

THE MANAGEMENT OF ROMANIAN'S ELITE SPORT AND ITS PUBLIC VALUE

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ABSTRACT

Sport has become a business, but like any company it has effects on society. Over time it has been shown that sport offers important benefits to society. Among the most important values transmitted through sport, including the cultivation of team spirit, the promotion of national identity, respect for the values of others or other benefits such as stimulating investments, trade or tourism. In addition, due to the fact that sport is a global phenomenon, athletes have become role models for young people, and in some cases they are negative examples due to their behavior. In Romania, sports management was largely led after the Revolution by oligarchs trying to obtain besides financial benefits, political power too. The lack of long-term vision and the poor results of the last period are reflected in the fact that the young Romanians do not have as a Romanian sports model

KEYWORDS: *public value, role model, sport management.*

1. INTRODUCTION

In the XXI century, the sport world become more and more an industry and the businessmen want to get profit out of this business. Like every single business, sports organizations influence in some way the society and offers public value. Sport involves many people around the globe and displayed or watched by a large number of world's population and the level of sport has changed from being an amateur to a true industry. Sport management stimulate trade, tourism and investment and also stimulate the national pride amongst their citizens (Hoye et al., 2018).

In the last years, the state increased the investment in sport activities. By example, in the USA, many government founded educational institutions to build and develop facilities like playing fields and indoor arenas (Fort, 2011). In many nations the government has founded on the one hand, the building of the establishment of training for athletes and on the other hand their subsequent operation. Therefore, many sport facilities managers, coaches or sport scientists are working for the government.

From the sport experience arise many benefits and social utility. Sport contribute to the well-being of the society because it provides values, attitudes and behaviors which are learnt and forwarded. Sport participation gives the opportunity to the young people to better understand the culture and the behavior of the society. Moreover, sport is perceived as a character building. But sport does not only form „character”, it transmits values which support central beliefs and attitudes of this modern society (Coakley et al., 2011; Rigauer, 1981). The sport conveys the idea that success comes through hard work, self-discipline and lots of initiative. Moreover, sport involves respecting rules, hierarchies, the authority of superiors, but also the opponents and their values. At the same time, team sport helps individuals to develop their skills in teamwork, a skill that is particularly important nowadays. Sport is considered the ideal practice to develop these values (Rigauer, 1981).

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2. THE MANAGEMENT OF ROMANIAN'S ELITE SPORT

Sport in general but especially European football can be seen as a microcosm of tension between local or national identities and globalization (McDonald, 2014). Not just in football, but in many fields of sport, sport clubs were associated with the state and the teams were used to influence people (Missiroli, 2002; Mills, 2009; Mills, 2010; Riordan, 2007). The team identity derived from elements of state including army or state railway (Missiroli, 2002; McDonald, 2014). Approximately 15 major Romanian oligarchs with varying degrees of political interest own domestical football clubs (McDonald, 2014). In Romania is the case of George Copos and Rapid Bucharest and George Becali and Steaua Bucharest.

Romania was influenced by the communist regime of Nicolae Ceausescu and his regime has influenced even the management of sport organizations. In that period, the mentality imposed by the communist leader was „winning is everything”. He took credit for party's commitment to producing sportsmen that brought prestige to the country. At that time, the Romanian Communist Party wanted to create celebrity role models out of the athletes through media coverage (Vinokur, 1988).

After the communism period, most teams lost their state sponsorship and turned to private financial support. So, since then many football clubs were managed by oligarchs. A oligarch could be described as a member of a small group that runs a country or a large organization (Macmillan dictionary). McDonald (2014) described the oligarch as an individual with significant wealth and political influence. Oligarchs buy football clubs to gain political capital and to improve their power. Moreover, investing in sport brings popularity but investing efficient could bring also profit. In some situation, some oligarchs use football to launder their wealth (Riordan, 2007). These oligarchs are less interested in financial benefits and more interested in political benefits.

Team media coverage grants the oligarchs stronger celebrity status. Oligarchs become more famous because of the association with football. By example, Steaua Bucharest owner, George Becali used media and publicity to promote his party through the team. Moreover, the manager of Otelul Galati Football Club become the city mayor short time after the local team won for the first and only time in the history the Romanian championship. Moreover, 4 year after winning the championship, the club went bankrupt (McDonald, 2014).

