

# *Challenges and Strategies for Management of IAAF World Championships in Athletics*

Kaiwei Zhou<sup>1, a, \*</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Guangdong Experimental High School, Guangzhou 528306, China*  
*a.Vincentzhou2006@163.com*

*\*corresponding author*

**Abstract.** The IAAF World Championships in Athletics (WCH) is one of the biggest sports events with high popularity. However, the influence and economics of WCH still face many challenges. This study discusses the challenges faced by WCH on venue and marketing management and proposes strategies to address these challenges by reviewing the literature on the development and management of WCH and other sports events from the perspectives of venue management and marketing management. In terms of selecting the host city, this study suggests considering the city's size, transportation convenience and its sports spirit and cultural background. Facing the increased demand and heightened expectations for live events and entertainment, multi-purpose venues with diverse attractions and amenities should be taken into account. Additionally, to increase the quantity and quality of the athletes, offering substantial prize money for athletes is crucial. And creating a compelling fan experience, activating sponsorships, and partnering with influencers should be also considered to promote the marketing management of WCH.

**Keywords:** IAAF world championships in athletics, venue management, marketing management

## **1. Introduction**

Track and field is a sport that consists of athletic competitions based on running, jumping, and throwing abilities. It is a sport with very high popularity around the world because it is suitable for people of all ages and there is little equipment required in most events. The development of international track and field sport is in a period of rapid development. Many organizations exist to provide a form of seasonal competition for the best track and field athletes. Among them, the IAAF (International Association of Athletics Federation) is the most influential body in track and field competition organizations.

The IAAF World Championships in Athletics, commonly referred to as the World Championships in Athletics (WCH), is one of the biggest sports events in the world, and is organized by the International Association of Athletics Federations. It has 214 members belonging to 6 regional federations in Europe, Asia, Africa, Central and North America, South America and Oceania. The main responsibility of WCH is to promote the sport of athletics globally while establishing and enforcing rules and regulations that protect the health of athletes and ensure fairness. Additional responsibilities include providing strategic direction to member organizations, setting age categorization rules, and managing anti-doping policies [1]. The competition began in 1976 in response to the International Olympic Committee's decision to remove the men's 50-kilometer walk from the Olympic program for the 1976 Montreal Olympics. Instead, a month and a half after the Olympics, the IAAF chose to host its own world championship event. It was the first World

Championships held by the IAAF apart from the Olympic Games (traditionally the main championship for the sport). The championships were initially held every four years until 1991, when they were changed to a two-year cycle. The competition has grown rapidly in terms of disciplines and athletes involved over the years, and becoming a world champion is now widely regarded as a huge accomplishment [1]. In 2019, IAAF has officially changed its name to World Athletics. Because of its reputation and the huge effects to the whole sports industry, the WCH is always a dream stage for athletes. Many world records have been set and broken in WCH, such as Usain Bolt's 100m and 200m world records, the Jamaican national team's 4x200m world record. As athletes must meet very high criteria in order to be chosen for the WCH, at the same time, the event's requirements for organization must also be very stringent. Many of the hardware and rules of major tournaments are also being changed to make them fairer and more professional. These reforms or measurement are beneficial for the development of the WCH.

Although WCH is large in scale, high in specification and fierce in competition, track and field is getting hard to get noticed, the influence and economics of the WCH are still lagging behind those of other sports like basketball and football. Therefore, there are still challenges for organization and management of WCH. In this paper, after reviewing the literatures on development and management of WCH and other sport events, this study aims to analyze the challenges of WCH from the perspectives of venue management and marketing management, propose the corresponding strategies to address these challenges.

## 2. Venue Management

The one choice that will have the biggest impact on the event is selecting the appropriate location and venue. The venue and location for the event will be a key factor that determines the impact of the event, economic benefit and attendees' experiences.

