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CHARACTERISTICS OF POLISH NATIONAL FOOTBALL TEAM FANS AS SPORTS TOURISTS

Key words: football fans, sports spectacle, sports tourism, physical activity.

ABSTRACT

The aim of the present study was to draw a comprehensive profile of Polish national football team fans ('passive' sports tourists), and to identify the determinants of their physical activity behaviours. The study was carried out at the Silesian Stadium in Chorzów on a randomly selected fan sample during a football match between Poland and Belgium in 2007. Data were gathered through a diagnostic survey using authors' own survey questionnaire. The results have shown that a Polish national football team fan is likely to be a male aged 19 to 35 years with at least a high school diploma, resident in a city with a population of 10,000 to 500,000. National football team fans spend around 100 to 200 PLN on the event itself; other expenses include accommodation and transport costs and catering services. Physical activity of football fans compares favourably with that of the total youth and adult population. A relationship has also been found between interest in football/participation in football events and engagement in physical activities.

INTRODUCTION

Sport and tourism are those spheres of daily life whose importance continues to grow. They are both extremely diverse and multidimensional social phenomena subjected to continual systematic changes resulting from civilizational, social, economic, cultural, and technological developments. Tourism, although not at all easy to define, requires movement outside the place where one lives, travelling and spending time at attractive tourist destinations. Although the understanding of *tourism* is similar in Poland and other European countries, the term *sport* has a narrower definition compared to Europe. According to theoreticians [3, 9] and the Sport Act of 25 June 2010, sport, physical

education, and movement rehabilitation are all the constituents of physical culture.

Z. Ważny points out that in numerous European countries *sport* is regarded as 'an essential part of contemporary culture consisting of voluntary activities resulting in or maintaining a relatively high level of physical fitness; also, quite frequently, demonstration of physical fitness skills via participation in different types of competition or special shows' [15, p. 10]. Also R. Tomik emphasizes that, due to the process of globalization and opening of country borders, there is a need for a broader understanding of the term *sport* in Poland, namely, sport should be defined as physical activity engaged in competitively [14]. This is in line with the above mentioned Sport Act passed in

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the first half of 2010, which defines sport as all types of temporarily undertaken or organized physical activities that influence the development or improvement of physical and mental condition, increase community spirit, and help achieve outstanding results at all levels of competition.

Not infrequently does sport affect the development of tourism, and vice versa, tourism may contribute to the development of sport through progress in the provision of infrastructure. Access to a wide range of infrastructure facilities (accommodation, gastronomy, transport, and recreation) results in an increase in the number of sport-motivated trips with the traveller planning to passively or actively participate in sports activities – in the broad sense of the word [12].

The development of sports and tourism infrastructure (hotels, gastronomy, transport) determines the chance of a given country or place to win the rights to host further sports events, and, in consequence, boosts the tourist inflow, including arrivals of sports fans. Examples of such countries are the United States (organization of the Olympic Games) as well as Germany and Italy (World Cup and European Football Championships). In Poland similar events, although smaller in size, were organized in the Katowice Spodek arena complex (major indoor games) and at the Stadion Śląski in Chorzów (from now on referred to as the Silesian Stadium).

Although international research studies on the subject have widely addressed the issues of sports tourism [2, 10, 12, 19], only few Polish publications have been available. This might partly be explained by the hitherto lack of prestigious global sports events being organized in Poland such as the Olympics, World or European Championships, especially in the most popular sports.

Sports tourism is one of the most dynamically developing sectors of the tourism trade in the world [6]. Z. Krawczyk believes the enhancement of sports tourism stems from movement recreation and the development of professional sport and the sports spectacle [7]. Sports tourism has emerged from tourist activities of sports fans associated with the participation in a sporting event; the latter may become an important determinant of the attractiveness of a tourist destination.

Due to the subject matter of the present paper, the authors have chosen to adhere to the

definition of sports tourism as travelling to places where national or international sporting events are organized. The travel involves both physically active (athletes – football players) and physically passive participants (fans).

The purpose of the present paper was to draw a comprehensive profile of Polish national football team fans ('passive' sports tourists), and to identify the determinants of their physical activity.

The following research questions were formulated:

1. What are the demographic and social characteristics of the Polish national football team fans?
2. What is the structure and magnitude of costs associated with travelling to a football match?
3. Is there any relationship between the engagement in physical activities and participation in a football match as a team fan?

