

**HÄMEENLINNAN LENTOPALLOKERHO SPECTATORS' MOTIVATIONAL FACTORS TO ATTEND
SPORTS EVENTS**



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This thesis aimed to find out what motivates fans in Hämeenlinna to attend Hämeenlinnan Lentopallokerho volleyball sports events. Individuals from Finland, visitors to the games, and followers of the Hämeenlinnan Lentopallokerho Facebook page on social media were the subjects of the study.

The thesis makes use of both qualitative and quantitative research methods. To examine respondent attitudes and reveal motives and habits about the decision whether to attend volleyball matches, a qualitative study in the form of a questionnaire was chosen. The survey consisted of eight questions in all to gather basic demographic information, opinions on volleyball events, attitudes toward motivational factors, and ideas for improving the event experience.

The study uncovered what factors motivate fans to attend events nowadays, as well as what experiences are viewed as essential motivators. These findings can be utilized to improve volleyball event production and marketing. It's critical to keep researching the factors that motivate people to attend HLPK-organized sports events.

As a result of this study, the HLPK volleyball club will be awarded and will be able to change the conduct of a sports event, maintain the club's social networks, which will generate more profit, and this is a way to better serve athletes, fans, sponsors, partners, and other interested parties.

Keywords Sport, team, volleyball, motivation, fans

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Appendix 1 Survey answers “How to engage HLPK fans”

ABBREVIATIONS

HLPK is the abbreviation for Hämeenlinnan Lentopallokerho

HPK is the abbreviation for Hämeenlinnan Pallokerho

1 Introduction

The research was inspired by the volleyball club general manager of Hämeenlinnan Lentopallokerho (HLPK), who was worried about the future volleyball seasons in Hämeenlinna, Finland, and the number of spectators at the games. Hämeenlinna is a small-sized town with a few high-level sports teams, including the HPK ice hockey men's and women's teams, the Steelers floorball men's team, and the HLPK volleyball women's team. There is a need for the women's volleyball event to be improved. HLPK was chosen because the author has a personal interest in the sport and hence has previously built networks in the volleyball industry, which is important for the study to have depth.

1.1 The subject of research

Hämeenlinnan Lentopallokerho Ry is a club for women's and girls' volleyball, originally founded on 1 August 1993 under the name Tarmo-Volley. Hämeenlinna has a long and successful history tradition in volleyball. The club competed under the name Tarmo-Volley until 2009 when it was renamed to HPK Naiset until 2018 when the club's name was changed again to HLPK, under which it continues to play today. Women's volleyball clubs have carried the burden of success in recent years. The club has brought 35 medals to the city (10 gold medals of the Finnish championship, 5 Finnish Cup gold medals, 5 silver medals of the Finnish championship, 8 Finnish Cup silver medals, 7 bronze medals of the Finnish championship) playing the last 31 years in the highest Finnish volleyball league. Since 1999 HLPK has played championship league medal games every year in the best four teams. For many years, the club has competed in European volleyball team events such as the CEV Cup, Challenge Cup, and Champions League. The club has won the title of the elite in Finnish women's volleyball over the years. HLPK's home arena is called Loimua Areena with a capacity of 3000 seats. (Hämeenlinnan lentopallokerho, n.d.)

The head coach is Giovanni Torchio, and the assistant coach is Antonio Orlandi. (Mestaruusliiga, n.d.)

In 2019-2020 the club's volleyball team appeared in television games, more than ever before, and almost all matches were televised. In addition, all matches came in the so-called through the fan camera. The matches were televised on Ruutu +, Yle Areena, and Euro Volley TV. The club was also prominently featured twice on the Euro Volley TV channel.

1.2 Purpose of the thesis

The purpose of this thesis is to identify common motivational factors that bring a live audience to volleyball events in Hämeenlinna, Finland. To reveal the most important features of a volleyball club and to substantiate the main elements of a sports organization's strategic management system.

1.3 Research question

This thesis answers the research question: What are the motivating factors that stimulate audience participation in Hämeenlinna lentopallokerho volleyball matches?

The major goal of the thesis is to discover how to obtain new supporters. It also illustrates what behaviors are required to keep current supporters loyal.

1.4 Research objectives

The goal of this thesis is to look at how HLPK, a non-profit professional volleyball team in Finland, uses marketing to keep its supporters interested. This will be accomplished by examining what activities the sports club is taking, and how those efforts might increase fan involvement. The reasons for a successful sports event can be revealed by researching the motivations of the fans' attendance, understanding fan behavior, and examining event management.

This thesis also investigates the different types of fans who attend volleyball events in Hämeenlinna and proposes some figures and percentages as background information for random fans in the national Finnish volleyball league.

The thesis will not look at the club's other relationships with stakeholders such as players, the media, or sponsors. This thesis will solely look into the club's relationship with its fans. The significance of maintaining fan involvement for the season is critical to the HLPK's financial existence. Furthermore, spectators are required to produce the tension and excitement that so many people associate with watching sports.

It should be emphasized that the author of this study narrowed the field of research to the professional volleyball club Hämeenlinnan Lentopallokerho, as the sports organization that produces sports performance products. Financially, all of the clubs in the Finnish Volleyball Association are non-profit organizations, which means they engage in non-profit activities or have a non-profit organizational objective. A non-profit organization in the sports industry's aim is to promote the interests of both its members and the general public via athletics. It is not the primary goal of a non-profit organization to earn money. A non-profit organization, like most for-profit businesses, can nevertheless generate money as long as the proceeds are reinvested in the members' usage cycle, for example, in the form of public sporting events. Because even non-profit sports groups require good financial management to attain athletic success.

1.5 Methodology

The thesis employs a combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods. The research approach is an interview and survey methods. In qualitative research, the most common data collection format is interviews. According to Oakley, a qualitative interview is a framework in which practices and standards are not just recorded, but also attained, questioned, and reinforced. (Oakley, 1998) The author chooses a method of semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews are in-depth interviews in which respondents must answer pre-determined open-ended questions. Semi-structured interviews are based on a semi-structured survey questionnaire, which is a systematic presentation of questions or subjects that the interviewer must explore. (Clifford, Cope, Gillespie, French, 2016)

The author has explained the selection of these approaches by stating that they are for discovering more about what the HLPK is doing well in their sports events for engaging customers and where the team may improve.

1.6 Thesis structure

The research question is mentioned in the introduction topic. The author provides some general facts on Hämeenlinnan Lentopallokerho in the opening section.

The introduction presents a more in-depth look at the thesis's objectives, purpose, and research question, as well as a greater understanding of the research methods used in thesis writing.

Sport, sports management, sports industry, sports brand, and fan motivational aspects are all covered in the thesis's theoretical study in the second part. Topic presentation is the thesis's second section.

The third section of the thesis digs more into the research methodologies used in thesis writing. The most common research approaches for thesis writing are qualitative and quantitative research. It defines the thesis's objectives and describes the research tools used by the author.

The outcomes are the fourth section of the thesis. In the fourth section, the author must illustrate and present the type of findings obtained, the author examines the team and the challenges that the club had in attracting new supporters. The author presents responses on how Hämeenlinnan Lentopallokerho managed their challenges and analyzes the respondents' interviews.

The fifth section of the topic provides an opportunity to discuss the author's findings. In the fifth section, the author describes how the findings contribute to the thesis's aims and how they relate to the study topic.

The conclusion, which summarizes the thesis, is the sixth section of the thesis. Those conclusions and recommendations were reached based on evidence discovered by the author.

2 Theoretical framework

To understand the overall business environment and characteristics of the sports industry, it is necessary to define terminologies such as sport, sports business management, sports industry, sports brand, sports fans, and their motivational factors.

2.1 Sport

"Sport" encompasses any type of physical exercise that attempts to express or improve physical fitness and mental well-being, develop social bonds, or achieve competitive achievements at all levels through informal or organized involvement (Council of Europe, 2001).

In the popular mind, today's sports are variants of games that have been played for millennia and whose genealogies can be traced in a continuous line back to ancient Greece (Keys, 2006, p. 5).

Sport is a game, tournament, or similar activity that requires physical effort and skill and is performed or done according to specific rules. It can be done for fun or as a job. (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.)

When sport is utilized as a distraction, it pulls us away from our ordinary lives and daily routines, which offers us pleasure; as a result, we are distracted (Shank and Lyberger, 2014).

2.2 Sports management

Sport management includes a wide range of disciplines and abilities that are essential to effectively and efficiently operate businesses. It includes planning the products, services, facilities, and other infrastructure that come together to give people leisure; managing available resources to produce high-quality services; monitoring and improving the resulting outcomes in the form of participation in and enjoyment of leisure activities; and contributing to potential effects of sport and leisure on people's health, quality of life, and so on. (Torkildsen, 2010)

2.3 Sports industry

Consumers, goods, and providers of sports items are the three essential pillars of the sports industry. The observers and participants are the consumers. Sports events, sporting items, and sports information are all examples of sports products. The owners of sports organizations, sanctioning bodies, advertisers, media, agents, and equipment manufacturers are all producers. Sports events, of course, are one of the most important factors for the sports industry, as they attract sports consumers, spectators, as well as sports marketers and business players who have helped to grow the sports industry into a multibillion-euro industry that is also a significant part of the entertainment industry. (Shank, 2009)

Without events or viewers, the sports industry would not exist. The focus of the sports business and sports marketing has always been on the event's spectators. Currently, a spectator can participate in an event by attending a live event or experiencing it through a chosen media(Shank and Lyberger,2014).

Sporting events have in past long attracted large crowds as spectators, but the modern economy and rapidly evolving media have had an impact on the sports sector, with decreasing spectator numbers. People believe that they can watch the same event from the comfort of their own homes, without having to travel or pay for a ticket. Highlights, replays, statistics, and commentary, all of which are important to certain sports fans, have been made possible through broadcasting. A sporting event is the primary product of the whole sporting sector, allowing for the presence of additional sporting items. (Shank, 2009)

Spectators value sporting events for a variety of reasons. Sporting activities are socially and culturally rewarding experiences. People from all origins and cultures come together during the events. Sporting events, on the other hand, are possibly utilized as political instruments. Third, many sporting events are development endeavors. And the last, sporting activities are cost-effective and frequently generate a profit for event organizers. Sports events may also be utilized as environmental and regeneration instruments for the city or municipality hosting the event. (Taylor, 2011)

The events connect the sports clubs with their key ties with fans and sponsors, as seen in Figure 1.

