

## Websites of Slovak sports clubs-Analysis, evaluation and recommendations

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### Abstract

The paper analyses the websites of sports teams of the most popular Slovak sports. For assessment were established 13 parameters. The evaluation is focused on the relationship of the club through the website with fans, sponsors and youth. The results of this analysis show the shortcomings and common features of various clubs, in view of the approach to addressing the issue. This article also shows the difference between the clubs and their approach with regard to the sports sector in which they operate.

**Keywords:** Website, critical success, factors, sport, marketing.

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## 1. Introduction

Football, ice hockey or other match are played for whom? For the fans. Who gives finance to clubs for their development? Sponsors. Who will replace the current generation of players? juniors, children, etc. Managing relationships with fans and sponsors is a key factor for the club as well as training new players.

How to manage these draws today, when fans (supporters) and sponsors of the club are often hundreds of kilometres away? Adcock, Brandfiel, Halborg and Ross (2001) said that marketing is providing the right product in the right place at the right price and at the right time. In the 21st century, right product is information's and is very important to give this informations to the sponsors and the fans in the right time. How? According to Quester and Thompson (2001), getting the maximum of sponsorship is needed to use a supportive form of communication. In practice, it means that ordinary mode of communication is supportive webpages, which serve as more or less static sources for public information's (Harrer, Zeini & Pinkwart, 2006).

These web pages must be able to satisfy main requirements not only to graphics and technical parameters but also to the correctness of informations. NBC NEWS in the paper regarding how many people searched for a health-related topic online (2013) says: In all, 80% of Internet users, or about 93 million Americans, have searched for a health-related topic online. And people do not seek only this post. Today, people are searching the Internet for everything, and it is important to know if we want to offer people something special. Next, it is important to write about it on the Internet, advertise it or show them on the Internet. According to Kotler (2003), marketing is not the art of finding clever ways to dispose of what you make. Marketing is the art of creating genuine customer value. If we expect that genuine customer value is the right information's at the right time in the right place, then we must see to it that we provide the right information's through communication channels for our customers—fans, sponsors and the public. The main communication channel for sports clubs in the online world is web page, and therefore, it is very important to offer information by web page that will be managed. As confirmed by Lendel and Kubina (2012), nowadays, the transition from a one-way communication to the customer relations management has a crucial strategy. What exactly does the Internet marketing offers? Another story is a corporate social responsibility (CSR) and as commented by Uhrich, Koenigstorfer and Groeppel-Klein (2014), CSR-linked sponsorship (i.e., the linkage of sponsorship with CSR activities) enables sponsors to demonstrate corporate goodwill and enhance their brand image. Floter, Benkenstein and Uhrich (2015) argued that to obtain positive brand effects, relevant stakeholders (e.g., customers) have to be aware of the company's CSR-linked sponsorship activities. Information about such activities can be passed on through a variety of channels. Sponsors often use company-controlled channels such as corporate websites, annual reports, newsletters or advertisements to communicate CSR-linked sponsorship (Floter et al., 2015). Such channels are fully under the sponsor's control; that is, the sponsor is the message source and can directly influence the communication content (Du, Bhattacharya & Sen, 2010). These facts just confirmed that website of sports club has key tasks in different spheres.

## 2. Methodology

The three major sports in Slovakia are ice hockey, football and tennis. This position is relative to the size of membership. For this analysis were used websites of hockey clubs from the top two Slovak leagues, the website of football clubs from the top Slovak league and 59 tennis clubs of a regional subdivision. Thirteen established parameters were as follows: fan zone, online shop of souvenirs, section on the website for partners, promotion partners on the main page, partner promotion to page footer, promotion partners on site in the form of banners, foreign language version pages, section for youth, promotion of youth, promoting matches of youth, students list (roster), link to elementary school and elementary school promotion. On the basis of these parameters and characteristics of the website, a critical success factors utility was built. Different approaches were analysed for the design

of web pages because of the individual parameters, such as an online store. It just did not care me whether the online store is only created, but mainly as well as to meet the expectations of fans, care me.

