of them, in their article, wrote about the sensations experienced in Patras, while it seems appropriate to report the answer of the journalist who had been to Patras in order to observe and evaluate the services: *“I have mentioned not only the organizational aspects but also the fact how the Organizing Committee has worked and how they managed to transform Patras in one perfect competition venue which has catered for so many sport disciplines”*.

This particular response indeed, could confirm the thesis and the hypothesis we seek to support, since the fact that the services were well organized made journalists speak positively of the event.

We, therefore, wondered what kind of services had been provided by the Press Operations to the accredited journalists in Patras; hence the eleventh question. And in this case too, different answers were received.

One said: *“I used my own car. All personal requests had positive responses”*

Another stated: *“Transport from Athens airport to Patras which was extremely useful and helpful”*

The third highlighted: *“Transport from Athens to Patras, after the accreditation pick up I was escorted to my hotel”*

Someone explained: *“I think that our only “special request” was when we asked permission to make video-interviews on the diving platform of the swimming pool! Permission kindly granted us by the organization staff. Apart from this, we didn’t need nor ask extra services”*

Another answered: *“Transfer from the airport and transfer to the venues”*

The next said: *“As AIPS Europe President, I had transport from Athens to Patras and back as well as for the transport provided which worked perfectly from the hotel to the venues”*

Two journalists answered: *“Did not provide anything”* or *“Didn't have any special needs”*

In this case as well, the exception proves the rule; one answered negatively, the other indifferently. Nevertheless, in half of the cases, the reply was positive: in particular,

three cited the transport from the Athens airport to the hotel in Patras, which was considered as a positive service provided by the Press Operations team.

In the twelfth question we sought to better examine the critical issues, asking the journalists if any of their requests were not satisfied. There was only one respondent who gave a negative answer specifying that he would have expected transportation from the hotel to the venues and free food at the MPC.

With the thirteenth question we wanted to understand whether the work of journalists at the Patras MBG would be the same, worse or better if there were not the services provided by the Press Operations. Even in this case, the five of them responded positively, one expressed perplexity.

The answers were the following:

One stated: *“Work would have been more difficult and anxious without the help from the MBG staff”*

Someone explained: *“The new standards require fast internet speed, and in all places. This is usually the main problem a journalist may face. In Patras, the organizers dealt with it adequately. In my general experience, where the organizers regulate the procedures / internet service as well as possible, and the distribution network, as far as accredited journalists are concerned, the chances of negative reviews of the event as a whole are limited”*

Another said: *“Worse. Especially due to the heat, the hosts made sure to provide as much as possible to combat that issue”*

The third respondent mentioned: *“Certainly worse. Support is essential to ensure that journalists do their job well”*

Someone else clarified: *“The same, because it didn’t have a big impact on my work. However, as I said, the MPC was very good. An efficient media centre is certainly a must of every sport event, big or small. You never know when you’ll really miss it!”*

The next commented: *“Having adequate and well organized Press Operations services helped very much for the better and smooth running of the media profession and of the Games in general”*

One of them answered: *“It would be the same”*

While the last one stressed that *“It would have been more complicated”*

It can be noted that three journalists mentioned the fact that without an efficient Press operations team, the work of a journalist can become problematic, more complicated and consequently worse. On the other hand, two interviewees responded that their work would not be affected by the services of the Press Operations team, but one of them clarified that the services provided by the Press Operations, particularly the MPC, was a satisfactory and fully serviced environment for the media representatives who came to Patras to cover the Games and share their stories around the world.

In order to demonstrate how the appreciation of the services provided was also “translated” into written stories, journalists were asked to send their articles. This was our fourteenth question.

The first journalist sent their article which was posted on the ICMG official website on of the one-year anniversary of the “Patras 2019” MBG. The article, with the emblematic title *“The 2nd Mediterranean Beach Games were successful”*, sums up the author’s feelings about the games.

The article is presented in the Appendix E.1.

The second journalist sent us their article which was posted on the website of the Cyprus National Olympic Committee, on 31st August 2019.

The text is in Greek, so we translated the phrase which reflects the positive comment of the writer: *“Patras turned out to be an excellent host, despite delays in the preparation and concerns expressed before the Games. In the end, everything went smoothly and the Greeks proved, once again, to be excellent hosts of a major sporting event”*.

The article is reported in the Appendix E.2.

The article of the third journalist was published in the newspaper Avvenire, on August 29, 2019 and the English translation of the title is “Games without borders, but for beach persons”.

In the article, the writer made a comprehensive presentation of the sporting event describing sport, cultural and organizational aspects of the MBG. Here is the translation of the text excerpt which best presents the positive view of the journalist on the MBG of Patras.

“Two symbols of the city are printed on the medals, the Rio-Antirrio bridge and the archaeological museum. A choice that mingles past and present, history and topicality of the third Hellenic city (after Athens and Thessaloniki) which, next to the ruins of the castle and the theater, welcomed 705 athletes, for most of whom the event had the taste of the Olympics”.

The article is presented in the Appendix E.3.

