

10. Mcweeny D. K., Boule N. G., Neto J. H. F., Kennedy M. D. Effect of high intensity functional training and traditional resistance training on aerobic, anaerobic, and musculoskeletal fitness improvement. *Journal of Physical Education and Sport* © (JPES), Vol.20 (4), Art 243 pp. 1791 – 1802, 2020. <https://DOI:10.7752/jpes.2020.04243>
11. Osipov V.M. Optimizing the physical condition of women of mature age by means of innovative fitness technologies. *Physical education, sport and health culture in modern society*. 2012. No. 4. P. 305–310. [in Ukrainian]
12. Romanchuk A., Dolgier Y. Effects of long-term training experience of aerobic exercises on middle-aged women. *Journal of Physical Education and Sport*, 17(2), Art 102, pp. 680-687, 2017. <https://DOI:10.7752/jpes.2017.02102>
13. Rýzková E., Labudová J., Grznár L., Šmída M. Effects of aquafitness with high intensity interval training on physical fitness. *Journal of Physical Education and Sport* © (JPES), 18 Supplement issue 1, Art 51, pp. 373-381, 2017. <https://DOI:10.7752/jpes.2018.s151>
14. Struhár I., Vaculíková P., Gimunová M., Minster D., Körnerová V. Effects of whole-body electrostimulation and acroyoga based exercise programme on blood pressure in a group of young women. *Journal of Physical Education and Sport* © (JPES), Vol 19 (Supplement issue 1), Art 8, pp. 49-57, 2019. <https://DOI:10.7752/jpes.2019.s1008>

DOI: [https://doi.org/10.31392/UDU-nc.series15.2024.3K\(176\).04](https://doi.org/10.31392/UDU-nc.series15.2024.3K(176).04)

**Kulda Arturs,**  
**BSc Business Management, MSc Sports Management**  
**RISEBA University of Applied Sciences (Riga, Latvia)**  
**Professional ice hockey player EC VSV(Austria), WIN2DAY Ice hockey League**  
**Abele Agita,**  
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7916-8150>  
**Dr. Paed., Mg Sp.sc., Mg Psych.**  
**Professor of Latvian Academy of Sport Education (Riga, Latvia)**  
**Department of Sports Theory**

## EVENT MARKETING AND FAN SATISFACTION IN WIN2DAY ICE HOCKEY LEAGUE USING AN EXAMPLE OF EC IDM WARMEPUMPEN VSV

*Pētījums virzīts uz pasākumu mārketinga un līdzjutēju amierinātības izaugsmes iespēju analīzi Eiropas hokeja klubu un līgu līmenī, tos salīdzinot ar vadošo hokeja līgu pieredzi. Fokusējoties un esošās mārketinga prakses nepilnību analīzi, pētījuma mērķis ir: balstoties uz klubu darbības analīzi, izstrādāt praktiskus ieteikumus Win2Day hokeja līgas (ICEHL) klubiem, lai uzlabotu pasākumu organizēšanas stratēģijas, tādā veidā paaugstinot līdzjutēju apmierinātību un atbalstītāju piesaisti. Pasākumu apmeklētība un līdzjutēju apierinātības rādītāji ir būtiski faktori komandu pasākumu ienesīguma veicināšanai un jaunu sponsoru piesaitei. Pētījuma subjekts ir profesionālais vīriešu hokejs un spēļu mārketinga ICEHL līgā un konkrēti komanda EC VSV.*

**Atslēgvārdi:** pasākumu mārketinga, līdzjutēju pmierinātība, hokejs, spēļu apmeklējums, sociālo mēdiju kampaņas.

**Кулда Артур, Абель Агита Івент-маркетинг та задоволеність вболівальників у хокейній лізі Win2Day на прикладі EC IDM Wärmepumpen VSV.** Автор пов'язує розробку рекомендацій щодо покращення івент-маркетингу та задоволеності вболівальників зі значними можливостями для розвитку ліги та клубів і наближення результатів у цих сферах до показників провідних хокейних ліг Європи. Дослідження також виявить прогалини та можливості в поточній маркетинговій практиці. Зрештою, метою є розробка практичних рекомендацій для клубів win2day ICE Hockey League (ICEHL), зокрема EC iDM Wärmepumpen VSV (EC VSV), щодо оптимізації їхніх стратегій івент-маркетингу, що сприятиме підвищенню задоволеності вболівальників, збільшенню відвідуваності матчів та загальній привабливості ліги для вболівальників та спонсорів. Середня відвідуваність - один з основних показників, що визначає успіх і прибутковість ліги та команд, які беруть у ній участь.

