

## Market study on parents' demands regarding sports choices for their children

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### Abstract

*Introduction:* The field of sports nowadays experiences a continuous development, both from the sports performance and social perspective, transitioning from a free time activity to a complex industry. On this growth trend where more and more people practice sports a large sports services market has developed, which brought a new applicability for marketing in this area of consumption.

The efficiency of a new marketing policy with regard to a sports entity depends on the importance given to consumer's needs. By studying the consumer's behavior one understands identifying the ways the consumer comes to a decision when deciding how to spend available resources (time, money, effort) in the acquisition and consumption process.

*Aim:* Sports clubs, especially the private ones, are in a continuous competition on the sports services market, we decided to identify the demand and needs of parents in Timisoara when it comes to choosing a sports activity for their children.

*Methods:* We obtained the information necessary for carrying out this market study based on a questionnaire. The research took place in Timisoara throughout the year 2016, and a number of 217 parents having children that were enrolled in seven different private sports clubs were included in the study, our target being sports games.

*Results:* The results help in highlighting the needs and demand of sports consumers, offering information about the amount of money parents are willing to pay, the number of weekly training sessions, the day and location for the activities, the best advertising etc. With these data we hope that sports managers can implement new marketing strategies, having a more detailed vision on the target group.

**Key words:** market study, sports choices, children, parents

### Rezumat

*Introducere:* Sportul este astăzi într-o continuă dezvoltare, atât din punctul de vedere al performanțelor sportive, cât și din punct de vedere social, reușind de mult tranziția de la un mod de petrecere a timpului liber la o industrie complexă. Pe acest curent de creștere a practicării sportului de cât mai mulți oameni, s-a dezvoltat o piață largă privind serviciile în sport, astfel, marketingul și-a mai adăugat o nouă latură de aplicabilitate, cea în sport.

Eficiența unei politici de marketing a unei entități sportive depinde de importanța cu care sunt tratate nevoile consumatorului. Prin studierea comportamentului consumatorului se înțelege identificarea modului prin care consumatorul ia o decizie privind modul de a cheltui resurse disponibile (timp, bani, efort) în procesul de achiziționare și consum.

*Scop:* Intrucât cluburile sportive, în mod special cele private, se regăsesc într-o competiție puternică pe piața serviciilor sportive, ne-am propus să identificăm care sunt cerințele și nevoile părinților din Timișoara atunci când aleg o activitate sportivă pentru copii.

*Metode:* Obținerea informațiilor necesare îndeplinirii obiectivelor acestui studiu de piață s-a realizat pe baza unui chestionar, cercetarea desfășurându-se în Timișoara în anul 2016, fiind chestionați un număr de 217 părinți care au copiii înscriși la șapte cluburi sportive private, țelul nostru fiind jocurile sportive.

*Rezultate:* Rezultatele obținute ajută la o evidențiere mai bună a nevoilor și cerințelor consumatorilor de sport, oferind informații despre valoarea taxei de participare pe care părinții sunt dispuși să o plătească, numărul de sedințe săptămânale de antrenament, ziua și locația desfășurării, cel mai bun mod de promovare etc. Cu aceste date sperăm ca managerii sportivi să poată implementa strategii noi de marketing, având o viziune mai detaliată asupra grupului țintă.

**Cuvinte cheie:** studiu de piață, opțiuni sportive, copii, părinți

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## Introduction

The field of sports nowadays experiences a continuous development, both from the sports performance perspective and from a social perspective, transitioning from a free time activity to a complex industry. This fact has brought big contributions in improving social wellness, as well as in increasing the economic level, by increasing both sports consumption, as well as income.

Different types of sport have experienced an increasing trend and, therefore a new market for sports services has developed; hence marketing strategies started to assess a new direction when it comes to the sports industry. The efficiency of a new marketing policy with regard to a sports entity depends on the importance given to consumer's needs. Thus, the planning process begins with the consumer and ends with the consumer. The first step refers to the research on consumer's behavior, and the final step is oriented towards the sports user, who represents the target audience for services offered by the sports club [1].

