

**Original Article**

## **The socio-demographic factors influencing visitors' participation in Hungarian sports events**

GÁBOR KOZMA<sup>1</sup>; GÁBOR MICHALKÓ<sup>2</sup>; RÓBERT KISS<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Social Geography and Regional Development Planning, University of Debrecen, HUNGARY

<sup>2</sup> Geographical Institute, Research Centre for Astronomy and Earth Sciences, Hungarian Academy of Sciences, HUNGARY

<sup>3</sup> Department of Tourism, Institute of Tourism and Business Studies, Kodolanyi Janos University of Applied Sciences, HUNGARY

*Published online: September 30, 2014*

*(Accepted for publication September 15, 2014)*

**DOI:10.7752/jpes.2014.03060;**

### **Abstract:**

The socio-demographic factors of the attendees of sports events could be connected to the tourism of places; therefore, the supporters' gender, age, level of education, personal income, number of children and place of residence provide elemental information on the success of sport tourism. Although the domestic sports events rarely generate overnight stays in the destination, however, exploring the relationship between the leisure activities of the fans and their socio-demographic characteristics may lead to the development of the sport tourism. This paper builds on a survey made among the tourists visiting sports events. Our study is looking for the most important socio-demographic characteristics that majorly influencing the leisure activities during their support. The results of the survey lead to the conclusion that the examined socio-demographic factors, although in different scale, do have an impact on the leisure behaviour related to sport events. The educational background had the strongest impact, besides the significance of gender conditions could be recognized in some cases. Especially huge confine appeared between socio-demographic features of the football matches' and other sport events' attendees; the former one visited by young, lower educated people with less income, meanwhile the latter one visited by people with degrees and more female supporters.

**Key words:** sports event, leisure time activity, socio-demographic characteristics, invisible tourism, Hungary.

### **Introduction**

According to the international trends one could experience that parallel with the shortening working loads of the employees their spare time has increased during the recently passed decades (Oh et al., 2012; Plantenga, 2003). Examining the gradual diversification and the multi-personalised supply of the leisure industry the traditional activities connected to sports should face with serious challenges (Abalasei, 2012; Aliabadi et al., 2013; Bánhidi & Flack 2013; Lindström, 2011; Meseguer et al., 2011). Sports-loving people could be listed into two, mostly overlapping, huge groups; one of them stands from amateur sportsmen and sportswomen (e.g. joggers, visitors of gym or players of 'pleasure'-football in their place of living), the other one from those fans that are all interested in visiting different sport events. The latter ones' passive group stands up from the consumers of the sport media (e.g. readers of sports magazines or sports channels), the active part covers supporters visiting sport events personally (Kurtzman, 2005; Pigeassou et al, 2003). One can meet with both local residents and with sport tourists on the viewing area of the sport pitches (Fourie 2011; Imanzadeh & Gündogdu 2013; Yoshida et al., 2013). Meanwhile the issues and analyses of the international sport tourism achieve larger and larger space in the literature (Bujdosó & Dávid 2013; Gibson et al., 2003; Lamont 2014; Stăncioiu et al. 2013; Teodorescu et al. 2012; Turco, 2008; Weed, 2009), the speciality of domestic sports events are less known (Higham & Hinch 2002; Huang 2011).

The football matches are the most popular domestic sport events in Europe as well as in Hungary; its infrastructure able to attract and host thousands and ten-thousands spectators. The football's marketing is the most intensive one; therefore, this sport is able to draw the biggest crucial capital for its necessary development (Ambrus, 1999; Grosjean, 2006). No one should forget about the smaller sized sports events that attract 'invisible tourists' to leave their place of residence week by week, although, their travels rarely generate overnight stays in the accommodations. Proceeding from the recognition that Hungarian sports events - that principally involve domestic demand - moves on the boundaries of the traditionally defined tourism, authors focusing on the visitors' leisure tourism behaviours, which may be the core of deeper researches of the problem. Authors are looking for the answer in this study how the socio-demographic features (such as gender, age, place

of living, personal income and educational qualification) may influence the willingness of participation in sports events.

## Method

In order to know the leisure and tourism activities of supporters visiting domestic sports events authors carried out a survey within the Hungarian adult population (18+). Respondents were those Hungarian citizens who at least once participated in a domestic sports event as supporters between 2008 and 2012. There were 289 respondents as a total; however, only 270 of them provided completely usable questionnaires. An Excel programme was used to record the data and after cleaning this database PASW Statistics 18 programme helped in the analysis. On the one hand authors - with the help of identifying the strength of the relationship among different characteristics - made a correlation calculus (whereabouts if the Spearman-type of correlation coefficient is below 0.3 refers to a weak, between 0.3-0.7 refers to an average and above 0.7 refers to a strong relationship). On the other hand tighten correlations were introduced and analysed by using cross tables.

