

## Sports Mega Events: Impact to Inbound Tourism, Motorsport in Four Countries Vs Olympic Games in the Case of Greece



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**SUMMARY:** This paper examines the case of organizing motor sports mega events, in the context of the statistical data on tourism, for the countries Singapore - Turkey - Malaysia and Korea in relation to Greece over a 25-year horizon. The selection of these countries was based on their special morphological and touristic characteristics and the fact that these countries, apart from Greece, have undertaken to hold such major motor sports events.

The questions that arise from such a comparison and correlation are whether the organization of major motorsport events contributes to the development of tourism in the host country and if this is the case, what is the time horizon of their contribution and in what ways does it contribute to it concerning inbound tourist figures.

The discussion of the above statistical data was based on the literature (Angus et al. 2007, Chartas, P., et al. 2010, Varvaressos, 2009, Fisher and Wakefield, 1998, Hunt and Bashaw, 1999, Mitoula, 2006, Weed and Bull, 1997, Gibson et al. 2003, etc.) and the processing of published statistical data, in order to draw conclusions about the contribution or not of motor sports to the annual tourist arrivals of each country.

From the study, it appeared that the year countries organized motorsport events there was an increase in inbound tourism in a percentage of 22% on average, taking advantage of the motorsport event, mainly in terms of the country's international visibility and promotion, thus showing an increase in tourism in the years following the event as well. On the contrary, in Greece, despite having organized major sporting events (Olympic Games 2004), there is no statistical increase in tourist figures, except for the year 2013, which is also a research question.

In conclusion, as can be seen from the available statistics, in addition to other methods for tourism development, the inclusion of motor sport events appears to contribute significantly to the increase in touristic arrivals. Concerning Greece in particular, the inclusion of such events in order to further stimulate country's tourism, would be an important addition, especially if one considers the country's existing tourism industry and its geostrategic position.

**KEYWORDS:** Motorsport, tourist arrivals, tourism, Formula 1, sports tourism, statistical comparison, economic sustainability.

### INTRODUCTION

Sport, mainly through major sporting events, results in local development both in terms of cultural, social and economic criteria. This is seen in many cases with an excellent example being the case of Barcelona, where approximately 15 billion dollars were spent, resulting in the complete remodeling of the city which created a dynamic of 15-year growth (Cave and Leader, 2003). Also for Greece, where significant economic growth occurred at least for the years before and during the Olympic games in the country, compared to its European partners (PricewaterhouseCoopers 2004).

Globally, sport has the most ardent supporters and followers of any other commercial product. For the various peculiarities of each person in the world, innumerable sports activities and games have been created for their active participation. But apart from his active participation in the sport, man also likes to watch the spectacle of sports matches either from the stadium or from electronic media. Usually with the influence of the "halo effect" (Fisher and Wakefield 1998; Hunt and Bashaw, 1999), the sports fan likes a sport that expresses him and likes it because he might be able to actively participate in it. A sector that benefits the most from sport and is arguably inextricably linked to it, is tourism (Panagiotopoulos, et al. 2022a). Continuously in recent years, has been observed the phenomenon that individuals tend to combine tourism with sports activities or sports as a reason for tourism (Gibson, et al. 2003). On a global scale and especially in Western societies, the relationship between tourism, leisure and

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sports is very close. Sports tourism is the tourist activity, the trip with a starting point and return to the same location (Athinos, 1998) with the purpose of engaging in or watching a sporting event.

The tourism industry often uses sports as a powerful element to promote tourist destinations. Especially since 25% of domestic holidays are sport tourism (sport is the main purpose for the trip), and sport tourism (occasional participation in sport during the holiday season) accounts for almost 50% of domestic holidays (Weed and Bull 1997, 1998).

Also, worth mentioning is that sport constitutes approximately 2% of the GDP of developed countries (Ritchie, 2005) and the contribution of tourism to a country's GDP varies between 5 and 6% (WTO, 2001), the contribution of global tourism to the global GDP is 10.4% (WTTC, 2021), while for Greece this percentage is 12.6% (INSETE 2022)<sup>1</sup>. The direct relationship between tourism and sports is therefore observed, which is actually two-way. In other words, individuals may initiate leisure tourism and participate in sports activities or programs actively or passively for various reasons, or initiate a tourist activity arising from the individual's need to participate in sports activities, directly as athletes or indirectly as spectators, to watch a major sporting event such as the Olympic Games, the world football championship, formula 1 and others, such events are usually tourist destinations having as a primary motivation the tourist's sporting interest. Of course, in events of this scale, although tourist mobility is particularly high, there is also a particularly increased economic activity. An example is the television rights of such events which in many cases are worth billions of dollars, as their viewers are also counted in the billions.