The fourth journalist wrote an article under the title “2nd Mediterranean Beach Games Patras 2019: Success in sea, sun and sand” and it was posted on the official website of the *Association Internationale de la Presse Sportive (AIPS)*, on September 2, 2019. Once more with the abovementioned title, as well as with a specific sentence used in the text, the journalist expressed their absolute satisfaction making specific reference also to the media services. *“The facilities offered for the accredited media and photographers were the best possible as also expressed by AIPS Europe President during the meeting held with the Organizing Committee of the Games”.*

The article is presented in the Appendix E.4.

Finally, in the fifteenth question, the journalists were asked to rate, from 1 to 10, their experience at the “Patras 2019” MBG and the Press Operations team.

The average rate was 7.8 therefore highly positive.

The answers are listed below:

One responded: *“8 for my whole experience at the MBG and 9 for the services of the Press Operations”*

Another said: *“7, which is pretty high compared to most events. The services from the staff no doubt helped raise the judgement”*

Another one stated: *“9. And I think more than half of the vote depends on having a great press operations team”*

Someone else exclaimed: *“10 +”*

Another answered: *“Very good, 9. Good professional and friendly relations developed quickly with the responsible colleagues at the MPC. However, it is not related so much to the operation of the Press, as to the good predisposition due to the relationship with the country of the games (common Ethnic origin), but also the personal relationship with the city itself (I studied at the University of Patras)”*

Someone replied: *“I say 8. I certainly have to consider that it wasn’t an event as big and chaotic as a World or a European Aquatic Championship, but Patras 2019 surely provided all the fundamental services of a sport event. As I said, Press Operations weren’t a big factor for my work, but they were well run and generally I found a good sense of availability by the organization staff”*

The second to last said: *“4/10 because the services provided by the Press Operation were not sufficient and satisfactory”*

The last one stated: *“8 and largely depends on the services of the Press Operations”*

5.3 Volunteers

The third group of individuals to whom our questionnaire was addressed, were the volunteers who assisted the work of the MBG Press Operations team and of the accredited journalists.

The questionnaire addressed to them is presented in the Appendix E:

The replies of the volunteers are presented below:

In the first question it became clear that the average age of the “Patras 2019” volunteers involved in the analysis is 23,8 years, since the six interviewees stated that they were of the following age: 29, 22, 28, 23, 22 and 19 years old. So, there were six young individuals, between 19 and 29 years old, in line with the total number of volunteers involved in the “Patras 2019” MBG.

From the responses to our second question, it is noteworthy to point out that those volunteers were individuals with high educational and cultural attainment, as all six declared having obtained the Bachelor Degree. In particular, four of them had degrees in Communication, one a Master’s degree in Applied Finance and Management and

one in Sport Business. Thus, we are before three mass media specialists, one in Applied Finance and Management and journalism and one who studied sports management. As a result, these are individuals capable of making the most of the work within the Press Operations Team. Therefore, it can be said that the volunteers engaged with the journalists were of a high standard and this certainly helped the work of both parties. In fact, the volunteer was able to better assist the journalists, while the latter felt understood by the volunteers when they made the requests.

In the third question, considering their previous work experience, four individuals said they had already worked, while for two of them the Patras MBG were their first job experience. It is the right mix that allows you to make the most of the work team, as the more experienced can help the younger ones. In particular, the two already experienced volunteers had carried out tasks in the field of sport, in the past; one as secretary of a sports club, the other one as journalist and social media manager and the last one as a teacher and journalist at a local newspaper.

Moreover, in the fourth question, with regard to previous experience as volunteers, the majority of our sample mentioned their previous experience as volunteers: four of the respondents had already worked as volunteers on other occasions, while two of them were just starting out in this role. This characteristic accompanied the entire organization of “Patras 2019”, since at all levels experience was mixed with novelty, trying to achieve the right balance between the routine mastered by those who had been in the sector for years and the desire for a breath of fresh air from those introduced in this working environment for the first time.

Among the motives that led these young people to apply for a volunteer position within the sporting event, was not only their strong desire to acquire experience but also a yearning to learn more about a job even without earning any money. In addition the MBG of Patras was considered a good opportunity and a sporting event that would be very difficult to be organized again in the future in the city of Patras.

Thus, scrolling through the answers to the fifth question, the following statements were found:

The first said: *“the opportunity presented itself, I followed a course on sport journalism at the university and found it very interesting”*

The second stated: *“to gain the experience of an international sports event”*

The third highlighted that *“it was a big sporting event, it was an opportunity that was held in my city. I love sports, so wanted to gain experience”*

The fourth stressed that *“it was a new experience and a chance to learn more about my job”*

The fifth mentioned: *“I did not know much about this institution, nor how many countries will participate, nor the number of athletes, etc. It just seemed to me that it would be a good event and an event that would be very difficult to be organized in the city again in the future”*

The last one pointed out: *“I came to this decision after a suggestion from a professor I had in University. I thought it would be a beneficial experience in regard to my studies and also an opportunity to contribute to a major event for my city”*

Question number six is the one that allows us to support our thesis. In fact, we were convinced that good Press Operations services also needed motivated volunteers ready to follow the journalists closely. As a matter of fact, all six interviewees replied that it was them who chose to apply for the Press Operations. This means that for everyone the job was a targeted selection. No one was allocated to the Press Operations department by mistake or as a second option. The individuals chose to work next to journalists on their own and hence they were motivated to perform their duties in the best possible way.