Дослідження фокусується на професійному чоловічому хокеї з шайбою, а також на маркетингу подій та задоволеності вболівальників в ICEHL, зосереджуючись в основному на одній з команд ліги - EC VSV. Мета дослідження - дослідити функціонування ліги з точки зору івент-маркетингу та задоволеності вболівальників, а також проаналізувати діяльність клубів у рамках ліги.

**Ключові слова:** івент-маркетинг, задоволеність вболівальників, хокей, відвідуваність матчів, соціальні медіа-кампанії.

*The author associates the development of recommendations for improving event marketing and fan satisfaction with significant opportunities for the development of the league and clubs and for bringing the results in these areas closer to those of the leading hockey leagues in Europe. The study will also identify gaps and opportunities in current marketing practices. Ultimately, the goal is to develop actionable recommendations for clubs in the win2day ICE Hockey League (ICEHL), particularly EC iDM Wärmepumpen VSV (EC VSV), to optimize their event marketing strategies, thereby improving fan satisfaction, increasing match attendance, and enhancing the league's overall appeal to fans and sponsors. Average attendance is one of the main indexes determining the success and profitability of the league and the teams participating in it.*

*The research focuses on professional men's ice hockey and the point of view of event marketing and fan satisfaction in the ICEHL, focusing mainly on one of the league teams – EC VSV. The purpose of the research is to explore the league's functioning in terms of event marketing and fan satisfaction and to analyze the operations of the clubs within the league's framework.*

**Key words:** *event marketing, fan satisfactions, ice hockey, game attendance, social media campaigns.*

**Results.** The ICEHL relies on a comprehensive online presence, utilizing various social media channels. However, the league needs to sufficiently embrace innovative approaches and the promotion of ice hockey through social media platforms popular with younger generations. A team's performance in games significantly impacts fan attendance and satisfaction. Achieving gaming success is the cornerstone of EC VSV fan satisfaction. EC VSV should focus on traditional hockey fans to ensure sustainability and revenue growth, but it should also target women, families, and fans of different ethnic backgrounds. Recently, the understanding of an all-encompassing customer experience in sports events has expanded and thus increased the importance of cognitive, affective, emotional, social, and physical responses to the sports event and the event organization [1]. Also, Theodorakis recognizes the high demand for providing sports event customer experiences in alternative channels due to the emergence of new technology and the ambitions of professional sports organizations to expand their fan base. Ratten [2] asserts that the burgeoning fields of sports marketing, sports entrepreneurship, and sports management intersect with various sectors. For effective marketing, sports marketers must discern the attributes that appeal to spectators, participants, and viewers, as well as understand how consumers relate to sports. Ratten identifies three primary categories of sports marketing: interest, participation, and consumption. He emphasizes that sports marketing connects sports products and services with fan behavior, promoting the acquisition of sport-related products, services, and merchandise.

Ice hockey and sports, in general, compete with other entertainment media that fans are drawn to, such as movies, concerts, and theater, for revenue [3]. In the case of EC VSV, being the only major professional sports team in a relatively small European city with little over 65 thousand residents offers an advantage. The city residents have limited entertainment options, and there is no competition for attention from other sports. Additionally, the city's long-standing hockey traditions ensure stable support from its residents.

In the growing world of entertainment, ice hockey clubs must differentiate the products they offer from other various forms of entertainment that customers can gravitate towards [3]. Engaging fans through social media is relevant for sports organizations since they are known worldwide for valuable brands and engaging large fanbases [4]. Sports organizations have a large fan base, and their fandom is high-level, so social media is an ideal platform for sports organizations to engage fans and followers. The popularity of social media has created new ways for sports marketing. Social media platforms allow users to engage with sports organizations. Sporting teams, recognizing fans as more than just customers but also as co-creators of messages, brands, and identities, have engaged with them personally and socially. Digital content keeps fans engaged beyond matchday. A GWI survey [5] of 23,073 internet users aged 16-64 across 15 different markets revealed that 58% of sports fans aged 16-24 follow athletes' accounts on social media, while 38% of fans aged 35-44 follow league social media pages. According to GWI, YouTube is the most popular platform (52%), followed by Facebook (47%) and Instagram (43%). According to Hallbäck [6], sports organizations need to understand what their fans and followers like and what makes them like the organization. This creates the basis of the information and data to develop communication and marketing. Given the subjective nature of the service, Mullin, Hardy, and Sutton [7] emphasize the challenge of ensuring sports customer satisfaction, noting that no other product or service elicits such strong emotional attachment and personal identification. Successful event marketing, which leaves fans satisfied even when the club performs poorly, offers a way to mitigate these risks. Winning is self-explanatory for attracting more fans, although this only provides satisfaction based on results [8].