Motorsport, as it is recorded in the literature (Angus et al, 2007) since the relevant federation called FIA (Federation Internationale de l'Automobile) has not defined otherwise (Dingle, 2009), is competitive speed racing using equal machines, on a periodic basis on racetracks specially designed for this purpose. These machines include grand touring cars, go-karts, rally, formula 1, two-wheeled machines and more. The nature of motorsport allows racing to take place in a variety of areas and conditions and for this reason, there is a plethora of classes. Motorsport is found in drag racing, dirt racing, drifting, and more, with production cars or state-of-the-art track racing cars. The crown of motor sports is considered the Formula 1 championship which finds its roots in 1950 and nowadays is a very profitable entertainment business which simultaneously brings about technological development in the automobile industry in general and tourism development in the places where events are hosted. Also characteristic of this particular league are the high financial benefits with the total revenues of the sport, which are steadily rising (statista.com)<sup>2</sup>, to reach \$1.78 billion in 2017, \$1.83 billion in 2018 and \$2.02 billion in 2019 before falling to \$1.15 billion in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic (cnbc.com)<sup>3</sup>.

This kind of organized efforts, with sufficient visibility, promotion, and systematic procedures, have not yet taken place in Greece, unfortunately. Exceptions are the rally acropolis, which returned after an absence of 8 years to the WRC calendar, as well as the highly promising Kart championship for Patras's city and its tourism, which has been held annually under the name PICK since 2009. At the same time, efforts have been made to create a Formula 1 race track in a city circuit which seems to be the best option for Greece, near Piraeus since it is the largest port in the Mediterranean and city street circuits are the trend in motoring sports lately. The importance of such an event is evident from data from other cities that host or have hosted a similar event. For example, in the USA the spectators in Indianapolis reach 200,000 for the three days of the F1 races, from 2000 to 2007 where the last event of the institution was held at this particular race track of America. In 2012, however, the USA reappeared on the F1 calendar with the organization of F1 races at the Circuit of the Americas, a circuit which cost \$400 million to build (bbc.com)<sup>4</sup>. The economic results of the decade 2010-2020 confirmed the estimates of the Americans (C.O.T.A.)<sup>5</sup>, with the direct benefit from the track events amounting around 400 to 500 million dollars per year and the total benefit to the state of TEXAS estimated at about 5 billion dollars for the track's ten-year contract with the International Motor Sports Federation (FIA). The sporting events hosted there attract approximately 300,000 spectators for each three-day Formula 1 race and 30 million television viewers. Given that the track also hosts other events such as nascar, moto gp and others, more than 6,000 seasonal jobs and 300 permanent jobs are created. Also 800,000 to 1.2 million spectators per year, 80% of whom are from out of state, visit the facility each year to watch motorsports with an average stay in the state of 4.6 days and average daily expenditure at about 1,500 dollars. These figures lead

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<sup>1</sup><https://insete.gr/bi/%ce%b7-%cf%83%cf%85%ce%bc%ce%b2%ce%bf%ce%bb%ce%ae-%cf%84%ce%bf%cf%85-%cf%84%ce%bf%cf%85%cf%81%ce%b9%cf%83%ce%bc%ce%bf%cf%8d-%cf%83%cf%84%ce%b7%ce%bd-%ce%b5%ce%bb%ce%bb%ce%b7%ce%bd%ce%b9%ce%ba%ce%ae/>

<sup>2</sup><https://www.statista.com/statistics/1137226/formula-one-revenue/#statisticContainer>

<sup>3</sup><https://www.cnbc.com/2021/02/26/formula-one-revenues-dropped-by-877-million-in-2020.html>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/news/business-20305619>