Altogether these actions are satisfied through studying the behavior of the customer, who according to Schiffman, Kanuk and Hansen [2], can be defined as behavior pattern shown by a person when this person wishes to carry on an action such as searching, buying or evaluating certain products or services which have as a final goal satisfying the needs of this person.

By studying the consumer's behavior we understand the identification of the way a consumer comes to a decision regarding how to spend available resources (time, money, effort) in the process of buying and consuming.

According to Ph. Kotler [3] we can identify four categories of factors that influence and shape the consumer's behavior:

- Cultural factors: Culture; Sub-culture – in any society we find groups that present different characteristics such as: generation groups (ages), nationality, religious groups, ethnic groups, walks of life.
- Social factors: the reference group; the family; social status.
- Personal factors: age; profession; economic status; life-style and values; personality and self-image.
- Psychological factors: motivation; perception; education and learning; beliefs and attitude; memory.

Because sports clubs, especially the private ones, are in a continuous competition on the sports services market, we decided to identify the demand and needs of parents in Timisoara when it comes to choosing a sports activity for their children.

## Materials and methods

We obtained the information necessary for carrying out this market study based on a questionnaire, conceived in such a manner as to comprise as many demands and needs from the parents' side as possible when it comes to choosing a sports activity for their children.

The questionnaire was built using a number of 19 questions, using open-ended numeric questions to identify the age of children, closed dichotomic questions (two variants of one-on-one response) and multichronic (multiple answer and Unique response), multi-choice, and differential semantic scales. We assessed: the number of trainings per week, participation fee, the day part of the week they prefer for the training sessions, performance levels that parents wish for their children to achieve, the reasons the children practice sports, vision on the benefits of sports, material basis and club notoriety.

The research was carried out in Timisoara throughout the year 2016, and a number of 217 parents with children enrolled in seven different private sports clubs were included in the study, our target being sports games. The mean age of the children was of 10.8 (89 female; 128 male).

The size of the test sample was calculated using the Smarquest software [4]. A representative group of 500 children was obtained, with a confidence interval of 95% and an error interval of  $\pm 5\%$  having. All the subjects in the study group played different sport games and were members of private sport clubs in Timisoara.

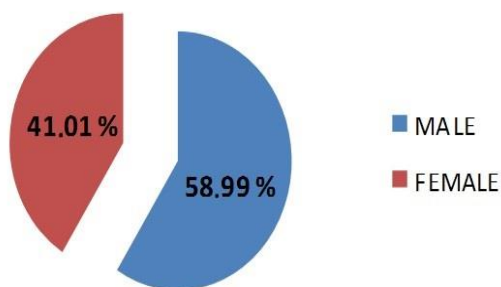
Table 1 presents the sports clubs where parents included in the study have their children enrolled.

**Table I.** Clubs where the research study was carried out

	Clubs	Number of questioned persons
1.	C.S. Sport Star –Volleyball	50
2.	C.S. Sport Star –Basketball	60
3.	A.C.S. Timișoara -Football	23
4.	ASU PoliTimișoara–Football	15
5.	Baschet TM Jump –Basketball	21
6.	Mp Sport –Basketball	25
7.	Vest Activ–Basketball	23

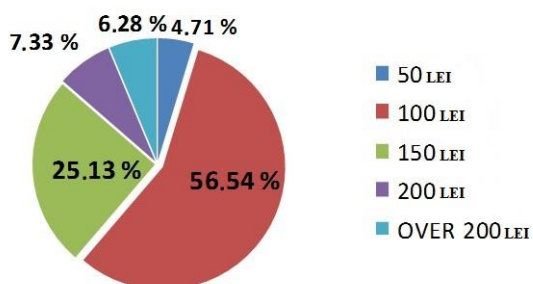
## Results and discussions

The analysis of the answers obtained from applying the questionnaire was carried out using the SPSS v.20 statistics software [5].