For many Romanians shareholders football is just a tool to become a public person and in some cases to increase the chances to a better political career. In that way, many shareholders are interested in short term wins rather than a long term strategy. These kinds of managers are searching just for short term success. To support the idea that the Romanians managers are seeking just for short term, we can take into consideration the situation of Steaua Bucharest Football Club. The owner of the club, the oligarch George Becali, reduced the activity of the football academy because it didn't produce skilled players and he cut the funding. Moreover, this choice of Steaua's owner had a direct impact on the society. When he cut the organization's second team, he left hundreds of children and several coaches without jobs.

3. PUBLIC VALUE OF SPORT

A major league sports team can provide civic pride and community spirit. In USA the Government is funding the building of new stadiums, but it seems that the costs payed by the taxpayers exceed the benefits received (Johnson et al., 2001). The USA Government justify the investment in sport arenas saying is the only way many cities can attract and keep a team. Moreover, sport can generate incomes from accommodation, merchandising and other travel entertainment. A sport team produce public goods like local unity, fan loyalty, sense of pride. Cultural significance of sports probably

exceeds its business significance. Many people identify them as a sport fan, even though they attend less games.

The analysis made by Johnson et al. (2001) suggests that the value of public goods generated by major league sports teams and their stadiums do not generate increased income for their cities and it would seem that publicly financed sport buildings represent a misallocation of resources. In Romania, in the last period many sport arenas were built, but many of them don't justify the amount of money allocated for their construction.

3.1 The role model of athletes

Role models or mentors are part of life and have an important impact on the actions of people. Role models are frequently used in different programs to communicate messages to a group in order to change their behaviour (Payne et al., 2003). Yancey (1998) considered that a role model is an individual who is perceived as exemplary, or worthy imitation. Also, a role model could be described as an individual who inspires other individuals or group of people (Ingall, 1997). The concept of mentoring and heroes are part of the definition of role model. It is important to underline that role modeling, cannot be always considerate a positive fact, because that person is not always worthy of imitation, by example by having a deviant behaviour (Payne et al., 2003).

The role models who influence teenagers tend to change over the time (Glover, 1978). Young children follow the example of family members, during the studies role models could change from family members to friends and teachers and later, the youngsters could take as role model athletes, coaches, television stars, pop stars or movie stars (French & Pena, 1991). Initially, children have parents as models, then they take other role models, especially coming from sport. These sportsmen have a strong influence on the children (Fitzclarence et al., 1998). French and Pena (1991) concluded that television has had a major impact on role model preference of children. Especially male see athletes as role models (Payne et al., 2003).

3.2 The influence of sports models

The influence of the role model depends on the behaviour which they show on the public. Many athletes try hard to become a positive model by raising money for charity or acting as mentors and talking to student groups. Moreover, an American Olympic gold medalist said: "When you reach a certain level of visibility, you are a role model whether you like it or not" (Globus, 1998). Also, in the USA, Kees (1995) identified that several athletes have failed to be a role model because they have been accused of certain crimes.

The modelling behaviour is not just based on the field performance but it is also based on the other activities. By example, many athletes have misbehaved in public places such a night club. The increased media attention underline social problems of the athletes who are often abusing drugs and alcohol, beating wives and girlfriend and having extra marital affairs (Lines, 2001). Despite of these negative activities, athletes are still considered to have a big impact as role models.

4. THE SOCIAL IMPACT OF SPORT – THE ROLE MODEL OF ATHLETES

A questionnaire has been designed and posted online on Google Forms in order to identify the role model of Romanian's teenagers. 114 young people from the rural region of Galati county replied to this questionnaire the answers are shown in the graphs below. The first question was "what are the models you follow in your daily life?" To this question the answer most often offered by the respondents was parents (the first answer being the mother- 45,6% and the father later with 21,9%). An answer that can be put on account of the fact that in the rural area the families are numerous and the mother takes care of the whole family. Third among the models considered by the respondents are teachers and only later athletes were considered as a model by the respondents. Among the other

models that the young respondents still have are brothers (7%) or sisters (11,4%), other family members (grandmother 0,9%) It should be noted that 9.6% consider that they do not have a model.

