

SPORT AND RECREATION AS A QUALITY OF LIFE FACTOR ON EXAMPLE OF POLAND

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Abstract:

The main purpose of this paper is to present the role that sport recreation may play and plays in consumer's lives and how it enriches the Quality of Life. Both sport organisations and governments (also EU) promote healthy life style, nowadays, in which an important part the sport plays. An increase in popularity of recreation influences lives of many people. They start sporting activities, become fitter, healthier and build relationships with other participants what plays and important role in a whole society. In this paper statistical data will be presented showing the rapid growth of sport participation in Poland. Some important problems in taking part in recreational sports will be discussed, such as lack of motivation, limited home budget, opinions on active Life styles, attitudes of both men and women towards sports, trends in popularity of specific disciplines, etc. Marketing activities run by sport organisations to attract consumers depend on consumers' needs, desires, limitations and anxieties. Adverts of those organisations (offering recreational activities eg. fitness, gym, swimming pool) will be presented to analyse what advantages of recreation are enhanced (and whether they are related to an idea of Quality of Life) in their slogans and what statements are used to attract potential clients.

Keywords: sport, quality of life, recreation, marketing

1. INTRODUCTION

There are many important benefits of sport to the economy and society. Sport may play an educational role, it can influence international and community development, promote health, socialize and also stimulate economy (Methodological Centre for Vocational Education and Training, 2008, p. 19). A Social Diagnosis (2013, s.172) report presenting findings of a research conducted in Poland, presents data proving that participation in sports has a positive impact on Quality of Life index and it is also possible that it influences psychological well-being, too (that may be influenced by rise of endorphins, social interactions, success, achieving goals). It may be a premise to assume that sport in a recreational firm plays an important role in peoples' lives and it enriches the Quality of Life, too. Nowadays, it is common to promote healthy lifestyle through sporting activities. For governments, high Quality of Life index is represents desired satisfaction of citizens so sport has become a tool for achieving it. According to European Commission ([EC], 2011, p. 25) sport may not only be a tool for influencing citizen's life styles but also for social inclusion activities (reducing social inequalities, exchanges and meetings between different social groups). Analysis of Polish market reveals how sport is important for citizens and what are the areas that should be improved in the future.

Sport organisations focus on satisfying their customers by designing an attractive product or service. An increase in popularity of recreation both influences people's lives and gives new possibilities for marketing communication. Analysis of marketing slogans and language used in advertisements of sport organisations offering recreational products and services may be helpful to understand trends on the market as well as needs of customers to be fulfilled. Marketing activities run by sport organisations, to be successful, should be designed to attract consumers and should be focused on fulfilling desires and needs of society.

2. ROLE OF A SPORT IN A SOCIETY

Sport has been described by Pierre de Coubertin (1863-1937), as a "part of every man and woman's heritage and its absence can never be compensated for" (EC, 2007, p. 2). "The United Nations has promoted sport worldwide as a means to promote education, health, development and peace" (Ratten & Ratten, 2011, p. 615). As Schimmel (2003) states, sport is widely known as a factor of building communities through bringing people with similar interests together for competition, spectatorship or recreation (as cited in Warner, Dixon, & Chalip, 2012, p. 984). Sport has been defined by Council of Europe (1992) as „all forms of physical activity, which, through casual or organised participation, aim at expressing or improving physical fitness and mental well-being, forming social relationships or obtaining results in competition at all levels". The same definition has been included in a White Paper on Sport (European Commission, 2007), and also in Polish Act on Sport in 2010. The important role that sport plays in human life is reflected in activities taken by countries that focus on promotion of sports. The National Sport Strategy in Poland until 2015 by Ministry of Sport and Tourism (Ministry of Regional Development, 2006, p. 39) focuses on promoting sport to "raise the level of the physical condition, prevent the negative phenomena and social pathologies and also support new sports and recreational objects available to the citizens to increase opportunities of spending free time in an active way and promoting a healthy lifestyle".

