

FANS INTEREST IN WOMEN'S FOOTBALL IN EASTERN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES – THE CASE OF POLAND

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Abstract keywords

women's football, fans, , new markets for sport, Poland

Aim of abstract/paper

The main objective of the study was to verify the research questions relating to women's football and its fans, as well as their knowledge and opinion of this sport.

Q1: Is it possible to create a fan-group of women's football, which characteristics would be different from the group of male football fans?

Q2: From the sport marketing point of view, is women's football less attractive than men's competition?

Theoretical background

Women's football is a still undiscovered and underestimated sport market. It requires not only financial support, but also strong social and theoretical background. How to break up the stereotypes and build up the popularity of women's football not only in Poland, but also in the other East European Countries (EEC)? This is an important question both for marketers and scientists.

Several articles were written on this issue. Given the space constraints of this paper, the review of research shall focus on only recent and most important contributions from the literature. From the authors point of view, the most important research in this field was taken in six German World Cup Cities in 2011 (see Preuss, H., Woratschek, H, & Durchholz, C., 2008). Also Jowdy and McDonald (2002) contributed to the topic, by preparing a study concerning Fan Festivals around women's football events. Williams (2003) conducted similar research in European market and reference to cultural aspects can be found in Sobiech (2012).

Among many questions related to this discipline there are some that should be answered at the very first place, i.e.: How to encourage people to come to the stadium and watch the game? How to organize the fans around the women's football?

Methodology, research design and data analysis

In order to analyze the current state, an empirical research was conducted in the form of a questionnaire among football fans - visitors the Fan Zone in Warsaw during the UEFA EURO 2012™. The aim of the survey was to gain the knowledge of how the fans see the future of women's football in Poland and what would encourage them to participate in this kind of sport event. Although the questionnaire was related only to Poland, the results can be well expanded to other EEC countries. A questionnaire was used as a research tool to collect answers and opinions about women's football. The study was preceded by a pilot survey. The main study covered 400 full-filled questionnaires. The main core of the survey was based on – “Empirical Findings of a Survey among six German World Cup Cities in 2011” (Preuss, H., Woratschek, H, & Durchholz, C., 2008).

Gathered data was analysed using SPSS tools. Respondents strongly indicated that in their opinion women's football is fair (75.5%), interesting (73.3%), addictive (64.8%) and sexy (69.8%). All these characteristics are positively associated with sport, especially with the women's sport. The focus was also set on the financial determinant of fans' participation in women's football match. 70% of the respondents pointed out that they would buy a ticket only if it cost up to 30 PLN (~8€). Among other questions, the respondents were asked to indicate what would attract them to come to the stadium on a game day. Among the most frequently indicated answers were:

- high level of the game (55%),
- possibility to go out with friends (28.5%),
- success of the national team (16.5%).

Results, discussion and conclusions

The results of this study show clearly that football fans assign such positive adjectives to women's football as: interesting, sexy and addictive. Unfortunately together with this opinion respondents underline the low popularity of this sport in Poland.

Answer to Q1: Yes, it's possible. Not only to create such group of fans, but also to build up their loyalty.

Answer to Q2: In responders opinion women's football is less attractive than men's. However, this issue should be studied in further extended research.

An interesting fact was obtained during the research analysis. Almost 40% of respondents prefer to participate in women's football match only if they came with their friends. It is a clear sign to all marketing sport agencies involved into promotions of women's sport clubs.

Women's football in Europe is fast growing sport market. In Western Europe this sport has already gained its popularity. Therefore, in EEC it needs not only scientific research in this field but also well prepared players and football clubs ready to support women. Thus the collected results can be useful for future development of women's football in Europe.

References

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