## Results

According to the responses it is clearly concluded that sport plays an important role for respondents during their leisure time: only 23.3% of the total respondents said that participation on sports events did not play important role in spending leisure time, meanwhile for 40% of them it was an important type of leisure activity (36.7% gave an average importance for this issue). Analysing the socio-demographic characteristics the strongest correlation was shown by the genders (Table 1). In this perspective the correlation's factor was 0.231, which referred to an existing (but quite weak) relationship: spending the leisure time with sports was much more frequently happened with men, especially truth among those having higher education degrees.

Table 1. The role of sport in spending leisure time regarding to the respondents' gender and educational attainment (%)

Gender	Educational attainment	The role of sport in spending leisure time			
		not important	average	important	total
Male	primary or vocational school	12.5	50.0	37.5	100.0
	high school graduation	25.9	22.2	51.9	100.0
	higher education degree	0.0	45.5	54.5	100.0
	total male respondent	16.7	35.2	48.1	100.0
Female	primary or vocational school	75.0	25.0	0.0	100.0
	high school graduation	33.3	33.3	33.3	100.0
	higher education degree	23.5	47.1	29.4	100.0
	total female respondent	33.3	38.9	27.8	100.0
Total		23.3	36.7	40.0	100.0

Source: own survey (n=270)

It is a well-known fact that participating on a sports event means financial burden on individuals (Feather & Shaw, 1999), therefore, it is important to examine how the economic recession has affected these kinds of activities. Results of the examination showed that the impact of the recession had less influence on this field as only 25.2% of the respondents decreased their participations, meanwhile 44% remained on the same level and 30.8% increased their spending on sports events. The trend of change showed close relationship with two factors. On the one hand respondents' relation towards sports had elemental impact (correlation coefficient 0.546): all of those people, in whose leisure time sports had been playing important role, had increased their participation in these kinds of activities. The other important - although having smaller influence - variable was the educational attainment (correlation coefficient 0.334), and this relationship was stronger among males (Table 2).

Table 2. The change in the role of sport in spending leisure time regarding to the respondents' gender and educational attainment since 2008 (%)

Gender	Educational attainment	the change in the role of sport			total
		decreased	has not changed	increased	
Male	primary or vocational school	31.3	56.2	12.5	100.0
	high school graduation	32.1	46.5	21.4	100.0
	higher education degree	0.0	45.5	54.5	100.0
	total male respondent	25.5	49.1	25.5	100.0
Female	primary or vocational school	75.0	25.0	0.0	100.0
	high school graduation	26.7	26.7	46.6	100.0
	higher education degree	11.8	47.0	41.2	100.0
	total female respondent	25.0	36.1	38.9	100.0
Total		25.2	44.0	30.8	100.0

Source: own survey (n=270)

According to the frequency of participation on sports events the majority of the respondents visited such events 6-12 monthly (44.1%) or 1-3 monthly (42.9%), while the share of the most frequent enthusiastic supporters (13.1%) was much smaller. The frequency of participation had strong relationship with doing sport in leisure time: those were thinking that physical activities were important in their leisure time, more frequently participated in sports events as well (correlation coefficient 0.696, which was close to strong relationship). Examining the socio-demographic factors of the respondents there was a slightly existing correlation between the age (0.228) and the educational qualification (0.217): younger people had much more frequent participation (1-3 monthly or 1-2 weeks) on sport events and this was especially truth for those having higher educational attainment (Table 3).

Table 3. The frequency of participation in sport events (since 2008) according to the respondents' educational attainment and age (%)

Educational attainment	Age	Frequency of participation			Total
		6-12 months	1-3 months	1-2 week	
Primary or vocational school	18-24	33.3	0.0	66.7	100.0
	25-39	100.0	0.0	0.0	100.0
	40-49	83.3	16.7	0.0	100.0
	60-x	71.4	28.6	0.0	100.0
	total	73.7	15.8	10.5	100.0
High school graduation	18-24	35.3	53.0	11.7	100.0
	25-39	28.6	42.8	28.6	100.0
	40-49	50.0	50.0	0.0	100.0
	60-x	50.0	16.7	33.3	100.0
	total	39.5	44.7	15.8	100.0
Higher education degree	18-24	0.0	100.0	0.0	100.0
	25-39	23.1	61.5	15.4	100.0
	40-49	60.0	40.0	0.0	100.0
	60-x	50.0	25.0	25.0	100.0
	total	29.7	59.2	11.1	100.0
Total	18-24	28.0	56.0	16.0	100.0
	25-39	34.8	47.8	17.4	100.0
	40-49	63.2	36.8	0.0	100.0
	60-x	58.9	23.5	17.6	100.0
	total	44.0	42.9	13.1	100.0