Depending on a role played, tradition or a country specifics, sport may be perceived as a (Ratten, 2011, p. 697): recreation and fitness (spending spare time, hobby, providing a healthy life style), gambling (horse racing or soccer bets), opportunity for meeting friends, family and other people (social nature of sports, cheering, attending games and events), gaining success and popularity or making money (by professional sportsmen), tourism stimulation (promotion of cities and countries through, attracting people to travel for sports events), education (social skills, promotion of healthy lifestyle). EU and Polish government strategies emphasise the most important factors of sport in case of sport for all influencing a physical and mental health, deepening social contacts (acceptation, tolerance, equality), and promotion and transfer opportunity for professional sports (Pfister, 2011, p. 2). It influences health, educational successes, position on labour market, work performance, social life, lowers crimes and boosts economic growth (growing demand for sport activities, events, apparel and equipment) (Instytut Statystyki Publicznej, 2010, p. 43). Advantages of sport may be analysed through its impact on society, economy and most importantly life of an individual. It may be a factor that is important in improvement of health, education, social skills as well as inclusion, relaxation and recreation (Constantinescu, Caescu, & Ploesteanu, 2012, p.809).

According to Hoyer et al (2006) it is typical for European governments to have a strong influence on development of sports, because sport and a recreation are used as a tool for promotion of healthy lifestyle and it is supposed to fulfil social goals (social integration, developing social skills, education). On the other hand in North America there is a different approach. Recreation is treated as goal there, perceived by society as a way of improving life (through practising sports). It is the business organisations, not the government, that influence the sport market the most (as cited in Scheerder et al., 2011, p. 11-12). Those differences in approach to sport may also influence the societies' perception of importance of sport in their lives. It can be presumed that sport (professional or recreational) may enrich citizens' life.

3. ENRICHING LIFE WITH SPORT AND RECREATION

Emerson (1985, p. 282) understands Quality of Life as a "satisfaction of an persons' values, goals and needs through the actualisation of their abilities or lifestyle" (as cited in Barwais, 2011). World Health Organisation (1997, p. 2) defines it as "individuals perception of their position in life in the context of the culture and value systems in which they live and in relation to their goals, expectations, standards and concerns. It is a broad ranging concept affected in a complex way by the person's physical health, psychological state, level of independence, social relationships, personal beliefs and their relationship to salient features of their environment". The Economist Intelligence Unit has developed in 2005 a Quality of Life index that can be used to compare changes between nations in time, in both subjective life-satisfaction and objective determinants of Quality of Life (Kekic, 2004). Material well-being, health, political stability and security, family life, community life, climate and geography, job security, political freedom and gender equality are validated through the index (Lepage, 2009, p. 110).

Recreation (as a sport) is becoming more popular nowadays, especially among citizens of both developed and developing countries. It may be defined as a "systematically practiced sporting activity done with enjoyment" (Gagea et al, 2010, p. 55) to compete or improve performance (make a progress). Recreation may bring benefits in case of health and appearance of a person or psychological well-being (comfort, lifestyle, hobby, meeting new people). The popularity of is related to its ability to improve the subjective life-satisfaction. Participation in leisure activities may influence happiness, stress level, physical and mental health, social and educational performance (Kuo, 2013, p. 1705). It can be said that it may consequently influence the level of Quality of Life and so that became a factor of it.

4. SPORT AND RECREATION IN LIVES OF POLISH CITIZENS

A survey conducted in Poland by a nationwide research institution Centrum Badania Opinii Społecznych [CBOS], 2012, p. 5) revealed that most important factors influencing health in public opinion were diet, physical activity and active leisure activities. Every year there are more Poles for whom recreational sport is a tool for improving well-being. According to CBOS (2013, p. 3) most of Poles is doing sport for health (70%), pleasure (61%) and feeling better, relieving stress and being in a good shape (47%) while the most important sporting activities in Poland are cycling (51%), swimming (28%), jogging (18%), trekking (16%), football (14%), volleyball (14%), gymnastics, fitness and aerobics (13%). Those men and women who practise some sporting activity perceive themselves as more healthy (Social Diagnosis 2013, p. 23). What is important, according to Social Diagnosis (2013, p. 172) in Poland, the positive impact of physical activity on Quality of Life Index is especially tangible in case of women who have stronger tendencies for depression than men. Even though, there are less physically active people in Poland (51%) than in overall Europe (61%), and only 6% of Poles do sports on regular basis, as Eurobarometer survey shows (TNS OBOP, 2010, p. 1), the statistics are rising. Two reports prepared by Central Statistical Office (Główny Urząd Statystyczny & Urząd Statystyczny Rzeszów [GUS & US Rzeszów], 2007, 2011) prove that there is a rise in participation in sports in Poland and dynamic growth of number of active women (who are still in a minority). Analysis of data presented in Special Eurobarometer Report (TNS Opinion & Social, 2010) shows that Poland is characterised with the lowest rates of physical activity of citizens in European Union. According to the study:

- most of Poles are not members of any sport club (87%),
- only 17% of citizens few exercise to improve appearance,
- control of weight is a motivator to train for only 11%,
- for only 8% physical activity is a way to spend time with friends,
- for half of people (46%) local sport clubs are sufficient (what is a promising evidence but still it is

one of the lowest rates in EU).

