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**THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON SPORT
TOURISM IN HUNGARY**

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1. Introduction

1.1. Background of the research and reason of choosing the topic

Sport tourism's popularity have been growing year by year. As UNWTO says, "Sport tourism is one of the fastest growing sectors of tourism. More and more tourists are interested in sport activities during their trips whether sports are the main objective of travel or not." Due to the improvement of technology, engineers have been designing bigger stadiums, organisers made sporting events available for a higher number around the world. The key factor of sport events are the visitors who would be willing to go to the other part of world just to support their family member or their favorite team. Not only because sport events would be much more boring without audience, but also because it is an excellent income source for the event organisers.

As it was already mentioned before, the popularity of sport tourism was increasing, however, something unusual had happened, that no one could ever predict. A disease unknown at the time appeared and changed the entire life of almost every living person on Earth. The COVID-19 pandemic became a worldwide problem. It caused many casualties, many restrictions and much more. The biggest victim of the pandemic was the tourism industry, including sport tourism.

My extraordinary interest about this topic is due to two major reasons. First, I am a sport tourist. Mostly not taking part on those kinds of events, rather going as a visitor or a fan. The difference sport tourism has from normal tourism is that a tourist usually visits the sights and the most popular places of the destination, however, a sport tourist is rather keen on taking part or visiting a sport event, and that is the only reason they go to that exact place. The second reason of my interest in finding out the changes that the pandemic has caused for this industry is that I would like to research the significant problems, the emotional disadvantages, the modifications that the industry had to do to 'stay alive' and the future solutions that could bring back those better days.

The relevance of my thesis is that people follow sports. Some of them do it for a living, some of them do it as a hobby. No matter which type you are, for most people, sport is in their everyday life. Sport is a healthy activity, it helps to lose weight, release stress, and it is a

fantastic opportunity to stay active. People also love to talk about sports, so it also contributes to building a strong community, as it is a quite common and wide topic to talk about, and to relate to.

1.2. Structure of the thesis

The thesis consists of five main segments: Introduction, Literature review, Methodology, Analysis of the research and the Conclusion. The intention of the introduction is to give an overview of the chosen topic, providing the concept of my research and looking over the key elements of what will be asserted in my dissertation.

Literature review is specifically about the discussion of scientific data and specialized literature devoted to the COVID-19 and its remarkable connection with the tourism overall and more specifically sport tourism in native land and globally. Historical background will also be given which is of significance of understanding better why sport has a great impact on people's lives and the reasons the pandemic could influence it colossally.

The third part involves the research methodology. Definitions will be given about the different types of methodologies. Since my choice was to use more types of methodologies, I will be focusing on each and declare my research questions in connection with sport and its way with professionals, everyday people and just events themselves.

Upcoming the analysis of the carried-out survey and the interviews will give the chance to demonstrate information about the changes and challenges Hungary and its people, sportsman and clubs had to face and also present problems that occurred in other countries.

Last but not least I will summarize the thesis in the final part of my thesis and give a conclusion.

1.3. Research aims, Research Questions, and Methodology

1.3.1. Research aim

The aim of this thesis is examining the effect of COVID-19 on sport tourism and finding out what were the major problems the industry had to face concerning several areas. Also, to

explore the management procedures undertaken by sport tourism stakeholders and their consequences during and after the Covid-19 pandemic in Hungary. By stakeholders, I mean hotels, event organisers, athletes, sport venues, and government.

1.3.2. Research Questions

Research questions are a must have if the reader wants to get anticipated and to be comprehensive about the thesis. The research questions are the following:

RQ1: *What were the major changes in sport events after the outbreak?*

RQ2: *What challenges did the pandemic present for the fans, players, and to clubs?*

RQ3: *Did the pandemic make everyday people's sporting habits more difficult?*

1.3.3. Research methodology

In order to get the adequate answers for the questions mentioned above, it is inevitable to make primary and secondary research. Both qualitative and quantitative research can be found in this thesis, so mixed methodology has been chosen. From the qualitative point of view, two interviews were made with professionals, who have strong connection with the topic of this thesis, considering their familiar background and carrier. The quantitative research strategy was a questionnaire. The topic of the survey was about the fillers' sporting activity, and their habits of visiting a sporting event, and the change of both due to the epidemic.

2. Literature review

This topic is quite a fresh one, it did not happen such a long time ago, more like in the recent past. This means that there are not that many sources, but there are still some materials and ongoing research in connection with the matter, mostly online. By sport tourism, we can mean several different activities, like a participant or a visitor. In this chapter, I am going to present a brief, historical overview, firstly, about academic history, and then Hungarian.

COVID-19 will be discussed, both from the aspects of major consequences and feasible solutions. Before diving into matters, definitions will be clarified, to be on the same page.

2.1. Definition of Sport Tourism

2.1.1. Tourism

"Tourism is a collection of activities, services and industries which deliver a travel experience comprising transportation, accommodation, eating and drinking establishments, retail shops, entertainment businesses and other hospitality services provided for individuals or groups traveling away from home." (Macintosh and Goeldner, 2020) In order for a moving to be called tourism, there must be a change of location, but not every kind of travelling can be called tourism.

2.1.2. Sport tourism

"Sport events of various kinds and sizes attract tourists as participants or spectators and destinations try to add local flavours to them to distinguish themselves and provide authentic local experiences. Sports events can be a catalyst for tourism development if successfully leveraged in terms of destination branding, infrastructure development and other economic and social benefits." (UNWTO, 2021) Sport tourism can be categorized into two parts. Active, and passive. Active sport tourism means when the individual is exercising the sport, for example, an athlete or a football player. Passive sport tourism is when someone is taking part in a sporting event, but as a spectator or a fan.

2.2. History

2.2.1. Academic history of sport

Ever since the beginning of human race, there has always been a rivalry between people. They always had to race, to win, or to lose. The first ever sporting event in today's sense was the Olympic Games. It was held in every four years, in Olympia, Greece, starting in 776 BCE, and it was organised until 393 CE. Only men, and only Greeks could participate, and they had

to be all naked. The events were running, jumping, discus throwing, javelin throwing, wrestling, and boxing.

After a big jump in time, since around the middle of the 19th century, people started to organise sporting events. The first ever football match in history, was held in Scotland, between Scotland and England. The first modern Olympic Games were held in 1896 in Athens, and still is being held in every four years in memoriam of the antique Olympic Games. Sport itself was so high of importance, that even during wars, the main sport events like the Olympic Games were held and until it was over there was a truce. Many competitors were defected to other countries to avoid wars.

The 20th century also had some innovations. The first Tour de France was held in 1903. In connection with American sports, 1946 was the first year that the still ongoing American elite basketball championship - the NBA - was held. For Europeans, the American Football final, the Super Bowl is mostly known for its half time show, even though the first Super Bowl was in 1967, there was no half time show until 1970. This show attracts people to watch it live, even if it is in the middle of night, depending on the time zone. The stake of this event can also be seen on the ticket prices because the cheapest tickets are around 6.600\$ and can be up to 75.000\$ just for one place and still, the stadium is on full every year. (Anon., n.d.)