The ICEHL is a Central European hockey league that is comprised of 13 teams representing four Central Eastern European countries: Austria, Slovenia, Italy, and Hungary. The empirical material was gathered through quantitative and qualitative methodologies. Interviews were conducted with ICEHL management experts and two experts from EC VSV and Hydro Fehérvár AV 19 management.

Qualitative research findings have shown that the league is currently undergoing a "Re-Positioning" process with the assistance of an external agency. This process indicates that the ICEHL management is aware of the challenges and is trying to address them. The experts also confirm that ICEHL struggles to implement effective marketing and product placement strategies, hindering its overall appeal.

The interviews results found that the ICEHL's progress in terms of marketing should keep pace with the efforts of the clubs. Closer collaboration, the exchange of ideas among clubs, healthy competition, a proactive stance, and the use of innovations enhance the league's overall attractiveness.

Ice hockey game attendance and average arena occupancy are fundamental and initial indicators of a club's marketing effectiveness. These elements lay the groundwork for subsequent aspects, such as event marketing and fan satisfaction. These factors, evolving, have the potential to either enhance the overall performance indicators or, conversely, negatively impact the club's attendance figures. Switzerland's National League (NL) boasts the highest average attendance among European hockey leagues, recording an impressive figure of 7,005 fans per game during the 2022-23 season. In the 2023-24 season [9], the average attendance figures surpassed those of the previous hockey season, with an average of 7,083 fans per game, exceeding the previous season's average of 7,005. To this date, Jan. 27, 2024, 290 games have been played this season, attracting 2,054,184 fans. However, the most remarkable statistic is the National League (NL) average arena occupancy rate. Currently, arenas in the NL are filled to an average of 87.14 percent capacity. Notably, seven teams boast an occupancy rate exceeding 90 percent. Among these, Fribourg-Gottéron stands out, achieving 100 percent occupancy for each game in their 9,040-seat arena.

In contrast to the National League (NL), where the average arena occupancy rate is a notable 87.14 percent, ICEHL records a markedly lower average occupancy rate of 54.42 percent [10]. Most of the ICEHL clubs play in relatively old arenas, with 10 out of 13 arenas over 30 years old. To find a correlation between sports results and average attendance, the coefficient was calculated between average place throughout six seasons and arena occupancy in 2023-24 and occupancy in 2018-19 till 2022-23,

excluding the 2020-21 season due to COVID restrictions. From this, the place in the regular season of the ICE Hockey League is moderately correlated with attendance.

In their study, Abeza et al. [11] interviewed 26 managers from professional sports teams, and discovered that all these teams were present on at least five social media platforms, some utilizing over nine. They found X (formerly Twitter) to be the most frequently used, followed by Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat. The study identified these teams' six primary uses of social media: interaction, news updates, ticket sales, sponsorship, public relations, and customer service. Table 1. presents the social media following of ICEHL and its teams across four major platforms. If compared with the findings of Abeza et al., X is not a popular social network among ICEHL clubs. Most clubs either do not maintain pages on X or simply replicate content from other official networks. Snapchat is currently an unexplored social network for the official channels of ICEHL teams.

Quantitative research was conducted through a survey targeting EC VSV hockey club fans. The data collection method consisted of 31-question survey of EC VSV fans. 945 respondents participated in it. Customer engagement can provide value to customers, and this can be achieved by satisfying them, establishing trust and loyalty, and using long-term relationships [12].