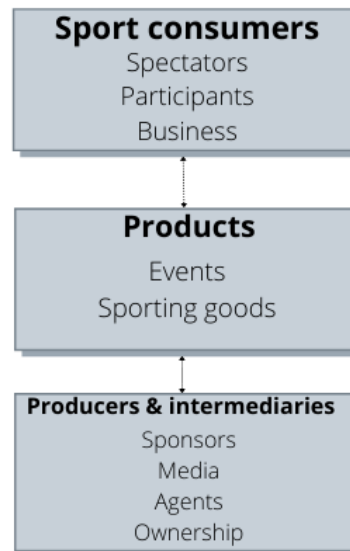


Figure 1. Model of the consumer-supplier interaction in the sports business simplified.

Source: Adapted from Shank and Lyberger (2014).

A consumer is a person or a group of individuals who have purchased, are purchasing, or will purchase goods and services. As a result, they are end-users of a product. A sports consumer is not always a die-hard sports fan. Sports consumers are ordinary people who like sports, watch sports, participate in sports, buy sports items, or have a great interest in sports. There are many behavioral patterns of customers when it comes to sports consumers. Some customers are devoted to a certain team and attend even their practice sessions, while others only attend games on rare occasions. (Shank, 2009)

According to Shank and Lyberger (2014), sports customers are very different from typical consumers from a marketing standpoint. The fundamental distinction between sports fans and non-sports fans is the intensity of their devotion to the object at hand and the irrationality of their purchasing habits.

When it comes to sports marketing, one of the most significant notions is fan loyalty. Sports fans may also be classified into numerous kinds based on their level of dedication to their preferred sport. Dualistic, tiered, and multidimensional fan typologies are the three main types of sports fans. Numerous sports marketing and psychology experts have discovered that there are two distinct sorts of supporters, according to dualistic fan typologies. Type 1

fans are a little older, not in terms of age, but in terms of fandom. Genuine, conventional, expressive, illogical, symbolic, and last but not least, die-hard supporters are all types 1 fan. Type 2 fans are a relatively new breed of fans. They are described as recent, dutiful, corporate, intelligent, and less devoted than type 1 supporters. (Stewart, Smith & Nicholson 2003)

Fans may be classified based on their beliefs and behaviors using tiered fan typologies, which quantify the degree of team affiliations. Different tiers make up tiered fan typologies, and the variables are the fan's primary and secondary interests when it comes to the team. Multidimensional typologies, which employ two or more dimensions concurrently, have overcome some of the constraints of tiered fan typologies. In 1995, Douglas Holt published one of the first multidimensional typologies. The four components of the concept are consumer experiences, how customers are incorporated into the club, how experience defines consumers' relationship to a club, and how consumers share their sports experience with other consumers. (Stewart, Smith & Nicholson 2003)

Sports marketers are always attempting to figure out how fans and casual observers feel about their favorite teams and other sporting goods. Fan loyalty in sports is similar to customer brand loyalty in general. Fans are customers that are emotionally attached to a brand and are loyal to it. Sporting businesses strive to provide their consumers with a powerful, pleasant, and distinctive fan loyalty experience and brand image. Sports fan devotion and motivational factors have a lot in common. Because fan loyalty is one of the primary characteristics that attract viewers to sporting events, the motivating factors of fan loyalty are critical. Fan loyalty may be viewed as a motivator in some cases. (Bauer, Stokburger-Sauer & Exler 2008)

Sports spectators are those who are present in the arena during a sporting event. Indirect sports spectators are those who watch the event on television or through other forms of media such as radio, the internet, or newspapers. Individual spectators and corporate spectators are the two consumer categories that make up direct spectators. Individual spectators are, of course, individuals, but corporate spectators are businesses that have their seats at every game or event and pay a significant quantity of money to the sports organization. (Shank, 2009) Collignon and Sultan constructed a sports ecosystem (see Figure

2) that clearly shows the flow of money and that the league, or game events, is the central component linking all of the major stakeholders in a sports club's surroundings.

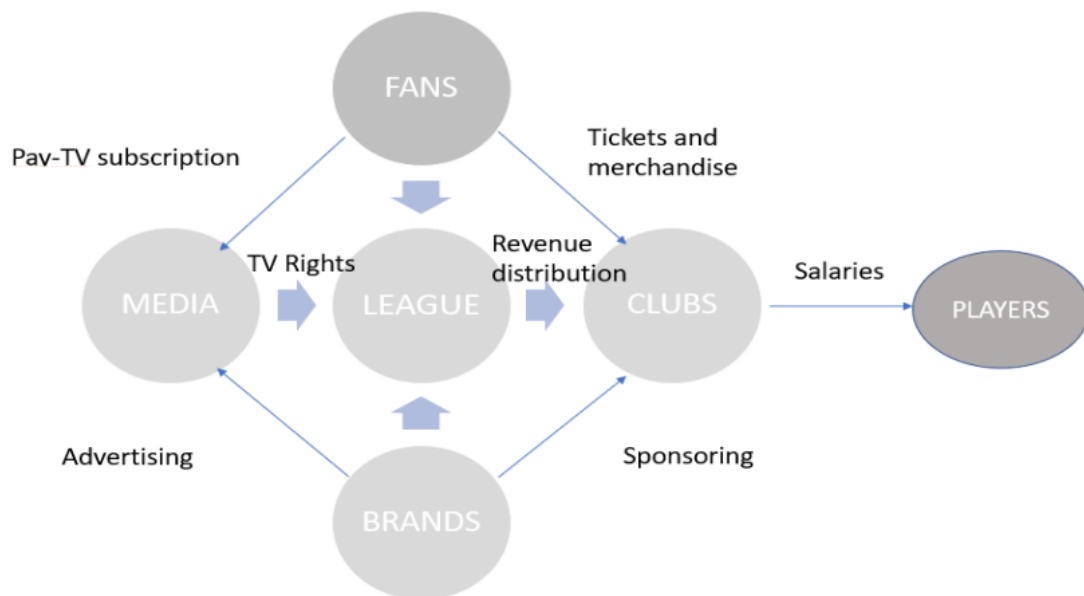


Figure 2. Sport Ecosystem by Collignon and Sultan.

Another major consumer in the sports marketing field, from the standpoint of sports organizations, is organizations and corporations interested in sponsoring sports. Sports sponsorship is defined as a transaction in which a customer (usually a corporation) swaps money or goods for the right to link its product, service, or name with a sporting event. As a result, both parties involved gain a commercial competitive edge. (Copeland, Frisby & McCarville, 1996)

The success of a company's event sponsorship is characterized by its aims and how effectively the final product can be assessed and helpful to the business. Wladimir Andreff and Stefan Szymanski (2006) recognize the difference between direct and indirect objectives. The sponsor anticipates a speedy change in the behavior of its present and new clients, according to the direct aim. While the authors argue that the indirect target is "mainly for enhanced awareness to both brands and goods, interaction with a specific sector of its client base, and an upgrade of its image; accompanying rise in sales are only a long-term goal."

Shank (2009) defines it as an "investment in a sporting entity (player, league, team, or event) to support overall organizational goals, marketing, and promotional tactics. Companies are involved in sponsorship for a variety of reasons, including social responsibility. Sports sponsorship may promote a company's reputation in its local community.

Customers will perceive you as caring and socially responsible as a result of this. (Jobber, 2007)

2.4 Sports brand

Because of the emphasis, supporters place on the name, symbol, and meaning of their favorite sports organizations, practitioners and academics have paid close attention to the management of sports brands (Gladden & Milne, 1999). The brand of a sports organization is one of its most important assets. Sports markets do not differ from economic activity and attract enormous financial transactions and flows, with sports businesses devising new strategies and techniques to promote sports brands and stimulate demand, consumers using, re-appropriating, or rediverting sports brands as a product. (Bouchet, 2013)

Sports organizations and individual athletes have also used social media platforms to boost their brand values by assessing the interest of fans, teams, sponsors, and other stakeholders all around the world. It's vital to remember that social media presents several obstacles for sports brands due to a range of factors, like the highly emotive nature of sports or the ups and downs in the team and individual success over the season. A sports team's brand incorporates all elements of the team, both on and off the field, in and out of the season. (Forbes, 2019)

Relationships in the sports brand ecosystem are fluid owing to factors such as team performance fluctuations, coaches being fired and subsequently hired by other teams, multiple player transfers, and the arrival of new sponsors or investors. These characteristics can transform fans' social networks, implying that companies must continually evolve and respond to the sports brand ecosystem dynamics and accompanying consumer attitudes over time. (Kunkel & Biscaia, 2020)

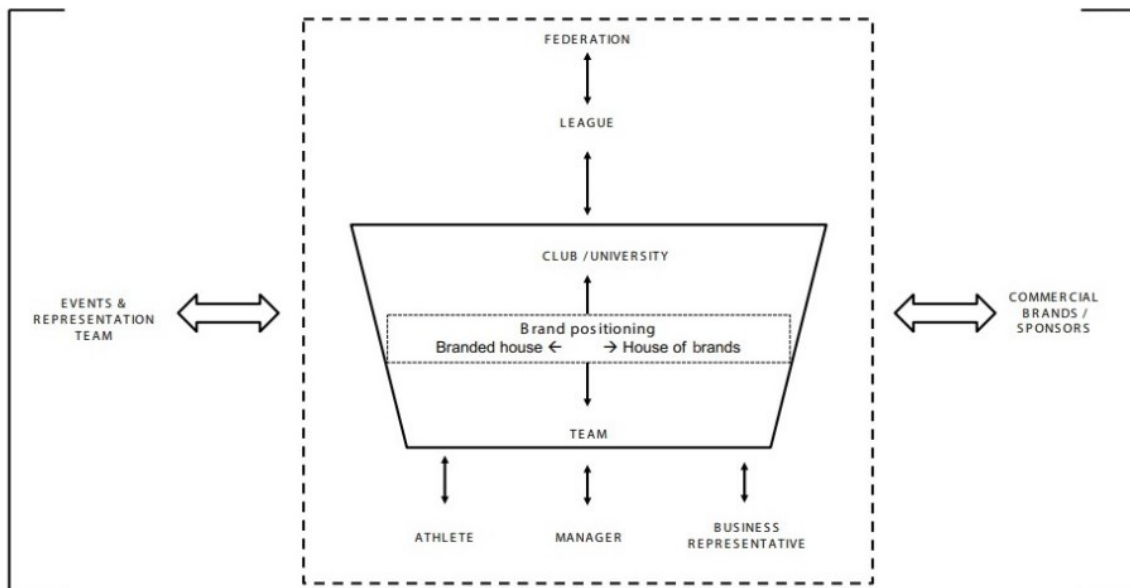


Figure 3. Sports brand ecosystem framework. Source: Adapted from Kunkel & Biscaia, 2020

Figure 3 depicts the sports brand ecosystem, which serves as a framework for examining the interactions between brands inside and related to the sports business. The dotted box denotes vertical brands that are part of the same brand portfolio and, as a result, are linked by their brand architecture. The trapezoid depicts the connection between clubs and their teams, with clubs having the option of positioning their team as a branded house linked to the club's master brand or as a house of brands unrelated to the master brand. Sports firms must understand how their brand changes over time and how to effectively respond to external circumstances and customer preferences, given the dynamic nature of the brand ecosystem. Brands that aren't part of the vertical brand architecture can nonetheless participate in the sports brand ecosystem. The events, or representative teams, on the left side of the brand ecosystem figure influence related brands in the sports brand ecosystem. External brands can enter the sports brand ecosystem through sponsorships and commercial collaborations on the right side of the brand ecosystem diagram. (Kunkel & Biscaia, 2020)

According to the author, it is simpler for supporters to adjust to the brand if the team performs admirably, referring to the rankings. When the team performs well and wins games, it is easy to adapt the sports brand. However, if the team goes on a long losing run, seats become more vacant, and the occupancy rate drops. If new prospective fans are disloyal and uncommitted, they may abandon the team.