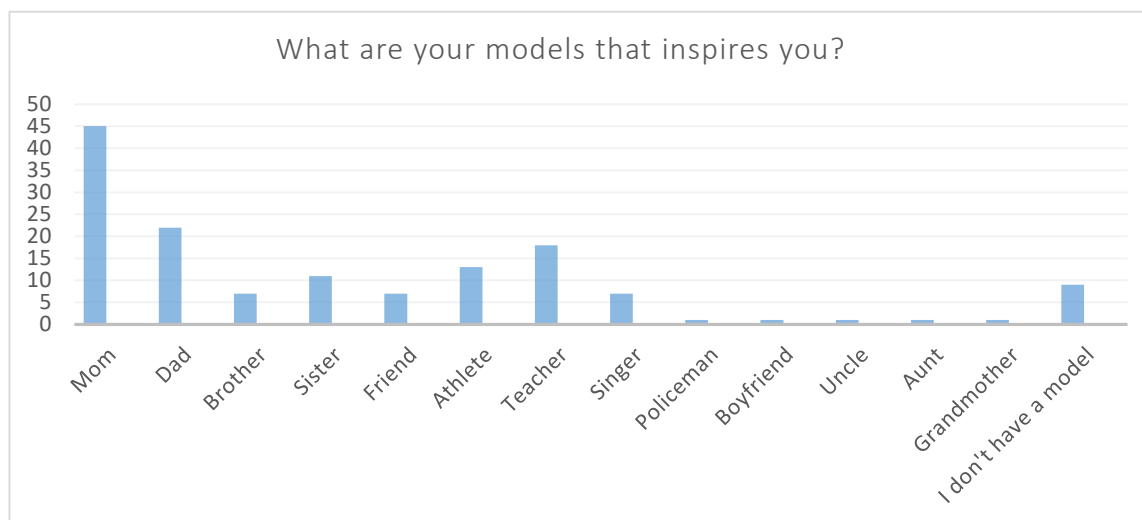


Figure 1. Young Romanian's models

The following question measures on a scale of 1 to 10 the degree to which young people copy elements of their models' behavior, where 1 means not at all and 10 to a large extent. As pointed out earlier, sport has become a global phenomenon, and athletes are highly regarded public figures. Thus, athletes are copied by young people even if in some situations their behavior is not worth following. Regarding the situation in Romania, the respondents copy in a large proportion the behavior of their models, over 52% of the answers falling between the 7 and 9 scales.

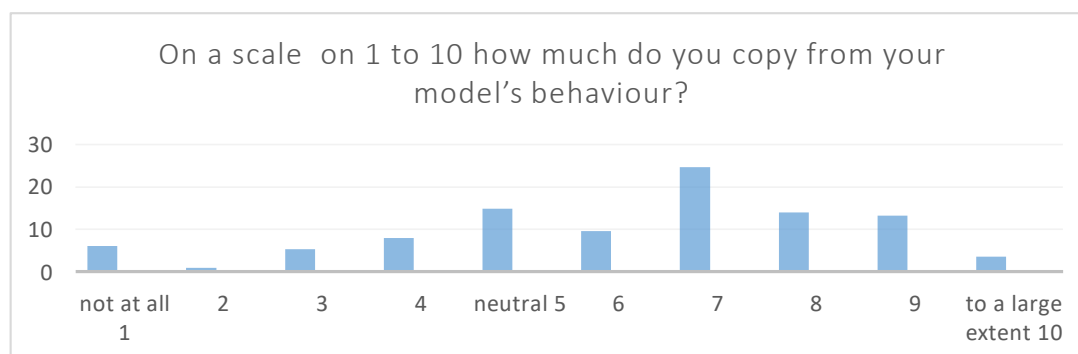


Figure 2. The extent to which young people follow their role model

Further, the respondents appreciate that Romanians athletes would still be good models to follow. Over 61% of the answers are between the 8 and 10 scales and 22.7% between the 5 and 7 scales, where 1 means not at all and 10 to a large extent.