2.2.2. Hungarian history of sport

The first organised form of doing sport appeared around the 19th century when noblemen had the idea to establish sport clubs, not only to compete but also to have a reason gather around and discuss the matters of the time. The first sport clubs were dedicated to: rowing, skating, sailing, and horseback-riding. Towards the end of the century the simple mediocre part of the nation could get a hold of the joy of exercising. For them only low-cost games were available, specifically the ones that did not require a lot of external equipment like boxing, football, wrestling. (Anon., n.d.)

The first ever time Hungary as a country itself participated on the modern Olympic Games was in 1896. From that year on Hungary has always competed both on the summer and winter games except for two years. The Olympic Games are not the only international sport event where this nation is interested. There are the World Games that includes games that are

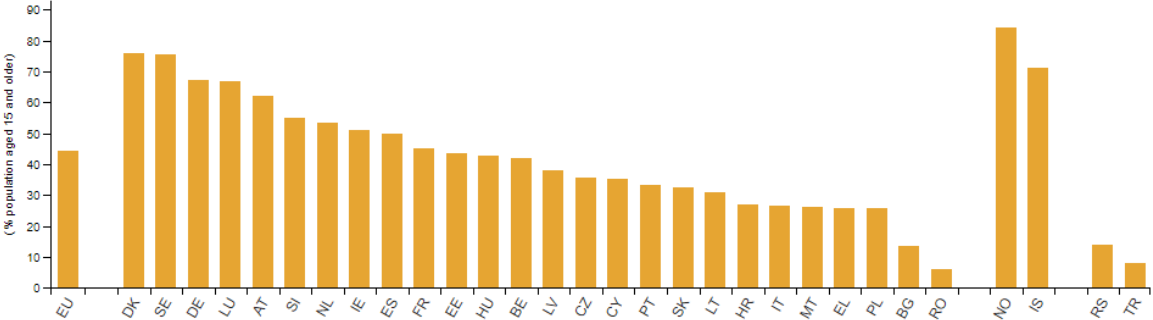
not on the list of the Olympics. Hungary is the most outstanding in aerobics, power lifting, squash, archery, dance.

The country concerning sport is most famous for its football outcomes in the 1950's. The Golden Team (in Hungarian: Aranycsapat) is world widely known and Hungarian football have not been as good ever since. The Olympics were held in Helsinki in 1952 where the team has won the golden medal. They also reached the first place during the 1948-53 European Cup series. The Golden Team was such in decent shape that in 1953 the English team lost to 3-6 against them, and it is still the most memorable sporting event for the Hungarians.

For this country sport has always been of high importance and to strengthen the enthusiasm there are countless domestic championships for every kind of sports. Student Olympics exist since the end of the 20th century. 2013 was the year when the government carried into effect the institution of everyday physical education in schools, kindergartens and even made it compulsory on universities.

2.3. Motivation for sports

To stay fit, and to keep up the work, it is a must to be motivated. Without it, it is easy to fall back from the everyday routine. First things first, it is better not to do it alone. Inviting a friend, a neighbour, or a family member to join could possibly help, because people can support each other. It is also crucial to choose the right sport. Without enjoying the exercise, it is common to quickly lose the motivation. Setting an aim is also essential when trying to find inspiration. Starting with simple goals, that can be as small as running for 10 minutes, is a good start. After the goal is achieved, it is important to reward oneself.



1. chart: Practicing sports, keeping fit or participating in leisure activities at least once a week. (2019)

(Anon., dátum nélk.)

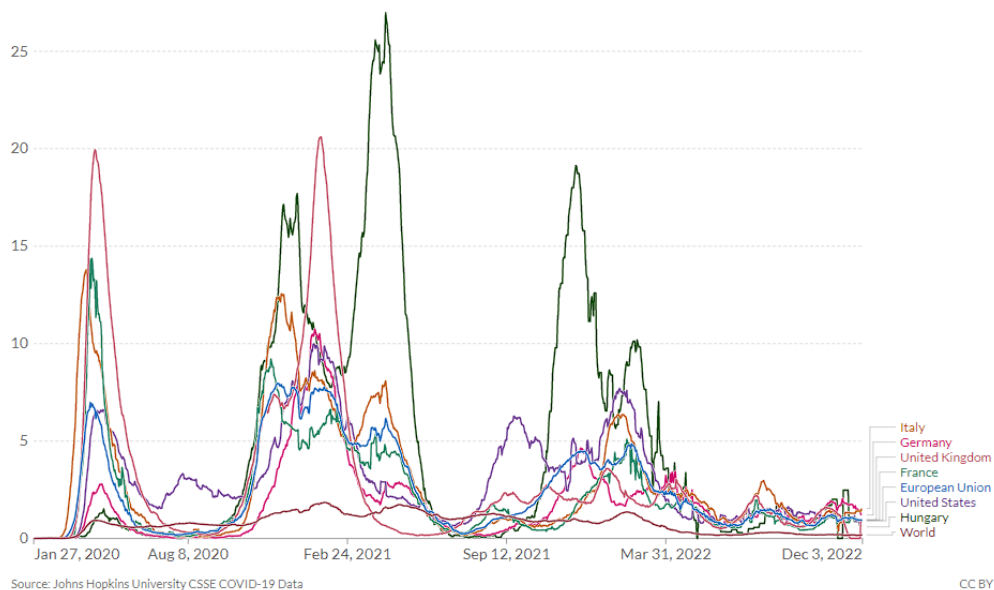
The figure shows how many percentages of the population of a country practices sports, keeps fit, or do sports as an activity or hobby at least once a week. In Europe, the average is 44.3%, Norway stands out with 84.2%, Romania is way below than average, with only 6.3%, Hungary is close to one percent away from the European average, with a number of 42.8%.

2.4. Appearance of COVID-19 across the world

“Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is an infectious disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus. Most people infected with the virus will experience mild to moderate respiratory illness and recover without requiring special treatment. However, some will become seriously ill and require medical attention. Older people and those with underlying medical conditions like cardiovascular disease, diabetes, chronic respiratory disease, or cancer are more likely to develop serious illness. Anyone can get sick with COVID-19 and become seriously ill or die at any age.” (WHO, n.d.)

Everything started in December 2019, from a Chinese town called Wuhan. First, local people got infected. Europeans and Americans did not take it seriously for the first time. The Chinese government reacted to the problem with lockdowns and restrictions. China tried to slow down and eventually stop the disease’s spreading. Unfortunately, these actions were not too successful. Mostly tourist, who visited Wuhan and its area diffused the infection to all parts of the world. The pandemic made a huge impact in almost every continent. Many sacrifices had to be made in every concerned country.

The first, and most effective way to stop the rapid spreading was the lockdowns. Scientists thought if people do not contact each other, it will slow down the expand of the pandemic, and they can have more time to come up with a better solution. People could not go out to the street, almost everything was closed, shops, gyms, markets, etc, only the essentials could remain open. A large number of people lost their job because of this action. Fortuitous ones could carry on by going into home office, meaning working from home.