Table 1

**ICEHL social media followers amount across various social media platforms, in thousand followers, accessed January 11, 2024**

	Facebook	Instagram	YouTube	TikTok	Total
<i>ICEHL</i>	37	27,2	0,755	4,045	69,0
<i>Klagenfurt</i>	34	17	2,67	-	53,7
<i>Vienna</i>	30	15	2,75	0,387	48,1
<i>Villach</i>	32	15	0,476	2,465	49,9
<i>Linz</i>	36	15	1,74	3,086	55,8
<i>Bolzano</i>	27	21	2,63	2,147	52,8
<i>Fehérvár</i>	33	11	4,44	13,6	62,0
<i>Pustertal</i>	15	11,6	1,57	4065	32,2
<i>Innsbruck</i>	10	9,314	0,349	-	19,7
<i>Salzburg</i>	36	29,1	3,57	8,407	77,1
<i>Graz</i>	30	10,4	-	37,2	77,6
<i>Vorarlberg</i>	1,9	3,237	0,161	0,367	5,7
<i>Asiago</i>	9,5	7,237	1,03	0,539	18,3
<i>Ljubljana</i>	6,2	5,752	0,665	-	12,6

Based on the quantitative research, the club's fans are loyal and devoted supporters, for whom the main event satisfaction is the victory of their favourite club in every match. The portrait of an average EC VSV fan is that of an individual aged 21-40, predominantly male, in some form of relationship, and with post-secondary education or a completed bachelor's degree. Financially, a significant portion (32.2%) did not disclose their earnings, but among those who did, the majority earn between 15,000 and 35,000 euros per year, with 40.6% earning more than 35,000 euros annually. The average EC VSV fan has been a supporter for a long time, likely backing the team from a young age and remaining a fan for life. Most of the respondents have been team fans for more than 20 years. They prefer to attend matches with friends or family and try to support the team with live games, watching 11 or more games per season. The main social media channels for following EC VSV are Facebook, Instagram, and the official website. The average fan generally does not follow or support only a few players on social media. Their favourite types of content on social media are videos and pictures, and they would like to see more content from EC VSV, especially "behind the scenes" material, hockey players' lives in the arena, and news and updates.

They feel that EC VSV should use more promotional means with fans and the city. Respondents rate the club's reputation and the atmosphere during games very highly. They consider the online activity, team merchandise assortment, arena staff work, team lineup, and results good. However, respondents are not overly satisfied with the entertainment activities at the rink, ticket prices, and arena comfort, rating them lower than other assessment categories.

There is a noticeable difference between the results in questions about the social media channels used by respondents and the channels they use to follow EC VSV. The third and fourth most used social networks by club fans daily are YouTube and Snapchat. EC VSV does not have an official channel on Snapchat. On YouTube, in the last 12 months, out of 28 videos, 21 are short interviews with players before or after games, gathering no more than 965 views each. Snapchat generated \$4.6 billion in revenue in 2022, a 12% increase year-on-year, with over 397 million people using Snapchat daily [13]. Snapchat could be a good option for EC VSV to engage with a younger audience. Only 54 out of 945 respondents indicated that they follow the club on TikTok, a social network that has gained massive popularity among the younger generation in recent years. The survey showed the respondents' preferences in the social media content they would like to see. An examination of EC VSV's social media platforms revealed a

noticeable absence of "behind-the-scenes" content and insights into the team's internal workings. Such content fosters a deeper connection between fans and the team, offering a closer look at the players and internal operations, thereby enhancing fan engagement and loyalty.

**Conclusions:** The ICEHL must proactively use social media to engage younger audiences and boost fan satisfaction, addressing marketing and cooperation issues within the league. Initiatives like marketing seminars, club awards, and diverse fan engagement strategies, including interactive campaigns and community involvement, are vital to increasing attendance and fan loyalty. EC VSV, in particular, should target a broader fan base and create content that appeals to underrepresented groups, leveraging social media to enhance fan experiences and community ties.