2.5 Sport fans

Spectators come to a sporting event for a variety of reasons. A fan is a person who has a strong attachment to a sports team. In the absence of team accomplishments, this dedication is demonstrated by financial and time commitments, as well as a long association with a sports club. (Stewart, Smith, and Nicholson, 2003)

Fans were defined as people who identified intellectually, emotionally, and interactively with a specific sports team. There can't be any discernible dividing line between a fan and a non-fan because every sports fan displays some level of recognition. A classification of the term "sports fan" that is considered to be one of the most common interpretations are television audience and spectators in the stadium\arena. Viewers at live sporting events are divided into:

- Consumption-oriented
- Event-oriented
- Sport-oriented

Groundhoppers, hooligans, and ultras are the three types of event fans. (Lenhard, 2002)

Shank and Lyberger (2014) argue that sporting goods consumers are very different from regular consumers from a marketing standpoint.

But, throughout this thesis, a supporter is characterized as per Lenhards' (2002) definition as all sports spectators at the stadium/arena, because it is this audience that requires investigating and defining their motivation, as the financial viability of the club is based on the live audience. Competitive sports have long attracted attention and viewers, and it's easy to see why. Athletes are the ones who have always pushed the human body to its limits. Consumers of sports have long found athlete competition to be exciting. Many studies have looked into sports fans' motivations to attend sporting events throughout the years, utilizing models such as Abraham Maslow's work hierarchy of needs and Seppo Iso-Ahola's

escape-seeking model. Many ideas have been proposed by psychologists to explain why spectators and supporters attend sporting events. (Funk, Filo, Beaton & Pritchard 2009.)

2.6 Factors motivating the fans

In order to effectively promote an event, it is necessary to first understand why people attend it. Consumers' motivations play an important role in the decision-making process that determines which events they will attend.

Elderly individuals could have the same driving factors as they had many years ago, but younger people's motivating factors have changed as a result of the experience economy. The majority of the motivating elements for attending a sporting event have to do with experiences, which is why the experience economy is such a significant component when it comes to motivating factors. For many years, the entertainment business has used experiences as a marketing tool. A similar situation is occurring in the sports sector, where fans and customers are seeking incredible experiences, which has transformed the driving elements for attending an event. Sports organizations, as well as other stakeholders, have a lot of new options related to the experience economy. Some sporting events these days cost hundreds of euros, and that is just for the cheap seats. Sports customers will have to spend significant money for their time in order to have a fantastic experience, which for many people is too much money in comparison to the time and pleasure they will receive. Pricing at sporting events should be tailored to the experience, allowing spectators to spend their money in sporting events over and over again, based on their particular recollections. Engagement would also have a good impact on motivational elements, making it simpler to attend sporting activities. Sporting activities must provide such an enjoyable experience that viewers would prefer to be there at the event than watch it on television or through other media. The atmosphere, among other factors, that contribute to the enjoyment of a sporting event should be studied and time and money spent to improve it. (Pine & Gilmore 2011)

It's tough to pinpoint the motivations of viewers. Individuals, of course, have their minds, personalities, and ideals. There are several motivations for fans and casual observers to attend sporting events. The majority of these motivations are based on customer social and psychological demands. (Shank, 2009)

The eight primary motivations for sports spectatorship are stated below, and these eight basic motives are utilized to examine and categorize the motivating aspects of HLPK supporters in this thesis.

1. Self-esteem enhancement.

One of the most essential aspects of the sport is success, accomplishments, and winning, and therefore a major component in why players become athletes and spectators come to see them compete. Strangely, onlookers enjoy someone else's achievement, but it's been that way for a long time.

Viewers link themselves with something nice, which makes them more positive.

(Sloan, 1989)

Most spectators have some level of admiration for the competing athletes, and this admiration is often enough to draw people to a sporting event. Self-esteem, group connection accomplishment, and community support are all related to self-esteem.

(Funk, Filo, Beaton & Pritchard, 2009)

Many viewers are also participants in the same sport, so they satisfy their desire for accomplishments by cheering on their favorite team, for example. BIRGing (Basks in the Glory of Reflection) is a phrase used to describe a situation in which a fan's self-esteem is boosted or maintained by identifying with winning teams. (Shank, 2009)

2. Diversion from everyday life

People prefer to participate in sporting activities because it provides them joy and well-being, according to health and salubrious effects ideas. Recreation theory and Diversion theory are the two most frequent theories in this area. People's exhaustion and vitality are restored by the joyful experiences they have during sporting events, according to recreation theory. People desire to get away from their daily routines and troubles and forget about their concerns for a while, according to the diversion idea. (Sloan, 1989)

These fans also attend sporting events to mingle with their friends and family, as well as other fans. This means that sports fans are eager to attend athletic events to strengthen their human ties through exterior encounters with their family, friends, crowds, and other social networks. (Funk, Filo, Beaton & Pritchard, 2009)

Sporting activities may sometimes be viewed as an escapism experience. Many entertainment events, as well as professional sporting events, aim to provide participants with not just a break from their daily routines, but also a journey to a specific location worth their time. (Pine & Gilmore, 2011)

3. Entertainment value

Sporting activities are among the most exciting events in the whole entertainment industry. Entertainment is becoming one of the most important motivators in people's daily lives, not just in sports. People are continuously seeking entertainment, and they are connected to it through social media and other means the whole time they are awake. Sport's spontaneous and unpredictable nature is one of the things that makes it so interesting. Emotions in athletic events are unexpected, which adds to the fun and enjoyment of the action. (Shank, 2009)

One important component that influences spectator motives is excitement.

Consumers desire experiences from sporting events that give a one-of-a-kind mental challenge and exploration in a sporting environment. Excitement may generate a slew of lesser reasons for people to attend an event. Celebrity appeal, eustress, drama, and a healthy atmosphere are examples of such elements. In comparison to broadcasting sports, sporting events offer one significant advantage: the atmosphere. Television, radio, internet streaming, and other types of media are all fantastic methods to watch sports and are also enjoyable ways to see sporting events, but they offer nothing in comparison to the actual atmosphere that exists during the event. Although the atmosphere is a feature that may be incorporated in virtually all of these theories, the entertainment value for viewers is crucial. (Funk, Filo, Beaton & Pritchard, 2009)

For viewers, the outcome of a whole event is extremely important. Winning is important, but viewers are also looking for a nice overall event for their money's worth. As a result, when a spectator attends an event, they are taking a "risk," and the act of taking the risk arouses them. One of the oldest explanations to explain why people participate in sports and watch sporting events is catharsis and aggressiveness. Violence has been used as a motivator for sports fan attendance in far too many tragic incidents. Catharsis and aggressiveness theories can both be used to explain why sports fans are hostile. Catharsis, or the lowering of aggressiveness levels, happens when people participate in sports or watch them from the stands, particularly when the players are violent. According to the frustration-aggression hypothesis, supporters become enraged as a result of the event's loss, and this enragement pushes them to attend another comparable event. Aggressive conduct and hooliganism are prevalent motivations for athletic events for some fans in several sports cultures. (Sloan, 1989)

4. Eustress

Many spectators are also motivated by a need for stress and excitement. Individuals who are not stressed in their regular lives like circumstances that induce them to be nervous and worried about something, which sporting activities most surely are. Sport causes spectators to get stressed, and the more severe the sport is, the more stress it causes. "Eustress" (pleasant stress) is the term for this type of pleasure-seeking stress. Eustress is a phrase used frequently in motivation psychology to describe a good and healthy influence in people's lives. (Sloan, 1989)

5. Economic factors

Sports supporters and spectators may be there to generate money, or they may be driven by free or low-cost tickets. These onlookers who detect the possibility of making money, such as through gambling, are encouraged to invest their money. Sports viewers who have lost interest in regular sporting activities sometimes gamble to make the event more exciting. For many individuals, sports clubs are also an investment. The notion of supporters as stakeholders and owners of a sports team is becoming increasingly popular. Economic considerations from across the world are

also highly important. Aspects of the sports marketing industry that may be controlled include ticket pricing and the event's perceived worth. The global economic condition, the average income of the people, and the country's overall position are all uncontrollable factors. (Shank, 2009)

6. Aesthetic value – performance

One of the most important factors in the opinion of viewers is performance. The audience has gathered to watch the purest form of athleticism in the world. For the eyes of the viewers, events bring greatness, domination, innovation, and beauty in motion. Every athlete, like every scene in a sporting event, is unique. One of the key reasons why people want to be present when something remarkable occurs is to see it. (Funk, Filo, Beaton & Pritchard, 2009)

7. Need for affiliation

Affiliation and the desire to belong are also important factors. The majority of a spectator's engagement may be explained by the spectator's tremendous empathy for a competing athlete. Spectator sport also has such an influence that the audience feels a strong sense of connection with the events taking place in the stadium. Spectators may get enthralled by the prospect of being a part of the crowd. For many people, yelling and cheering for their team and being a part of the boisterous crowd is a memorable experience. (Sloan, 1989)

8. Family ties

When it comes to sociability during sporting events, one of the most important consumer segments is, of course, the players' interest groups and family links; their relatives, friends, and acquaintances who attend the games to support only one athlete. (Funk, Filo, Beaton & Pritchard, 2009)

2.7 Other factors

Not all of the games are as appealing as others. Game attractiveness is influenced by the day, week, opponent, records, and league standings, as well as whether or not a game is a special event, such as the season opener or final. Demographic considerations also have a

role. Attendance at sporting events is influenced by factors such as population, age, gender, education, occupation, and ethnic origin. The location is a crucial consideration. Location, accessibility, newness, facility aesthetics, and general comfort of the arena are all seen to have a beneficial impact on attendance. Sport is vital to a community's well-being. Sport may be perceived as adding value to the community, particularly professional sports, which are considered community boosters. (Shank, 2009)

Men and women both consider themselves sports fans, however, women consider themselves fans if they attend and watch sporting events with their friends and family, while men consider themselves fans because they previously played sports and want to relive the emotions they felt as players. Male fans are more concerned with eustress, self-esteem, amusement, and aesthetics, whilst female fans are more concerned with supporting family members. Fans of various sports are somewhat dissimilar to one another. Aesthetic motivation is higher in individuals who like non-aggressive sports than in those who prefer violent sports. Any sporting event is viewed as a spectacle by sports fans. The three primary components of entertainment: intellectual, artistic, and physical, are universal in any sport's perception, but they are expressed in various ways. Power sports focus on the physical aspect, whereas gymnastics focuses on the overall look and feel, chess on the intellectual aspect, and so on. As a result, there are variances in both the sensations created by spectators' and supporters' psychological qualities, as well as the perceptions of these games. (James, Ridinger, 2002)

3 Methodology and method

This chapter discusses the research approach, as well as research philosophy and research method. In addition, a complete description of the data collection and sampling methods used is provided. The format of the interviews is explained.