Research conducted in Poland by GUS (2012) reveals how Polish citizens perceive their physical condition, what sports they choose, how much money they spend on sport activities (see Table 1). The situation of recreational sports in Poland is still different from the desired one in rest of EU countries but many changes are taken place and the situation is getting better.

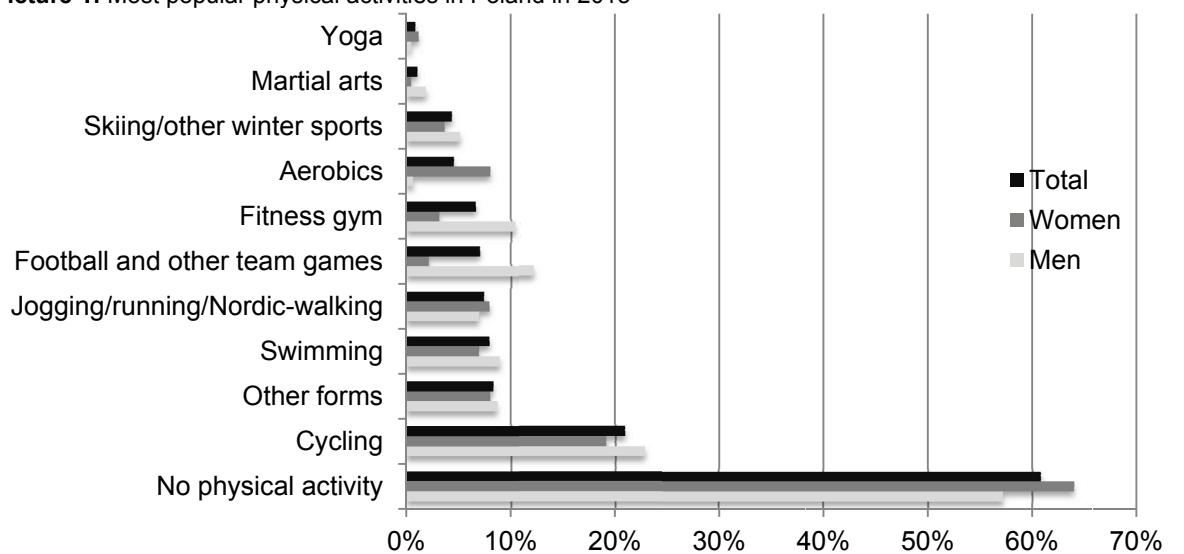
Table 1: Attitudes toward recreational activities in Poland in 2012

Measure	Details
Physical condition	23% of Poles perceive their physical condition as very good 38,6% as good, 25,8% as medium, 10% as bad, and 2,6% as very bad.
Physical activity	Polish people practice sporting activities usually once a month (25,6%) or one to two Times a week (20,3%).
Popularity of physical activities	Cycling is popular among 66% of population (64,8% man, 67,2% women), and swimming among 39,9% (42,1% man, 37,8% woman). Woman from urban areas choose aerobics, fitness, yoga and gymnastics, and those from rural choose jogging, Nordic walking and dance. Preferences among man are everywhere the same.
Common barriers	The most common barriers in practising sports are: lack of free time (32,1%), no interests in active leisure (18,7%), health and medical condition (16,5%), age (14,6%), budget (6,2%) and tiredness (5,2%)
Money spend on sport by households	Households spend most money on sport and recreation classes or trainings without commuting (29,9%), purchase, maintenance or rental of technical equipment (19,4%), and purchase of other equipment (15,8% including 5,5% for bicycle and 3,2% team games' ball).
Sport equipment	80,8% of households admits to have sport equipment. The most popular are bicycle (70,9%), basket, volley or hand ball (37,3%) and a sled (35,3%).