1. figure: Daily new confirmed COVID-19 deaths per million people

(Anon., n.d.)

In this figure, the death per million people in some significant European countries can be seen, along with the world's and the European union's average values. The three big "waves" are easily noticeable. During the first one, around April 2020, from these listed countries the outstanding country was the United Kingdom. Following the UK, France and Italy reached this unfortunate podium. On the day of 13th of April, the death per million people in the UK was 19,94. France with 12,76 and Italy's numbers were 9,54. Hungary was way below than the European Union's average (6.70) with 1.02 DPM. It is not stated on this figure but in general the biggest loss at the time was in Belgium, with a number of 26,96 deaths per million.

The last two months of the 2020 year was the appearance of the second wave. On Christmas Eve, Hungary became the number one country out of the listed countries, reaching 17,07 DPM, the UK and Italy followed it, with close to the half of it, 8.90 and 8.80. On April 13th, Hungary reached a drastically enormous number 26,97 deaths per million. It was three times more than the 2nd Italy, who had 8,08 DPM, following the European Union's average which was 6,17.

By the end of 2021, the third wave was raging. Looking at the European Union's average, we can establish that this was the weakest wave out of the three, but not for Hungary. The deaths per million people's peak for Hungary in the 3rd wave was on the 8th of December, reaching 19.09 million per deaths, while the EU's average was 4.34. Not including the first wave, we can state that Hungary's death per million people was almost always more than the European Union's average. The biggest reasons for this were the Hungarian hospitals' poor

condition, the lack of lung ventilators, the lack of skilled medical staff, and the lack of free places in the hospitals.

2.5. European countries' governmental respond to the pandemic

The European Union was fighting as one team to stop certain outcomes against coronavirus. Numerous international conferences were being held for the sake of securing more and more human lives. In general, it can be said that international helpline was a significant achievement of this period. Medical devices such as lung ventilators or coronavirus tests were sent to those countries, which were in the need of help.

In this subsection, three European countries with much influence on the European Union were analysed to be able to know how different countries responded to the disease. These countries are Germany, France, and the UK.

Germany had a four staged strategy: prevent, detect, contain, treat. Prevention was a national crisis management effort on trying to understand the epidemiology of the disease. Since Germany was one of the first countries to come up with a way of testing, it was natural that their strategy included detection of the infection of people through this new way of technology. There was a period of time, when long term care facilities were shut down to outsiders keeping the deaths down. Germany did a careful planning of vast number of hospital beds allowing them to treat people in the correct way. (Lothar Wieler, Ute Rexroth, René Gottschalk, Exemplars in Global Health, 2021)

The UK had a similar way of thinking. Chief Medical Officer Chris Whitty said, “we basically have a strategy which depends on four tactical aims: the first one is contain; the second of these is to delay; the third of these is to do the science and research; and the fourth is to mitigate so we can brace the NHS”. Containing meant the detection of cases as early as possible as well as looking up close contacts. Delaying was the process of slowing the spread down with the purpose of pushing it away from the winter season. The main aim of research was the development of vaccines. People who fell ill had to be taken care of the best way possible, this was the part of the mitigation. (Anon., n.d.)

France had a different kind of approach. Despite the fact that the country's healthcare system is advanced and world-class, they registered numerous positive cases. Their point of view was to save as many lives as they can while also saving the economy of the country. Their key management of the situation was social restrictions, closing down places like universities,

schools, public places keeping only essential facilities open. (Zeynep Or, Coralie Gandré, Isabelle Durand Zaleski, Monika Steffen, 2021)

2.6. COVID-19 situation in Hungary

The pandemic has reached Hungary by March 2020, where firstly two Iranian students got the infection. It was the first wave of the virus, starting from March until the start of May, reaching two thousand positive cases. The second wave came in the end of the 2020 summer, around August. The infection rate was much higher, than in the first wave, however, the death rate decreased. The reason for this is because mostly the younger generation got infected, and the virus did not have such fatal effects on them. The last wave was slightly different. It reached the country in February 2021. The British mutant swept through the country with a very high number of casualties.

However, in November 2020, the government declared a state of an emergency. As, the State of New Jersey defines, “The Governor declares a State of Emergency when he/she believes a disaster has occurred or may be imminent that is severe enough to require State aid to supplement local resources in preventing or alleviating damages, loss, hardship, or suffering. This declaration authorizes the Governor to speed State agency assistance to communities in need. It enables him to make resources immediately available to rescue, evacuate, shelter, provide essential commodities (i.e., heating fuel, food etc.) and quell disturbances in affected localities.” The Prime Minister of Hungary, Viktor Orbán and the Government’s Coronavirus taskforce, with the leading of Cecília Müller, has declared numerous restrictions and rules to slow down the spreading of the virus.

From the 11th of November 2020, restrictions have come into effect. People could not visit restaurants, but it was not fully closed, because delivery was an available option. It made a huge problem for the small- and medium enterprises, because the income of the restaurants has significantly dropped.

Not only these eating out places were the casualties, from the same day, entertaining and sporting places got also closed. There was no nightlife in the country, even clubs and bars had to stop functioning. In several big cities, - like the capital city of Hungary - Budapest, Pécs, Debrecen, Szeged, wearing a mask was obligatory, even in outside places. At 7PM, shops got closed, people had to arrive home by 8PM. From 8PM, curfew was introduced. Curfew meant that from 8PM, people had to stay at home, and it was forbidden to leave the house. There were much less cars on the streets, less people on the buses or in public.

There were some exceptions. Only those people could leave their home, who had to go work, or to visit the doctor or hospital. People owning an animal also fell under exclusion, because they could and had to suffice their animal's needs anytime, however, could go only five hundred meters away from their home. For those, who broke these rules, the penalty could have gone up to 500.000 Hungarian Forints.

Seemingly the best solution to fight against the virus was the vaccines. Every country of the European Union got a supply and started to vaccinate the people between Christmas and New Year, in 2020. The British Pfizer and Moderna were the first vaccines in the country, but after 2 months, in February, the Chinese and Russian vaccines were also available. Every vaccine was free of charge, and people could have it injected by choice, it was not obligatory.

In the autumn period of 2021, Hungary became the first country in the European Union to release its own Immunity Certificate. It was a card, like a credit card or an ID card, but it was also available online. It was given to the people who went through the disease with justification or for those who got vaccinated. The aim of this card/application was simple, people who had the card could have an entry into country's different places like bars, club, sporting events, and so on. Later on, during the summer, the European Union released its COVID card. It was quite similar to the Hungarian one, and it had the same purpose. The advantage of this card was to be able to travel abroad.

2.7. Hotel changes due to the pandemic

Most probably, hotels and all other catering units were one of the biggest casualties of the epidemic, inside the tourism industry. The most difficult part of their operation was the period when they had to close all of their services. With no tourists, lack of interest, and to keep the rules, hotels had no other choice, but to shut down their facilities. Thousands of working people became unemployed from one day to the other. Chefs, receptionists, chambermaids, F&B, bell boys, all of the mentioned and many more had to stop doing what they have done in probably many years, and look for a completely different job, that was sustainable during this special period.