3.1 Research philosophy

This study looks at the HLPK and the phenomena of the characteristics of a sports team that supplies their core product and how they manage their fan involvement. This will be accomplished by investigating what steps sports organization take to engage fans, how they

are regarded, and why those actions were chosen. There are two primary research approaches used while performing research work: qualitative and quantitative. Qualitative research is used to comprehend the nature or characteristics of a phenomenon, whereas quantitative research is used to comprehend the scale of an occurrence or a relationship via numerical data.

Silverman (2005) states that understanding and investigating individual behaviors, beliefs, and values is a key component of qualitative research, which is linked to interpretivism. As a result, qualitative research will be the best fit for conveying the intricacy of this thesis's goal. A quantitative technique would have been better if the purpose had been to ascertain how many activities the clubs were doing; but, because the goal is to acquire information, a qualitative approach is preferred; but, because the aim is to gather information about different people's perceptions, experiences, feelings, and opinions about this phenomenon, a qualitative method will yield more in-depth findings than a quantitative method in this case. Because the author of this thesis is interested in discovering what actions are taken and why they are taken, the qualitative research approach was chosen.

There are various ways for performing qualitative research, including experiments, surveys, action research, and case study. (Silverman, 2005) The author decided to study HLPK management and fan base through interviews and surveys.

3.2 Research approach

When drafting a thesis, three methodologies are commonly used: deductive, abductive, and inductive. An inductive technique generalizes existing concepts, whereas a deductive approach focuses on verifying theory using hypotheses. An abductive method is a combination strategy that begins with a collection of observations and searches for a cause-and-effect link to explain them. Furthermore, an inductive technique is similar to interpretative research, but a deductive approach is similar to positivist research. (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2007)

The abductive method was chosen by the author as the most appropriate for data analysis and interviews.

3.3 Research method

As a research method, the author decided on semi-structured interviews. In-depth interviews with semi-structured interview questions require survey participants to answer open-ended questions that have been pre-determined. The foundation of semi-structured questionnaires is a semi-structured questionnaire form, which is a thematic layer of questions or topics that the questioner must investigate. (Silverman, 2005)

The researcher has minimal influence over occurrences, and the research is focused on contemporary phenomena contemporary in a real-life environment, which makes a case study the most appropriate research technique. Surveys and interviews may be appropriate tactics based on those two criteria. Therefore, given that the major research issue in this thesis is a “What are the motivating factors that stimulate audience participation” question and that case study appears to be the favored technique when addressing a how or why inquiry, the case study strategy appeared to be the most appropriate for this research.

3.4 Data collection

One of the overarching goals of the research is to generate and disseminate new information; hence, data gathering plays a vital part in the research project process. The author will collect both primary and secondary data for this study. In this work, interviews with the club management, an audience survey, and archival research were used to support the production of exploratory work. The author will be required to perform a non-historical analysis of documents and material created about and by the HLPK, including electronic databases, and web pages. The sources for the archive study were confined to social networks and the clubs' web pages to identify and specify the activities that are deployed by the clubs. This is done to narrow the scope, keep it more in-depth, and be relevant to the aim of the thesis. Facebook and Instagram were chosen as the social network sites for investigation. These were selected since they are the most widely used social media platforms in society, as well as the two platforms on which HLPK is engaged more.

3.5 Interviews and survey

The information gathered through interviews and surveys was used to gain a better understanding of all of the research questions. Interviews and surveys would provide interesting insights about club decision-making processes that archival analysis may not be able to answer as clearly.

The interviews and surveys were semi-structured, with open-ended questions that probed key respondents about the facts as well as their reactions to the events.

Semi-structured interviewing methods have been used to great advantage in a wide range of social movement studies. Search interview strategies have been especially useful in research on loosely organized, short-lived, or thinly documented social movements, as well as studies that explore issues for which structured questionnaire field observation or documentary analysis is difficult to gather data. The author can gain access to the motivations and perspectives of a larger and more diverse group of social movement participants through interviewing methods than would be represented in most documentary sources.

The survey's questions were semi-structured and inquired about the main motivating factors as well as the factors that demotivate viewers, as well as the respondents' thoughts on how to improve their experience at a sporting event, enhance the quality of the sporting event, and thus attract more new viewers in the future.

The interviews took place in real-time, daytime, and in the middle of the week. Interviews were conducted in Finnish with the HLPK general manager and in English with the marketing manager and took 60 and 30 minutes respectively.

The electronic survey received responses within a week on a Facebook platform, and an offline survey on the same questions was conducted after the restrictions on attending sporting events were lifted.

4 Results

4.1 Hämeenlinnan lentopallopallokerho social media in numbers

Online networks open up new channels with a greater reach, allowing producers to employ engagement marketing to better engage with customers, as well as a variety of media. Social media allow businesses to interact with their consumers while also allowing customers to connect. Because individuals do not have a lot of time to follow social media at the moment, sports teams must keep their messages brief and simple. According to Facebook research, users spend only 1.7 seconds looking at a single post on their mobile devices. Because over 90% of people use Facebook on their phones, it's critical to provide mobile-friendly content. People want social media material that makes them laugh and is relatable to them. When a sports club wishes to engage its audience, it must first understand its demands and requirements. If the club posts a basic photo with wording linked to the subject, it has a greater engagement rate. It's critical to encourage people to talk about it on social media. (Newberry, 2018)

Customer involvement on social media is frequently quantified in terms of likes, comments, and shares. HLPK's Facebook page has 4,471 followers, the majority from Hämeenlinna – 1006 persons, and 3584 from Finland. The distribution between male and female audiences is a lot different, as seen in Figure 4 below. The active Facebook visitors are aged between 35 and 64 years. (HLPK Facebook, n.d.)

Average Facebook page performance: posts reach 2000, which means the number of individuals who have seen at least one of the postings. Reach differs from impressions, which might encompass numerous views of the same content by the same person; engagement – 250, the number of individuals that reacted to, commented on, shared, viewed, and clicked the post. (HLPK Facebook, n.d.)

Instagram, which was developed to reach a younger audience, now has 2,073 followers. According to the audience coverage statistics, the average post view was about 2000, with 30 to 60% of the accounts seeing the posts not being subscribers. Audience coverage is the number of unique accounts that have visited this content at least once, according to

audience reach data. The distinction between reach and impressions is that impressions might comprise numerous views of the same account's postings. (Instagram @lentiskerho)

Audience

Age and Gender

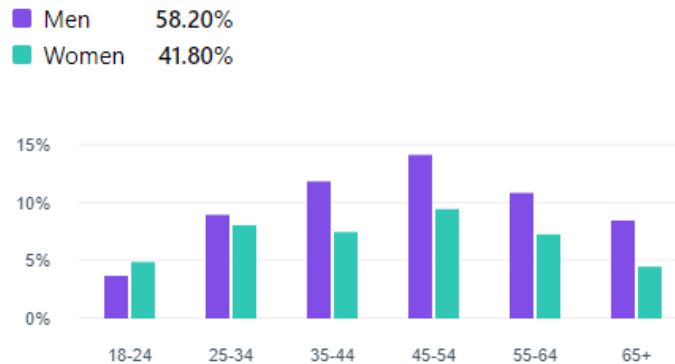


Figure 4. Audience by age and gender on the HLPK Facebook page.

Twitter has a less audience and only 378 followers and does not play any significant role in the promotion of the team.

Analyzing social media data reveals that HLPK focuses on the Facebook network, which has significantly more followers than other channels. Instagram serves as a secondary platform, attracting a younger demographic. Over 60% of people who are interested in sports are on Facebook, and nearly three-quarters of these sports fans say that following sports event coverage is their primary reason for using social media. (Facebook IQ, 2019)

As can be seen from the quantitative study of the social networks of the HLPK sports club, Facebook plays a key role as the most important channel between the club and the audience. Although the audience from Hämeenlinna accounts for a sizable portion of all followers, this does not imply that all followers attend the games on a regular basis, just as not all those who attend the games are Facebook fans. However, it is a significant channel of fan interaction that must be effectively utilized.

4.2 Audience statistics

A global epidemic erupted at the start of 2020 and causing societal division and the cancellation of the Finnish volleyball season. The 2021 gaming season began with spectators at matches, but after social distancing and meeting rules were tightened, only spectators with a code were allowed to enter the games. All games will be played without spectators again at the beginning of 2022. The author will research the live crowd at volleyball tournaments using official statistics from the incomplete season, without playoff games, which can attract a larger number of spectators, since this is the culmination of the season. During the season, the most crucial thing that clubs can provide for fans to engage in is live game action. With the restrictions, affecting the audience, though, clubs must be inventive in the activities they provide for supporters, recruiting a new audience, while some regular fans may be forced to stay at home owing to changing circumstances. As you can see in Figure 5, Hämeenlinna Pallokerho has a greater involvement of live spectators at the games compared to other women's volleyball league teams. (Suomen Lentopalloliitto, n.d.)

However, as compared to the ice hockey match, the men's team HPK had an order of magnitude more spectators- 3930 on average. (Ainoamittari, n.d.)

Ice hockey is Finland's most popular activity, with 68,000 registered players, 430 clubs, 3,000 teams, and 40,000 games played each season. (The Finland guidebook, n.d.).

So, it is hard to compete with a such large sport in a small-sized town. Therefore, knowing your fan base and potential followers is critical in order to work on attracting supporters, and sponsors, and improving the conduct of a sporting event in order to compete with such a large rival in the city as a hockey club.

According to audience statistics, Hämeenlinna has a large base of sports fans who might be interested in volleyball.

The volleyball league's spectator statistics show that games against strong opponents drew the largest crowds, while games against outsiders drew a smaller crowd. It's reasonable to assume that this is influenced by the game's predictable outcome and a less exciting game for the audience.