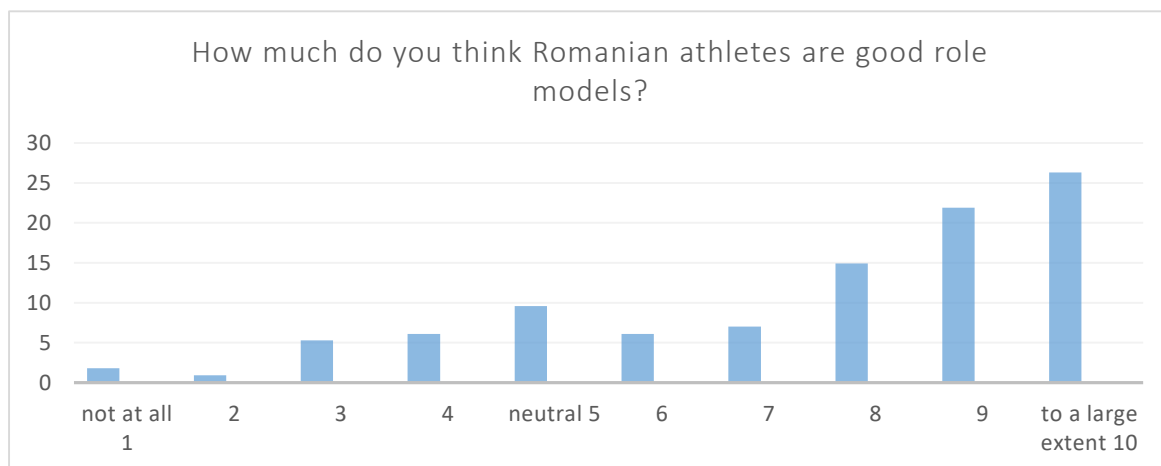


Figure 3. The extent to which Romanian athletes are considered good role models

Regarding this question, it also analyzes on a scale from 1 to 10 the extent to which the Romanian athletes inspire the respondents to carry out sports activities (where 1 means not at all and 10 to a large extent). Although most respondents do not have a model in the field of sport, they still believe that athletes can make them decide to play sports. To this question over 50% of the respondents offered answers between scales 7 and 10.

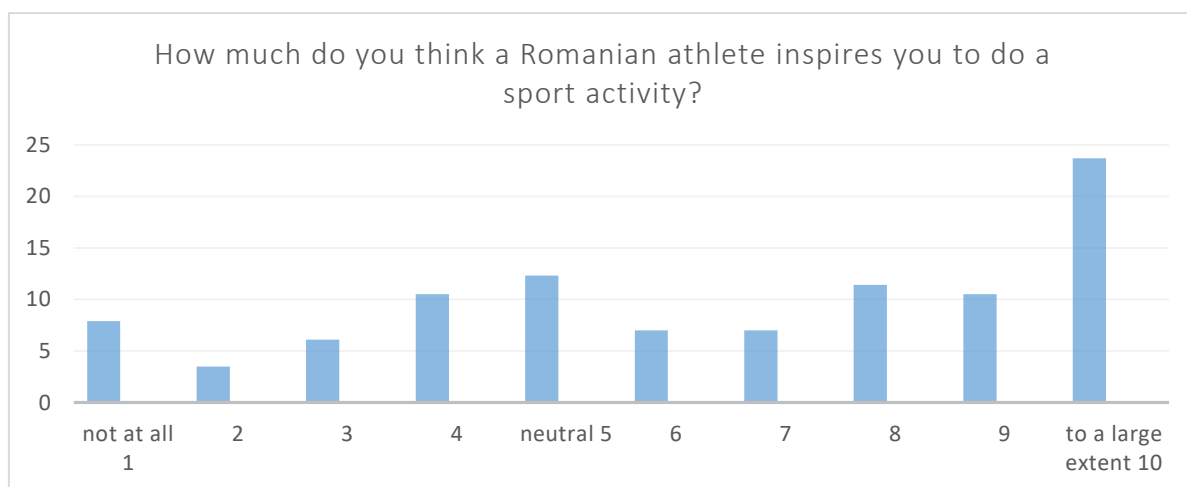


Figure 4. The extent to which Romanian athletes inspire young people to carry out a sporting activity

In Romania, sports infrastructure is not very well developed, and young people do not have many opportunities to play sports. This aspect emerges from this questionnaire. About 70% of the respondents gave answers between scales 7 and 10, stressing that a better developed infrastructure would determine them to play more sports (1 means not at all and 10 to a large extent).