<sup>5</sup> <http://circuitoftheamericas.com/economic-impact>

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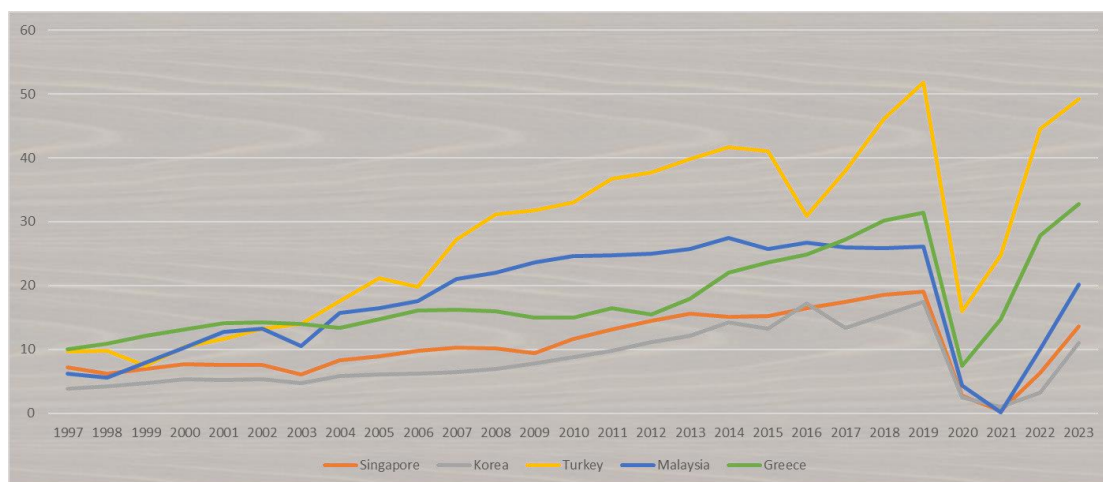
to the conclusion that a single year of motor sports brings the state a total of \$1.7 billion in revenue as the track's official website confirms with its economic impact analysis (<http://circuitoftheamericas.com/economic-impact>). Additionally, just for the three-hour televised coverage of the race, approximately \$200 million is spent on advertising, part of which is revenue for the track and by extension the state.

The present work presents cases of countries organized motor sports mega events and correlating them with the annual number of tourists in the countries of Singapore - Turkey - Malaysia and Korea compared to Greece over a 25-year horizon. The questions that arise from such a comparison and correlation is whether the organization of major motorsport events contributes to the development of tourism in the host country in terms of the number of inbound tourists and if this is the case, what is the time horizon of their contribution and within what ways it can contribute to it. The method used in this work is the review of the literature, while the selection of the compared countries was made on the basis of the relative similarity of their special morphological and touristic characteristics, and on the other hand, the fact that these countries, apart from Greece, undertook in this period of time to hold major motorsport events.

### Comparison of inbound tourism

The comparison of the changes in the inbound tourists' figures is of particular interest, especially for countries that have hosted or hosting motor sports events, especially the most demanding event, the Formula 1 championship. The countries that seemed necessary to relate to the case of Greece are: Singapore, Turkey, Malaysia and Korea over a 25-year horizon for the reasons already mentioned.

Characteristics of the sport and its profitability as well as its contribution to the tourism of a country are shown by the following figures. The seven countries that joined the Formula 1 race program the previous decade saw an increase in tourism arrivals by an average of 69% (Sylv and Reid, 2011). In this particular study, the difference in the number of tourists in each country hosting an F1-level race was calculated, from the year before the takeover until the end of 2010. This research, based on measurements by the United Nations organization (UNWTO, 2010), showed that the countries that hosted the event for the first time showed an increase in the inflow of tourists to the country, significantly higher than the global increase in tourism during the same period which was only 48%. The greatest benefit from organizing the races was felt in Malaysia, which from 1999, where the Malaysian grand prix began, until the end of 2010, showed an increase in tourism of 342.8%, namely from 5.6 million tourists to 24.6 arrivals for 2010. Moreover, a significant number of 3.4 million sports fans watched the sport as spectators, when a large part of them were tourists from other countries, while more than 515 million sports fans around the world watch it as television viewers. These figures show the amount of display and promotion a country is being benefited when actively organizing and hosting a Formula 1 race. In total, new entrants to the field of motorsport received 137.2 million international tourists in 2010 compared to 81.2 million arrivals before the start of their contract with the International Motor Sports Federation (FIA). So, there is an upward trend in these countries which does not seem to be slowing down. The data of inbound tourists for the 5 countries mentioned above, are shown in the picture 1 below. The data starts from 1997 to 2023 including the years 2020 and 2021 where the Covid-19 pandemic broke out, although the comparison for these years is not particularly meaningful, indeed they show the extremely large extend that tourism was affected overall on the planet.