Naisten Mestaruusliiga (2019-20)

[Kaikki ottelut](#)
[Live](#)
[Sarjan tilastot](#)
[Yleisötilasto](#)

Koti	Vieras	Hämeenlinna	JymyVolley	Kuortaneen Urheilupuisto	LiigaPloki	LP Kangasala	LP Viesti	LP-Vampula	OrPo	Puijo Volley	Pölkky Kuusamo	WoVo	Koti KA
Hämeenlinna		560	522	569	618, 679	649	698, 559	616, 592	482, 554	643, 496	342	572	572
JymyVolley	380, 409		325	450	345, 364	301	440	447, 269	285	354, 289	396, 405	364	364
Kuortaneen Urheilupuisto												0	0
LiigaPloki	362, 424	349, 361	278		419	443, 402	547	422	404	426	346, 348	395	395
LP Kangasala	260	215	220	270, 358		420, 390	280, 428	340	260, 190	350	144, 225	290	290
LP Viesti	523, 512	1069, 443	341	478	1576		413	383, 342	621	414, 501	347	569	569
LP-Vampula	485	495, 334	389	328, 616	445	412, 562		268	482, 412	458, 464	328	432	432
OrPo	313	321	253	418, 502	432, 421	497	415, 452		319, 396	384	319, 396	389	389
Puijo Volley	238	364, 249	552	324, 384	229	229, 254	233	339		203, 302	242	296	296
Pölkky Kuusamo	480	325	359	483, 458	501, 484	447	422	386, 410	361		412, 455	427	427
WoVo	301, 525	352	349	303	402	348, 300	448, 406	363	344, 375	489		379	379
Vieras KA		401	418	359	424	532	404	442	398	392	412	336	452

Figure 5. Audience statistics, season 2019-2020

4.3 Interviews

Data was gathered through interviews to gain a viewpoint on all of the research questions. Interviews will be able to provide more detailed information about the decision-making processes in the clubs, which the archive analysis may not be able to provide with the same rigor. The interviews were semi-structured, with open-ended questions questioning important respondents about facts as well as their perspectives on the events. Because the interviews were performed in person, the author was able to ask follow-up questions and obtain more detailed information. The interview with the HLPK club general manager lasted 60 minutes, conversation with the marketing manager continue for 30 minutes.

Interview questions:

- Could you tell me about your role at the HLPK club; what do you do?
- How does your club work to increase supporter engagement? (Are there any specific tactics employed?)
- How has the pandemic influenced the club's connection with its fans, in your opinion?
- Can you tell me about your club's efforts to retain its ties with its supporters?
- a) During the regular season?
- b) During the season break?
- What steps has the club done to keep its supporters engaged?

- a) Why did these acts come to be chosen?
- b) Have you gotten/noticed any feedback on your actions?
- c) Describe how these acts result in fan involvement in your own words.
- What do you think of the club's future connection with its fans?

4.4 Interview results

The findings of this study are presented in chronological order, beginning with the club's management interview and basic respondent information, and proceeding to actual responses to questions.

The team's general manager is in charge of many aspects, including the selection of players, the search for and conclusion of contracts with sponsors, and the organization of a game match. He bears the majority of the responsibility for the sports club's activity. Starting at the end of the season, active work to prepare for the next one begins. In recent years, social networks such as Facebook and Instagram have begun to play an important role in promoting the club and marketing the team. As a result, there is now a greater emphasis on social media, even though traditional methods such as game ads in local newspaper Hämeen Sanomat and player articles continue to be effective. However, the club's management recognizes the importance of developing and engaging fans on social networks in order to interact with the audience quickly. Increased interaction with supporters on social media, including daily news updates and thorough post-game reports, as well as online game reports during and after each game. At least four daily Facebook page updates, including the club's sponsors' adverts. On the day of the game, a report about the game is given after each set, so that even those who are unable to attend the event are aware of the outcome, as well as a detailed report with photos and videos following the game. Years of pandemics have forced HLPK to seek new ways to attract fans; however, despite the difficulties, the club has a dedicated fanbase that supports the local team in difficult times.

The club collaborates with sponsors to develop engagement with fans and offers attractive ticket packages, such as family tickets, or on Valentine's Day friend's day, which is celebrated in Finland, everyone who buys a ticket can bring a friend for free.

HLPK invites its top sponsors and volunteers to a team meet once or twice a year to spend a day together. In co-operator sports store Urheilulinna, the club also has a limited product collection for sale. Having a selling point in matches, on the other hand, would be advantageous. The game calendar is designed in a way that the matches do not take place on the same day as the HPK ice hockey match, and viewers do not need to select which sports event to attend, in order to include spectators who are interested in both volleyball and hockey. The Covid-19 pandemic has significantly reduced game attendance, but the situation has just recently begun to improve, and the club's administration anticipates that the final stage of the season will be able to pull a large number of spectators to the arena.

The club's opinion on how they are working to keep their fans involved during the season shutdown all revolved around the club's belief that they have already developed a great relationship with their fans during the season, which will keep them engaged till next season. The club's consensus opinion is that throughout the closure, the fans are moving the relationship forward by seeking out the club and supporting its initiatives. This could be owing to the clubs' hard work over the season, when they created a strong relationship with their fans, as well as their support for a local sports club HLPK amid severe pandemic conditions, as the club's management stated.

4.5 Survey

Due to government limits on sporting events, it has been decided to conduct an electronic survey first on the Facebook platform, which has the greatest number of followers, and an offline survey during the volleyball match in Hämeenlinna. It should be emphasized that the sample may change slightly from the fully offline poll because the audience who attends the games also utilizes print media for information, such as the newspaper Hämeen Sanomat, which publishes game announcements and updates on games and players. Newspaper announcements, according to the club's general manager, play a large part in attracting an older audience to the games, since the habit of collecting information from paper sources is still strong in the Hämeenlinna city.

4.6 Survey results

The survey was completed by 85 persons, in the Finnish language so that respondents can express themselves more freely. The respondents' basic information includes their gender, age, and the city in which they now reside. These data depict the demographic and geographic aspects that may influence attendance at the volleyball game. The background information provides significant information about the attending audience, which aids in segmentation and event marketing. The poll also investigates the degree of attendance in order to determine how active the respondents are in attending athletic events in Hämeenlinna. An engaged audience could be a viable target for HLPK games, according to the author's suggestion.

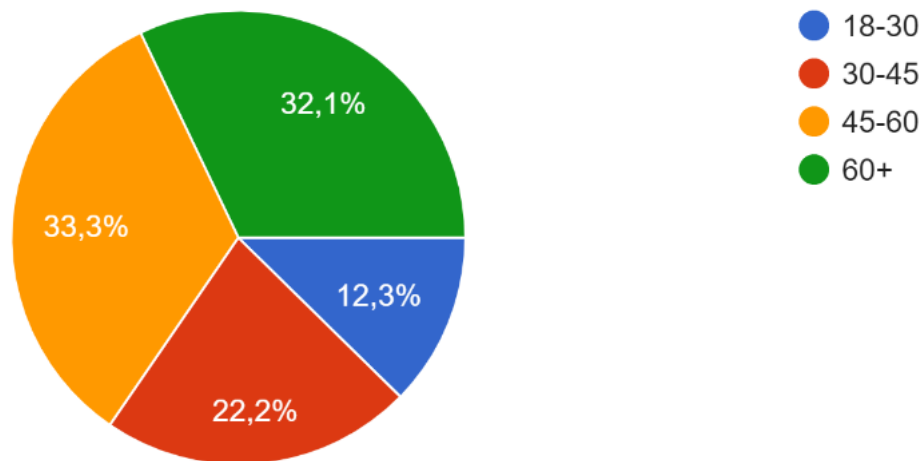


Figure 6. Respondents' age.

Figure 6 illustrates the respondents' ages. The significant majority of those who responded are over the age of 45. This is worrying statistics because the proportion of young viewers is substantially lower than the active fan base of the older generation and for the growth of the future fan sector. According to a Statista poll conducted in 2019, 28 percent of respondents who watch sports are between the ages of 36 and 49, this is the largest segment of the audience, with 22 percent belonging to the 50-64 age group and 19 percent belonging to the 26-35 age group. (Statista,2021)

According to the analysis of the HLPK audience, the largest age group has shifted to an older age group when compared to global data.

57% of respondents are men and 43% are women. What corresponds to global fan gender data, more than half of men on all continents are sports fans, with 56 percent of men and 44 percent of women in Europe. (Facebook IQ, 2019)

According to Gemba Insights global sports fan data, women make up 47 percent of highly engaged, passionate sports fans across 13 of the world's most popular sports in 2020. This is up from 45% three years ago, indicating that the fan gender divide is narrowing. (The Gemba group, 2020) Men are more interested in participating in an athletic event than women, according to prior findings and this is confirmed by the survey.

“How many home HLPK games do you attend per season?” was the following question in the survey, and it was designed to see how engaged the respondents are in attending home games.

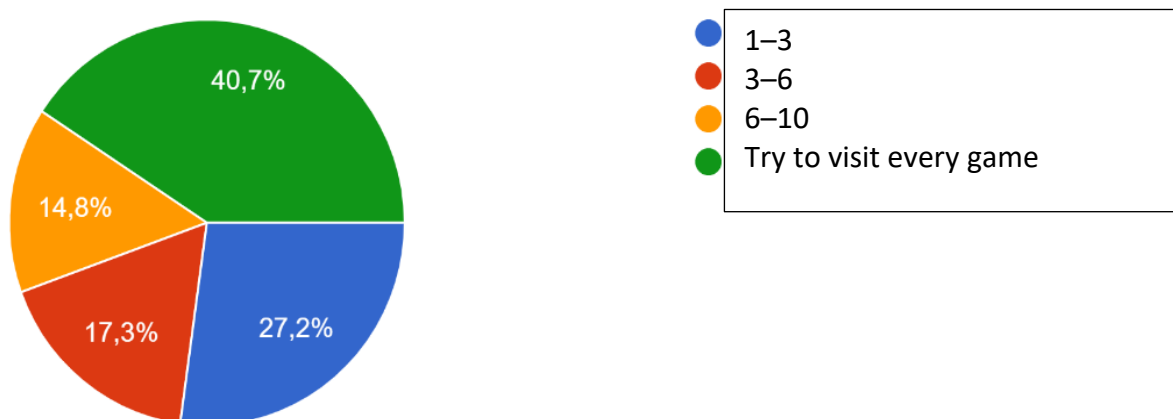


Figure 7. How many home HLPK games do you attend per season?