Steps of analysis:

1. defining factors of CSF,
2. categorisation of clubs in categories,
3. search web pages of all clubs,
4. preview all clubs pages and clubs of one category,
5. evaluating websites according to how fulfilled the criterion rated,
6. evaluation analyses in percent,
7. evaluation analyses in graphs.

### **3. Research and analysis**

#### ***3.1. Evaluation of web pages clubs of TOP Slovak hockey league—Tipsport league***

The analysis shows that every club has the web fan zone and only one club does not have an online souvenir shop. Each club also has a web section for sponsors and only 10% of clubs in addition to this part of the site was reserved for sponsors and they promote their sponsors on the main page of their site. Also, only 10% of clubs promotes their sponsors in addition promotion to page footer and 10% promotes their sponsors using advertising banners. It is interesting that nowadays has only a 10% of clubs which have foreign language version of their site. The following section analyses showed that 80% of clubs have on their web, web section for young people (recruitment, information for members, etc.). But each of them has published roster players (members of the teams—such assembly team U17, U19 team composition, etc.). From these clubs, only 30% were promoting youth teams in the form of videos, photos (of league matches, trainings, meetings, etc.). In addition, only 30% of clubs which promote their matches, in addition to promoting youth-team league matches (U17, U19, etc.). For the education of youth, it is important to collaborate with some elementary schools, where there is plenty of talented students, but only 20% of clubs have on their site to link school with which it cooperates and only 10% of clubs doing for their school advertising on their site.

#### ***3.2. Evaluation of web pages clubs of the second highest Slovak hockey league***

In continuing the analysis, it was found that clubs from lower leagues do not have so perfect website and there are significant shortcomings. To some degree that they have the funds but that is not the subject of this analysis. When we look at what this analysis shows, we can see that compared to teams in the top league there are the following changes. Not every club has the web fan zone, but only 25% of the club has the web fan zone and even 83% clubs does not have an online souvenir shop. Here, you can see the lower interest and care about their fans.

Not every club has a web section for sponsors (as in the TOP league), but only 67% of clubs has a web section for sponsors. They promote their sponsors in other ways:

- promotion partners on the main page—63% of clubs,
- partner promotion on page footer—0% of clubs,
- promotion partners on site in the form of banners—20% of clubs,
- foreign language version pages—8% of clubs.

Changes can also be seen in the next section on youth. Not 80% of clubs have on their web a web section for youth but only 50% of the club have this section and not each of them has published roster players but only 67% of the clubs did it. It can be seen clearly that the clubs are less interested in the promotion of youth:

- promotion of youth—50% of clubs,
- promoting matches of youth—50% of clubs,
- link to elementary school—8% of clubs,
- elementary school promotion—8% of clubs.

Compared to the highest league it was seen with the much lower rating. It is known that the lower league has less money and therefore it cares about the fans, sponsors and promotes juniors (talents) as it is at a lower level.

### 3.3. Evaluation of web pages clubs of TOP Slovak football league—Fortuna league

Unlike the previous analysis points, at this point analyses were evaluated on websites of football clubs. When we compare clubs of TOP hockey league and TOP football league, we will be able to watch a surprisingly large difference. Such a difference we could see in a hockey league.

One hundred percent hockey club has a fan zone on the website of football clubs at no fan zone is only 67% of the clubs. We can see a decrease in the care of their own fans and even in shop online section, where 67% of the clubs that have a fan zone and only 62% has the addition of online shop.

It is interesting to watch the fact that football clubs in addition to the section for sponsors (75% of all), were promoted by its sponsors and the title of the website (75% of all). Only one club promotes its sponsors in the page footer, or the clubs in the promotion that does not use banners and foreign language version of the site has only 42% of the clubs. However, elementary school promotion is only 8% of the clubs.

Promoting youth is excellent level in all parameters:

- Section for youth—100% of clubs.
- Promotion of youth—58% of clubs.
- Promoting matches of youth—50% of clubs.
- Students list (roster)—92% of clubs.