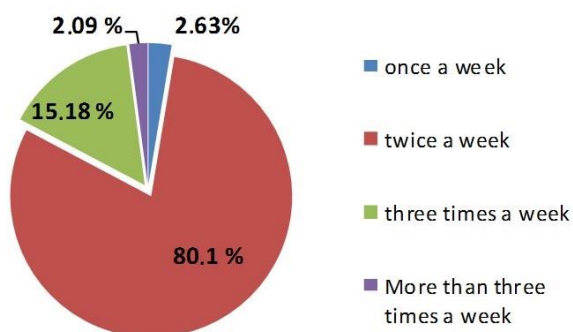


**Figure 1.** Distribution of children enrolled in the study based on gender

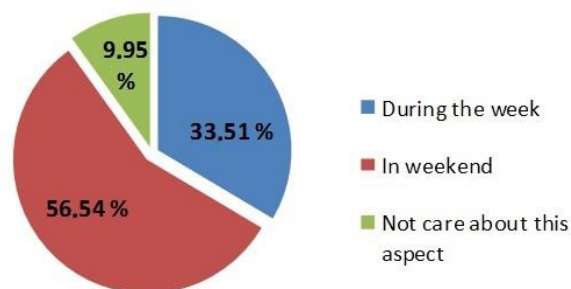
From figure 1. we can observe the gender distribution of children enrolled in the sports clubs as follows: 41.01% female and 58.99% male. After correlating data regarding gender with all variables we observed that parents' demands are not based on the child's gender, the statistical significance being over 0.05 for each correlation with a correlation coefficient under 0.4, leading therefore to a weak or non-existent correlation.



**Figure 2.** Answers given by parents regarding the participation fee

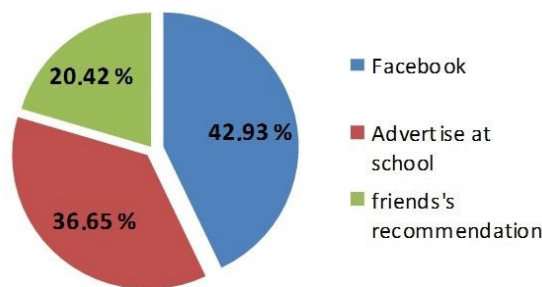


**Figure 3.** Answers given by parents regarding the number of trainings per week



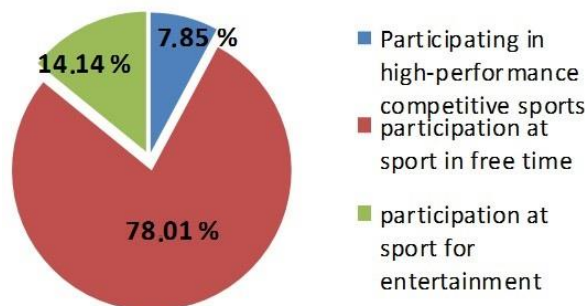
**Figure 4.** Answers given by parents regarding the daypart of the week they prefer for the training sessions

By combining the analysis of the last 3 diagrams we can conclude that the participation fee that the majority of the parents are willing to pay is 100 lei (56.54%), with a frequency of two times per week (80.10%), the best days for training being during the weekend (56.54%).



**Figure 5.** Advertising means for sports clubs

An important aspect for the marketing strategy is the advertising. The most useful tools for promoting the sports clubs included in this study and that helped the parents receive information are: Facebook advertising (42.93%), promoting the activities at school (36.65%) and through recommendations (20.42%) (figure 5).



**Figure 6.** Performance levels that parents wish for their children to achieve

According to figure 6, for the selected group, we can observe that the tendency is to practice sports as a free-time activity, with competitions that do not require high performance, the most important being the personal development of the children (78.01%).