### 2.1. Selection of Host City

When selecting a host city for the World Championship (WCH), factors such as the scale of the event, traffic, and transportation are important considerations. In recent years, the spirit and culture of track and field sports in selected cities have also become important factors.

While large cities such as Beijing, Paris, and London are often considered as the first choice for hosting the WCH due to their scale and infrastructure, cities with a better mass base and cultural background are also becoming more attractive hosts [2]. One example is the 18th World Athletics Championships held in Eugene, Oregon, in the United States in 2022. Despite being a small city with a population of just 170,000, Eugene was chosen to host the WCH due to its reputation as "TrackTown USA" [3]. Eugene's strong culture advantage in track and field sports made it an attractive host city for the WCH. The city has a rich history of track and field athletics, with many track and field celebrities such as the legendary distance runner Steve Prefontaine, pioneering Coach Bill Bowerman, and champion decathlete Ashton Eaton. Additionally, Eugene has world-class stadiums within the campus of the University of Oregon, and a large number of knowledgeable and appreciative fans who can get up close with athletes who might go unnoticed in a bigger city [4].

This demonstrates that the residents' perceptions and culture of track and field sports in a city can be an important factor in hosting the WCH. By selecting a host city with a strong track and field culture, the WCH can create a more engaging and memorable experience for athletes and fans alike.

### 2.2. Design and Arrangement the Venue

The post-pandemic era has brought about an increased demand and heightened expectations for live events and entertainment. As a result, multi-purpose venues are becoming a trend in creating new and

diverse revenue streams. A truly multi-purpose venue with a mixed-use development or entertainment district can draw more crowds before and after events [5].

When designing a multi-purpose venue, it is important to consider the functions of the venue such as surrounding entertainment, retail, hotel, and office space [6]. This helps to attract a diverse array of fans and customers and maximize revenue both inside and outside the venue walls. WCH can leverage this trend by creating or selecting a venue that offers a variety of attractions and amenities, making it a destination for fans and non-fans alike.

In addition to selling the rights and tickets, the WCH can also maximize profit inside and outside the venue walls by selling derivatives of the events. These could include commemorative T-shirts of track and field events, toys of elite athletes, mini sports equipment, signature products jointly created by elite athletes and sports brands, souvenirs related to the events, and more. This generates additional revenue and creates a lasting memory for fans and attendees.

Therefore, when designing and arranging the WCH venue, it is essential to consider these issues. By creating a multi-purpose venue with diverse attractions and amenities, the WCH can expand its revenue streams and create a memorable experience for fans and attendees. By selling event derivatives, the WCH can generate additional revenue and make the event more accessible to a wider audience.

### **3. The Marketing of the World Championship**

The composition of the Athletics World Championships Administrative staff is made up of president, council, congress, committees, and member federations [1]. A series of well-known track and field events such as the World Championship and Diamond League are basically operated by WCH, which means it has mature experience in competition management. However, WCH still faces many challenges in marketing management, as it seeks to attract athletes, sponsors, fans, and media attention from around the world.

#### **3.1. Attracting the Athletes**

One of the biggest challenges facing WCH is increasing the quantity and quality of the athletes. The prize money must be substantial enough to attract high-level athletes from all over the world, but it must also be within the budget of the organizers.

The prize for the World Championship (WCH) is a reward for the winners and an important factor in attracting talented athletes from all over the world. The prize money attracts high-level athletes to compete and thus motivates them to produce better results. The cost of the prize is a part of the overall cost of organizing the championship, but it is a crucial investment in the quality of the event. By offering a substantial prize, the WCH is demonstrating its commitment to excellence and its recognition of the hard work and dedication of the athletes. The prize money serves as an incentive for athletes to train harder, perform better, and strive for victory. It also helps to raise the profile of the sport and the championship, attracting more fans and increasing media coverage. Moreover, the prize money can have a significant impact on the lives of the athletes themselves. For many athletes, the prize money represents a significant portion of their income, and it can provide crucial support for training, travel, and other expenses. By supporting the athletes in this way, the WCH is helping to ensure the continued growth and success of the sport.