### 3.4. Evaluation of web pages clubs of Slovak Tennis Association (STA)

Clubs of STA are categorised into four regional groups: Bratislava Region (BR), Western Slovakia (WS), Central Slovakia (CS) and Eastern Slovakia (ES). Web pages of tennis clubs are given worst criteria. A synoptic comparison can be seen in Table 1.

**Table 1. Evaluation of tennis clubs' webpages in Slovakia**

Group	1 (%)	2 (%)	3 (%)	4 (%)	5 (%)	6 (%)	7 (%)	8 (%)	9 (%)	10 (%)	11 (%)	12 (%)	13 (%)
BR	0	0	29	29	0	0	18	41	35	18	12	6	6
WS	0	0	5	25	0	0	20	20	35	0	25	5	0
CS	0	0	14	7	0	7	0	7	50	0	7	7	0
ES	0	0	13	13	0	0	0	25	50	13	38	13	0

Legend:

1. fan zone,
2. online shop of souvenirs,
3. the section on the website for partners,
4. promotion partners on the main page,
5. partner promotion on page footer,
6. promotion partners on site in the form of banners,

7. foreign language version pages,
8. section for youth,
9. the promotion of youth,
10. promoting matches of youth,
11. students list (roster),
12. link to elementary school,
13. elementary school promotion

We can see that tennis clubs through the website only promote youth but not elementary schools. Neither of the clubs has no fan zone on the website, so there is the question: Tennis clubs have fans? If so, why not have their part on their website? Why tennis clubs do not promote their sponsors? That is a question for tennis clubs.

The CSF method was used with the rating scale of 0–10. Below we can see that the maximum points achieved by the hockey club were 2.0 points in the eighth factor. The graph shows the difference in the results of the best clubs of results of CSF analysis for areas: hockey, football and tennis as a whole. These differences are described in detail above.

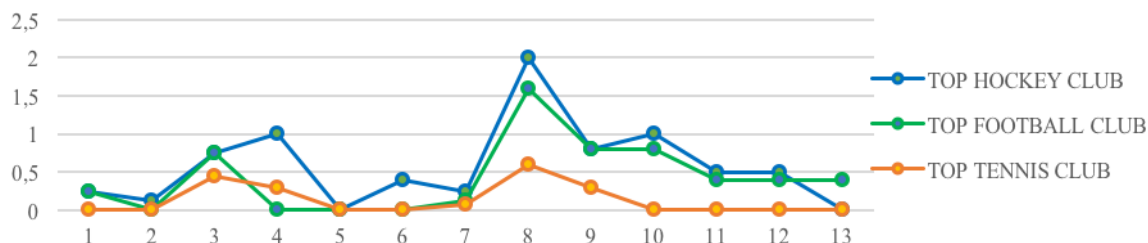


Figure 1. Compare best clubs—CSF analysis

#### 4. Conclusions

Given the results of football clubs, it would be for their future profit good to focus on the online gift shop. They would also be tried to use other possibilities of promoting sponsors on the website (such as logos on the web background, logos of the main sponsors in the page footer, etc.). Worse are the tennis clubs, which should focus on all factors. Especially, it should focus on categories of sponsors and fans. They should create sections for fans and also to create an online store so that there are more fans. Create an advertising background on a website for their main sponsors or advertise as links in the footer, and the like. Tennis is a very expensive sport and in except to advertising of young recruitment, and prices of lessons should also focus on the promotion of their young members, such as they have in hockey clubs. Create part of members, players, their statistics and the like on their website. To present videos and photos of trainings, meetings on social networks create links with websites. Using YouTube, Instagram and the like take up more potential new members, such as referring to looking for a new talent. Finally, even hockey clubs are not flawless. Hockey clubs should improve especially in promoting sports schools to more easily attract children to their sport schools. It should also be improved in other factors that are better than clubs in other sports; also, it does not mean that they are perfect. We are still in this issue behind the world, and clubs must work very hard to cope with foreign clubs, but it is already out of the issue.

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