Original Article

Sports interests of polish academic youth: analysis of selected trends in the marketing aspect of business operations

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Published online: April 30, 2020

(Accepted for publication: April 15, 2020)

DOI:10.7752/jpes.2020.s2168

Abstract

Contemporary Polish service enterprises operate in a dynamically changing market environment. Also, the leisure services industry, including sports and recreation services, is developing rapidly, new facilities are being created, new services are offered, and physical activity is promoted, pointing to the health-promoting values of this type of behaviour.

Sport and physical activity have nowadays been treated as the basis for social competences, maintaining full strength and health, lifestyle and even a mega leisure trend. Unfortunately, according to research, many Poles still remain passive and do not engage in any physical activity. One of the important aspects of public health is the physical activity of young people.

The aim of the work was to determine current trends and to analyze the attitudes of academic youth in the field of sport and physical activity. The role of physical activity and building long-term habits of caring for health is undoubted. In search of factors determining physical activity, it was observed that young people do not undertake physical activity due to lack of time, lack of financial resources or because of their family situation. The study assumes that there is a large relationship between the family situation of students and their physical activity.

The results of the study showed that there are other reasons for the lack of physical activity of young people than the family situation. The presented research results may form the basis for creating a program to promote the physical activity of young people and be a starting point in the development of sales activation activities in fitness clubs and other facilities providing sports and recreation services.

Key Words: marketing, free time, leisure, physical recreation, sport, management

Introduction

Modern times and the development of technology, on the one hand, have made living much easier, but on the other hand, it has alienated man from his nature and physical activities that in earlier times were necessary for the fulfilment of his daily duties. (Shkodra M. et al., 2020).

Thus, appropriate exercise habits will better support the growth and development, prevent illness and injury, and ensure a healthy life in the future. (Syuro Ito et al., 2020).

That's why in recent years, physical activity has become an important aspect of life for Poles. This is evidenced by the results of research of nationwide research laboratories, the growing number of networks of enterprises providing sports and recreation services and the developing sports infrastructure.

According to a study carried out by CBOS in 2019 (How healthy, 2019), among the activities that Poles believe most contribute to improving people's health, regular exercising, sports and healthy eating were the highest priority.

Other results are presented in Figure 1. For comparison, in 2012 in the CBOS Report on Poles about their health and healthy behaviours and activities, the most often given answer was healthy eating (50% of responses), regular visits to the doctor (34%), avoiding stressful situations (29%) and only then regular gymnastics (25%) (Poles on their health, 2012).

Figure 1. Actions that Poles believe contribute most to improving human health in% (percentages do not add up to 100 because respondents could indicate more than one action)

Source: How Poles eat healthy. Communication from the CBOS research, 106/2019, p. 8

Also, analysing the market of sports and recreation services, one can notice an upward trend - according to the Report "The European Health & Fitness Market 2019", prepared by the consulting company Deloitte, Poland being in the 7th place in this ranking, together with the remaining countries of the top ten generated 80% share in the total revenues of this industry in 2018. (Nearly 3 million Poles, 2019) The above report also indicates the prospects for the development of the sports and recreation services market - according to the report's authors, the sports and recreation industry will develop in Poland. The market of sport and recreation services can be defined as processes that occur between the providers of these services and sports participants. (Sowier-Kasprzyk I., 2016). It is worth mentioning that in Poland the market for this type of services is highly fragmented, it has several major players and many micro networks. Poles play sports not only using the services of sports and recreation companies offering such services as: fitness, gym, squash, swimming pool, power bike, dance classes, climbing walls, cross training, outdoor training or martial arts. Table 1 presents the most popular sport disciplines practiced by Polish participants of the activity.