But it was not always such a difficult time. Mostly after the vaccination, many hotels could reopen, but major changes had to be made for the sake of the guests. Cleaning protocols played the most important part. Hand sanitizers were placed in almost every corner of the hotel. Staff paid much more attention to the cleanliness. Masks were obligatory for them to use in order to protect the guests' health conditions. Many developed hotel chains created their own website or their own mobile application. The main reason for this was to reduce the contact

between the guests and the staff. Booking, ordering, emergency contact, everything could be found on the application. This service is still available for many hotels because it is much more comfortable for the guests, and they enjoy using it. (Marisa Méndez, 2021)

2.8. Changes of sport events due to the coronavirus

In 2020, There were many major competitions that should have been held. As it was already mentioned in this thesis, the modern Olympic Games were held in every four years, and it should have been held in 2020, however, due to the pandemic it was moved to 2021. Likewise, the Football European Championship had been postponed to the following year, which Italy eventually won.

Far from Europe, the American elite basketball league, NBA came up with an incredible idea. During these times, America was in one of the worst conditions, in terms of testing positive. The NBA usually starts from the middle of October, until next year's April. However, this year, the association has declared special schedule. All 22 NBA teams were forced to move to one place, to Orlando, Florida. The so called 'bubble' was the place where all the matches were played. This 'bubble' had an effective and safe outcome because there was not a single player, who tested positive. (Greg Heilman, 2020)



2. figure: One stadium from the 'bubble', where some of the matches were played.

(Mark Medina, 2021)

This picture is from Orlando, it shows the conditions under which the players had to play, and the fans had to cheer. It is clearly visible, that there were no spectators in the stadium,

however, the NBA have figured out something for the fans. They set screens around the court, and fans could join in from home, as a virtual fan.

There was a time where all European football was stopped to keep the spreading of COVID-19 under control. Probably, the best and most famous league, the English Premier League was also suspended on the 13th of March. There were no trainings, no matches for almost three months. The first allowed training was on the 19th of May, and the Premier League could resume on the 17th of June, strictly, behind closed doors. (Anon., 2020) The following, 2020/2021 season was also started with no spectators. After more than a year of waiting, May 2021 was date, when a limited number of fans could go to the stadium.

2.9. Sport tourism in Hungary during COVID-19

The European Men's Water Polo Champion was a fortunate event. It took place in Duna Aréna, Budapest. Under fortunate, the last major competition before the outbreak of the coronavirus is meant. It was held from the 12nd of January, until the 26th of January. The Hungarians won the whole competition, beating Spain with penalties in the final. There were more than five thousand fans on site, thousands from home, cheering for the Nation Team, and the players gave them an unforgettable night.

The Hungarian Formula 1 Grand Prix is a joy to visit for the locals every year. However, the 2020 Grand Prix were held behind closed doors, there were no spectators in Mogyoród on the 19th of August. Luckily for the fans, the following year, the 2021 Grand Prix was held on the 1st of August, but this time, spectators were allowed in the area.

The Football European Championship is the second biggest international football event, after the World Cup. Both are being held in every 4 years, just like the Olympic Games. The Football European Championship should have been held in 2020, but the pandemic prevented the whole event. The association has declared that it will be postponed to the year of 2021. The brand new Puskás Aréna gave home to 4 football matches, including 3 Group Stage matches, and one 1/8-Finals. 2 out of the 3 Group Stage matches, (Blikk, 2020) Hungary was participating. The National 11 matched up against former European Champions, Portugal, and former World Cup winners, France. By this time of the year, the number of the COVID-19 cases in Hungary were favourable, so both locals, and foreign people could come to Budapest. The Stadium worked with full capacity, the attendance of the two Hungarian matches were 55,662 and 55,998 people. The Hungarian fans and ultras made an unremarkable atmosphere inside, and outside the Stadium. "In exchange", the players gave a brilliant performance against

one of the best national teams in the world, drawing 1-1 against France, and losing 0-3 against Portugal, but the score was 0-0 until the last 5 minutes of the 90-minute game.

COVID-19 pandemic was still raging when the 2022 European Men's Handball Championship took place at Hungary and Slovakia. It lasted from 13-30 January 2022. Out of 65 matches, Hungary gave home to most of those matches, in 3 cities, Debrecen, Szeged, and Budapest. The Venue in Budapest was the brand new MVM Dome, whose maximum capacity can reach up to 20.000. The Hungarian team was also in this competition, sharing Group B, with Iceland, Portugal, and the Netherlands. Shockingly, Hungary did not reach the Play-Offs, they fall out incredibly early, from the group stage, winning only against Portugal. This also cannot be blamed on the fans, who were singing and cheering for the nation through all 3 matches. (Anon., 2022)

3. Methodology

During the chapter on research methodology, I will define how the research has been conducted, how the research data was collected, the types of research design used in this thesis, as well as its motivation and main objectives.

It is widely spread that the challenges occurred during a research conduction are vanquished by different type of research designs. It helps to make the research more efficient, be of high performance and coherent. It is a must for it to be in the center of everything.

3.1. Research design types

3.1.1. Definition of quantitative research method

“Quantitative research is a means for testing objective theories by examining the relationship among variables. These variables, in turn, can be measured, typically on instruments, so that numbered data can be analysed using statistical procedures. The final written report has a set structure consisting of introduction, literature and theory, methods, results, and discussion. Like qualitative researchers, those who engage in this form of inquiry have assumptions about testing theories deductively, building in protections against bias, controlling for alternative explanations, and being able to generalize and replicate the findings.” (Creswell, 2008)

3.1.2. Definition of qualitative research method

“Qualitative research is a means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. The process of research involves emerging questions and procedures, data typically collected in the participant’s setting, data analysis inductively building from particulars to general themes, and the researcher making interpretations of the meaning of the data. The final written report has a flexible structure. Those who engage in this form of inquiry support a way of looking at research that honours an inductive style, a focus on individual meaning, and the importance of rendering the complexity of a situation.” (Cresswell, 2007)

3.1.3. Definition of mixed method

“Mixed method is an approach to inquiry that combines or associates both qualitative and quantitative forms. It involves philosophical assumptions, the use of qualitative and quantitative approaches, and the mixing of both approaches in a study. Thus, it is more than simply collecting and analyzing both kinds of data; it also involves the use of both approaches in tandem so that the overall strength of a study is greater than either qualitative or quantitative research.” (Creswell, 2009)

3.1.4. Definition of questionnaire

“A set of carefully designed questions given in exactly the same form to a group of people in order to collect data about some topic(s) in which the researcher is interested.” (Jupp, 2006.)

It was deduced that the best way to support my research is to choose the mixed research design method. I have conducted two relevant interviews regarding my topic with people that have great influence on sport tourism and also have had many involvements on this field.

Although they provided with very valuable information, I believe to get widen the point of view as much as possible it was best to ask everyday people about how their lives were influenced during the COVID-19 era concerning sport. That is the reason I not only did interviews but a questionnaire as well. Hence my choice of mixed research design.