Although WCH is a highly anticipated event in various sports, the prize money associated with this title has not always been consistent. Before 2022, the prize money for the World Athletics Championship was significantly lower compared to other sports. For instance, the winner of the event received \$60,000 while the runner-up received \$30,000. Starting in 2022, the prize money increased significantly. The prize money for the winner is set to \$70,000, and for the runner-up is \$35,000 [1].

The rise in prize money is a welcome change and a step towards achieving greater parity in sports. The prize for the WCH is not just a reward for the winners, but an investment in the quality of the event, the growth of the sport, and the support of the athletes. And meanwhile, the organizers must ensure that the prize money is sustainable and that the championship can continue to offer a competitive prize over the long term. This requires careful financial planning and forecasting, as well as a commitment to seeking out sponsors and other sources of revenue.

### **3.2. Increasing the Sponsors**

Sponsorship is a critical source of revenue for the WCH, but attracting sponsors can be challenging. Sponsors want to see a return on their investment, and the organizers must demonstrate the value of their sponsorship packages. This requires a strong understanding of the sponsor's needs and objectives, as well as a compelling value proposition.

To successfully attract sponsors, it is not enough for the organizers of WCH to simply offer sponsorship packages. They must also focus on sponsorship activation, which means creating opportunities for sponsors to engage with the event and its audiences. This is a crucial step in demonstrating the value of sponsorship packages and attracting long-term investment [7].

One way that the organizers can activate sponsorships is through hospitality events. This could include hosting exclusive events for sponsors, such as pre-competition dinners or VIP receptions. These events provide sponsors with the opportunity to engage with athletes and other key stakeholders, and to showcase their brand in a high-profile setting.

Another way to activate sponsorships is through branded content [8]. The organizers can work with sponsors to create compelling content that showcases the sponsor's products or services in a meaningful way. This could include videos, info graphics, or social media posts that highlight the sponsor's involvement in the event and its commitment to the sport.

Finally, social media campaigns are an effective way to activate sponsorships and engage with audiences [9]. The organizers can work with sponsors to create social media campaigns that promote the event and highlight the sponsor's involvement. By leveraging the power of social media, the organizers can reach a wider audience and generate excitement and engagement around the event.

To ensure the ongoing success of the WCH, the organizers must also measure the impact of their sponsorship packages and demonstrate the value of their investment. This means tracking key metrics, such as brand exposure, engagement, and sales, and providing sponsors with regular updates on their performance. By demonstrating the value of their investment, the organizers can build strong, long-term relationships with sponsors and ensure the ongoing success of the championship.

### **3.3. Building Fan Engagement**

Fan engagement is critical to the success of the WCH. The organizers must create a great event experience that appeals to fans and keeps them coming back year after year. This requires a deep understanding of the fan's needs and preferences, as well as a commitment to ongoing engagement.

One way to create a compelling fan experience is by offering unique amenities such as VIP seating, free merchandise, and access to athletes [10]. These amenities add value to the fans' experience and make them feel special. By providing fans with unique experiences, the organizers can create fans for life who will come back year after year.

Creating engaging content and interactive experiences is another way to build fan engagement. The organizers can create content that is shareable on social media, such as videos, images, and other interactive content [11]. This encourages fans to interact with the event online and share their experiences with others, which can lead to even more engagement and exposure for the event.

The organizers must also listen to their fans and respond to their feedback to ensure that the event meets their needs and expectations. This involves gathering feedback from fans through surveys, social media, and other channels, and using this feedback to improve the event experience [12]. By responding to fan feedback, the organizers can show fans that their opinions matter and that they are committed to creating an event that meets their needs.

WCH has made significant efforts in promoting the event through major social media platforms. The organizers have set up official accounts on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and Tiktok to release previews and real-time information about the events. They have also invested in advertising to attract more track and field fans to the event.