In order for the journalist to be satisfied and write their stories about the sporting event, it is necessary to provide them with qualified, motivated and well-prepared volunteers. The training and fine-tuning of the volunteers is a fundamental and crucial step from which the success or failure of the work may arise. In fact, our thesis is supported also in this case, as to the seventh question, all volunteers declared that they had received a certain period of training before being sent to the field to get in contact with the journalists. Here are the responses of the interviewees:

One said: *“there was guidance from those in charge and since our role was helpful in the organization I do not think it needed further training. The journalists we collaborated with gave us clear instructions and explained us the procedure”*

The other stated: *“I had the basic knowledge due to studies, but received specialized training in the event”*

Another mentioned: *“I had qualification from my studies in sports journalism, but we received training-instructions by the sport journalists at the press office”*

Another one highlighted: *“I received a general training concerning the event and the volunteers' extent of responsibility and also a brief, more specific training from other journalists about the exact way we would work”*

The second to last clarified: *“Having practiced in sports journalism, I knew from the beginning what kind of questions would be asked, how to discuss with someone or the team that won or lost, how Greeks perceive the sporting event for our country and how foreigners etc .. Less than a month before the games, the 20th Panhellenic Beach Handball Championship was organized in Patras (which was a test event for the MBG), during which we met the responsible journalists and they explained to us the sports venues, the allocation of volunteers etc. Further clarifications and instructions on which volunteer will be in which competition were made during the first hours of the sport”*

The last one said: *“I received training as a volunteer for press operations”*

With the eight question and in order to get an idea about the role of the volunteers in the event, we asked them to describe how the Press volunteering was organized.

We received the following answers which were quite explicit and self-explanatory

One said: *“There were journalists and each one was specialized in a different sport so the workload was divided. There were journalists in charge who defined the procedures and we, volunteers, "supported" the work of all of them. The comments of the games were made immediately after the games, while there was a summary text at the end of the day. Many times we volunteers got some statements from the players (both in Greek and English) in order to better complement the coverage of the Games”.*

Another stated: *“The work was very well organized. They provided us with everything we needed (clothes, notebooks, pens, etc.). We had a tour of the places where we were going to work before the beginning of the games, and we received training by the press manager for our duties. Also, there was always a timely published programme”*. Someone else added: *“We were helping journalists to find their seats and were giving them information for every single match (e.g. starting line-ups). Sometimes we were sent by the MBG Press Office to learn information about the competitions and to interview the players after the end of every match”*

Another mentioned: *“Journalists had the supervision of the press volunteers. At the start of our shift we decided which matches each would cover and during the day we reported back to the journalists”*

Another one pointed out: *“Most of the volunteers knew each other and so it was easy to stay together for so many hours without feeling uncomfortable. Initially there was a meeting point where all the journalists worked, with tables, computers, etc. There we met at the beginning of the shift to see the sports programme and which journalist was responsible for each sport. Together with the journalist in charge, we were either on the pitch during the whole match or at the end. Sometimes, the volunteer was alone and at the end of the match with the responsible journalist, the questions were asked, etc. In other cases, the volunteer journalist recorded statements of athletes and sent them to the person in charge for transcription”*

The last one said: *“We had a good cooperation with the journalists, who guided us, pointing out important aspects of sports journalism. Mostly, the volunteers worked in teams, watched the games and after that, we talked to the athletes, who made statements about the competition that had just ended”*.

In the ninth question, we asked the volunteers to tell us the most common questions made by the sport journalists. From the answers we discovered an entirely different world from what we could have expected. The most common questions to the majority of the interviewees did not concern the Games, but were related to the personal sphere of the societal life of the volunteer. In fact, a candid exchange of views was held between the journalist and the volunteer and the journalist was very often interested in making the volunteer feel comfortable. Of course, this is possible

only in competitions with few journalists and few volunteers – as it was the case of “Patras 2019” – but it is certainly an original and innovative aspect. A sincere relationship is created between journalists and volunteers and therefore one is interested in the personal issues of the other.

Here are the questions the volunteers were asked by the journalists:

The first said that a common question they were asked was: “*Why did you decide to take part in the event as volunteers?*”

Another was asked: “*Have you participated in a similar event in the past?*” or “*Do you want to work in sports journalism?*”

Some stated that the most common question they were asked was “*Have you worked in a similar field?*”

The last one mentioned: “*Journalists wanted to be informed about the games results or something interesting/strange that had happened during the game*”

In addition, common questions to the volunteers were the following: “*What do you think about the experience?*” or “*Do you think there is pressure the work?*” or “*Where are the team-sheets?*”

In the last question none of the interviewees mentioned curious or strange incidents that had happened during the Games. Evidently, their work took place as planned, without any peculiar issues or unusual happenings.

6. DISCUSSION

The Media play a pivotal role in life and in modern democratic societies. The main elements of the term are information and communication. In this context, according to Ntouroudakis and Arnaoutoglou (1999) the Media are: "... any form of information, mobile operator or channel used to transmit a message. They are the continuous natural connection system that mediates between the sender and the receiver".