METHODS

The study was carried out among a representative sample of randomly selected fans who had arrived to participate in a football match between Poland and Belgium at the Silesian Stadium in Chorzów on 17 November 2007 (knockout tournament of the 2008 European Football Championships – Austria and Switzerland 2008). Four hundred and fifty seats were selected out of the stadium capacity of 45,000 seats; four hundred and nine questionnaires were eligible for analysis; some selected respondents refused to participate in the study, some questionnaires were completed incorrectly, and several seats remained empty. The statistical error of the research sample was $\pm 4\%$ ($p = 0.95$).

Data were gathered through a diagnostic survey using our own survey questionnaire containing instructions for respondents, and consisting of 9 open-ended and 7 demographics questions. A pilot study was performed among second-year students of the Sport Management Faculty of the Jerzy Kukuczka Academy of Physical Education in Katowice. The stadium survey began three hours before the kickoff and continued until minute 30 before the first whistle of the referee. If the fans were not in their seats (the seat was empty), the pollster returned to meet them during the half-time break.

Multidimensional statistical analysis (including Chi-square tests) was carried out to identify factors significantly affecting the engagement or non-engagement of football fans in physical activities.

RESULTS

Social and demographic characteristics of football fans

The proportions of female and male football fans were 16.4% and 83.6%, respectively. Considering the survey site, i.e., the Silesian Stadium, it is not surprising that the majority of fans arrived from Upper Silesia (40.8%), the neighbouring Małopolskie (12.7%) and Mazowieckie provinces (10.3%). There were also fans from almost all other Polish provinces but the proportion thereof was markedly lower (Fig. 1).

27.4% of the study participants arrived from cities with 10,000 to 50,000 residents. Every fourth fan came from a big city (500,000 – 1,000 000). Over 70% of fans were from cities with a population of 10,000 to 500,000 (Fig. 2).

Despite some differences in respondent age, at least two out of three were 19 to 35 years old. Less than 5% of the study population were under the age of 18, and only few individuals were over the age of 55 (Fig. 3).

The majority of subjects had at least a high school diploma. Every third fan had a high school diploma or a university degree. Another variant, i.e., incomplete higher education was selected by every fourth respondent; however, a detailed analysis revealed that 40% of the group were students; thus a proportion of the study participants were future university graduates (Fig. 4).

69.7% of the respondents declared they were professionally active, and every fourth was a

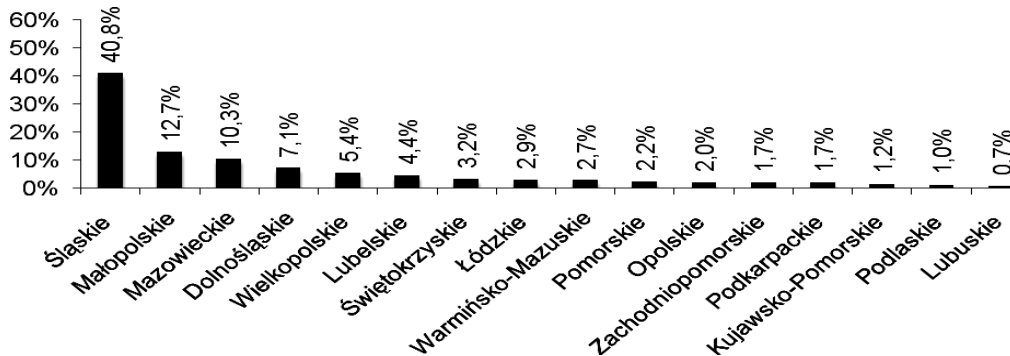


Figure 1. Proportion of football fans from different provinces of Poland

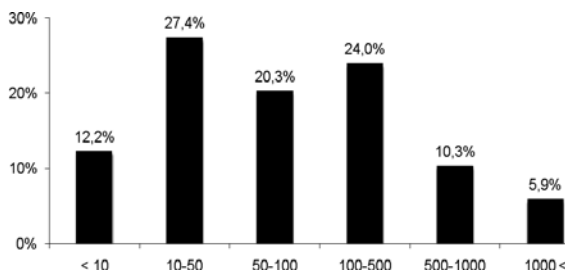


Figure 2. Proportion of football fans by population size of the place of residence (population in thousands)

