

SURVEY OF FANS HABITS AT TWO GAMES OF THE 2013 MEN'S HANDBALL WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP IN MADRID

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Abstract: I have done a survey at the World's Men Handball Championship 2013 in Madrid during two games of the Hungarian team among the Hungarian's and the opponent's fans. I was curious about how are the fans, who are coming to the World Championship, are behaving in this environment. I was also interested how strong bonds they have with the handball as a sport and what are their financial budget for this global event. At last I compared the number of the sport fans visiting the stadiums in Madrid in 2013 and in Gothenburg in 2011.

Keywords: handball, worldchampionship, sport tourism, fans

Prelude

By sports tourism, we mean all those journeys that took place in which performing or simply watching sports were the primary motivation. Sports-recreational tourism is regarded as an active type of tourism (for example: fishing, water sports, horseback-riding, etcetera...). The Hungarian Tourism PLC utilizes the term "active tourism" to express all recreational-free time motivated holidays in its professional materials and recommendations. Active tourism is a form of tourism where the motivation of the travelers is to do any kind of physical activity such as skiing, biking, natural water sports, or golf. These sporting events have become increasingly popular due to the fact that people lately have been choosing to follow a healthier lifestyle.

People who are living an active lifestyle are participating regularly in sport events (like Iron man, Olympic games...) as professional or amateur athletes. These people look at sports as a way of living, which comes with competitions, and races both at a national and international level. The duration of these events are usually a few days, so those who participate and their families make up a big percentage of sports tourists. So, we put participating in sport events (active tourism) and people watching or supporting them (passive tourism) in this category in the first place.

Here, we can mention other definitions, concerning passive participants of sport events as sports tourists as it follows: "Sports tourism refers to all travels done in the purpose of which is not trading but performing or observing sports events in a domicile which is different than their home environment". (Hall C.M. 1992). "Sports tourism refers to

the people who have traveled from their permanent living habitat to take part in sports, competitions or recreational activities, as well as event sport tourism; referring to traveling in the purpose of watching a sport event; and nostalgia sport tourism; referring to visits done to sports museums, famous sports venues, and sports themed cruises." (Hudson, S., 2003) "Holiday activities include sports activities – pursuing or watching sport" (Weed, M., Bull, C. 1997). Hich and Higham (2001) believe that racing has become a big trend, from recreation sports to professional competitions. So both professional and amateur competitions and events are becoming more and more important as complex touristic products. Gibson (1998.,2006) differentiate tourists into two groups as well – active and passive sports tourists –, while Robinson and Gammon (2004.) separated them into groups according to primary and secondary motivations.

There are several specialized literature (Müller 2001; Könyves-Müller 2001; Bánhidi 2007; Dobay 2006; Halassy 2007) researching studies about active tourism, and its potentials. Müller (2001.) is writing about the opportunities and favorable circumstances, and also emphasizes that these elements should be displayed in the tourism product development. Another dominant segment of sport tourism is sport events, in which we can participate passively, cheer for your favorite team or actively as an athlete. In this article, I will present and examine this area. In Europe, primarily football matches, in America basketball games are getting most of the attention because it is directly or indirectly in the site of many people who are interested in it. During watching football matches people pay for watching others doing sports. Nowadays professional athletes perform and the resulting

served interfere with the basic or core service beyond the so-called additional services that are included. The subject of the exchange is spending free time in a form where the use of the service is typically some kind of experience, coupled with entertainment. The value of the product determines the quality of the sales channel. In the case of on-site service, the quantity depends on possibilities offered by the stadium, and through media, it depends on media as a transforming element. (Andras 2003) Wide literary background of the football and business elements research is known. Research in the field of other team sports (handball, basketball, water polo, hockey) do not form such a complete system. The uses of sports consumption trends, knowledge of consumer behavior and marketing mix elements are essential (Muller 2009), since they contribute in the field of sports and leisure economy, multinational companies, and the success of businesses. One of these trends in Europe is in addition to Football, handball popularity is increasing. For handball matches, fans are also willing to travel long distances. In the article, my aim is to map and describe consumer behavior of the fans of handball matches. I made a survey at two matches, Hungary-Australia and Hungary-Croatia, especially with the Hungarian fans, but ten Australian and five Croatian fans also filled out the survey. The majority of survey respondents were between the ages of 30 and 50.

The research method

I have done a survey (n = 192 people), which focus was to study the fans' touristical habits and their relationship to handball as a sport. The survey included eleven questions. Hereinafter I will list the most important findings by topic.