On the other hand, sport is a multifaceted concept which is connected not only with the physical and mental development but also with the socialization of the individual. In this context, sport is a social phenomenon that plays a vital role and provides a huge impact reflecting on many areas of everyday life.

The multisport events attract the attention of millions of sport fans all over the world, compelling them to watch and in a way "participate" in the sport performance of the athlete. Media is a means of communication through which the sports fans globally receive data and information about the sporting event. As a result, the way Media is treated in a multisport event, can reflect the positive or negative image of the sporting event to the public.

In the case of the Mediterranean Beach Games "Patras 2019", we sought to examine how the MBG Press Operations team worked in order to provide a range of services and facilities that responded to the requirements of the national and international Press. Therefore, the research approach focused on three categories of people: Press Operations team members, journalists and volunteers. Each was given a specific questionnaire, the results of which are discussed below.

As for the Press Operations team, the workforce which was responsible for the Media services during the MBG of Patras had a considerable experience in the field, as the majority of the components of our sample were active in the field of Sports Media for more than 15 years. The majority of the interviewees responded that they got involved out of the love and passion they nurtured for sports. This is the classic motive that makes a person work with joy and satisfaction and also cope with long periods of stressful work without excessive pressure or fatigue. The press sector was organized on two axes. The first concerned the period until the start of the games and the second was related to the requirements of Games Time, i.e. the full and with all possible means publicity on the one hand and the service to the representatives of the Media on

the other. They had a considerable responsibility since there was a long delay and mistrust, as to whether the games would actually take place and as there was zero information and communication-advertising. So they had to organize a network of activities that would be able to create a positive current for the games and attract volunteers in the first place, in addition to future supporters, sponsors, spectators.

Regarding journalists, most of them commented on the service quality. In fact, the location of the MPC which was in central position, in relation to the venues and the hotels, as well as the good Wi-Fi connection was very much appreciated by the journalists. At the same time, it was mentioned that it would have been better if the MPC had been in a building rather than a tent. However, the answers obtained, showed to what extent the services provided were appreciated.

Most of the journalists wrote about the sensations experienced in Patras, they have mentioned not only the organizational aspects but also the fact how the Organizing Committee has worked and how they managed to transform Patras in one perfect competition venue which catered for so many sport disciplines. These responses indeed, could confirm the thesis and the hypothesis we are trying to support, as the well-organized services made journalists speak in a positive way of the event.

Regarding volunteers, they were individuals with high educational and cultural attainment, as all six declared having obtained the Bachelor Degree. In particular, some of them had degrees in Communication and in Sport Business. Therefore we can say that the volunteers engaged with the journalists were of a high standard and this certainly helped the work of both parties. In fact, the volunteer was able to better assist the journalists, while the latter felt understood by the volunteers when they made their requests.

For the volunteers who were mostly young people, participating in a multisport event volunteering – although it did not offer immediate financial rewards – was considered as an opportunity to acquire skills and make acquaintances which could enhance access to the labor market after the end of the Games.

In our analysis we wanted to take these three categories into consideration, because in this way we were able to create a triangulation between the views of the three categories of subjects and as a result to examine their interaction and impact on the overview of the sport event. In particular, the Press Operations team represents an

internal component of the Organizing Committee, the journalists are an external component, while the volunteers are halfway, because they are part of the organizational team, but they are not remunerated. In this way we can in fact interpret the fact that even an external category, such as journalists, can affect the success of a sporting event. The successful outcome of the Patras MBG was summarized by the President of the Organizing Committee, Nikos Papadimatos during his speech at the closing ceremony. The OC President expressed his pride for the success of the Games with the following words, retrieved from the website of Patras 2019 (the link is https://www.mbgpatras2019.gr/?section=637&language=en_US&itemid1541=4252&detail1541=1): *“For a week, the vigorous sports youth of 26 Mediterranean countries, with more than 700 athletes, “fought the good fight”. With true empathy, with a genuine athletic spirit, with power, with vision, with high expectations and with an eye on their open horizon. From last Sunday until today we have all lived at the pace of Patreas (the mascotte) who took us on walks by the sea, by the lake, by the pool, by the water and by the sand, in two cities, in four facilities and in ten stadiums. All these days and nights we got out of our routine and Patras became a hub of the sporting land: the headlights dropped here and lit up our city, our homeland, the Games and the whole Mediterranean which is a very powerful reference point in planet. Modern, special and exciting Games, great records, strenuous efforts, feelings, emotions, moments that will remain indelible in our minds and hearts and will always nourish them. We are very sorry that the Games are over, but we are glad we did and lived up to them. Patras won the bet. Greece has re-entered the game of big events and is looking forward with a clear look and an optimistic look. I feel the need to thank the International Committee of the Mediterranean Games for trusting Greece and Patras, the 26 National Olympic Committees, the athletes, the coaches, the referees, the judges, the attendants”*.

7. CONCLUSION

The purpose of the present study was to explore how Press Operations could be a strategic lever for the successful outcome of a Multisport event. For this reason, the case of “Patras 2019” Mediterranean Beach Games was examined. In particular, the current study examined how the “Patras 2019” Press Operations team managed to be a strategic lever for the successful outcome of the event.