#### Literature

- 1.Theodorakis N. (2014). *Customer Experience in Spectator Sports*. In J. Kandampully (Ed.), *Customer Experience Management: Enhancing Experience and Value Through Service Management*. Dubuque: Kendall Hunt Publishing Company.
2. Ratten V. (2010) 'The Future of Sports Management: A Social Responsibility, Philanthropy and Entrepreneurship Perspective', *Journal of Management & Organization*, 16(4): 487-494. 16. 10.5172/jmo.2010.16.4.488.
- 3.Gantz D. (2020). *Strategies for increasing revenues for sun belt National hockey league teams*. Doctoral Study. Minneapolis, United States: Walden University.
- 4.Annamalai B., Yoshida M., Varshney. S., Pathak A., Venugopal P. (2021). Social media content strategy for sport clubs to drive fan engagement. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 62. [Online]. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/>. Available at: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0969698921002149> [Accessed 25 Jan. 2023].
- 5.GWI. (2023). *The Sports Playbook*. [Online], GWI. Available at <https://www.gwi.com/industries/sports>. [Accessed 5 December 2023].
- 6.Hallbäck R. (2020). <https://www.anchorsportadvisors.com/post/social-media-in-sports-the-complete-guide-to-content-marketing>. [Online]. <https://www.anchorsportadvisors.com>. Available <https://www.anchorsportadvisors.com/post/social-media-in-sports-the-complete-guide-to-content-market> [Accessed 5 December 2023].
- 7.Mullin B.J., Hardy S., Sutton W.A. (2014). *Sport Marketing (4th edition)*. Human Kinetics. ISBN 9781450424981.
- 8.Wann D. (1994). The "noble" sports fan: The relationships between team identification, self- esteem, and aggression. *Perceptual and Motor Skills*, 78, 864-866.
- 9.SIHF. (2024).NL Attendance. [Online]. [sihf.ch](https://m.sihf.ch/de/game-center/national-league/#/mashup/teams/teamSpectator/spectatorsQuotient/des). Available at: <https://m.sihf.ch/de/game-center/national-league/#/mashup/teams/teamSpectator/spectatorsQuotient/des> [Accessed 27 January 2024].
10. ICE Hockey League. (2023). *Tabelle*. [Online]. <https://www.ice.hockey/>. Available at: <https://www.ice.hockey/> [Accessed 11 December 2023].
11. Abeza G., O'Reilly N., Seguin B., Nzindukiyimana Or. (2017). Social Media as a Relationship Marketing Tool in Professional Sport: A Netnographical Exploration. *International Journal of Sport Communication*. 10. 325- 358. 10.1123/ijsc.2017-0041.
12. Sashi C.M. (2012). Customer Engagement, Buyer-Seller Relationships, and Social Media. *Management Decision*, 50, 253-272.
13. Businessday.ng. (2018). Ronaldo: Why Juventus gambled €100m on a future payday. [Online]. <https://www.businessday.ng>. Available at: <https://businessday.ng/financial-times/article/ronaldo-why-juventus-gambled-e100m-on-a-future-payday/> [Accessed 21 Nov. 2023].

DOI: [https://doi.org/10.31392/UDU-nc.series15.2024.3K176\).05](https://doi.org/10.31392/UDU-nc.series15.2024.3K176).05)

**Kulda Edgars,**  
**Mg. Stud., Sp.Sc. (Latvian Academy of Sport Education (Riga, Latvia),**  
**BSc Business Management, RISEBA (Riga, Latvia),**  
**Professional ice hockey player HC Slavi (Praha), Chance Liga (Czech Republic)**  
**Abele Agita,**  
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7916-8150>  
**Dr. Paed., Mg Sp.sc., Mg Psych,**  
**Professor of Latvian Academy of Sport Education (Riga, Latvia),**  
**Department of Sports Theory**

## EDUCATION AND SPORT COMPETENCE DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR ICE HOCKEY PLAYERS IN LATVIA

Raksts pievēršas Latvijas hokejistu sporta darbības un izglītības iegūšanas savstarpējām saiknēm. Pētījuma mērķis ir izpētīt Latvijas hokejistu kompetenču attīstības iespējas, tās balstot holistiskā talantīgu sportistu karjeras attīstības koncepcijā, to integrējot ar izglītošanās procesu. Kopumā šī sportistu izaugsmes duālās karjeras perspektīvas tiek skatītas sportistu aptaujā, kas kopumā uzrāda vairākus sekmīgas realizēšanas šķēršļus, kur būtiskākais ir nepietiekama sadarbība starp sporta federācijām, izglītības iestādēm un hokeja klubiem. Pētījumā tiek pamatoti vairāki ieteikumi sportistu profesionālās darbības sekmīgai apvienošanai ar izglītošanās procesu, tai skaitā – proaktīva federāciju iesaistīšanās, valsts atbalsta palielināšana, elastīgs studiju grafiks un atbalsta tiešsaistes programmu izveide, kas saskaņota ar sportistu iespējām. Kopumā pētījums aktualizē visaptveroša sportistu atbalsta mehānisma izstrādes nepieciešamību, kas sekmētu veiksmīgu duālās karjeras realizēšanu hokejistiem Latvijā.

**Atslēgvārdi:** izglītība, sports, duālā karjera, iespējas, hokejs.