Picture 1 Annual tourist arrivals

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In more detail concerning the countries above, tourism arrivals are shaped as below with special interest to be observed in the changes in arrivals during the event (see Pictures 2,3,4,5,6). The years in which the major sporting event took place are shown in red.

### Singapore - Marina Bay 2008 – 2014 & 2022 onwards

Year	Tourist numbers in millions	% Tourist figures change	Key Moments
1997	7,20	-1.30	
1998	6,24	-13.28%	
1999	6,96	11.47%	
2000	7,69	10.54%	
2001	7,52	-2.20%	
2002	7,57	0.60%	
2003	6,13	-19.04%	
2004	8,33	35.92%	
2005	8,94	7.4%	
2006	9,75	9.0%	
2007	10,28	5.5%	Event Taking
2008	10,12	-1.6%	Start
2009	9,35	-4.3%	
2010	11,64	20.2%	
2011	13,17	13.1%	
2012	14,50	10.1%	
2013	15,57	7.4%	
2014	15,10	-3%	
2015	15,23	0,9%	
2016	16,40	7,7%	
2017	17,42	6,2%	
2018	18,51	6,2%	
2019	19,11	3,2%	
2020	2,74	-85,66%	Covid-19
2021	0,33	-87,96%	
2022	6,31	1812,12%	Re-start
2023	13,61	115,69%	

Picture 2 Singapore - Marina Bay 2008 - 2023<sup>6</sup>

The Singapore Formula 1 (F1) Night Race (2008-2019), since 2008, attracts on average around 250,000 sports tourists and motorsport fans accumulative for the three days of the races. In the first years of its holding, it added to the country's income an average of 140 million dollars annually during the three days of the race (Sylt and Reid, 2011). It is the first Grand Prix in Asia to be held on city streets, and in its first year it contributed at about \$132 million to the state's income from tourism sector. Over the next three years the F1 race helped boost tourism earnings by \$278 million. Singapore encourages arriving tourists to spend more money by providing plenty of additional events, such as the F1 night race. The Singapore tour package also includes other activities and attractions such as the panda forest and the marine life park. Also, the Universal Studios casinos, mall and theme park which contributed to tourism growth of 13% in 2011 after a profitable year of 20% growth in 2010. The country's motto concerning

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.statista.com/statistics/977993/total-international-visitor-arrivals-singapore/>

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tourism is "enhancing our destination attractiveness". It is worth noting that while the country's tourism is in the range of 10 million tourists per year until 2009, after the promotion that the country received worldwide from the two consecutive years of holding the F1 event, this number gradually increases every year until 2019 where was held for the last time consecutively. The three-day Formula 1 event in 2020 and 2021 did not take place in Singapore due to the COVID-19 pandemic, while it has been included in the 2022 race program with a contract until 2028. It is important to emphasize that in the first event after the pandemic (2022), the daily concentration of spectators exceeded 100,000 while correspondingly for the three days of the games it exceeded 300,000 for only the second time after 2008. In 2023 it continued to rise in numbers with a very high attraction similarly to the last years before the pandemic. These show that the country continues to invest in "enhancing our destination attractiveness" and already having evaluate the result of holding an F1 specification race as positive, it extends the racing contract thus expanding the factors that make it form a profile of an attractive tourist destination.

### Korea - Korean gran prix 2010-2013

Year	Tourist numbers in millions	% Tourist figures change	Key Moments
1997	3,90	-	
1998	4,25	8.8%	
1999	4,66	9.6%	
2000	5,32	14.2%	
2001	5,15	-3.3%	
2002	5,35	3.9%	
2003	4,75	-11.1%	
2004	5,82	22.4%	
2005	6,02	3.5%	
2006	6,16	2.2%	
2007	6,45	4.8%	
2008	6,89	6.9%	
2009	7,82	13.4%	Event Taking
2010	8,80	12.5%	Start
2011	9,80	11.3%	
2012	11,14	13.7%	
2013	12,18	9.3%	
2014	14,20	16,6%	
2015	13,23	-6,8%	
2016	17,24	30,3%	
2017	13,34	-22,7%	
2018	15,35	15,1%	Winter Olympics
2019	17,50	14%	
2020	2,52	-85,6%	Covid-19
2021	0,97	-61,51%	
2022	3,2	229,9%	
2023	11,03	244,69%	