The individuals who worked for the “Patras 2019” MBG Press Operations were qualified officers who managed to defend the reputation and image of the sporting event, working in a manner that the following goals could be achieved in a very short time: On the one hand, they had to gain public support and understanding, as the Mediterranean Beach Games was an unprecedented experience and uncharted territory for the Greek public and journalists. On the other hand, they had to build and develop solid relationships with national and international Media that came to Patras in order to cover the sporting event, offering the best possible services to all the accredited Media representatives i.e. journalists, photographers, technical staff. They had to carry out a stressful work, due to delays in preparation and lack of funds, they had to meet tight deadlines but above all they had to ensure the best possible image of the sporting event not only inside but also outside of the Greek borders. Thus, after many years of deep recession and absence, in terms of organizing a multi-sport event, Greece managed to win the bet and come back to the international sport scenery strong and ready to undertake other similar sporting challenges in the future.

As far as the Press volunteers were concerned, it can be argued that the team of Journalism students and young journalists who worked as Press Services volunteers at the various sports facilities proved to be an extra asset offering their services in the organization of the 2nd MBG and gained unique experience from a leading international event. They were young people who tried to do their best every day to make everyone happy, both the accredited journalists covering the 2nd MBG and the members of the Press Office and demonstrated one more time that a strong team of volunteers can be an additional asset for creating and delivering high quality sports services. Students at Panteion University, at the Aristotle University, at the Professional Training Institute of Western Greece, at the Sports Reporting Center, at

different public Professional Training Institutes, but also young journalists, became Press volunteers at the 2nd MBG for one reason only: their love for journalism.

The research has shown how journalists can be fully inserted among the strategic players of a multisport event. In fact, they can play a crucial role in conveying the positive or negative image of the event. In order for journalists to write positively about the event, the Press Operations team must follow them carefully and provide them with everything they need. The case of “Patras 2019” highlighted that if journalists are followed closely, they are also able to speak highly of the event.

This study intended to investigate the following research hypothesis: to what extent the Press Operations team support the organizational success of a sporting event?

All in all, it could be argued that a strong and efficient Press Operations Team can lead to the success of the event.

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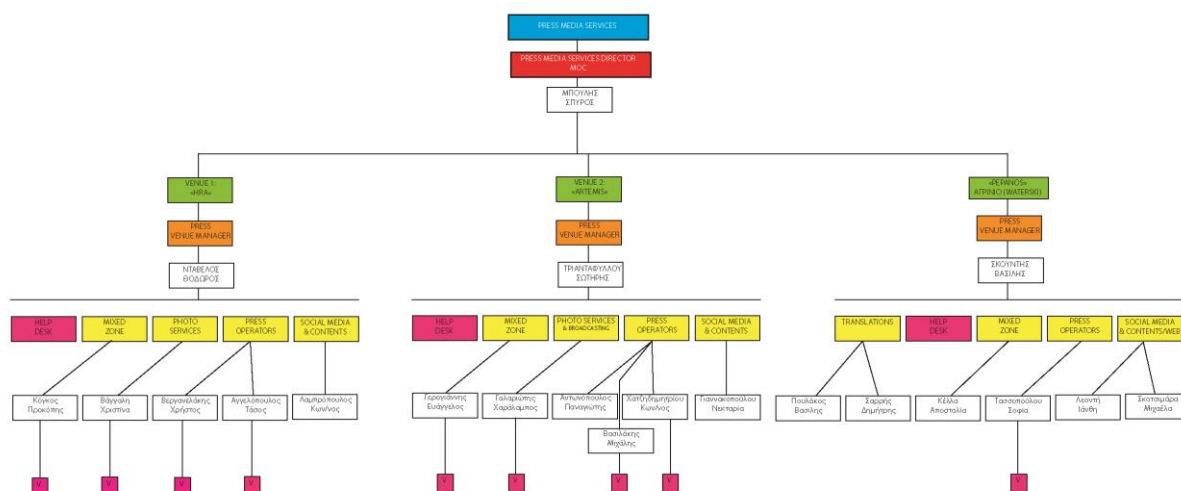
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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Editions of the Mediterranean Games. Source: ICMG website (<https://ICMG.org.gr/mediterranean-games>)

No	Year	City - Country		Number of participating countries	Number of Athletes		
					Men	Women	Total
I.	1951	Alexandria- EGYPT		10	734	-	734
II.	1955	Barcelona- SPAIN		10	1.135	-	1.135
III.	1959	Beirut- LEBANON		11	792	-	792
IV.	1963	Naples - ITALY		13	1.057	-	1.057
V.	1967	Tunis - TUNISIA		12	1.211	38	1.249
VI.	1971	Izmir - TURKEY		14	1.235	127	1.362
VII.	1975	Algiers - ALGERIA		15	2.095	349	2.444
VIII.	1979	Split - YUGOSLAVIA		14	2.009	399	2.408
IX.	1983	Casablanca - MOROCCO		16	1.845	347	2.192
X.	1987	Latakia - SYRIA		18	1.529	467	1.996
XI.	1991	Athens - GREECE		18	2.176	586	2.762
XII.	1993	Agde-Roussillon - FRANCE		19	1.994	604	2.598
XIII.	1997	Bari - ITALY		21	2.166	790	2.956
XIV.	2001	Tunis - TUNISIA		23	1.972	1.019	2.991
XV.	2005	Almeria - SPAIN		21	2.126	1.077	3.203
XVI.	2009	Pescara - ITALY		23	2.183	1.185	3.368
XVII.	2013	Mersin - TURKEY		24	1.994	1.070	3.064
XVIII.	2018	Tarragona- SPAIN		26	2.180	1.468	3.648