Source: own survey (n=270)

The significant commitment towards sport shows whether supporters are eager to visit sports events organized in other cities than their place of living, as it costs financial and temporal outgoings. (Literally, by definition these people could be taken only as sport tourists - Hinch & Higham, 2011). The result of the survey reflects the respondents' significant commitment towards sport: 81.3% of the respondents have participated on sport events organized far from their home since 2008. Participating in non-residential sports events has relationship with how people thinking of sports activities in general: for all those to whom sport plays important role in spending their leisure time show bigger willingness to visit these events far from their living quarters (correlation coefficient 0.342). This type of activity could hardly influenced by socio-demographic factors. The value of the correlation coefficient in all the examined variables was always smaller than 0.2, exceptionally the place of residence (0.159) and educational attainment (0.144) show some interrelations. In the latter case those with higher educational attainment showed stronger willingness of visiting non-residential sport events (Table 4), while the prior case in Budapest's and in the other smaller settlements' figures exceeded the average (Table 5).

Table 4. Willingness of participation in non-residential sport events (since 2008) according to educational attainment (%)

Educational qualification	Participation on non residential sport events since 2008		Total
	Yes	No	
Primary or vocational school	75.0	25.0	100.0
High school graduation	79.1	20.9	100.0
Higher education degree	89.3	10.7	100.0
Total	81.3	18.7	100.0

Source: own survey (n=270)

Table 5. Willingness of participation in non-residential sport events (since 2008) according to place of living (%)

Type of settlement	Participation on non residential sport events since 2008		Total
	yes	no	
Budapest	90.6	9.4	100.0
Settlements of the agglomeration of Budapest	80.8	19.2	100.0
Other* middle or big cities	63.6	36.4	100.0
Other small cities	66.7	33.3	100.0
Other settlements (villages etc.)	84.6	15.4	100.0
Total	81.3	18.7	100.0

\* - located outside of the agglomeration of Budapest

Source: own survey (n=270)

Analyzing the frequency of participation on sports events far from home the survey concluded that supporting teams, sportsmen or sportswomen very rarely appears as a leisure activity during travelling: 55.4% of the respondents participated on sport events maximum half a year (6-12 months), while the share of larger frequency's group (1-2 week) was only 8.1%. Basically two factors influenced the frequency of participation. On the one hand the respondents relationship towards sport has to be mentioned: those doing more sport in their leisure time more often participate on away sport events (correlation coefficient 0.608). On the other hand two socio-demographic variables could be highlighted (although the relationship is weaker here), educational attainment (0.234: for higher level more frequent participation associate) and the number of children (-0.205: more children cause less frequent travels).

The most popular goal of non-residential sports events are the football matches: the share of their visitors achieved 59.5% (32.4% of the respondents mentioned only football, while 27.1% participated in both football matches and other sport events). The share of all the other sports has not reached 15%; auto-motor races (13.5), handball matches (8.1%), and equestrian or running competitions (6.8-6.8%) were the most popular activities.

The regular visitors of sports events organized far from respondents' place of living slightly partway from the football matches' and other sports events' (tables introduce only those factors where the correlation coefficient showed stronger relationship.) On the one hand the regular visitors of football matches are mostly men, while other sport events visited by women more than above the average (Table 6). On the other hand football matches visited rather less educated people (completing primary or vocational school), on the contrary, other sports are visited by those people having degree(s) (Table 7).

Table 6. Distribution of the regular visitors of all non-residential sports events, football matches and other sport events by gender (%)

Gender	Total visitors	Visitors of football matches	Visitors of other sport events
Male	63.5	75.0	60.0
Female	36.5	25.0	40.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: own survey (n=270)

Table 7. Distribution of the regular visitors of all non-residential sports events, football matches and other sport events by educational attainment (%)

Educational attainment	Total visitors	Visitors of football matches	Visitors of other sport events
Primary or vocational school	20.3	25.0	18.0
High school graduation	45.9	45.5	40.0
Higher education degree	33.8	29.5	42.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: own survey (n=270)

Examining the distribution of the regular visitors by income (Table 8) it can be observed that the lowest and the average income groups are the primary segment for visiting football matches, meanwhile attendees of other sports attract more of the higher earners. The differences perhaps correlated with the costs of each sport

events: the average entrance fees of football matches are cheaper than other events' (e.g. Formula-1 race belongs to the latter category as its average entrance fee exceeds €30).