Picture 3 Korea - Korean gran prix 2010 - 2013<sup>7</sup>

Regarding the case of Korea (2010-2013), the increase in inbound tourism can be seen from 2009, the year the games were awarded, with an increase of 13.4%. This increase in the number of tourist arrivals in Korea continued with growing rates of 12.5%,

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.statista.com/statistics/709116/south-korea-inbound-visitors/>

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11.3%, 13.7% for the following years and 9.3% respectively for 2013 which was also the last time Formula 1 grand prix was held there. However, the exposure the country and city received in those four years of holding the F1 event was enough for the number of incoming tourists to rise from 5 to 6 million annually to more than 12 million from 2013 onwards. In just 4 years, Korea has doubled its inbound tourism by taking on major sports events such as the F1 three-day event and investing overall in its tourism product and the promotion of the country. Korea is a completely different case from that of Singapore, choosing to invest in this event and to take advantage in the short term of the mainly indirect benefits arising from it, which concern the promotion and image of the country in the international tourism landscape. Accordingly, this is demonstrated by the hosting of the Winter Olympic Games in 2018, an event which contributed to the further increase of the percentage of incoming tourism by 15% in the year it was held and 14% the following. After the rapid decline in the country's tourism due to COVID, from 17.5 million tourists to less than 1million, it is recovering at a steady increasing rate.

### Τουρκία - Istanbul Park 2005-2011 & 2020, 2021

Year	Tourist numbers in millions	% Tourist figures change	Key Moments
1997	9,69	-	
1998	9,75	0,6%	
1999	7,49	-23,2%	
2000	10,43	39,2%	
2001	11,62	11,4%	
2002	13,26	14,1%	
2003	14,03	5,8%	
2004	17,52	10,6%	Event Taking
2005	21,13	20,6%	Start
2006	19,82	-6,1%	
2007	27,21	37,3%	
2008	31,14	14,4%	
2009	31,76	2,0%	
2010	33,00	3,9%	FIBA world championship
2011	36,77	11,4%	
2012	37,71	2,56%	
2013	39,86	5,7%	
2014	41,63	4,4%	
2015	41,11	-1,2%	
2016	30,91	-24,8%	
2017	37,97	22,8%	Eurobasket
2018	46,11	21,4%	
2019	51,75	12,2%	
2020	15,97	-69,14%	Covid-19
2021	24,71	54,73%	
2022	44,56	80,33%	
2023	49,21	10,45%	

Picture 4 Turkey - Istanbul Park 2005-2011, 2020-2021 (according to Turkey's Ministry of Tourism)<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup>

<https://www.ktb.gov.tr/EN-249307/tourism-receipts-and-expenditures.html>

KAL

<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/ST.INT.ARVL?locations=TR>

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According to data retrieved from the Ministry of Tourism and the Turkish Statistical Service (TurkStat, 2014) as well as the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of Turkey (M.C.T., 2014), the highest peak in tourism inflows was in the years 2008 to 2011. The \$20.9 billion 2007 income, increased by about a quarter to reach \$25.4 billion in 2008, while in 2011, Turkey saw an increase of \$3 billion from the previous year. In the last consecutive years of holding the F1 Grand Prix (up to 2013), Turkey's income from tourism increased from \$25 billion in 2008 to around \$31 billion.

The number of visitors of the country has also increased significantly, with the total number of visitors from 14 million in 2003 reaching 39.9 million in 2013 and almost 52 million in 2019. Which demonstrates the gradual attraction of tourists to the country especially after being awarded the grand prix of Istanbul (2005-2011) in 2004. The year Turkey took over the event in 2004, had an inbound tourism of 17.5 million tourists and in 2012, the year after which the event stopped being held there, it had reached 38 million tourists. The number of 38 million tourists remained almost at the same level for the next five years until 2017 when it took over the hosting of another major sporting event of the European basketball championship, which contributed to the further increase in the number of tourists. To their credit, both of these events respectively contributed to Turkey's image, both in glamor and exposure, making it one of the leading tourist countries in the world, reaching 51.75 million tourists in 2019.