Źródło: based on GUS, 2013.

Presented data outlines the situation of citizen's participation in sporting activities in Poland. The government as well as private sector can take part in changing sport consumption patterns and citizen's attitudes towards sport. It is possible that the biggest challenge is to encourage people to practice physical and to raise awareness of possibilities on the market (services offered, ways of reducing costs, time management), and also to make infrastructure and equipment more available for people. Picture 1 presents most popular physical activities among Polish people in 2013. As in previously presented study, this one proves that among Poles cycling, swimming, jogging, nordic walking, fitness, aerobics and team games are most popular. Most of those activities are easy to practice without a formal organisation (club membership, instructions, organised group) and only need some easy to reach equipment (usually owned by households). They are also cheap so that physical activity does not affect home budget.

Picture 1: Most popular physical activities in Poland in 2013



Source: Social Diagnosis, 2013, p. 212.

What is also important most of Polish citizens do not practice any physical activity. It may be due to limited home budget, lack of time or even awareness (concerning availability of organised recreation or infrastructure, health). Sport organisations and clubs that offer recreational products and services have to understand consumers' desires, anxieties and limitations to be able to manage marketing communication and satisfy them. Organisations that compete locally or regionally have to analyse their market, understand consumers point of view for designing successful medium term-strategies (Cafferata, 2004, p. 19). Sports may not only improve and influence lives of citizens, by enriching quality of life, but can also change how people feel (and perceive themselves) as employees. More and more employers, nowadays, encourage their staff to provide healthy and active lifestyle. According to Pava & Krausz (1997) companies get involved in social responsibility activities related to sports so that they influence Quality of Life of their employees, customers, shareholders and local communities (as cited in Ratten & Ratten, 2011, p. 615).

5. QUALITY OF LIFE IN MARKETING COMMUNICATION ON EXAMPLE OF RECREATION ENTITIES

In marketing, as Huang and Chen (2008), noted, Quality of Life is perceived through its relationship with consumer satisfaction (as cited in Constantinescu, Caescu, & Ploesteanu, 2012, p.809). Promoting leisure and participation in sports as an important part of life (even a central habit) may increase their overall joy and happiness (Wiley et al., 2000. as cited in Kuo, 2013, p. 1706). Type of lifestyle desired by people depends on a culture (luxury, organic, traditional or simple), consumption patterns, political situation (stable or unstable), trends and even fashion (designed casual or sport clothes and apparel). Hofstede (1984, p. 389) stated that also Quality of Life concept is culturally dependent. It means, that companies through their marketing and advertising strategies create desires of consumers nowadays. They can easily influence consumer satisfaction that consequently can affect Quality of Life (Constantinescu, Caescu, & Ploesteanu, 2012, p.809). Success of those actions depends of level of understanding peoples needs and limitations (related to health, budget, time, and openness for new experience). A research conducted by European Commission to compare situation and opinions of citizens and sport organisations' representatives revealed that (EC, 2011, p. 39) for citizens the biggest barrier keeping them from doing sports is lack of free time (53%) and costs (26%) while from sport clubs perspective and federations it is participation or membership fees (25%), quality and availability of infrastructure (22%), timetables and free time (25%) and lack of equipment (13%). This shows that organisations do not fully understand their customers.

5.1. The study

The aim of the preliminary study was to analyse what slogans of Polish organisations to promote offered recreation and leisure services presented on their websites. The focus on slogans was put to be able to recognise directions and ideas of marketing communication of sport organisations that will be analysed deeper in the future. Data was collected during February 2014. Twelve local companies representing four disciplines popular among Poles, especially Polish women (that were indicated by respondents in researches presented above in this paper) were selected. Aerobics, swimming, Nordic walking, yoga and dance are those most popular disciplines. Football, jogging and cycling which are also very common physical activity in Poland were not chosen for analysis since those are typically practiced as an outdoor recreation nor requiring engagement of any professional organisation. Analysed disciplines are mostly chosen by women who represent a minority among recreational sports participants. It has been analysed how sport organisations try to attracts them as customers.

The Table 2 presents findings of the study and examples of slogans (representing customers desires chosen by organisation to fulfil) design to attract both woman and man (to whom the marketing communication was addressed).