Table 8. Distribution of the regular visitors of all non-residential sports events, football matches and other sport events by income (%)

Income	Total visitors	Visitors of football matches	Visitors of other sport events
Worse than average	14.9	15.9	10.0
Average	67.5	77.3	66.0
Better than average	17.6	6.8	24.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: own survey (n=270)

Quite large part of the respondents took visiting sport events as their primary motivation of their travel; thus, they sustain as real sport tourists. This sport related motivation was typical for 77.3% of the visitors of football matches and 74% of the visitors of other sport events, so no significant difference have been made between the two groups.

Analysing the socio-demographic factors of those who visited the given sport events by primary motivation, quite substantive differences can be experienced between the football matches and other sport events. According to the distribution of the genders (Table 9) significant difference can be seen in both types of sport events as the male visitors' took more often primarily the visit of these sport events than the female representatives.

Table 9 Distribution of the visitors of football matches and other sport events attended with primary motivation by gender (%)

Gender	Visitors of football matches	Visitors of football matches with primary motivation	Visitors of other sport events	Visitors of other sport events with primary motivation
Male	75.0	79.4	60.0	64.9
Female	25.0	20.6	40.0	35.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: own survey (n=270)

The examination of the age groups (Table 10) already highlights on the differences among the primary motivated visitors of both types of sport events. The football matches are most significantly visited with primary motivation by the younger ages (they make up the most enthusiastic fans of some teams, who are travelling even further distance following their favourites), while the groups of 25-39 and 40-59 year-old are primarily targeting other sport events.

Table 10. Distribution of the visitors of football matches and other sport events attended with primary motivation by age (%)

Age	Visitors of football matches	Visitors of football matches with primary motivation	Visitors of other sport events	Visitors of other sport events with primary motivation
18–24 year	34.1	38.7	28.0	27.0
25–39 year	29.5	29.4	28.0	32.4
40–59 year	20.5	21.4	24.0	29.7
60 year or above	15.9	10.5	20.0	10.9
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: own survey (n=270)

Examining the place of residence (Table 11) it points out the differences in the offered supply what the different types of settlements provide. In the case of football matches the inhabitants of Budapest and the middle or big cities can easier find and attend local, good level sports events, therefore, these segments are less motivated leaving their cities and visiting other sport events. On the contrary the smaller settlements (villages) are not able to provide exciting football matches, and probably this is the reason for their citizens' over represented participation on football matches.

In connection with other sports the high percentage of Budapest and its agglomeration can be explained by the fact that Formula-1 Hungarian Grand Prix organized in capital's agglomeration attracted lots of visitors from this area who had primary interest in participating in it.

Table 11. Distribution of the visitors of football matches and other sport events attended with primary motivation by place of residence (%)

Type of settlements	Visitors of football matches	Visitors of football matches with primary motivation	Visitors of other sport events	Visitors of other sport events with primary motivation
Budapest	38.6	32.4	38.0	40.6
Settlements of the agglomeration of Budapest	22.7	26.5	30.0	32.4
Other middle or big cities	9.1	5.8	14.0	13.5
Other small cities	9.1	8.8	6.0	5.4
Other settlements (villages etc.)	20.5	26.5	12.0	8.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: own survey (n=270)

The third factor in which bias may be recognized among the details of participation in football matches or other sport events is the income of the respondents (Table 12). The people of the lower-than-average earner groups show higher scale in visiting football matches with primarily motivation than other groups (perhaps it relates with the fact that the most committed supporters usually emerge from the lowest educated people of the examined population), whilst those specifically travelling to attend other sport events have higher income.

Table 12 Distribution of the visitors of football matches and other sport events attended with primary motivation by income (%)

Income	Visitors of football matches	Visitors of football matches with primary motivation	Visitors of other sport events	Visitors of other sport events with primary motivation
Worse than average	15.9	20.5	10.0	10.8
Average	77.3	73.0	66.0	62.2
Better than average	6.8	6.5	24.0	27.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: own survey (n=270)

## Conclusions

The participation in Hungarian sport events as leisure time activity principally plays important role among the male population, especially within those having higher degree(s). The prevalence of the participation in sport events has tight relationship with the general role of sport in killing of free time, whilst among the socio-demographic factors the age and educational attainment have the strongest impact. Visiting sport events far from people's place of living mostly typical for higher educated people and for those living in the capital city, Budapest. In the case of the attendees visiting sport events organized outside their cities the lower qualified and lower income groups of men are over represented among the football supporters, while other sports events attract more than the average the highly qualified and wealthier layers of the sport fans. Sport events principally mean motivation for male travellers, at the same time those attending football matches or other sport events with primary motivation significantly separated by age, place of living and personal income.