Table 1. Sport disciplines practiced by Poles

What sport have you played in the last year?	Have you practiced these sports regularly or occasionally?	
	Regularly	Occasionally
	In %	
Group fitness classes, e.g. crossfit, zumba	64	36
Exercises in the gym indoors, in the sports hall, bodybuilding	62	38
Running, jogging	55	45
Exercises that you do at home on your own initiative	52	48
Cycling	45	55
Nordic walking	38	62
Dancing	38	62
Exercises at the outdoor gym	37	63
Football	32	68
Rehabilitation or therapeutic exercises recommended by a doctor	32	68
Winter sports	29	72
Swimming	29	71
Walking in the mountains, hiking on hiking trails	29	71
Volleyball	22	78

Sports disciplines practiced by more than 5% of respondents were included

Source: Poles' physical activity. CBOS report 125/2018, p. 5

The most frequently chosen forms of recreation and sport activity carried out by Poles in their free time, as shown by the CBOS research, are as it follows: fitness classes, including crossfit, zumba, indoor gym exercises, a sports hall as well as running, jogging. It can also be observed that in sports and recreation centres young people usually train at organized and individual classes. According to CBOS, people aged 18-24 (85%) and 25-34 years (82%) exercise the most. Among the declared reasons for taking physical activity, are as it

follows: health (69%), pleasure (55%), recovery stress (44%) as a way to spend your free time (27%). For 25%, the reason for practicing physical activity was an attractive appearance and a nice figure. (Physical activity of Poles, 2018) Despite the progressive changes in the sports and recreation market and many important advantages of physical activity, we are still a society that largely prefers a passive lifestyle. People are physically active in their free time. There are also many constraints related to leisure activities. These leisure constraints have been defined as factors that are assumed by researchers and/or perceived or experienced by individuals to limit the formation of leisure preferences and/or to inhabit or prohibit participation and enjoyment in leisure (Hinch T. et al., 2013).

Due to the noticeable impact of age on the undertaken physical activities, on the basis of the results of the conducted research, an attempt was made to determine the current trends and attitudes of young people towards sport and physical activity.

Material & methods

The conducted research concerned current trends and analysis of attitudes of academic youth in the field of sport. The aim of the study was to create the basis for a program to promote physical activity of young people and was to be a starting point in the development of sales activation activities in fitness clubs and other facilities providing sports and recreation services. This work attempts to answer the following questions:

1. Are students aware of the importance of physical activity in the life of modern man?
2. What behaviours do the surveyed students represent towards physical activity?
3. How do students' life situation affect their physical activity?
4. What trends in physical activity have young people recently observed?
5. Who, according to students, is responsible for promoting physical activity?

A research hypothesis was also formulated, which was: It is assumed that there is a large relationship between the family situation of students and their physical activity.

To check the above hypothesis, the chi square statistical test and the V-Cramer convergence coefficient were used.

The study was conducted among 200 students of the Częstochowa University of Technology representing such fields of study as Management, Tourism and Recreation, Logistics, Finance and Accounting, Management and Production Engineering, and Occupational Health and Safety. 196 correctly completed questionnaires were adopted for further analysis. A non-random selection method was used. The study was deliberately conducted among representatives of various fields of study at the Faculty of Management of the Częstochowa University of Technology. The study was conducted using a survey method in the period from September to November 2019 in a student town. Figure 2 presents the structure of fields of study represented by respondents.

Figure 2. Structure of fields of study represented by respondents

Source: own study based on conducted research

Management, Tourism and Recreation as well as Finance and Accounting were the most numerous group. These disproportions result from the number of individual directions. The most students study in Management (409 people - as at December 30, 2019), Finance and accounting (878 people) and Logistics (729 people). Among the respondents, 59% are women and 41% men.

Results

Although 93% of respondents declare that they are physically active people, their degree of satisfaction with the effects of undertaken activities varies. In one of the questions, the respondents assessed their physical condition and appearance (Figure 3). Only 11% assess their condition and appearance very well, the majority (43%) describe it satisfactorily.

Figure 3. How do you assess your condition and appearance?

Source: own study based on conducted research

Among the most frequently mentioned motives for undertaking physical activity, attention was given to attractive appearance, willingness to improve well-being and health aspects. For comparison, in the 2018 CBOS survey, Polish respondents most often indicated health (69%), well-being and only then attractive appearance (25%) as the reason for undertaking sports and recreation activities. Young respondents enjoy health and in the current period of their lives undertake physical activity mainly for aesthetic reasons.

Figure 4. What most often motivates you to take up physical activity

Source: own study based on conducted research

Students indicated cycling, gym, team sports and fitness among the most frequently chosen forms of physical activity. Activities such as windsurfing, canoeing, shooting or Nordic Walking enjoy the least interest. Nordic Walking, according to observations, is chosen with the greatest interest in later life.