Appendix B: The “Patras 2019” MBG Press Operations organizational structure



Appendix C: Questionnaire addressed to the “Patras 2019” MBG Press Operations employees

1. How long have you worked in Sports Media?
2. Why did you choose this job?
3. What is your previous experience/assignments at press operations in mega sport events?
4. In which Department did you work at the MBG Patras 2019?
5. How many employees did you have under your command?
6. What was your role within the organizing committee?
7. How was your department organized? (Responsibilities, objectives)
8. What kind of services did you provide to the journalists?
9. How did you treat the different types of Media?
10. What were the most common question(s)/request(s) made by the sport journalists?
11. Can you mention a strange/curious incident which happened to you during the MBG of “Patras 2019”?

**Appendix D: Questionnaire addressed to the accredited journalists of “Patras 2019”
MBG**

1. How long have you been in the profession?
2. Before covering the MBG “Patras 2019”, what other sporting events have you covered on the pitch?
3. Was it you to decide to go to Patras or were you assigned by your chief editor?
4. Why did you decide to cover the MBG “Patras 2019”?
5. Did you cover the MBG in full or just for a few days?
6. Did you cover a specific sport or all sports?
7. Did you write your articles at the MPC or elsewhere?
8. How would you comment on the services provided at the MPC?
9. Compared to your previous experience in other sporting events how would you describe the services provided at the Patras MBG? Was there something different?
10. In your articles/services did you mention only sport aspects or did you also mention organizational aspects?
11. Did the Press Operations sector of Patras MBG provide you with any special services? (i.e. transport from the airport, transport in sports venues, supplies of material you have requested, possibility for one-to-one interviews with athletes).
12. Where there any of your requests that were not satisfied?
13. In your opinion, if there were not the services provided by the Press Operations, your work at the MBG would be the same, worse or better?
14. Could you send me an article of yours where you have mentioned the organization of the Games?
15. From 1 to 10 how would you rate your experience at the MBG? How much of this judgment depends on the services provided by the Press Operations?

Appendix E: Articles sent to the author by accredited journalists at the “Patras 2019” MBG

Appendix E.1. Article from ICMG official website. Source: <https://ICMG.org.gr/the-2nd-mediterranean-beach-games-were-successful/>

The screenshot shows a web browser window with three tabs. The active tab is titled "The 2nd Me...". The URL in the address bar is "https://ICMG.org.gr/the-2nd-mediterranean-beach-games-were-successful/". The website header includes the ICMG logo and navigation links: HOME, ICMG, MEDITERRANEAN GAMES, MEDITERRANEAN BEACH GAMES, NEWS, CONTACT. The main content area features a large blue banner with the headline "The 2nd Mediterranean Beach Games were successful". Below the banner is a photo of two men, one in a blue shirt and one in a blue polo shirt with a lanyard, standing in front of a blue background with white geometric patterns. To the right of the photo are social media icons for Facebook, Twitter, and Pinterest. Below the photo is a text block with several paragraphs and a sub-heading: "Mr Dalainas, one year later, what is your opinion on the level of the Mediterranean Beach Games 'Patras 2019'?". The text discusses the success of the games and the challenges faced by the organizing committee. Below the text is a photo of a meeting around a long table. At the bottom of the article, there is a sub-heading: "Describe the first actions that you took when you took over the administration of the Games?". The text below this heading states: "The most important thing, when we started working in February, was to act quickly and change the standards of the master plan, as it had been submitted to the International Committee of the Mediterranean Games. We made it more realistic as long as...". On the right side of the page, there is a search bar and a "Recent Posts" section with several article titles, including "The Tunisian Olympic Committee continues the financial support of Elite athletes", "The 'Hammou-Boutellis' Sports Palace in Oran is almost ready for the Mediterranean Games of 2022", "Kosovo NOC organized the 1st International Sports Film Festival 'Pristina 2020'", "Anti-doping awareness session at Morocco", "The Sustainable Sports Entity Certification awarded to Spanish NOC", "Meeting of the Organizing Committee 'Oran 2022' with the Algerian Olympic Committee", "Cooperation of the ICMG with the Greek government in the perspective of the Mediterranean Games of 2030", "'Sports Forum' Conference opened the European Sports Week in Kosovo", and "Algerian Olympic Committee celebrated the World Cleanup Day". At the bottom of the page, there is a row of icons for various applications: a blue envelope icon, a blue circular icon, a green Excel icon, a blue Word icon, and a red and blue circular icon.