## Acknowledgements

The research was supported by the 'OTKA K100953 The invisible tourism of Hungary' project.

## References

Abalasei, B. (2012). Types of audience attending sports events in Romania. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 46. 3482-3486.

- 
- Aliabadi, S., Zobairy, M., & Zobairy, L. (2013). The relationship between depression and leisure time activity in female high school students. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 84, 256-258.
- Ambrus, T. (1999). A magyar labdarúgás területi vonatkozásai 1945 után. *Comitatus*, 9(7-8), 33-42.
- Bánhidi, M., & Flack T. (2013). Changes in Leisure Industry in Europe. *International Leisure Review*, 2(2), 157-176.
- Bujdosó, Z., & Dávid, L. (2013). Extreme sports and other activities in tourism with special regard to the Mátra Mountain. *Journal of Physical Education and Sport*, 13(1), 39-45.
- Feather, P., & Shaw, D. (1999). Estimating the cost of leisure time for recreation demand models. *Journal of Environmental Economics and Management*, 38(1), 49-65.
- Fourie, J., & Santana-Gallego, M. (2011). The impact of mega-sport events on tourist arrivals. *Tourism Management*, 32(6), 1364-1370.
- Gibson, H., Willming, C., & Holdnak, A. (2003). Small-scale event sport tourism: fans as tourists. *Tourism Management*, 24(2), 181-190.
- Grosjean, F. (2006). Géographie et sport: étudier le football dans und cadre regional. *L'Information Géographique*, 70(2), 67-76.
- Higham, J., & Hinch, T. (2002). Tourism, sport and seasons: the challenges and potential of overcoming seasonality in the sport and tourism sectors. *Tourism Management*, 23(2), 175-185.
- Hinch, T., & Higham, J. (2011). *Sport tourism development*. Bristol: Channel View Publication.
- Huang, L. (2011). Research on effect of Beijing post-olympic sports industry to China's economic development. *Energy Procedia*, 5, 2097-2102.
- Imanzadeh, M., Göndogdu, C. (2013). Investigation on the people's expectation from municipalities in the area of sport and recreational services in Iran. *Journal of Physical Education and Sport*, 13(3), 458-463.
- Kurtzman, J. (2005). Sport tourism categories. *Journal of Sport Tourism*, 10(1), 15-20.
- Lamont, M. (2014). Authentication in sports tourism. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 45, 1-17.
- Lindström, M. (2011). Social capital, desire to increase physical activity and leisure-time physical activity: A population-based study. *Public Health*, 125, 442-447.
- Meseguer, C., Galán, I., Heruzzo, R., & Rodriguez-Artalejo, F. (2011). Trends in leisure time and occupational physical activity in the Madrid Region, 1995-2008. *Rev Esp Cardiol*, 64(1), 21-27.
- Oh, S, Park, Y., & Bowles, S. (2012). Veblen effects, political representation, and the reduction in working time over the 20th century. *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization*, 83(2), 218-242
- Pigeassou, C., Bui-Xuan, G., & Gleyse, J. (2003). Epistemological issues on sport tourism: challenge for a new scientific field. *Journal of Sport and Tourism*, 8(1), 27-34.
- Plantenga, J. (2003). Changing work and life patterns: examples of new working-time arrangements in the European member states. *Advances in Life Course Research*, 8, 119-135.
- Stăncioiu, A. F., Teodorescu, N., Pârgaru, I., Botos, A., & Băltescu, C. A. (2013). Young people's motivations and preferences for sports tourism. *Journal of Physical Education and Sport*, 13(1), 106-113.
- Teodorescu, N., Stăncioiu, A. F., Botos, A., Arsene, O., Ditoiu, M. C. (2012). Means of assessing a sport tourism destination's competitive advantage sources. *Journal of Physical Education and Sport*, 12(4), 498-506.
- Turco, D. M. (2008). An analysis of sport event tourism research: trends, issues and future directions. *Journal of Tourism Challenges and Trends*, 1(2), 61-76.
- Weed, M. (2009). Progress in sports tourism research? A meta-review and exploration of futures. *Tourism Management*, 30(5), 615-628.
- Yoshida, M., James, J., & Cronin, J. (2013). Sport event innovativeness: conceptualization, measurement, and its impact on consumer behaviour. *Sport Management Review*, 16, 68-84.