Figure 5. Forms of activity undertaken by respondents

Source: own study based on conducted research

Another question directed to respondents concerned current trends in physical activity. From observing the market for this type of services, it can be seen that currently there are several trends regarding sports and recreational activities. Among the most noticeable are:

- the growing importance of mobile applications registering effects and motivating to physical activity. According to the MultiSport Index 2018 Report, every fifth active person uses mobile applications during training. Endomondo is one of the best-known applications. (Multisport Report)
- personal trainer services - individualized training, the ability to adapt exercise sets to fitness, age, health and expectations of participants are elements of the offer that allow you to stand out from competitive offers,
- short class classes last from 15 to 30 minutes, are distinguished by high intensity, dedicated to people expecting results in a short time.
- offer for seniors - a very important market segment today. Managers are increasingly perceiving the size of this segment and constructing offers for recreational and health activities for seniors, e.g. the MultiSport Senior Card.
- sports coaching, understood as a motivator for undertaking physical activity. The role of a coach can be played by a personal trainer. It can also be a person who publishes instructional videos on physical exercises (e.g. YouTube) as well as programs and audiobooks whose content can be listened to during training.

Other noticeable trends in physical activity include: low-cost training (devices in the open air), health training, classes for pregnant women, clubs only for women, gamification classes, i.e. using elements of games to motivate and engage participants in sports activities recreational activities. A novelty on the market of sports and recreation services is training in virtual reality, but specialists forecast a great interest in this type of activity. In addition, services such as training in luxurious conditions, exercises on multifunctional devices that allow you to engage in whole body training, dedicated to physical rehabilitation classes, in recreational training, as well as in strength and endurance exercises, and EMS (Electrical Muscle Stimulation training) can be observed), consisting in causing muscle contraction by means of electrical impulses.

Figure 6. Current trends in physical activity in the opinion of the respondents

Source: own study based on conducted research

In the respondents' opinion, the most noticeable trends in physical activity (several answers could be given) include mobile applications and portable technology, personal trainer care, low-cost training and individualization of training. Activities such as exercises for seniors, training in luxurious conditions, EMS training, classes for pregnant women were not noticed by the respondents (they received respectively 22, 10, 22, 21 answers). Young people are not the addressees of the above offers and may not notice their potential.

According to the surveyed students, the most important barriers to undertaking physical activity include lack of time and laziness. The lack of financial resources was a barrier only for 17 respondents. There are many forms of activities that do not require costs. In the next question, the respondents also specified the reasons for their lack of interest in the physical activity of other young people. Among the answers to this question, the most common appeared a passive lifestyle (which is also shown by national surveys), overload of duties and a lack of ability to organize time, which can be a typical feature of the modern young generation dominated by modern technologies, growing up in the company of social media, smartphones, games, overloaded with all sorts of messages and receiving a huge amount of stimuli. Who, then, is responsible for promoting healthy habits among young people? In this question, the respondents most often indicated themselves (44%), parents (24%) and the media (17%). Such responses as sports and recreation companies and the State received 5% of responses, healthy food producers 4% and local government 1%.

Figure 7. Reasons for the lack of interest in physical activity of young people

Source: own study based on conducted research

As shown above, 93% of respondents declare that they are physically active people. However, their involvement in sports and recreational exercises is unsatisfactory. Possible barriers and reasons for the lack of interest in sport and recreation were also analysed. Students are aware of the role of physical activity and the need to build long-term habits to take care of health from an early age. Therefore, the question arose as to the reason for resignation and unwillingness to undertake activity at a young age. It was assumed that there is a relationship between the family situation of students and their physical activity. To check the above hypothesis, the chi square statistical test and the V-Cramer convergence coefficient were used to verify this hypothesis.

The V-Cramer coefficient based on chi square statistics assesses the strength of the relationship between two qualitative characteristics. In the research, the family situation of students and their physical activity were assumed as qualitative features. This statistic consists in first calculating the chi-squared statistic and then referring it to the formula for the Cramer's dependence ratio. Table 2 presents empirical numbers in the study of young people illustrating the relationship between family situation and physical activity.