Appendix E.2. Article from the official website of the Cyprus National Olympic Committee. Source <https://www.olympic.org.cy/index.php/gr/news/153-beach-mediterranean-games-news/670-2019-7>

Κυπριακή Ολυμπιακή Επιτροπή
02 Σεπτεμβρίου 2019

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Κυπριακή Ολυμπιακή Επιτροπή
02 Σεπτεμβρίου 2019

Οι **2οι Παράκτιοι Μεσογειακοί Αγώνες** ανήκουν στο παρελθόν! Με την **τελετή λήξης** το βράδυ του Σαββάτου 31 Αυγούστου, σε ένα γεμάτο κεντρικό γήπεδο με 2500 θεατές και στην παρουσία εκατοντάδων αθλητών, ολοκληρώθηκαν και επίσημα οι Αγώνες, μετά από δράση επτά ημερών.

Σημαιοφόρος της Κύπρου στην τελετή λήξης ήταν η «αργυρή» στο beach volley **Μαριώτα Αγγελοπούλου**, για την οποία η διοργάνωση ήταν ιδιαίτερα ξεχωριστή, αφού ο πατέρας της είναι Πατρινός και η πόλη της Πελοποννήσου το δεύτερο της σπίτι!

Η Πάτρα αποδείχθηκε τελικά εξαιρετική οικοδεσπώτρια, παρά τις καθυστερήσεις στην προετοιμασία και τις ανησυχίες που εκφράστηκαν πριν τους Αγώνες. Εν τέλει, όλα κύλησαν ομαλά και οι Έλληνες αποδείχτηκαν, γι' άλλη μια φορά, εξαιρετικοί οικοδεσπότες μιας μεγάλης αθλητικής διοργάνωσης.

Η τελετή λήξης αποτέλεσε ένα μεγάλο πάρτι, με μπόλικη μουσική και χορό, με τους αθλητές των 26 χωρών να απολαμβάνουν τη γιορτή όλοι μαζί, ειρηνικά, στο πνεύμα των Ολυμπιακών Αξιών.

Στο τελετουργικό μέρος, αφού έκανε την ομιλία του ο πρόεδρος της Διεθνούς Επιτροπής Μεσογειακών Αγώνων κ. **Αμπό Αντάντι**, όπου ευχαρίστησε την Πάτρα για την άριστη φιλοξενία, έγινε η παράδο της σημαίας των Μεσογειακών Αγώνων στον πρόεδρο της ΔΕΜΑ και στον γεν. γραμματέα κ. Ιάκωβο Φιλίππου, με το επόμενο... Παράκτιο ραντεβού να κλείνεται για το 2023 στους 3ους Παράκτιους Μεσογειακούς Αγώνες.

Η επόμενη συνάντη των 26 χωρών της Μεσογείου θα γίνει, βέβαια, το 2021 στο Οράν της Αλγερίας και τους 19ους παραδοσιακούς Μεσογειακούς Αγώνες.

Κυπριακή Ολυμπιακή Επιτροπή
31 Αυγούστου 2019

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Appendix E.3. Article published in the Italian newspaper Avvenire on 29th August 2019

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29-AGO-2019
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SPORT
Giochi da spiaggia
e la corsa con "pulizie"
Nicotelli e Pedrazzini a pagina 22

Giochi senza frontiere Ma per tipi da spiaggia

Dal canottaggio beach sprint all'aquathlon domenica a Patrassas, in Grecia, scatta la seconda edizione dei Giochi da spiaggia o acquatici

MARIO NICOTELLO

C'è qualcosa di nuovo che brilla sotto il sole cocente di Patrassas. Se ne sono accorti anche i gabbiani, che si muovono pigramente lungo la battigia, zampettando su una sabbia diversa dal solito. Quel manto dorato è stato raccolto un centinaio di chilometri più a sud, sul litorale di Pégas, sito in contaner e spedito a Patrassas per diventare l'elemento centrale della seconda edizione dei Giochi del Mediterraneo sulla spiaggia. Quattro anni dopo Pescara, tocca al lero settentrionale del Peloponneso dare vita alla rassegna multisport più curiosa che ci sia. Una settimana di gare (da domenica a sabato 31 agosto), undici discipline, tre località e ovviamente un gabbiano, Patrassas, come mascotte. Il clima è rovente, la colonna di mercurio costantemente sopra i 35 gradi, così gareggiano in costume da bagno è normale, per la gioia del pubblico, ben disposto ad ammirare le bellezze provenienti da 26 nazioni di tre continenti, tutte bagnate dal Mare Nostrum, ad eccezione di Portogallo, Serbia, Kosovo e Macedonia del Nord. Quello spec-

chio d'acqua, nei secoli luogo di scambi commerciali e campo di battaglie navali, ma oggi tristemente citato per viaggi di altra natura, diventa il collante capace di unire popoli di diverse tradizioni, riuniti in Grecia nel nome dello sport. Nella storia dei giochi olimpici, sotto i riflettori finiscono specialità solitamente ignorate, versioni di nicchia di sport noti con altri format. Così nel primo teatro di gara, ribattezzato Era (la dea della famiglia, sorella e moglie di Zeus), vanno in scena le specialità che mischiano sabbia e acqua: il canottaggio beach sprint, la canoa oceanic racing, lo sci nautico, il nuoto pinnato e l'aquathlon. Di menzione il canottaggio tradizionale, nella versione da spiaggia gli atleti percorrono di corsa tra i 10 e i 30 metri sulla sabbia, quindi salgono sull'imbarcazione per affrontare un percorso a slalom di 250 metri con 3 boe. Inversione di U e stesero trascinato al ritorno fino a riva, dove si lascia la barca per tagliare il traguardo a piedi. Gareggiano due nazioni per volta, in un duello testa a testa nelle specialità della punta e della coppia.