Table 2: Slogans and ways of attracting

Discipline	Examples of slogans used to used to attract customers
Aerobics and gym	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "Change your life in 60 days (meeting with personal trainers, nutritionists, training diary, 2months membership, before and after reports, concierge services)" - "You will start to LOVE the FEELING (description on company philosophy)" - "Fitness club for only women – no men, no mirrors, no make-up!" - "Partnership with Reebok and LifeFitness" - "Special spring offer helping get the perfect body"
Swimming pools and spa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "Event: Fitness + aqua aerobics marathon (with disco music) with after party in a local music club (meeting with nutrition and cosmetics specialists, presentations of massage,, contests with awards)" - "10% discount for aqua aerobics for students and seniors" - "Winder mornings" 20% discounts for sauna on Tuesdays and Thursdays between 8am and 10pm" - "Physical activity and health are our passion (aqua aerobics)"
Nordic walking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "Active all year" - "Fitness in a park" - "Care of two instructors"
Yoga and dance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "Gymnastics with elements of a dance for seniors" - "May holidays (long weekend) with ashtanga yoga (with Rita and Magnus Appelberg)" - "Burlesque sweeter than chocolate but with a little bit of chill" - "Fit family – Saturday special offer"

Source: own research (data from websites of sport organisations).

The marketing communication of those service organisations can by analysed from several perspectives:

- Personalised communication (focusing on specific target group)
 Most of presented communication has focused on both men and women. In the presented study, analysed organisations, if they do they rather focus on women's needs than men. It may be related to the fact than less women than men practice sports and men are those who are active and do not need any extra promotion and convincing to sports. Only those organisations offering their services to a specific target group (women, seniors) has created slogans concerning those peoples' desires.
- Qualities, desires, benefits, needs mentioned that may be related to enriching Quality of Life
 In the presented slogans there are desires and qualities related to motherhood (Saturdays for families), weight loss (before summer), changing life, shame (no windows, no makeup), taking care about oneself (meeting cosmetics specialist, nutritionists, personal trainer), environment (Nordic walking in a park), and also relationship with know brand (representing desires, prestige, professionalism) mentioned.
- Balance in focusing on price and benefits
 It seems that price is one of the most important factors (perceived by sport organisations) attracting customers. Most of organisations had their discounts and prices presented on their websites. Those that do not focus on price only, put the stress on qualities such as environment, friendliness, passion for sports or music.
- Promotion through events
 Presented organisations usually attract new customers through organised evens that go beyond fitness only. In organised promotional events there are not only trainings but presentations and meeting with nutritionists, personal trainers, cosmetologists, party in a pub, contests, and so on.

The study has a preliminary character. Its aim was to explore very basic marketing communication (online) to analyse ideas of sport organisations for promotion to design a future study (and factors to be analysed). In the future the needs, desires and limitations of customers should be analysed to compare and find out if sport organisations understand and are able fulfil them. The only way to analyse effectiveness and relevance of the marketing communication is to analyse its results and effectiveness (what attracts most of customers). It is also important to understand what consumers expect from the sport organisation (more discounts or more understanding) so client's service satisfaction should also be analysed.

6. SUMMARY

Distinction and originality (even specialisation) is a key factor of successful strategy on an emerging and turbulent market. Sport, especially fitness and recreational, industry in Poland is still developing and awareness of consumers is still changing and growing. Sport organisations start to adapt new ideas and marketing strategies to reach their target groups. Plethora of disciplines, technologies and consumers desires (building muscles, weight loss, socialisation, hobby, etc.) influences their management. They begin to rationally and consciously design marketing campaigns because the competition is rising. Results of presented study show that not sport organisations in Poland do not often use rich marketing communication (used slogans, new or personalised and targeted products, creating customers desires, power words, motivational quotes). They do not even differentiate their slogans designed to attract men or women (unless they are focused on one group only) who have different needs. It is possible that they do not analyse deeply enough their customers needs and they do not understand them as a consequence, so it is hard for them to design a successful marketing strategy. Sport organisations are those that build relationships with their clients with strong emotions and associations. It is their strongest advantage on the market. They are able to change consumers' lifestyles, influence their perceived Quality of Life. With this ability, power of sports and knowing customers needs they are able to both make a change in people's lives but also in success of their organisations. Sport organisations can only satisfy their customers by designing an attractive product or service and promoting it with conscious and well designed marketing communication proving that they know how to enrich customers Quality of Life.

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