3.2. Secondary research

A secondary research method involves using data that has already been collected. In order to increase the effectiveness of research, existing data is summarized and compiled.

Documents such as research reports and similar publications are considered secondary research. Various sources can provide these documents, such as public libraries, websites, surveys already completed, etc.

3.2.1. Literature search

The secondary research is one of the most crucial parts of the thesis therefore, it required a lot of inquiry on my side.

Since the happenings of the 2019-2022 era are quite fresh regarding the illness and its causes, it is very unlikely to find something in libraries however I have been able to locate various writing on this topic that have been published online. The internet was my main source of gaining information.

In spite of this fact, I have been able to find reliable sources at the Budapest Business School's library about sport and sport tourism itself.

My main keywords were the following: sport, sport tourism, COVID-19, sport events, sport activities, travel, adaption, economic changes.

It is high of importance to highlight the fact that the search phase was carried out in two languages which were Hungarian and English.

3.3. Primary research

There were no personal information requirements for the survey, such as a name, email address, or mobile number. There are several advantages to this method, such as the fact that it only takes a few minutes to complete, the respondents can come from all types of social groups,

and diagrams can be prepared from the responses easily. It is always possible, however, that the research will not be completed, and frivolous answers will be received.

As for the interviews, personal experiences and feelings were asked about but with the contribution of the interview subjects.

3.3.1. Research objectives

Answers were inspected to the following questions:

RQ1: *What were the major changes in sport events after the outbreak?*

RQ2: *What challenges did the pandemic present for the fans, players, and to clubs?*

RQ3: *Did the pandemic make every day people's sporting habits more difficult?*

3.3.2. Data collection

The data for this dissertation was from a survey, which was made on Google Form. It contained 17 questions. Multiple choice, checkboxes and linear scale were the major question types. At the linear scale part, people had to choose from 1-5, 1 means "Not at all", 5 referred to "Fully". Checkboxes were given for some questions, because it was a possibility, that more one than one answer is correct for the respondent.

3.4. Timescale

The thesis is made up of numerous phases: In order to, give a comprehensive perspective on my topic, the first and most important step was to gather data about tourism and sport. This process involved locating relevant literature reviews, reading, and analysing research articles, and choosing the primary sources that comprise the secondary research. In the second step, questions were prepared for both the online survey and the two interviews. Next the questionnaire was distributed among people who were willing to provide with feedback about their experiences concerning sport. Last but not least, the analysis of the filled- out surveys and the interviews could be carried out, and deductions could be made. In this phase creating tables and charts out of the provided information was also a crucial part to be made.

4. Analysis of the research

4.1. Interviews

4.1.1 First interview

The first interviewee was István Sallói. István Sallói, former footballer, member of the Hungarian National Team 13 times. The attacking midfielder's major domestic clubs were Honvéd and Videoton (now called MOL Fehérvár). He made his retirement in 2000, after playing 6 years abroad, in Israel. After that, he was the Technical Director of the Hungarian National Team. Later, he was the part of several Hungarian teams, like Siófok, Újpest, Diósgyőr, Kecskemét, Dunaújváros. At the time, he saved Siófok from bankruptcy and was remarkably close to make Újpest the Hungarian champions. He was also the scout of the English Premier League team, Wolverhampton Wanderers. On the summer of 2018, he became the Sports Director of Zalaegerszeg, until the summer of 2021, when he joined MOL Fehérvár, also as Sports Director. (Anon., 2022) After the 2-0 loss to Vasas, on the 15th of October 2022, he offered his resignation, that the club accepted. (m4sport.hu, 2022) He is also known for his appearances on the television before and between football matches.

Mr. Sallói was perfectly suitable for the interview not only because of his experience and knowledge, but also because of his close relative. His son, Dániel Sallói is a current football player in America. Dániel Sallói is the part of the first team of Sporting Kansas City since 2017. The talented, 26 years old forward's peak season so far was the 2021 calendar year, where he made 26 goal contributions (goal + assist combined) in 32 league matches. (flashscore.com, 2022) The four-time Hungarian National Team player was experiencing the disadvantages and drawbacks of the COVID-19 pandemic in America. His American experience, and his dad's domestic Sports Director knowledge allowed me to compare the two country's changes, moves.

First of all, I do not want to start focus on Hungary, but on the United States, where your son is playing currently, and achieves brilliant performances, he is playing there since 2017, so I would like to know, how sport tourism looks like in the United States, what was it like, before the pandemic?

American sport's build up is different from the European. Firstly, it is absolutely driven by commercial measurements, which means they do not do it for just for the show, but to make money. When I was in Kansas, I talked to Peter Vermes how Americans formed stadiums. In Kansas, the city has an American football team, a baseball team, and a soccer team. Each has

its own stadium with the maximum capacity of 100.000, 50.000, and 20.000. Peter said it was a 2-year-old study, to figure out what could be that number, where no matter how the team performances, they can reach 90% of the maximum capacity. This is how this 20.000 was calculated for example. The design of the whole stadium is different. The buffet, the restroom is on the top. This means that if I would like to drink something, I can see the match. In Europe, in general, these places are downstairs, so when people want to get something from the buffet, or use the toilets, they miss that part of the match. No matter what sport we are talking about, their focus is to always have stadiums with full house, and the franchise and the big interest allows them to complete this goal. It is highly unlikely to happen in America what's happening here in Hungarian football. By that I mean there is no way that those teams make it to the Hungarian first division, who cannot generate spectators. It is all about the fans, in America. When I was at Daniel, I saw the stadium where they invented, that the player outgoing should go through the VIP section, so people see their favorites from 1 meter. These types of entertainments make these things so different. The show, the vibes can make you forget the score or who is the opponent, it is that fascinating, and I think that is the whole point of it. In America, if the team does not perform well, the fans are just going home, there are some areas in Europe, where fans are burning up the stadium if they are losing. One of Daniel's teammates told me that he is playing in Italy's first division, and when the team is in a bad form, they can not go out in public, to drink a coffee. because then the fans are finding them. There is nothing like this in America. Looking at the economic side of it, they are making rules for the player's salary. Their goal is to buy players that attracts spectators, not to have players for a huge amount of salary. Once again, everything is for the fans and to be profit oriented.

March 2020 was the date when the American first division, the MLS was stopped due the pandemic. What changes did it cause for your son, for other players, and for the club?

Everywhere in the world, it caused the same. It caused uncertainty. We did not know what this is, we did not know for how long it will last, and we did not know its effect. They lost the income from the spectators straight away because it was prohibited to attend the matches. Besides that, the league stopped. For example, in basketball, in the NBA, there is in every player's contract that its salary is based up on how many matches is he playing, so for example, if a player misses a match, then his salary can be less. After the appearance of the virus, the soccer commission and the league sat down for a trail to figure out something. They made a decision which concluded that the salary of the players will not decrease, but they will freeze the wages for 3 years. After all that, just like in the NBA, the 'bubble' league was formed. All team moved into one place, where they played all the matches.

Were there any team trainings?

No, there was not. The pitch was separated into many places, players had to train in the places alone. First, they could use the gym, but later it was disallowed.