Results

At one of my most important questions I was curious about that how often the fans are attending sport events every year.

Table 1. How often do you attend sport events?

	Respondents (number)	Respondents (%)
Once/Twice a year	60	31,3
Every month	54	28,1
Weekly or more often	78	40,6
Summary	192	100,0

As you can see in the table 40,6% of the respondents are attending sport events weekly or even more often. 28,1% of the respondents are monthly, while 31,3% of them only attend once or twice a year any sort of sport event. From these answers it can be stated that two third of the attendees at the handball world championship in Madrid are visiting sport events regularly.

With my next question I focused on revealing how often these fans are following handball games in live.

Table 2: How often do you attend at handball games?

	Respondents (number)	Respondents (%)
Once/Twice a year	57	29,7
Monthly	48	25,0
Weekly or more often	72	37,5
Whenever my favourite team plays	15	7,8
Summary	192	100,0

Compared to the previous table's results there's not a big difference between the proportions. The number of fans who are attending sport events once or twice a year decreased just at a very small rate. As we can see from the results, most of the fans on the site are specifically visiting handball games out of all sport events.

In my next question I was interested that how many games did the attendees had tickets for during the championship.

Table 3. How many games you have a ticket for during the World Championship in Madrid?

	Respondents (number)	Respondents (%)
1	21	10,9
2-5	150	78,1
Purchased tickets for after group matches	21	10,9
Summary	192	100,0

As we can see from the numbers, a high percentage of the attendees purchased more than tickets during the group stage. There's a really small number of fans who held only one ticket or bought tickets to the play-off rounds. This can be explained with pre-planning, since the set up of the groups was already public a few months before therefore it was easy to arrange the accommodations and travel plans. Besides that we can't avoid the fact that the championship haven't been even close to be sold out so it was relatively easy to purchase tickets to the later rounds.

In my next question I was researching how many nights did the fans spent in Madrid.

Table 4. How many nights you spend in

	Respondents (number)	Respondents (%)
1	6	3,1
2-5	123	64,1
More than 5 nights	63	32,8
Summary	192	100,0

We can come to the conclusion that the number of fans who precisely arrived for only one game to Madrid is really low. Following the previous table we can see it here also that most of the visitors spend two to five nights in the city to visit the preplanned group games. But the number of people who are staying for more than 5 nights are not irrelevant either.

Finally as the conclusion of the tables before, I was interested of how much is the budget of these fans.

Table 5. What is your financial budget for your stay at the World Championship all in all?

	Respondents (number)	Respondents (%)
100-200 euros	3	1,6
200-300 euros	9	4,7
300-500 euros	45	23,4
More than 500 euros	135	70,3
Summary	192	100,0

As we can see from the table, more than 90% of the attendees are planning their visit with a budget over than 300 euros for the world championship. Since the fans filled out their surveys individually these budgets are for per person. I believe we can sum up from these numbers that the visitors of the world championship came with a big budget. It seems like they planned their visit well ahead of the championship in their personal calendar.

Number of visitors

Depending on my personal experiences that I gained at the world championship I need to make the statement that regardless the low ticket prices it wasn't a good experience to see that only one or two thousands of fans were wondering around in the stadium that accommodate more than ten thousand attendees. Maybe it would have been a good idea to include more smaller stadium, just as it was at the world championship in Sweden, since even the host Spain's group games never filled up the stadium. Even so that some of the games (such as the ones against the Hungarian and Croatian teams) were almost sold out, thanks to the fact that the organizers invited elementary school students and members of the youth team.

Table 6. Comparison of the average supporters figures.

	2011 Göteborg	2013 Madrid
Average number of visitors at the host team's group games	6596	4126

Summary

I believe that after studying my research we can come to the conclusion that most of the fans who were attending at the world championship are also visiting games at their home town too. Furthermore we can see that the handball games are one of those events that the respondents are visiting regularly. Since the tickets went on sale relatively early for the world championship we can state that the attendees had the time to set up their budget which can be seen from the fact that most of them haven't just spent only one night in the Spanish captiol.

After closely studying the number of visitors during the host country's group games, it has been found that there were a much higher number of fans at the 2011 world championship in Sweden. The reason for this could be the fact that the handball is a highly popular sport in Sweden and also that

the Swedish championship was functioning as a qualification round for the 2012 Olympic Games, whilst the Spanish championship didn't give qualification to any other further games. Even so we need to applaud the Spanish organizers for the fact that they took on the challenge of this championship and they could organize an almost sold out stadium for the host team's games which had its final result since the Spanish team brought home the title of World Champion.

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