During the three days of Formula 1 races, tourism in Turkey increased by 60.5 percent whenever a race was held according to The Richest (2013). This was despite the fact that Turkey is a country with a very developed tourism product and a large tourism industry. Importantly, the Turkish government encouraged tourism during the games by lifting visa restrictions (which is a requirement for entering the country) during the week of the games (TheRichest, 2013), which shows that the policy will and actions are those that can bring about big changes in a country's tourists inbound as well as to its image abroad. Proof of Turkey's very strong touristic identity is the decline in tourism during the pandemic years, which is one of the smallest recorded with a drop of only 69% for one year and the rising right the next one at about 54%, 80% and 10% in 2023 returning within 3 years in the historically high numbers of incoming tourism. Although Turkey had been excluded from the F1 race program, it nevertheless took over the holding of races in 2020, the main covid year and the following one, which is a possible factor concerning the relatively small drop (other countries nearly reached zero inbound tourism) as well as for the immediate rise in the number of incoming tourists, thus being a possible example of a substantial contribution of a major sporting event to a country's incoming tourism.

### Malaysia - Petronas Malaysian gran prix 1999-2017

Year	Tourist numbers in millions	% Tourist figures change	Key Moments
1997	6,21	-	
1998	5,55	-10,63%	Event Taking
1999	7,93	42,88%	Start
2000	10,22	28,88%	
2001	12,77	24,95%	
2002	13,29	4,07%	
2003	10,58	-20,39%	
2004	15,70	48,39%	
2005	16,43	4,65%	
2006	17,55	6,82%	
2007	20,97	19,49%	
2008	22,05	5,15%	
2009	23,65	7,26%	
2010	24,58	3,93%	
2011	24,71	0,53%	
2012	25,03	1,30%	
2013	25,71	2,72%	
2014	27,44	6,73%	
2015	25,72	-6,27%	
2016	26,76	4,04%	

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<b>2017</b>	<b>25,95</b>	<b>-3,03%</b>	
<b>2018</b>	<b>25,83</b>	<b>-0,46%</b>	
<b>2019</b>	<b>26,10</b>	<b>1,05%</b>	
<b>2020</b>	<b>4,33</b>	<b>-83,41%</b>	<b>Covid-19</b>
<b>2021</b>	<b>0,14</b>	<b>-96,77%</b>	
2022	10,07	7092,86%	
2023	20,14	100%	

Picture 5 Malaysia - Petronas Malaysian gran prix 1999-2017<sup>9</sup>

The Malaysian Grand Prix, which also bears the name of its main sponsor, the Petronas oil company, was held for the first time in 1999 and from the very first year the number of inbound tourism showed an increase of 43% achieving a doubling of inbound tourists by only the third year of the Gran Prix. The F1 three-day event and its consequent indirect and direct benefits, has helped the Malaysian tourism industry concerning the number of country's visitors to increase rapidly by 297% over a decade for the years 1998-2008 and boosted its tourism by 2.5 times from 2000 to 2010 where it reached almost 25 million of inbound tourists. After this decade of tourism development, the country's tourism has steadily numbered around 25 million tourists annually. When the Malaysian Grand Prix race was first held, it helped attract around 2.5 million more tourists than in previous years, with Malaysia receiving a 42.9% increase in inbound tourism. The number of visitors since then has been increasing by leaps and bounds, as shown in Mohamed's (2002) research. However, this increase, as recorded in the table in Picture 5, stops or continues decreasing with certain fluctuations from the year 2011 onwards. This is due to many factors such as the overall tourism potential of Malaysia and the touristic threshold, but also to a large extent to the holding of the neighboring Singapore grand prix which had started in 2008 and as the first night race and received very high visibility and exposure, thus overshadowed that of Malaysia in the Asian market. This fact is also the reason why the Malaysian three-day event was stopped because in 2017 the cost of participating in the world championship did not correspond to the additional benefits of such participation, since it was no longer the only Asian race together only with that of Japan, according to then Minister of Youth and Sports of the Malaysian Government (Express, 2017). In the years after the 2019 pandemic, even though the country's inbound tourism was almost zero, it recovered within 2 years, although not completely.