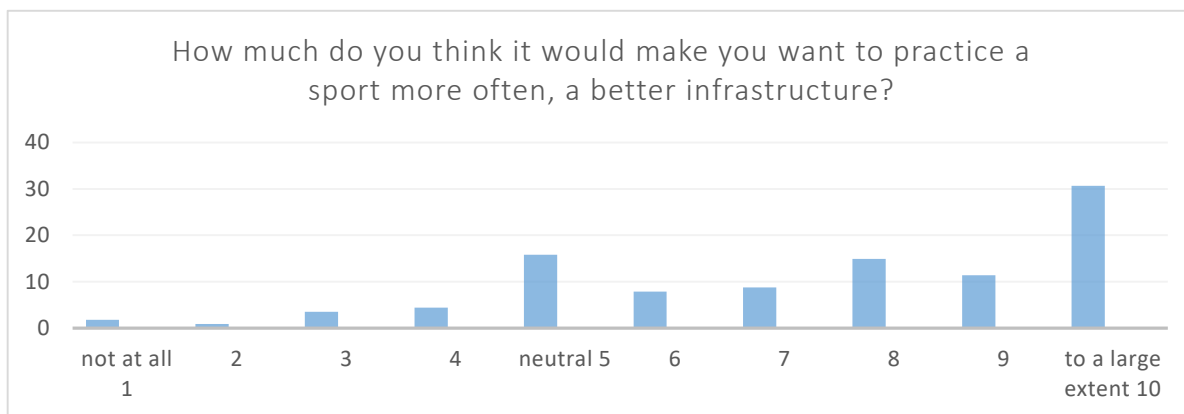


Figure 5. The extent to which infrastructure influences the practice of a sport

Regarding the gender of those who answered the questionnaire 35% are men and 65% are women, and the age of most respondents is between 12 and 20 years (97%). Only about 2% of respondents are between 20 and 30 years old.

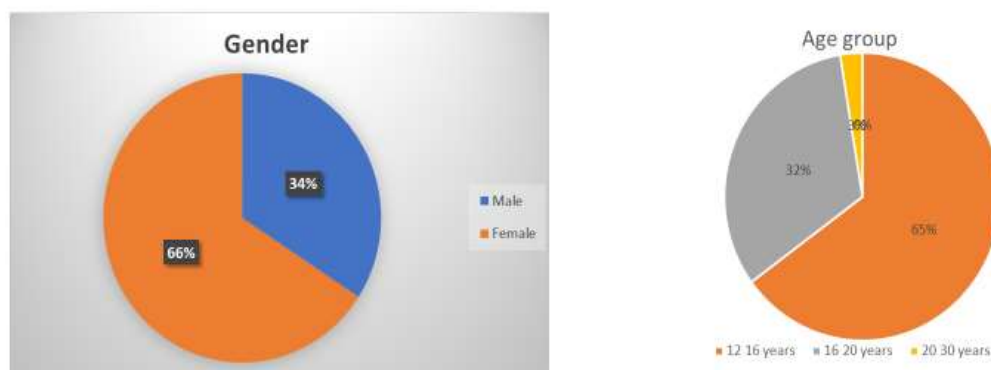


Figure 6. Gender and age of the respondents

5. CONCLUSIONS

Sport in general and football in particular could be a prolific business, but some time it could provide many advantages to the society, but for the owners too. The management of Romanian's sport clubs is marked by the control of the oligarchs. These oligarchs want to gain political capital, to increase their power, to make profit, and sometimes to laundry their business. Many other clubs are funded by public money and politicians want to associate their image with the club's success.

Regarding the impact on the society, the sport can produce some benefits. Among the benefits of sport are: national pride, group cohesion, drive investment in infrastructure, stimulate trade and tourism and inspire people to do sport. Moreover, the sport influence the society by the example of athletes. Nowadays, because of the media coverage, the athletes have a big visibility and they became role model for many teenagers. These teenagers copy many aspects from the behaviour of their models, but sometimes these models have a questionable behavior that should not be followed. Despite of these undeniable benefits there are also situations in which the money invested in sports, especially in sports arenas, does not justify the amounts paid the governments.

In Romania, youngsters like to do sport and many of them would play more sports if the infrastructure were better developed. Romanian's teenagers don't have models as athletes, because

because in Romania there are not many examples of successful athletes and when some athletes succeed at a high level they are not promoted as they should.

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