Figure 7 depicts the level of spectator participation and attendance at sporting events over the course of a full season. Almost 41 percent of those polled are die-hard supporters. At least one game of the HLPK home match was attended by all of the interviewees. The

responses were divided into two visible groups: a seldom visiting audience and a frequently visiting audience. Only 1–3 games were attended by 27% of respondents during a season, whilst 41% attended every or almost every HLPK game. The remaining third of respondents were separated into two groups: those who attended 3 to 6 games per season and those who attended 6 to 10 games per season. A team with a unique identity might capture the interest of the infrequently visiting viewers. 1–3 game visitors are a sizable segment that should be considered while marketing the sporting event.

The author received the most informative and useful responses to open-ended questions about fan motivation, what inspires and demotivates people from attending sporting events, and what improvements in the way a sporting event is held can increase their interest.

“Can you identify three reasons why you'll be watching the HLPK games?” - A follow-up question highlighted the most important motivational factors why viewers attend HLPK sporting events. The most popular responses can be classified into four main groups:

- Interest in sports, particularly volleyball, was expressed more regularly.
- The desire to support the local team was the second most prevalent response.
- Atmosphere, excellent gameplay, and a pleasurable pastime were the other significant factor.
- Used to play volleyball in past, my friends or relatives play in HLPK now, which was frequently noted in the answers.

According to the responses, the majority of respondents enjoy sports events and volleyball especially and have played volleyball in the past. The most important motivators that inspire respondents to attend team HLPK sports events are aesthetic values, self-esteem enhancement, entertainment value, need for affiliation, and family ties.

The most important motivating reasons for HLPK fans were aesthetic values, indicating that the fans studied were enthralled by the volleyball game itself. Respondents repeatedly stated that volleyball is their passion. The need for affiliation motivation factor is most

frequently traced in the responses (76% of those who answered) respondents have been involved in volleyball themselves and continue to support this specific activity. The urge for connection is also related to the atmosphere, as respondents stated that they came to spend time with other fans, enjoy the ambiance, and be a part of that community. The self-esteem enhancement motivation factor can be identified as the survey's second most popular response (58% of those who answered), participants wanted to support their local team and help them succeed. The entertainment value factor was noted by 49% of the viewers who participated in the survey, social atmosphere, having fun, and getting away from routines were mentioned in the responses, as well as the desire to have coffee with other volleyball fans. 28 percent of respondents expressed an interest in players or family bonds; their families and friends who played a specific HLPK game.

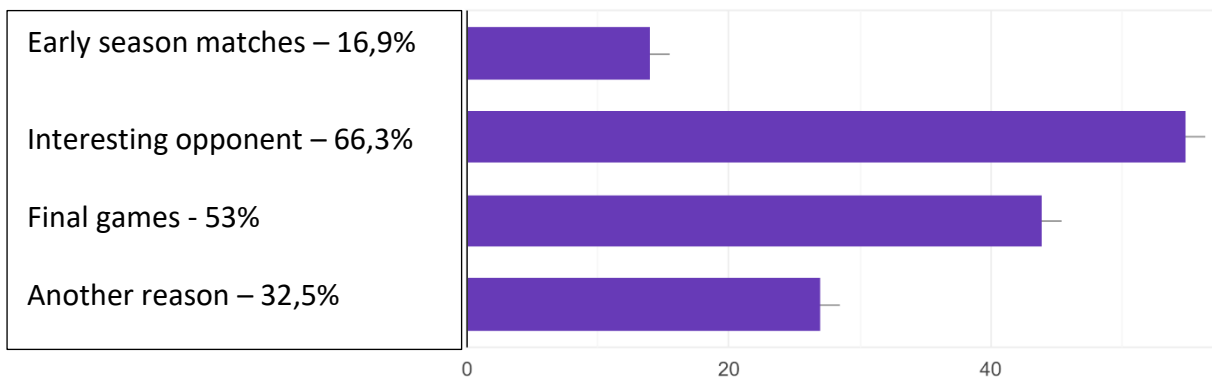


Figure 8. What factors motivate you to come to watch HLPK games?

Figure 8 depicts the factors that influence viewers' decision to attend a sporting event. In the survey, it was able to select multiple responses and provide a detailed response about what else motivates visitors to attend volleyball games. An interesting opponent was cited as the most compelling reason for playing volleyball throughout the season. The final part of the season is projected to be successful in terms of attracting spectators to HLPK games.

Another reason for attending a sporting event was also mentioned by respondents, which will be investigated further to have a better knowledge of the factors that influence fan attendance. The following factors can be highlighted in the thorough answers to the reasons for visiting a volleyball sporting event: a season ticket encourages to attend games more regularly; the goal to see all of the games and seeing a decent game is sufficient; for many

supporters, watching games is a much-needed "personal time," and they value being present among fellow volleyball fans.

The next question in the poll: -“What factors reduce your motivation to come and watch games?” should be thoroughly investigated in order to address the negative effects of spectators' non-participation in sporting events or, if possible, decrease their impact on spectators. The most common reason for not attending HLPK games this season is Coronavirus- 19 epidemic. Because the team's management has no control over this element, the author will disregard this argument. Weak opponent, bad playing time (too late), and preceding poor team success significantly influence fans' desire to engage in a sporting event. These variables are not completely changeable. In whatever sport and in any league, there will always be a weak opponent.

According to an interview with team management, the game schedule and match time are determined by several factors. On weekdays, the match time is moved a little later for the convenience of spectators so that they can participate in the event after a long day at work, but this is inconvenient for the older generation of HLPK viewers. Furthermore, due to game broadcasts on Ruutu TV, it is not possible to switch games to an earlier time. Training can improve a team's previous poor performance, but it is not guaranteed. However, criticisms of the event, such as the use of a stroboscope, poor sound reproduction in the hall, and a lack of engagement with the audience, should be carefully reviewed and corrected in the future.



Figure 9. What do you want to see, or see more when you come to watch the games?

Figure 9 gives a clear image of what the spectators at the HLPK games are missing. The majority of spectators lack admit interaction with the club, which will certainly improve in the future season. Covid undoubtedly affected the proximity of players and spectators; it was impossible to communicate closely due to restrictions; therefore, it is precisely this shortcoming that must be addressed, and methods to meet the needs of spectators in communicating with the team, both in a normal situation and in the future of continued restrictions on personal communication, must be developed.

Games with spectators and entertainment during breaks account for one-third of the supporters' improvement wishes. This absence on the part of the club should be rectified, and in the future, engaging entertainment at a sporting event other than volleyball could pull in more people. The environment around the game, as well as the game itself, should continually attract more viewers.

Quick interviews with players and coaches, Fan-meetings, more attractive fan goods, commentator's explanations of the game mistakes that are not clear to everyone - these are the most significant wishes given by a third of the respondents. As a way of increasing value and connection between the parties concerned, the club needs to open up communication and interaction with and among its followers.

5. Conclusion

In order to complete the study, the answer to the thesis purpose and research questions is presented in this chapter. The purpose of this thesis was to uncover the most important features of a volleyball club and substantiate the main elements of a sports organization's strategic management system by identifying common motivational factors that bring a live audience to volleyball events.

According to quantitative audience research and a qualitative survey of viewers, a strong opponent and an interesting game, as well as the expectation of an exciting game based on the team's previous victories, are the most motivating factors for attending games.

The club's managers make no mention of using different marketing for different fan groups, instead of speaking of their fans as one big group and making marketing decisions based on their perception of fan group size. When analyzing the club's actions, the author cannot ignore the club's activities, which are clearly aimed at local fans, even though the club lacks some marketing knowledge. The club's small interaction efforts still bring good replies, despite the fact that the club's activities are primarily focused on digital technologies and media. People will seek out events that meet their needs through the media. This explains why the HLPK's managers in the interview believed they wouldn't have to do as much to keep their customers as they did.

Previous events created a need among the fans, and they then look for events that meet those needs, in accordance with the user and satisfaction models. Spectators have the opportunity to interact and express their needs or requirements to the volleyball club through multi-way communication and interactions, which helps to build the value of a relationship between active stakeholders. The HLPK create engagement by delivering information directly to their communicated needs and wants, resulting in a valued relationship between the two. When a club creates marketing events on Facebook, they are creating a community space, which is very beneficial for sports fans who want a platform to share their common passion for the sport. The Facebook network provides the fan's basic desire for sociability, or as it is more widely known, a sense of belonging, which keeps fans engaged in the club and encourages fans to return. With Facebook rewards, the HLPK allows for interactions, relationship building, and network formation not only with fans but also between fans.

Because sports fans are not a homogeneous group, aiming for broader emotions, as in this case, can be extremely successful. Furthermore, the emotional high of coming out on top will motivate your supporters to act and contribute resources.

The club is aware that various club activities will be required to keep fans interested and attract new ones. According to the study, the fan base over 45 years old for more than 65 percent of the total. To appeal to a younger generation of fans, the club's marketing strategy will need to be reworked.

Aesthetic values, self-esteem enhancement, entertainment value, need for affiliation, and family ties are the most important motivators that inspire respondents to attend team HLPK sports events, according to the author's analysis. By improving the quality and variety of a sporting event and adding new marketing solutions on social media, the club can influence factors such as aesthetic values, entertainment value, and the need for affiliation. There were requests for changes during the staging of a sporting event in the survey, which the club should consider because there is a melted request from the audience. This will aid in the development and creation of a closer relationship between the club and its fans, which will benefit both parties. Fans are coming to the HLPK sporting event expecting to have a treat, and the club must provide something that will entice them to leave their couches and attend the game. The feeling of release comes from satisfying the fan's desire for excitement and unpredictability. Allowing fans to participate in sporting events through closer communication with athletes or by involving them in activities within a sporting event can increase their sense of inclusion and then belonging.

Nonprofit organizations should prioritize their customers and put them at the center of everything they do. As a result, the sports club is attempting to meet the needs of its fans in order to increase fan engagement. Sports fans are vastly different from regular customers in terms of marketing. The greatest difference between sports fans and non-sports fans is their increased levels of passion and loyalty to the product, as well as their irrationality in their consumption habits. As a result, the fans' commitment may have an impact on the strategy's long-term success. The main motivation for the club to take action is related to the financial goals of generating income because despite being a non-profit organization, the club requires funds to carry out its activities and pay the salaries of its players and coaches.

The author has the impression that in a sports club-fan relationship, it is the fans who are primarily driving the relationship forward, with their need for social belonging being strong and passionate, as Shank and Lyberger (2014) stated, whereas the organizations are more motivated by revenue generation. In the sports industry, it appears that what both stakeholders want can be met just as easily on a digital platform as it can on a physical one. Furthermore, this thesis fills a knowledge gap regarding how a non-profit sports club HLPK can manage its fan engagement during a season; through this study, new ideas of actions a sports club can take were discovered, and knowledge regarding how a non-profit organization can develop their communication with their fans was gained.