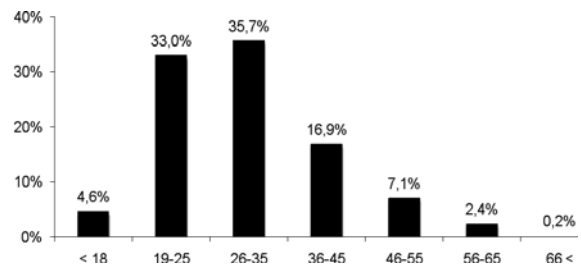


Figure 3. Proportion of football fans by age

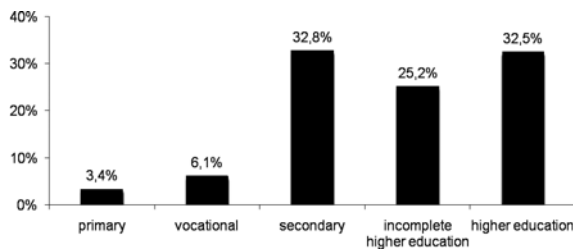


Figure 4. Proportion of football fans by education

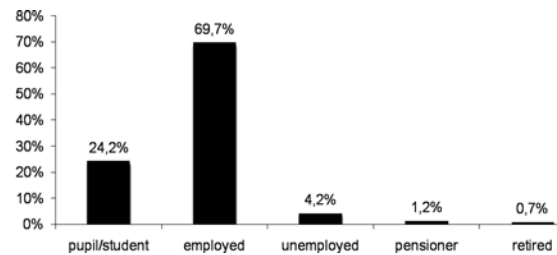


Figure 5. Proportion of football fans by professional status

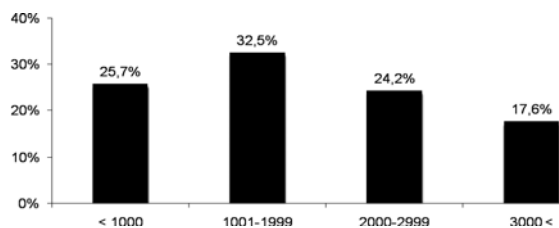


Figure 6. Proportion of football fans by their net monthly income (PLN)

student (24.2%). Unemployed and retired respondents and pensioners constituted a minority, i.e., 6% of the study sample (Fig. 5).

The net monthly income per household member was comparable among all fans although respondents with net earnings in the range of 1,000 to 2,000 PLN were slightly more numerous. Every fourth fan earned $\leq 1,000$ PLN and also every fourth had net monthly income of 2,000 to 3,000 PLN (Fig. 6).

The Chi-square analysis of the interest in football among Polish national football team fans revealed that the most important factors discriminating fans interested in football from those who are not were the fact of watching football games on TV, gender, marital status, practising football, and active team support at the stadium (Tab. 1).

Table 1. Factors influencing interest in football

Factor	Chi-square	p
Watching football games on TV	136.81	0.0000
Gender	24.85	0.0000
Marital status	17.98	0.0012
Practising football	13.01	0.0015
Active team support at the stadium ('live')	9.89	0.0017

Spectating frequency was also investigated; it turned out that regular or occasional support of the team depends on the fact of watching football games on TV, gender, practising football, trips to the stadium and practising sports other than football (Tab. 2).

Table 2. Determinants of active team support at the stadium

Factor	Chi-square	p
Watching football games on TV	49.12	0.0000
Gender	12.15	0.0005
Active team support at the stadium	10.64	0.0011
Practising sports other than football	13.54	0.0011
Costs related to travelling to an event	7.24	0.0071
Selection of the media for passive support (TV, radio, Internet, newspapers)	11.60	0.0089
Practising football	7.54	0.0230

Structure and magnitude of costs associated with travelling to and watching the game

National football team fans spend around 100 to 200 PLN on the event. However, every fifth fan admits spending over 500 PLN (Fig. 7).

The analysis has shown that, apart from the cost of an event ticket, the expenses also include accommodation after and/or prior to the event (17.4% of fans). Almost half of the respondents (47.2%) use catering, and 59.4% transport services; this is consistent with the fact of 40% coming from the province or, maybe, even the place where the event is held (Fig. 8).