In addition, the World Championship is usually equipped with multi-camera shooting to improve the viewing experience. For example, in the running competition, the camera angles are taken by multiple high-speed cameras and drones, which enriches the content of the competition and allows fans to see the runners' running skills. Spectators at the event offline will receive souvenirs from World Championships officials, which adds a personal touch to the event and makes the fans feel appreciated. Viewers watching the event online will also be able to see the analysis of the event and replays from different perspectives, which helps them stay engaged and feel like they are part of the experience.

### **3.4. Attracting Media Attention**

Attracting media attention is critical for the success of WCH. In addition to using all kinds of social media platforms to share real-time updates and behind-the-scenes content from the event. Influencer marketing is another effective way to attract media attention to WCH.

Working with influencers in the sports and entertainment industries is a powerful strategy for promoting WCH and generating buzz. Influencers, such as athletes, coaches, and celebrities, have a large and engaged following on social media, which can be leveraged to attract attention to the event [13]. The organizers can identify influencers who align with the values and goals of the WCH and work with them to promote the event. This could include partnering with athletes who are competing in the event, coaches who have a strong track record of success, or celebrities who are passionate about track and field sports. The organizers can collaborate with these influencers in a variety of ways, such as sponsoring their social media posts, hosting exclusive events for them, or providing them with behind-the-scenes access to the event. By partnering with influencers, the WCH can tap into their large and engaged following and reach a wider audience. Working with influencers can also help to generate excitement and anticipation leading up to the event. By sharing exclusive content and behind-the-scenes access, influencers can create a sense of anticipation and build excitement among their followers, which can translate into increased interest and attendance at the event.

Finally, storytelling is a powerful and effective way to attract media attention [13]. By telling compelling stories about the athletes, coaches, and fans involved in the event, the organizers can capture the attention of journalists and audiences alike.

These stories can be shared through a variety of channels such as press releases, social media, and other media outlets. By sharing these stories, the organizers can generate interest and engagement in the event, as well as create a more personal connection between the audience and the participants.

For example, the organizers can tell the story of an athlete who overcame significant obstacles to compete in the WCH, or the story of a coach who has dedicated their life to training athletes for this event. These types of stories can inspire and engage audiences, and give them a deeper appreciation for the dedication and hard work that goes into preparing for the WCH. In addition to sharing stories about the athletes and coaches, the organizers can also share stories about the fans and their experiences at the event. These stories can showcase the excitement and energy of the event, as well as the diversity and passion of the fans who attend.

## 4. Conclusion

This study provides a detailed analysis of the challenges faced by WCH in terms of the venue management and marketing management. The WCH is a large-scale event that requires careful planning and execution to ensure its success. One of the main challenges faced by the WCH is selecting an appropriate location and venue that can accommodate the event's scale, infrastructure, and transportation needs. To address this challenge, the document proposes strategies such as selecting a host city with a strong track and field culture, and creating a multi-purpose venue with diverse attractions and amenities that can draw more crowds before and after events. Another significant challenge faced by the WCH is marketing the event to attract athletes, sponsors, fans, and media attention from around the world. To address this challenge, the study proposes strategies such as offering substantial prize money for athletes, creating a compelling fan experience that includes unique amenities and engaging content, activating sponsorships by creating opportunities for sponsors to engage with the event and its audiences, partnering with influencers to promote the event and generate buzz, and using storytelling to attract media attention and create a personal connection between the audience and the participants.

Overall, this study outlines several strategies that can be employed to address the challenges faced by the WCH in terms of venue management and marketing management. These strategies can help ensure the success and continued growth of the event, and provide athletes, fans, and sponsors with an engaging and memorable experience. This study also has some limitations, such as the lack of empirical data to support the proposed strategies. Further research is needed to test the effectiveness of these strategies and to identify other challenges of WCH.

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