### Olympic Games – Athens 2004

With reference to all the above figures presented by the relation tourism has to major sporting events, it is interesting to compare them with Greece's figures for tourism and arrivals for the corresponding years from 1997 to 2023. The years 2020 to 2023 are not considered that much of particular interest due to the effects of the global COVID-19 pandemic that changed the global touristic landscape. Greece did not host a Formula 1 championship race but did host a major sporting event in 2004 with the Athens Olympic Games. In this case, the differences are found in the year of assignment, the holding of the big event for a single year and its duration since it is not held for a few days but for two months should the Paralympic games are also taken into account. The year in which the games were commissioned in this case is two Olympiads ago, that is almost 8 years, namely 1997. This is the reason why tourist arrivals for all the above countries are examined from 1997 onwards.

<b>Year</b>	<b>Tourist numbers in millions</b>	<b>% Tourist figures change</b>	<b>Key Moments</b>
<b>1997</b>	<b>10,07</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>Selection</b>
<b>1998</b>	<b>10,92</b>	<b>8,40%</b>	
<b>1999</b>	<b>12,16</b>	<b>11,43%</b>	
<b>2000</b>	<b>13,10</b>	<b>7,66%</b>	
<b>2001</b>	<b>14,06</b>	<b>7,34%</b>	
<b>2002</b>	<b>14,18</b>	<b>0,87%</b>	
<b>2003</b>	<b>13,97</b>	<b>-1,49%</b>	
<b>2004</b>	<b>13,31</b>	<b>-4,70%</b>	<b>Event holding</b>

<sup>9</sup> <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/ST.INT.ARVL?locations=MY>, <https://www.tourism.gov.my/statistics>



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2005	14,77	10,91%	
2006	16,04	8,63%	
2007	16,17	9,22%	
2008	15,94	-1,4%	
2009	14,91	-6,4%	
2010	15,01	0,6%	
2011	16,43	9,5%	
2012	15,52	-5,5%	
2013	17,92	15,5%	
2014	22,03	22,9%	
2015	23,60	7,1%	
2016	24,80	5,1%	
2017	27,19	9,6%	
2018	30,12	10,8%	
2019	31,35	4,1%	
2020	7,37	-76,49%	Covid-19
2021	14,71	99,59%	
2022	27,84	89,26%	
2023	32,74	17,6%	

Picture 6 Athens Olympic Games 2004<sup>10</sup>

As recorded in the above table in Picture 6 (ELSTAT, 2014), a particular increase in inbound tourists is observed from the time Greece took over the games (1997) and thereafter, with a slight decline in the year of the games and the year before that, when most of the preparations for the games took place. An increase in arrivals is observed again in the following three years, which, however, does not reach the growth rates of other countries such as those that undertook and organize another type of event (such as F1 race), with the annual changes amounting to 10.9% in 2005, 8.6% in 2006 and 9.2% for 2007 respectively. In the case of Greece at least, the holding of the Olympic Games does not seem to have had the same results nor the same influence in improving its tourist image, in contrast to countries that have successfully organized the biggest sports tourism event, that of Formula 1 and noticed an ever-increasing demand for their tourism product over a significant number of years.

### Summary of comparison

From all the above, it emerges that the countries that organized major motor sports events, that year showed an increase in incoming tourism at about 22% on average, taking advantage of the motor sports event, mainly in terms of the promotion and exposure of the country internationally, thus presenting gradual increase in inbound tourism. Also, the following years of undertaking the event, there was a significant rise to the inbound tourism of these countries by up to 27%. In particular, Singapore did not show an increase in the first year of the F1 event, Turkey showed an increase of 20.6%, Korea 12.5% and Malaysia 42.9% in tourist arrivals. On the contrary, in countries such as Greece which, despite having organized a major sporting event, there is no significant percentage increase in tourists, except for the year 2013 and after, which is also a research question. Specifically in the case of Greece, the increase in tourist arrivals occurred in the following year of the sports event and lasted for two more years, showing a downward trend in the next few years, in contrast to the changes observed in the rest of the countries as presented above, where the increase lasted for a considerably longer period.

The data mentioned above, show the special contribution of sports to the tourism of a country to a certain extent and especially to its international promotion. It can be concluded that motor sports is a part of the sports world which shows quite a lot of dynamics and potential from a touristic point of view. Accordingly, a major sporting event held annually seems to be a rather

<sup>10</sup> <https://insete.gr/statistika-eiserxomenou-tourismou/> και

[http://www.gnto.gov.gr/sites/default/files/files\\_basic\\_pages/Analisi\\_touristikis\\_kinisis\\_2001-2010.pdf](http://www.gnto.gov.gr/sites/default/files/files_basic_pages/Analisi_touristikis_kinisis_2001-2010.pdf),

<https://insete.gr/statistika-eiserxomenou-tourismou/>

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more appropriate choice of event than a one-off event in order to achieve continuous enhancement of a country's tourism. Motorsport satisfies this condition while appearing to contribute significant direct and indirect benefits.