Dicorso simile nella canoa: gli atleti partono sulla spiaggia con la barca in mano e dopo una breve corsa entrano in acqua, pagano una decina di chilometri tra le onde, poi tornano sulla sabbia. Rispetto alle imbarcazioni classiche, queste canoe sono più lunghe e leggere, con la prua più alta. L'aquathlon è invece una prova multi-gli: 200 metri di corsa, 150 metri di nuoto e ancora due chilometri e mezzo a piedi. Nel

sci nautico i funamboli si destreggeranno nel week-end tra slalom e figure, nel nuoto di fondo affronteranno i 15 chilometri, mentre il nuoto pinnato avrà due case: la piscina coperta e il mare aperto. Scendendo lungo il litorale ciottoloso, una volta superato il porto, si incontra il campo di gara chiamato Artemide (dea della caccia), il palcoscenico degli sport classici da ombrellone, quelli che almeno una volta nella vita ogni bagnante ha sperimentato tra il tempo per nuotare e quello per abbronzarsi. Dopo la penisola, gioco che vede core centrali della giornata è impossibile gareggiare per via del fango, sui tre rettangoli di sabbia circondati dalle tribune si spazia dagli sport di squadra (calcio, pallanuoto, pallavolo) a quelli individuali (tennis e Jorda). Più che il pallone o la palla sono stati gli aerodinamici racchettoni a colpire i profani nei primi giorni di gara, quando l'Italia ha fatto incetta di medaglie, monopolizzando le finali del doppio femminile e del doppio misto e acciuffando l'argento nel doppio maschile. Prima di rifiorire sul campo, la squadra azzurra aveva già ottenuto un importante successo alla vigilia della cerimonia di apertura, quando Taranto si era assicurata la ventesima edizione dei Giochi del Mediterraneo (quel-



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li tradizionali, non sulla spiaggia, che la Puglia ospiterà nel 2026, un anno dopo rispetto alla canonica cadenza, a qualche mese dalla conclusione dei Giochi invernali di Milano-Cortina. Tornando a Patrassas, l'attesa è tutta per la lotta, presente già nell'agenda dei giochi olimpici antichi, che da domani mostrerà il suo volto avvincente nella versione beach. Corpi al sole che si avvinghiano e ostentano sulla sabbia per contendersi il metallo più prezioso. Sulle medaglie sono stampate due simboli della città, il Ponte Rio-Antirio e il Museo Archeo-

logico. Una scelta che coniuga passato e presente, storia e attualità della terza città ellenica (dopo Atene e Salonicco), che accanto alle rovine del castello e del teatro ha accolto 705 atleti, per buona parte dei quali la rassegna ha lo stesso sapore di un'Olimpiade. Stavolta andare a Patrassas non è sinonimo di rovina o morte, bensì di vita e duelli agonistici sotto la canicola. Tra quattro anni è attesa la terza edizione, magari con nuovi sport - la passeggiata in acqua è tra i candidati - e qualche bandiera in più, basta sullo sfondo la suggestione di

vedere in questo contesto anche Israele e Palestina, al momento gli unici due Paesi bagnati dal Mediterraneo estromessi dai Giochi, sia quelli tradizionali che questi sulla spiaggia. Un mucchio di sabbia e un'onda, tanto basta per scatenare la festa. Tutti sudati e contenti nonostante il calore. Sole, mare e sport. Tipi da spiaggia che si battono per una medaglia. Sono gli effetti della canicola nei monti dell'Acia. Lo hanno capito pure i gabbiani, che anziché volare gironziano sulla sabbia. Alla disperata caccia di un filo d'ombra.



Il beach handball, uno degli sport protagonisti dei Giochi del Mediterraneo sulla spiaggia

CONI

CONI

Appendix F: Questionnaire addressed to the “Patras 2019” Press Operations volunteers

1. How old are you?
2. What is your educational background?
3. What is your work experience?
4. Have you been a volunteer in the past or was it the first time?
5. Why did you decide to volunteer for the MBG “Patras 2019”?
6. Did you apply to volunteer for the Press Operations or for another functional area?
7. Did you have a qualification or did you receive training as a volunteer for Press operations?
8. How was Press volunteering organized?
9. What were the most common question(s)/request(s) made by the sport journalists?
10. Can you mention a strange/curious incident which happened to you during the MBG of “Patras 2019”?

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my life companion, Mario, for his unconditional love and constant support not only in my professional advancement but also in my personal struggles. Without him, I would have never made it this far.