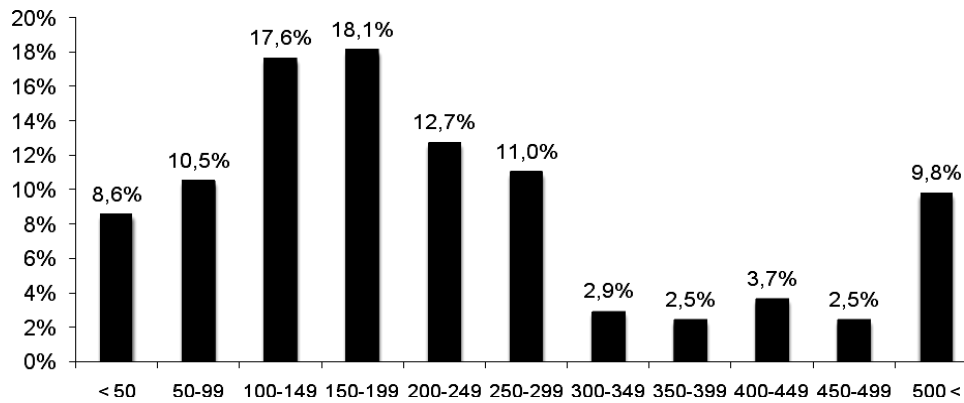


Figure 7. Fans' costs associated with participation in a sporting event (PLN)

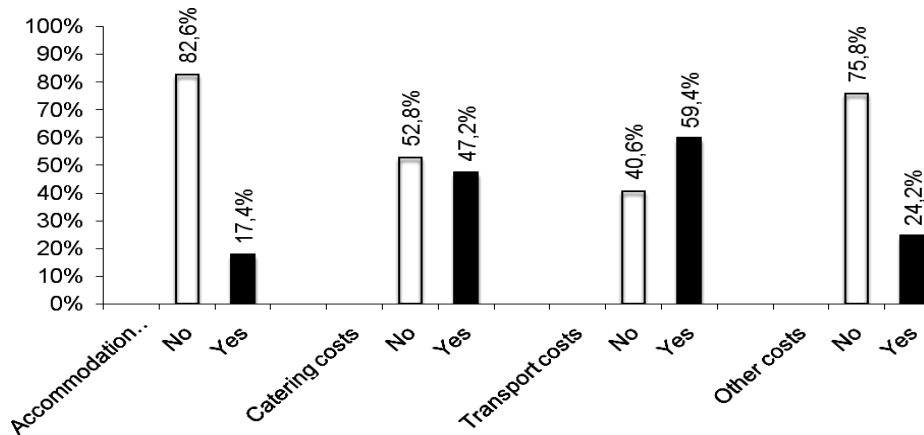


Figure 8. Structure of costs related to participation in a football event

Football fans' engagement in physical activities

Seventy-one per cent of the study sample declare engagement in recreation and sports activities. However, the amount of time spent on practising sport differs; 14.7% of the respondents practice some form of physical activity for less than 1 hour a week. Every third football fan (35%) exercises for 1 to 3 hours a week. Twenty-one per cent of the respondents declare more time spent on sport and recreation whereas as many as 28.4% of football fans are physically inactive (Fig. 9). It is also of interest that only two out of five physically active fans of the Polish national football team practise football. Almost the same amount (42.6%) practise other sports.

The most significant determinants of whether or not football fans are physically active are listed in Table 3.

Table 3. Determinants of fans' physical activity pursuit

Factor	Chi-square	p
Practising football	104.43	0.0000
Practising sports other than football	94.75	0.0000
Age	51.43	0.0000
Marital status	31.50	0.0000
Profession	27.66	0.0000
Income	19.51	0.0002
Costs related to travelling to a sporting event	10.57	0.0011