Table 2

Empirical numbers of comparisons of categories of family situation of academic youth and their physical activity

Family situation	I live alone	I live with parents	I live with partner	SUM
Physical activity of academic youth				
Everyday	4	19	2	25
2-3 times a week	16	64	13	93
Once a week	3	33	11	47
Less	4	16	8	28
SUM	27	132	34	193

Source: own study based on conducted research

The above Table served as a starting point for determining whether the family situation of student youth has an impact on the sports and recreational activities they undertake. The test that makes it possible to verify the main hypothesis is the chi square test (1).

$$\hat{n}_{ij} = \frac{n_i \cdot n_j}{n} \quad (1)$$

Theoretical quantities were calculated according to the procedure (1). These values are presented in Table 3.

Table 3

Theoretical numbers of comparisons of the family situation of academic youth and their physical activity

Family situation	I live alone	I live with parents	I live with partner	SUM
Physical activity of academic youth				
Everyday	3,5	17,1	4,4	25
2-3 times a week	13,0	63,6	16,4	93
Once a week	6,6	32,1	8,3	47
less	3,9	19,2	4,9	28
SUM	27,0	132	34	193

Source: own study based on conducted research

Further research involves calculating the chi square coefficient according to the formula (2):

$$\chi^2 = \sum \frac{(n_{ij} - \hat{n}_{ij})^2}{\hat{n}_{ij}} \quad (2)$$

After applying for the relevant data from Tables 2 and 3 of formula (2), empirical statistics of the chi square distribution were obtained, which was 8.3. Then the statistics were applied to the formula for the V-Cramer convergence coefficient (3),

$$V = \sqrt{\frac{\chi^2}{n(\min(k,r)-1)}} \quad (3)$$

where:

χ^2 – empirical chi square statistics,

n – number of respondents,

$\min(k,r)$ – smaller value from the number of columns or rows.

We substitute data for the above formula assuming fewer columns as 3 and chi square factor as 8.3.

$$V = \sqrt{\frac{8,3}{193*2}} \quad (4)$$

As follows from formula (4), after substituting the appropriate values, the V-Cramer coefficient was 0.29. It means a weak dependence of traits, i.e. the relationship between physical activity of student youth and their family situation is weak. This should be explained by the general inactivity that is visible under all circumstances. The hypothesis that there is a relationship between a family situation and physical activity must be rejected. Student youth undertakes activity so rarely that it is not affected by the phase of the family life cycle. It should also be stated that people who are already active today will most likely be also in the future when their phase of the family cycle changes.

Dicussion

The aim of the work was to determine current trends and to analyse the attitudes of academic youth in the field of sport and physical activity. The research results presented above show how much can and should be done to promote physical activity among young people. Students are aware of the importance of physical activity in the life of modern man. Young people independently, regardless of their family situation, make decisions about involvement in physical activity. Regardless of this, the sports and recreational market entities can strive to change the attitudes of current and potential customers. In addition to their overriding business goals, they can build marketing programs to promote a healthy lifestyle by creating crowds of committed and loyal customers, who in turn will be a role model for future generations. Parents, after ourselves, are a group that effectively promotes healthy habits and an active lifestyle.

Based on the research, it is possible to define general tasks for entrepreneurs providing sports and recreation services, for local governments, producers of sports equipment and the media regarding the promotion of physical activity among young people. This activity may focus on:

1. Promotional offer of sport and recreation enterprises for new and current clients, service packages, carnets, recommendations to other clients, family packages.
2. Location of facilities, more facilities, greater accessibility, parking lots, access by public transport.
3. Education, promoting an active lifestyle in schools, at the university, cooperation with educational institutions, cooperation with sports centres, discounts for students.
4. Promoting less popular activities, rewarding customers for commitment and loyalty (gamification, loyal customer clubs).
5. Promoting mass sports in the media, more TV programs or press articles, not only in the trade press promoting an active lifestyle.
6. Creating applications that motivate and monitor physical activity, cooperate on this level with fitness clubs, mass event organizers.
7. sponsorship of local events, festivals, competitions, tournaments, sport competitions and other sports and recreation activities.

Conclusions

It should not be forgotten that the promotion of health and physical activity is above all one of the most important tasks of public health. The aim of these activities should be to encourage Poles to increase physical activity. Obtained data can also be a starting point for further research on physical activity of other age groups.

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