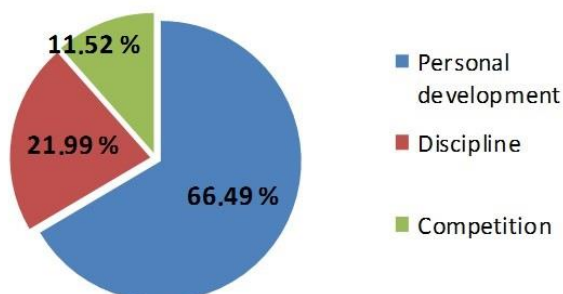


Figure 7. Important values promoted that attracted the parents

In our study the most important values that attracted the parents are: personal development with all the it implies (66.49%), discipline (21.99%) and performance (11.52%).

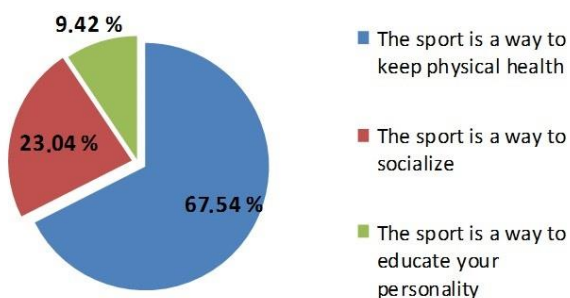


Figure 8. Parents' vision on the benefits of sports

The results presented in figure 8 comes in accordance with the answers presented above, showing that parents envision sports as a way of maintaining a level of health and a way of social development for their children.

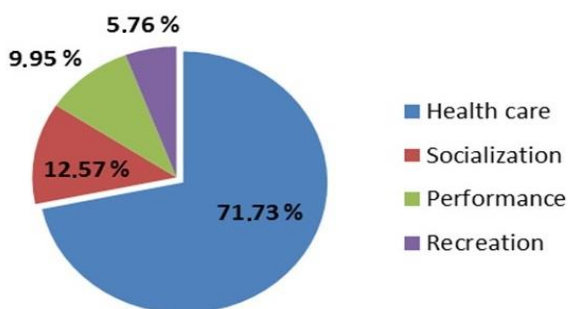


Figure 9. Distribution of the reasons children practice sports

On the other hand the main reasons for parents to bring their children to practice sports are: a good level of health, an active life-style, followed by socializing, performance and free-time activity (figure 10).

In regard to the questions about the attitude of the respondents towards different aspects we obtained the following answers:

- Training location is an important factor when choosing an activity, with a score of 5.6 on a scale of 1 to 7, where 1 - not important and 7 - important.
- Having a presentation of the activities carried out during training proved to be important; this affirmation obtained a high score. Therefore, we can easily realize that the activities have to be explained beforehand, being a decisive factor when making a choice.
- The responds consider that the trainer's gender is not important (score 1.5 from 1 to 7 where 1 is unimportant and 7 important). They did not think that the trainer should be the same gender with children enrolled in that sports activity.
- Asking for the respondents' opinion on the notoriety of the club as a decision-making factor, they said that it is not an important aspect able to influence their decision.

### Conclusions

From the data we obtained we can highlight the fact that when choosing a sport for their children, parents are not influenced by the child's gender, therefore marketing strategies will be the same for both gender groups. Regarding the gender of the trainer, it is not a decision-making factor, being an insignificant criterion.

Regarding the optimal number of trainings during a week, most of the respondents said it was two trainings per week that take place during the weekends, being willing to pay a fee between 100 and 150 LEI. The training location influences their decision, parents being attracted towards clubs that are closer to their homes and have easy access.

Another important aspect is the level of performance they wish their children to attain. A significant part of the parents choose for their children a sport they should practice during their free time and that should not interfere with the child's school activities. In order of their importance, the reasons a parent enrolls a child in sports activities are the following: maintaining an optimal level of health by having an active lifestyle, socializing, performance, and free-time activity.

From the current market study we can draw conclusions on the actual ways sports clubs can promote their activity, such as: Facebook, direct

advertising at school, and indirect advertising through the recommendations given by past subscribers. Through them they can make up advertisements and announcements that should not lack slogans that underline certain values such as personal developments, discipline and performance. We should underline the fact that the parents stated that they wish to be informed beforehand about the way the training will be conducted, therefore being important that the advertisements also include pictures or videos of the training sessions.

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