Could your son come home for this period?

No. The biggest difficulty was that we did not know how long this situation will last, what if he comes home, and they decide to restart the league, then maybe he cannot cross the border and go back to America, also, his contract was there, so we thought the best decision for him is to stay there.

Did everything go back to normal by now? The matches, the audience, the players.

Completely.

I would like to switch over to your Sports Director career. What was it like for you, as a director?

In 2020, when the virus spread, I was at Zalaegerszeg, we changed the team coach right then. We were fighting for the place to stay in the first division. The league stopped for an unknown period. We did not know the outcome of the situation. Our fear was that the league will be deleted, and the current standing will be the final. It would have been the worst-case scenario for us, because at the last match, before the league paused, Paks scored a goal against Újpest in the last minute, which made us in the position of relegation. We were hoping that the league will not get deleted, we would have been feeling the decision unfair. Moreover, we did not know what effect it will make for the club financially. So, we, Sport Directors and the clubs had a proposal, to decrease the salary of the players by 20-30%. The Hungarian Football Association, the MLSZ rejected the proposal, they said the clubs should solve this problem themselves. So, there was no other choice, but to sit down with every player one by one and talk about wage reduction. First, almost every club had an arrangement with Volkswagen. They instantly stepped back and took back the cars. After some time, the MLSZ provided the costs of the club, including the wages of the players, but we agreed a 20% wage reduction with the players until the end of the season. Later, around 1 month later, the league continued under very serious security measures. These things, such as frequent testing had a very high cost. At a level of Zalaegerszeg, we could not afford to test everyone. It was a question who to test. Besides that, we had to transform the whole club into security zones. We solved the training sessions in such a way that we gave the players their jerseys, they had to wash it at home, the pitch was the only place where players met, they could not come to training in one car. The spectators were not allowed in the stadiums, only club members could be on a match. We asked the players to take care of themselves, of their family, if someone felt bad, then report it immediately in order

to not infect the whole club. At first, there were only running and goal-shooting trainings, so the players can be far from the other. This protocol has been kept until the of the season.

The next season has started the same way when I arrived to Fehérvár. What caused the biggest challenge from a professional point of view was the organization of the club's first and second team. Both teams had to prepare for COVID, because if the squad was too narrow, if 5 or 6 got ruled out due to the illness, then who is going to replace them. On the other hand, the purpose of the second team is mainly to get game experience for youngsters and to get the injured players back into their healthy form. Unfortunately, we had to shut down the passage between the two teams. There were two different corridors for the two teams. The club could not afford to test the first and the second team as well, so only the first team got tested. Eating together was abolished, for the backroom staff, rubber gloves and masks were obligatory.

What about the fans? How did they get through this period?

By time I was at Fehérvár, the fans could already go back to the stadiums. Before it, for example in Ferencváros, the fans could buy the seat for the match, and the club printed their sent pictures and put it on the seats. At Zalaegerszeg, there is a huge screen in the stadium, fans could leave messages to the players.

What were player's attitude?

We played chanting recordings to the stadium to make them feel like the fans are around them. It was very hard for them to focus on the game, it was extremely difficult to handle this mentally. The biggest challenge was to take the game as seriously as when there is audience. They could lose motivation much more easily, it was not easy for them, that is for sure.

Both Zalaegerszeg and Fehérvár has numerous foreign players. Was it harder for them?

Yes, it was. They wanted to go home to their family. Just like in my son's situation, there was a risk, that what if the league starts again and he is not here, so we did not let the players to go home.

Was there any governmental support for the clubs?

No, there was not.

How are things looking by now?

Everything went back to normal. There are no masks, no tests, nothing.

As for my final question, let me ask you, do you have idea how can tourism, and sport tourism improve in order to avoid what happened now?

Well, first of all, it was a huge experience for the sport, because no one knew this could ever happen. This illness was a “lucky” version, because if you got infected, that did not mean that you are going to die. We learnt how to handle this thing. However, we could not learn how can we operate sport next to it. It is clearly seen that people needed sport during this tough time, so sportsmen had to risk their lives, and work even though under these circumstances. I think these scripts were playing in different sports, in different countries, we can learn from this, but I do not think we can secure the on-site visit if something familiar appears in the future.

4.1.2. Second interview

My second interviewee was with Károly Gelei. This interview was more like an open conversation, than an interview. Károly is a former goalkeeper, who played 18 years as a footballer. After that, he was the Marketing Assistant for the Hungarian Football League, later he became the Marketing Director. Later on, he was the Technical Director of the already mentioned Hungarian Football Association, the MLSZ. Nowadays, he and his friend are the only two official match organisers in Hungary, who is recognized by FIFA. He has been doing it since 2008. He is also a current teacher at the Budapest Business School, teaching Sport tourism and sporting event in English.

He told me about events that he organised, these were both domestic and foreign events. These events were being held before and during the pandemic, so he could easily talk about the changes of those events, if there were any.

The first event that he mentioned was an aftergrowth football competition in Nigeria. He is the organiser of the event for 5 years now, and it is being held every year, and by now, it became Nigeria’s Number 1 scouting competition.

So, if it is going on every year for 5 straight years by now, that means it also happened during the pandemic, right?

Yes, I also went to Nigeria, when the COVID was much more active. They handled this thing differently. Interestingly, let’s say that I have not met anyone who had COVID. Obviously, we were prepared, we were tested, we were vaccinated, so were careful. My Nigerian partner told me that they do not really have anyone affected by this virus. In Africa, there are other type of diseases, that are dangerous, for some reason, coronavirus did not really

hit that hard, like Europe, or the United States. South Africa was the only country in Africa, where we got the news that there is a COVID situation in that time.

Another event which was organised by him was a pre-season, friendly football match. Elite Italian team, AS Roma hosted the match against Debrecen. This happened in July 2021. The home team won the match 5-2. At that time, the COVID situation was very low in Italy, fortunately for them. Károly told that the number of vaccinated people in Italy was 20%, and there was a rule, that only vaccinated people could visit the match. Thanks to that, only 3500 spectators were at the event.

“One thing is for sure; the appearance of the virus had a very serious effect on tourism. If you look at it, aircraft companies were at the edge of bankruptcy. Many travel agencies had to shut down or barely survived. Just think about that travel agencies had many reservations in advance, but they lost all of it, because people were disallowed to go to such places like hotels, cruise ships, etc. Just imagine when you are a company, and there is no income anymore, but the spendings are the same. We could hear that there was a governmental support. For example, the help for the hotels or the moratoriums. – Mr. Gelei said

One of the interesting things he said that he is organizing many training camps for football clubs. For example, in Turkey. He told me that in Turkey, they handled the situation so much differently. They did not give that much attention to this virus, then in every other place in Europe. He saw a lot of teams training in Turkey. “They kept the rules of course, for example, if in a club, there was an ill player, then he got separated from the others. There was plenty of room in the hotels because it was empty. These training camps worked out perfectly, without any problem or panic. Obviously, there was a little bit of fear because it was an unknown situation. By now, sport clubs and tourism are more prepared, than they were before.”