6. Recommendations

The interpretation of fan reactions and feedback clearly creates a desire for and presence of sports amongst passionate fans. This could be an opportunity for an HLPK sports club to boost its social media presence and fill that void by creating a more enhanced digital environment that meets the fan's needs for belonging, excitement, release, and identity creation via social media. Engagement marketing for non-profit organizations works through social networks and can be used throughout the year. Furthermore, this study can be used to understand how the non-profit club HLPK perceives phenomena, what motivates them, and how they work. As for recommendations for the future, the HLPK should focus on its social media strategies. The action that the team must take is to create more engaging content. Keep an eye on Instagram's growth, as the club's management wants to attract a younger audience, and Instagram could be the best route to do so. Asking questions from fans, creating player questions & answers, and making interesting videos could increase engagement on social media platforms.

Increasing customer accessibility to fan merchandise, adapting to emerging e-commerce, and establishing a flexible distribution channel to make it easier for customers to engage. HLPK must work with the convenience to buy in their marketing mix when adapting their communication with the audience. There may be loyal supporters who are uninterested in purchasing tickets or fan merchandise. This is an issue worth investigating.

Improving fan engagement will keep the sports club and its supporters connected. As a future recommendation, the author suggests that the sports club listen to as many supporters as possible. The author suggests that HLPK understands how to constantly measure fan engagement and motivation in the future. The volleyball club must investigate how new potential supporters adapt as members of the fan community. According to the author, a future recommendation is to investigate how the sports club can increase motivation for casual supporters.

The author suggests that HLPK organize more competitions for spectators where they can win prizes from sponsors. There is a 15–18-minute break after the second set, and the club can hold it during that time.

The survey found that fans want to interact with athletes. Closer fan involvement can be achieved through the organization of live fan meetings, a photo zone after the game, and more active participation of athletes in the club's social networks, such as writing a blog and commenting after games.

In order to improve the conduct of a sporting event, it is necessary to consider the audience's wishes and recommendations gained through the survey and determine what changes can be implemented to improve the quality of a sporting event.

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[valuable-athletes-ronaldo-mcgregor-and-lebron-score/#6f546db2f98](https://www.forbes.com/sites/kurtbadenhausen/2019/08/03/social-medias-most-valuable-athletes-ronaldo-mcgregor-and-lebron-score/#6f546db2f98)

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[mparison_of_sport_consumption_motives](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/289126356_Female_and_male_sport_fans_A_comparison_of_sport_consumption_motives)

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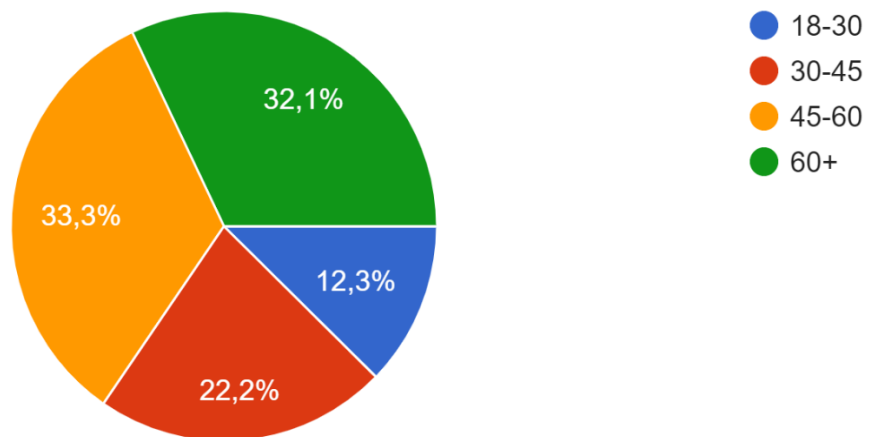
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Appendix 1: Survey answers “How to engage HLPK fans”

Kuinka houkutella HLPK:n katsojia. Vastaukset.

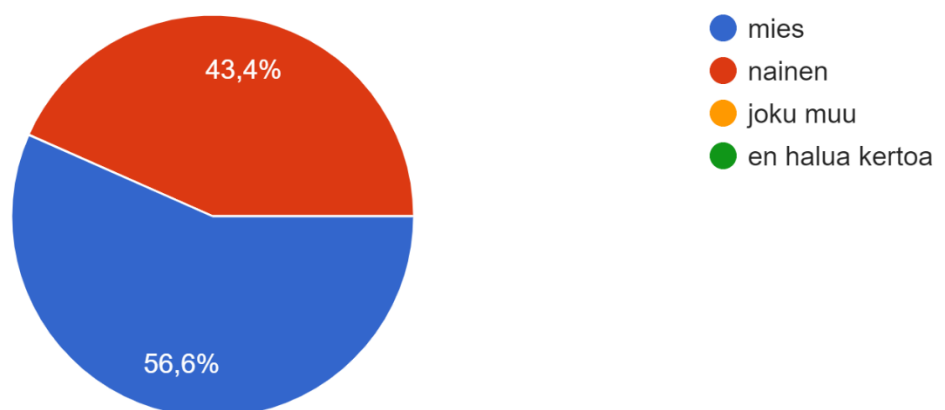
Ikä

81 ответ



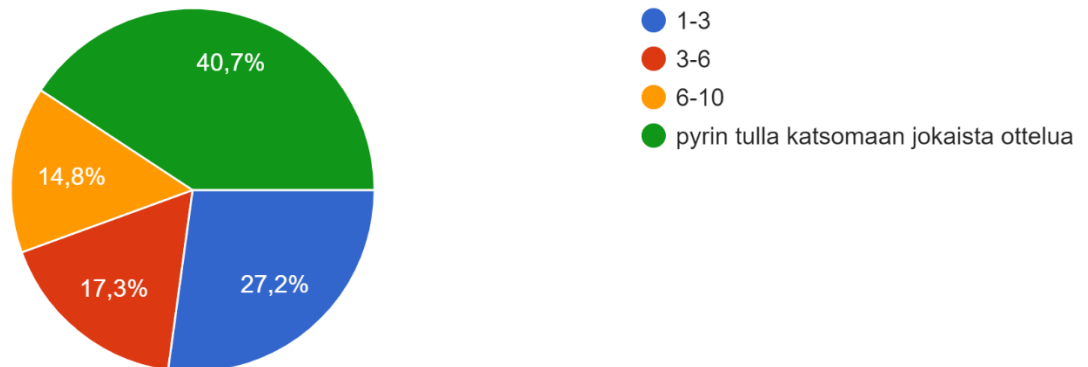
Sukupuoli

83 ответа



Kuinka monta live HLPK:n ottelua tulette katsomaan kauden aikana

81&nbsp;otvet



Pystyttekö nimeämään kolme syytä, miksi tulette katsomaan HLPK:n otteluita?

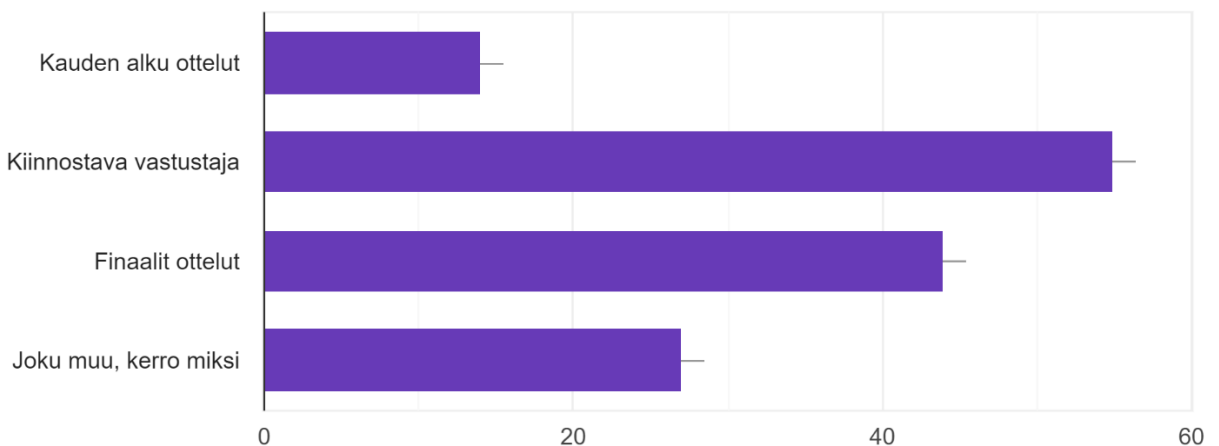
- Vuodesta 65 katsonut otteluita. Rakastaa lajia
- Tykkää lentopallosta, tunnelma, kaverit
- Itse on harrastanu, uusi joukkueen kokoonpano, mielenkiinto naislentopalloa kohti
- peli, kaverit, kahvio
- Kiinnostaa pelaajat, rakkaus urheilulajiin, itse on pelannu
- menestyvä hämeenlinnan joukkue
- Kiinnostus lajia kohti, hyvä peli, hyvä joukkue
- mielenkiinto, tuttu paikka
- tykkää lentopallosta, kannustaa omia, hyvä ajanviette
- kiinnostus, miehen seura, hyvä ajanviette
- itse on pelanut, kiinnostus lajiin
- naisten lentopallo, halu kannustaa, hämeenlinnan palloilukulttuuri
- harrastaa itse lentopalloa, paikallinen joukkue
- helppo seurata lentopalloa, ystävällinen tunnelma, oma talkoolaiset
- rakkaus lajia kohtaan, vastustaja, ystävät
- talkoissa ollu, lentopallo mielenkiintoista
- pelaajat, kiva ajanviette
- kotijoukkueen kannustus, mukava ajanviette, joukkueen johtaja
- Kiinnostava vastustaja, näkemään kavereita, rakkaus lajia kohtaan
- Hauskaa, melko halpaa ja menestyksen nälkä
- Lentopallo kiinnostaa, haluan kannustaa HLPK:a, mukavaa ajanvietettä
- Vapaa-ajan vietto, penkkiurheilu ja tuloksen jännittäminen.
- Lentopallo kiinnostaa, menestysnälkä ja helppo saavutettavuus
- Viihdyttävää, mielenkiintoista ja vauhdikasta
- Tuttujen näkeminen, viihde
- Pidän lentopallosta
- Mielenkiintoisia pelejä, pallolajit kiinnostaa, naisurheilun kasvu