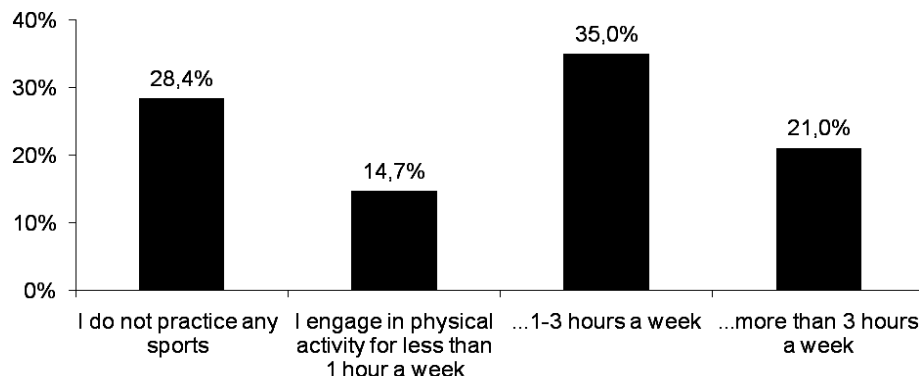


Figure 9. Football fans' engagement in sports

The answer to the question regarding the participation in any sport seems consistent with the answer to the question of what sport the respondents practise. However, this only evidences a serious attitude of the respondents towards the survey. A relationship has also been demonstrated between practising sport and the fan's age, marital status, profession, income, and whether they need to spend money on transport services in order to actively support the team. Although a causal link can be noted between age, income, marital status, professional activity and the decision to engage in sport or remain inactive, no cause-effect relationship can be directly established between practising sport and transport-related costs.

DISCUSSION

Participation in a sporting event as a fan depends on a number of internal (push) and external (pull) factors [4]. The pull factors, i.e., those which encourage fans to passively participate in international sporting events, are needs the fans believe this participation can fulfill as well as resultant motivation [16]. Based on the motivations of the sports tourist (fan), T. Robinson and S. Gammon identify several groups of sporting event participants [10]. The most essential determinant of the fan's participation in an international football match is what is at stake in the game. Other motivations include type of competition, the popularity of the competing teams, the level of sports skills, a chance for fierce rivalry, and the location of the event [18]. Practising football by the fan also seems to be among those motivations.

In the theory of needs the term *pull* refers to external forces that encourage an individual to undertake an action, e.g., to arrive at a football match [4]. The results of our diagnostic survey suggest that a history of following football events in the media is a crucial factor drawing football fans to actively support a team at the stadium. It should be remembered though that tourism may also increase due to some other pull factors, including advertisement and promotion, which enhance the attractiveness of the city/region/facility where the sporting event is held. The standard of accommodation and catering services as well as tourist values available to use in free time before or after the event are also important [4].

Some of the above mentioned elements are among the components of the sports product, i.e., the core benefits, the actual product, and the augmented product. However, at the age of competitiveness and struggle to attract a sports fan who is, at the same time, a tourist, organizers of major sporting events have to upgrade the sports product to the level of the potential product consisting of 'everything that might, in the future, make it more inviting, thus attracting and retaining a sports consumer' [5, p. 67]. Entertainment services, the opportunity to use sports and recreation facilities, participation in music concerts, sightseeing, visiting museums and catching a glimpse of nature attractions are the most widely expected elements of the potential product [17].

International sporting events belong to basic forms of sports tourism [16]. Our results confirm the hypothesis that the participants of those events bear not only the costs related to purchasing a ticket, but also have other expenses [13]. National

football team fans spend around 100 to 200 PLN on an event. Most of the money is spent on transport. Around 10% of respondents declared spending over 500 PLN.

Some structural characteristics of sports fans groups previously determined by other authors [2] have also been confirmed. Men predominate (over 80%) among football fans and so does the 20-45 age group.

It is a fact as remarkable as it is disturbing that a large percentage of Polish football fans arriving at international football events declare non-engagement in physical activity compared to football fans from other countries. An analysis of data obtained from football fans during the 2004 UEFA European Football Championship in Portugal showed that around 9% of the studied population were physically inactive [2]. Our studies carried out among Polish football fans revealed a markedly higher percentage of non-exercisers, i.e., over 28%. However, physical activity of football fans still compares favourably with that of the total youth and adult population in Poland [1, 8, 11], i.e. a lower percentage of football fans declare absolute lack of engagement in any recreational activity. According to the latest pan-European research published in 2010 as many as 49% of Polish people declare they are physically inactive [11].

The results of a survey carried out among the fans of the Polish national football team led us to draw the following conclusions:

1. The majority of the Polish national football team fans are men aged 19 to 35 years with at least a high school diploma. Approximately 70% are professionally active with net monthly income of 1,000 to 2,000 PLN; every fourth is a student. Over 70% of the fan population come from a city with 10,000 to 500,000 residents.
2. The analysis has shown that the fans spend 100 to 200 PLN on the participation in the event. Other expenses include accommodation (over 17% of fans), catering (47.2%), and transport services (59.4%).
3. Physical activity of football fans compares favourably with that of the total youth and adult population. A relationship has also been found between interest in football/participation in football events and physical activity behaviours. Practising football and other sports turns out to be a significant determinant of active team support at the stadium. Moreover,

practicing football increases the level of interest in this sport.

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