“What we know by now, is that if a player got infected, but he is vaccinated, then he can recover so much easily. Teams tried to push to player to get vaccinated, but there was always someone in every team who did not want to get it.” – he added

“Currently, there are no COVID restrictions nowhere. Everything got unlocked, every rule got deleted, for now. We will see what happens when the winter comes, in my opinion, there will be no more rules. With this huge inflation due to war, the world cannot allow to stop once again, because that would mean an economic crisis. “

“I can say that tourism made the biggest loss from this period. It had an impact not only on the 2020 summer, but the following summer as well. In Hungary, in Budapest, tourism just got back to level they were on before the virus, at the second period of the 2022 summer.”

If I know correctly, the clubs did not get any governmental support. Is that right?

No there was not. There is a so-called Corporate Tax, in Hungarian, Társasági Adó, TAO. It did not help the major clubs, but the aftergrowth, so we can say that the government supported the younger generation. The club's first team had to solve the problem themselves, the Hungarian Football Association, the MLSZ helped those 12 clubs, that are in the first division financially after some time.

4.2. Analysis of the interviews

The reason for the interviews was to increase my knowledge about the topic, to hear different opinions, different situations from different people. Also, buttress up the aims of this research. This was the aim of the thesis once again:

The aim of this thesis is examining the effect of COVID-19 on sport tourism and finding out what were the major problems the industry had to face concerning several areas. Also, to explore the management procedures undertaken by sport tourism stakeholders and their consequences during and after the Covid-19 pandemic in Hungary. By stakeholders, I mean hotels, event organisers, athletes, sport venues, and government.

With my two interviewees' kindness and helpfulness, it was quite simple to analyze the interviews. They both answered my questions properly. The understanding was clear. They both covered all the things I wanted to ask, somewhere without even asking the question itself. They have spoken about the major problems, the consequences of the virus, how was it before, during, and after, what was is it like for the athletes, for the event organisers, and the whole chaos's effect on the tourism industry, including sport tourism, which was the whole aim of the thesis.

Mr. Sallói could easily talk about a football club's difficulties, because of his personal experience. He was there, he saw the players, saw the staff, saw the whole club. He, and the club had to make hard decisions, for the sake of their own good. They had to prepare for the worst-case scenario. Both mentally, and physically.

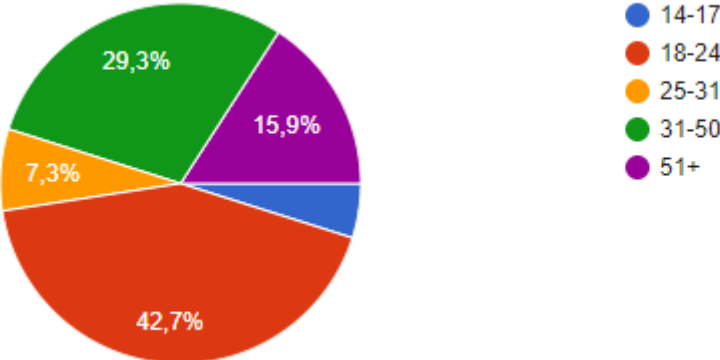
The open-minded conversation with Mr. Gelei was also satisfactory. He told me about his experiences as a match organiser, gave me examples of a foreign and domestic sporting event during the pandemic. He told me different types of solutions that he experienced across

the world. We also talked about future plans, if something familiar comes up again, how can we avoid it, or slow it down at least.

4.3 Analysis of the questionnaire

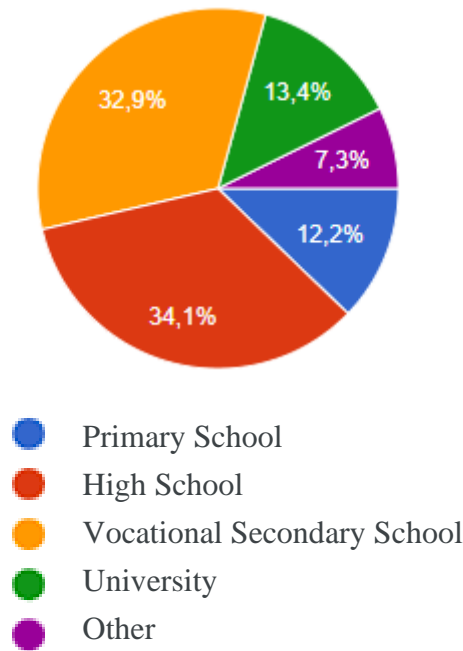
In this survey, 17 questions were asked. The topic of the questionnaire was about average people’s active and passive sport tourism. The main aim of the questionnaire was to research if the pandemic has changed anything in people’s sporting habits and match visits. This survey was available only in Hungary, only in Hungarian, and reached 82 fillers. 43 women, and 39 men went through all the 17 questions.

Question 1: How old are you?



First of all, I asked the fillers about their age. Based up on the answers, the major two groups were the young adults, with a number of 35, and those who are in the age of 31-50, this 24 people. After came the elderly ones, with 15.9%, which meant 13 people, and rest were middle-aged or very young people.

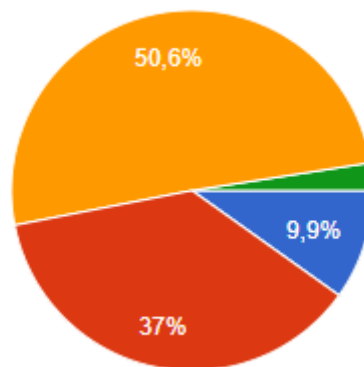
Question 2: What is your highest degree?



This question was about the people's highest degree. High school became the most popular response, with 28 votes. One point behind comes the Vocational Secondary School.

The reason for this could be the different ages. Nowadays, going to High School is very trending, back in the 90'-s for example, having a profession was more fascinating. There were 11 people who already finished University, 10 people still go to Primary School, and 6 people chose other.

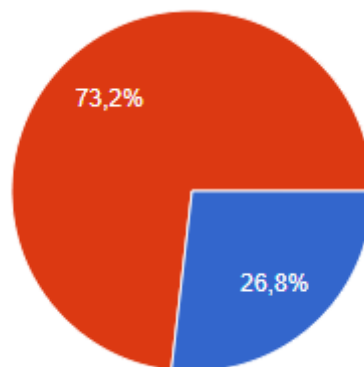
Questions 3 :Do you have on-going studies?



- Yes, I am a High School student
- Yes, I am a university student
- No, I am working
- Other

After the highest degree, the question was if the person has on-going studies. More than half of the fillers, 42 people said that currently, they do not study, they are working. 30 people is a university student, 8 is doing High School, and there were two 'Other' answers.

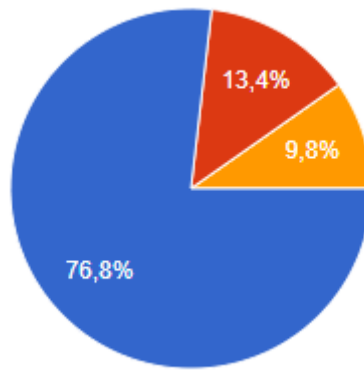
Question 4: Are you metropolitan or rural?