The advantage of building motorsport infrastructures, specifically those of F1 specifications, in terms of costs, is that they are not only used for one race in the F1 racing program but can accommodate any category of motorsport that is held on tarmac including the Touring Championship (WTCC), the Gp2 and Gp3 categories, kart races, drift shows and more. But apart from these events, a circuit of such specifications even when there is no race being held, can be made exploitable by amateur drivers, paying a fee, as is done at the now historic German Nürburgring circuit, the Turkish circuit and other similar facilities around the world. These actions have as a result the track being operated throughout the year thus providing a steady stream of revenue to the country from occasional users, subscriptions, sponsors and more. Such an undertaking provides multiple benefits to society as well, since citizens have the opportunity to run with their car or even race, in safe conditions within a space specially designed for this purpose, instead of the city streets, after all, through sports there is a clear reduction of the human tendency for criminality (Jugl, Bender and Losel, 2021). Something like this has been seen in America (D.L.G., 2014) and in New Zealand (N.Z.H., 2014) as shown in special studies that took place there but also in Germany and Great Britain (komonews, 2013). In these countries, in addition to the F1 specification race tracks, have been built race tracks that are purely intended for races between citizens so that they do not take part in illegal races on public roads. In the countries mentioned above and specifically in America, the fee for participating in a race or using a race track is less than a ticket for speeding or the respective ticket for participating in illegal street racing. In this way, mainly young people and other friends of motor sports are effectively encouraged to use the specially designed facilities, resulting in the ever-reduced number of traffic accidents and fatalities.

In this type of events, Greece should probably also invest in order to diversify its tourism product which remains Mediterranean (Chartas, P., et al., 2010) in the sun and sea standards and has not succeeded in diversifying it in order to mitigate its dependence on organized holiday tourism and mass (non-sustainable) tourism in order to maximize and extend the period of tourism demand in the country.

In conclusion, from the above it becomes clear that motor sports when used as a tool to boost alternative tourism, is presented to be a driving force for sustainable tourism development on the one hand and on the other hand for sustainable economic, cultural and social development. Nowadays, the concept of sustainability has gone beyond the environmental context itself (Mitoula, 2006) and affects ecosystems, the economy, technological development, society and culture. This seems to happen through sport (Panagiotopoulos, et al. 2022b) and major sporting events, contributing to the economy through tourism and to the other aspects of sustainable development, to the environment through new technologies and the promotion of efficiency and effectiveness of machines, in culture through the educative nature of sports, noble rivalry, road safety and the global promotion of countries in matters of education, morals, culture and customs.

### **CONCLUSION**

Major sports events contribute significantly to the development of tourism, while large motor sports events seem to have comparatively more benefits for the host country. In particular, large scale motorsports events, are shown to bring multiple direct and indirect benefits, while these benefits have a longer duration than one-off large-scale sports events. The benefits deriving from the organization of major motorsport events are found in society, in culture, in the environment and of course the main benefit is found in the economy. It ultimately contributes to all three pillars of sustainable development (Purvis, Mao & Robinson, 2019). In particular, the contribution to the economy of the place and by extension the host country is great, both directly with the profits during the event but also indirectly through the impact it has on the country's tourism and international visibility. Also, the difference in the organization of such a big sporting event is the repeatability that motor sports offer, whereas the Olympic Games or the world football championship for example do not. These are some of the reasons why the four countries examined showed an immediate and sustained increase in inbound tourism after the first F1 race was held on their territory, compared to Greece which saw a rise in the number of inbound tourists only on next year and for two more years. Finally, an initiative by Greece to develop motor sports and road education, with the creation of a Formula 1 specification track, is very likely to be crowned with success if one considers the corresponding experience of other countries that are relatively close to Greece's tourist standards. Also, the glamour and appeal of F1 in the eyes of the international tourist, would work positively towards the image of the country abroad, resulting in the redefinition of the tourism product of Greece.

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