- Lentopallo kiinnostaa, tuttuja pelaajia, hyvä fiilis
- Penkkiurheilu, verkostoituminen
- Kausikortti, hinta-laatusuhde, vaihteleva/nopea peli (vertaa esim jääkiekko).
- Tyttären harrastuksen myötä syntynyt kiinnostus
- Kiinnostus lentopalloon
- rakkaat pelaajat, tunnelma, viihtyminen, mukanaolo, jännittäminen, tarjoilu
- Lentopallo ja joukkue kiinnostaa
- -Mielenkiintoiset pelit -Mukava tunnelma
- Olen itse lentopallon pelaaja/harrastaja, laji on kontaktivapaa eli väkivallaton, tapaan samanhenkisiä tuttuja
- Olin ennen innokkain joukkueen kannattaja nyt en enään ole edes katsoja, valitettavasti.
- Mukavaa ajanvietettä, kavereita pelaamassa ja hieno laji.
- Interesting team in the country
- Tykkään lentopallosta. Hyvät kahvit ja erityisesti munkit. Haluan fanittaa kotikaupungin joukkuetta.
- Itse lajia harrastaneena se peli tunnelma välittyy parhaiten paikan päällä. Tietysti pelaajat ovat myös se syy. Hämeenlinnassa nais lentopalloa liigassa.
- vanha kotikaupunki ,tottakai kannatan HLPK ta
- Pelaa itse "höntää", oikeasta pelistä saa virikkei. Onnistuneita suorituksia on ilo seurata. Moottoriurheilun lisäksi ainoa laji, jota seuraan!
- Kunnianhimoinen seura ja pelaajat. Iloisuus!
- Suosikkijoukkue, Laadukasta pelaamista ja kauniita naisia!
- Hämeenlinnassa joskus asunut pelaa viihdyttävää lentistä Ja hyvä torjunta peli
- Tuttuja pelaajia, livenä kivempaa, kavereiden näkeminen
- Hyvä tiimi henki, paras joukkue, aina mielenkiintoinen joukkue.
- Tunnelma, lajin viehäytys, kauniit taitavat pelaajat
- En
- Naisten lentopallo mielenkiintoista, puolison kanssa yhteistä tekemistä, kannustus
- Tottahan se on paljon jännittävämpää katsoa seurassa ja olla koko ajan tilanteessa mukana.
- Lentopallon seuraaminen on mieleistä puuhaa
- Haluan kannattaa HLPK:ta, nautin hyvästä pelistä, jännitys
- -Olen pelannut nuorena lentopalloa Hämeenlinnassa -Peleissä on hyvä tunnelma -Kiva tukea paikallista seuraa ja katsoa lentopalloa
- Kiinnostavuus, lajin kehitys, itse pelaan
- Olen käynyt katsomassa jo hämeenkaarella. Ja ollut Eevan apuna kahviossa. Harva peli jää katsomatta👍
- Viihdyttävää, jännittävää, ja ennenkaikkea Hämeenlinalainen Kerho
- Lapsenlapsi on pelaamassa
- Mahdollisuus nähdä kansallisesti korkean tason lentopalloa. Nähdä myös kansainvälisiä otteluita. Korkeatasoisten pelien katsomiseksi ei tarvitse mennä Hesaan vaan voi katsoa omalla paikkakunnalla.
- Otteluajankohta sopii omaan kalenteriin, joukkueen peli toimii, pääsylippu on kohtuu hintainen
- Tukeminen, silmäniloa ja urheiluhulluus
- Tytär pelaa lentistä, näyttävää, hyvät olosuhteet ja tarjoilut

- Mielenkiintoista, ystävät, kannustaminen
- Kun vastassa on Mestaruusliigan kärkipään joukkueet. 2) Live urheilu 3) urheilutoiminnan tukeminen
- Nopea ja toimintarikas laji, halli lähellä.
- Hyvää viihdettä halpaan hintaan. Jänniä pelejä. Aina ei tarvitse voittaa.
- Hyvät pelaajat, normaalisti hyvät pelit ja katsomo
- Viihdyttävää urheilua
- Naislentopalloa
- Viihdyttävä tapahtuma, kotikaupungin edustusjoukkue ja yhteisöllisyys
- Omien kannustaminen, pelien viihdyttävyys, ystävät
- Tulen katsomaan HLPK:n kotiotteluita, koska koen kannustamisen merkitykselliseksi, yritän oppia pelaamisesta lisää seuraamalla ammattilaispelaajia ja nautin lentopallon katsomisesta.
- Kannatuksen, lentopallon ja tunnelman takia
- Tunnelma, hyvä peli, mukavaa ajanvietettä
- Jännitys, kauniit naiset ja tuttujen tapaaminen.
- Lentopallo kiinnostaa lajina, mukava tunnelma pelissä, on tullut menestystä

Mitkä tekijät motivoi teitä tulla katsomaan pelejä

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- Rakastaa lentopalloa
- sali on hyvä
- aina pelataan voitosta
- kaikki kiinnostaa
- peli riittää
- pelaajat
- joukkueen menestys, näkee omia kasvattajia(seuraa pelajia joita on valmentanu)
- Lentopallo kiinnostaa
- Lentopallo lajina
- käyn joka pelissä, jos vain peliin pääsee
- Kannustaminen ei ole menestyksestä kiinni.
- Peli kuin peli (=kausikortti -> tavoite käydä katsomassa kaikki pelit).

- Kaikki pelit
- Katson kaikki ottelut, jos suinkin on mahdollista
- Tykkään lajista.
- Silloin, kun sopii omiin aikatauluihin! Omia pelejä en jätä väliin...
- Ajanviete, kausikortti
- Kyllä paljon riippuu vastustajasta.
- Yleensä kannustaminen.
- Pelin kehittyminen kauden alusta kohti kauden loppua
- Korkeatasoiset pelit
- Tutut pelaajat
- Pelitapahtumat. Hyvät passit, nostot, torjunnat. Nopea älykäs peli-
- Viihde ja paikallisen urheilun tukeminen.
- Kotiareena Loimua on lähellä ja pelien katsominen on minulle paljon kaivattua "omaa aikaa" vailla vastuuta lasten hoidosta.
- Kiinnostus lajiin, koska pelaan itsekin

Mitkä tekijät vähentävät teidän motivaatio tulla katsomaan pelejä

- Korona
- korona
- menestys, korona
- huono keli, jos itse on kipeä
- ei ole
- jos ei tule voittoja
- huono keli
- huono vastustaja
- huono peliajankohta(liian myöhään)
- huono menestys joukkueella
- joukkue ei ole pysyvä
- jos joukkue ei pärjää
- Korona,huonot pelit
- Mikäli oma joukkue ei yritä tosissaan voittaa otteluita
- Strobovalo esittelyn aikana
- Huonolaatuinen peli
- Pelaajiston vaihtuvuus.
- Koronarajoitukset ;), huono keli (pakkanen/lumisade - kun pitää omalla autolla tulla)
- Liian myöhänen ottelun alkaminen
- Jos ei koronaa huomioida niin sää kun ei asu vieressä
- Ei mitkään
- Muuta puuhaa
- Pitkät matkat peleihin, koska en asu Hämeenlinnassa
- Jos joukkue pelaa jatkuvasti huonosti ja sarjasijoitus on alhainen
- Kotikatsomon negatiivisuuden.
- Misu ei kentällä . Aneeminen yleisö.

- Viikonloppusin liian myöhänen ajankohta
- Huono peli
- Ottelu aika
- korona ja maskipakko
- HLPK:n pelipaidoissa pelaajien nimet ovat aivan liian pienellä fontilla. Pelaajia vaihtuu ja aina pitäisi katsoa käsiohjelmasta, "kukas tuo olikaan". Haittaa pelin seuraamista ihan liikaa! Graafikon pitäisi ottaa mallia muiden seurojen paidoista.
- Lipun hinta ..
- Matkustaminen toiselta paikkakunnalta
- Menestys sarjassa
- Välimatka kotoa hallille ja yhteensopimattomat pelaajat
- Covid 19
- No pitkä matka
- Ajanpuute
- Huonot peliesitykset, heikko vastus
- Jos ei lainkaan menestystä niin pelit tylsiä (0-3)
- Oma liikkumiseni on huonoa. Viikonlopun pelit voisivat alkaa jo esim. klo 16
- Liian kova melu(rummutus)
- En ole niin kova lentopallofani enää
- Työni, liikaa ulkomaalais pelaajia joukkueissa
- Ei oikein ole sellaista.
- Ei ole mitään
- Asun niin kaukana
- Menestyminen lisää motivaatiota ja päinvastoin.
- Huono ajankohta
- Menestys, keli ja ajanpuute
- Tasoerot, junnu joukkueet
- Ei merkitystä ottelulla, korona
- HLPK alkuesittelyt (välkkyvät valot), jotka aiheuttavat päänsärkyä ja häiritsevää tunnetta. Uskon että monella jotka kärsivät helposti mm. migreenistä tai epilepsiasta on suuri syy olla tulematta paikalle. Tästä ovat monet valittaneet vuosien aikana kun valot ovat olleet käytössä.
- Fanikulttuuri uupuu eikä sen eteen tehdä töitä. Pelaajia ei (ymmärrettävästä syystä) pääse tapaamaan.
- Ei mikään vähennä.
- Rummuttavat ja mölyävät katsojat häiritsevät myös televisiolähetyskiä. Rummut ja muut kovaa ääntä pitävät välineet pois.
- Ruuhkat
- Huono menestys
- Huono menestys ja heikot pelaajahankinnat
- Rumpuryhmä, kuulutuksista ei saa selvää
- Hieman on harmittanut kannustamista vastustava keskustelu, jota varsinkin syksyllä julkisesti käytiin, mutta sekään ei vähentänyt motivaatiani tulla peleihin enkä myöskään ole lakannut kannustamasta. Joskus yleisöstä kantautuva negatiivinen äänen käyttö (buuauus, pelaajien/valmentajien/tuomareiden haukkuminen) harmittaa, mutta ei sekään niin paljon, että olisi vaikuttanut motivaatiooni tulla peleihin.

- kuulla valmentajien ajatuksia
- Fanituotemyyntiä hallilla, paremmannäköisiä fanituotteita (karseat oranssit paidat)
- Katsomo lähemmäs kenttää, jotta näkee paremmin ja olisi parempi tunnelma.
- Hyvää taistelua ottelussa, voittoa tietenkin.
- näkyvyyttä ulospäin (esim. pelaajapäivät somessa), mainokset
- Pelitilanteissa syntyvät virheet jäävät usein epäselviksi. Kiva kun joku kertois. Mitä tapahtu.
- Erätauolla isolta näytöltä pelin tapahtumia.
- Hyvät fani ryhmät kuten lätkässä.
- Tasaista peliä, hienoja pelisuorituksia, taktista peluutusta
- Vilkkuvat valot pois sillä se saattaa laukaista pahan migreenikohtauksen
- Olisi hienoa taas saada kannustaa joukkuetta täysillä.
- Kahvipaussi ja vähän liikuntaa
- Selostaja voisi kertoa erikoisemmista virheistä, jotka jää katsojalle epäselväksi.
- Mukaansatempaavaa musiikkia tyttöjen kotimaasta.