- Metropolitan
- Rural

In the following part, I asked the people's living place. Almost $\frac{3}{4}$ of the 82 people live outside Budapest, only 22 filler was from the capital. In my opinion, it was good to know, because there were some periods when the virus had a bigger impact on the capital, then in other areas of the country.

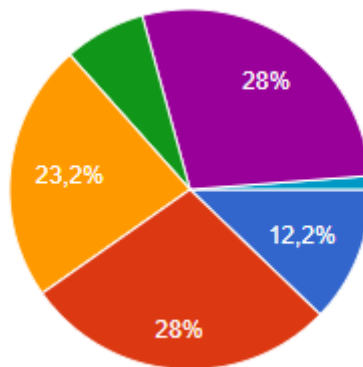
Question 5: Where were you living at the period of the COVID-19 outbreak?



- City
- Village
- Municipality

In the next question, I wanted to know where people were living during the pandemic. Getting through the virus in different localities meant different difficulty levels. For example, it was so much easier to get infected in a crowded, big city than in a village, where there are 400 locals.

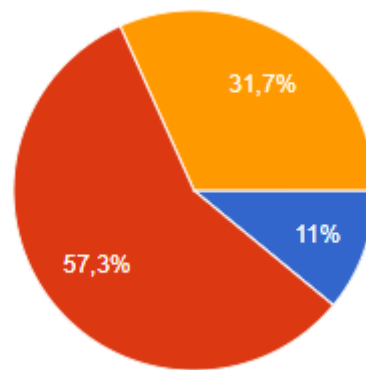
Question 6: How often did you do sports before the COVID-19 pandemic?



- Daily
- 2 or 3 times a week
- Once times a week
- Once in a month
- I did not do sports
- Other

This was a question type, where it is a possibility, that it will change, because the same question was asked later, but the aim of that question was about the post-pandemic period. Before the pandemic, 28% of the people did not do any exercise, and also 28% of them did it two of three times a week. This 28% meant 23-23 people. 19 people did sports once in a week and there 10 people, who have done it every single day.

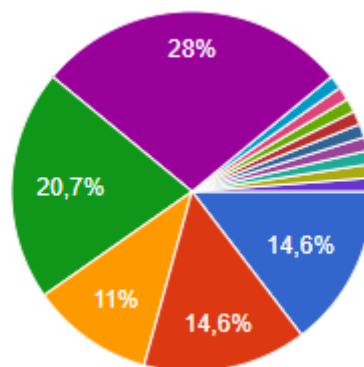
Question 7: If you have done exercise, on what level have you done it?



- Professional level
- Hobby level
- I did not do exercise

More than half of the people did their exercises on a hobby level. This may be playing football down the street with friends or going for a run to stay fit. There are 9 professionals, and 26, who did not do sports.

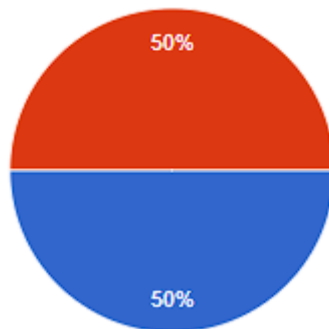
Question 8: If you have done exercise, what kind of sport was it?



- Running
- GYM
- Team sport
- More than two from the mentioned
- I did not do sports

The reason for this question was to analyze what kind of sports the fillers did, if they did any. 23 people, so the 28% of them did not do any. 17 people did more than one exercise, running and GYM equalled with 12-12 people, 9 of them chose teams sport, for example football, or basketball and I gave them chance for other, so they could tell what kind of activity they did. These were the answers: Cycling, fishing, darts, spinning, combat sports, hiking, folk dance, each of them got 1-1 responses.

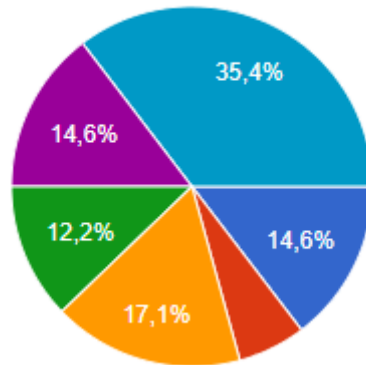
Question 9: Did you have to change your sporting habits during quarantine?



- Yes
- No

For me, this was the most awaited question. This showed how much impact did COVID-19 make on average people’s sporting exercises. Surprisingly, neither side have ‘won’, because it finished with 50-50%, so for 41 people, the pandemic changed their sporting habits, and for 41, it did not. For those, who had to change their habits were doing most probably teams sports. There was a restriction, where people were not allowed to get close to each other in Hungary. As a result of this, people had to figure out other options for movements, running seemed like a good choice for example.

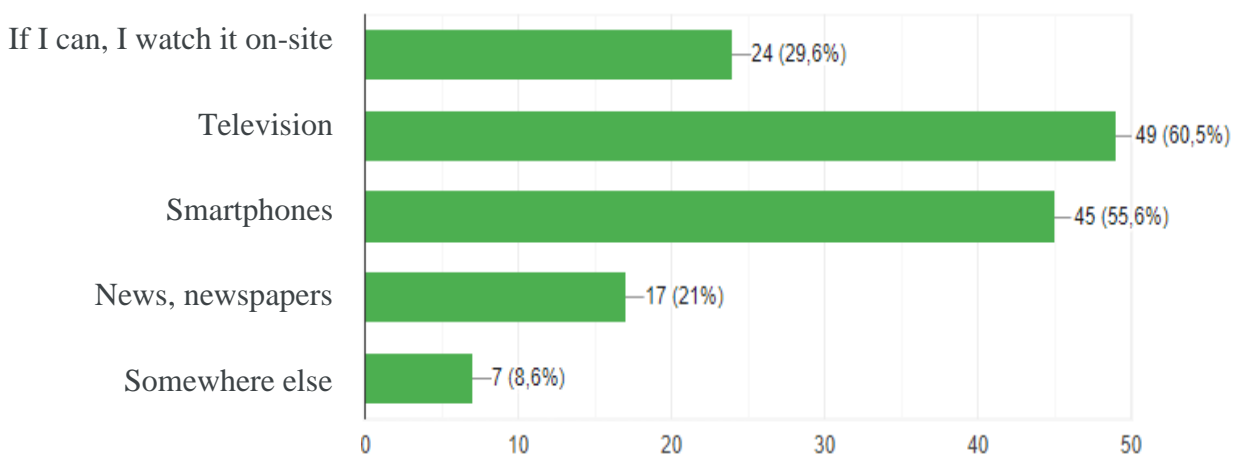
Question 10: How often did you visit sporting event before the COVID-19 pandemic?



- Whenever I had the chance, I went
- Once a week
- Once a month
- Several times a month
- Every half a year
- I do not visit events

Out of the 82, 29 people does not visit any sporting events. 14 fillers attended once in a month, 14 fanatics went every time they had the chance.

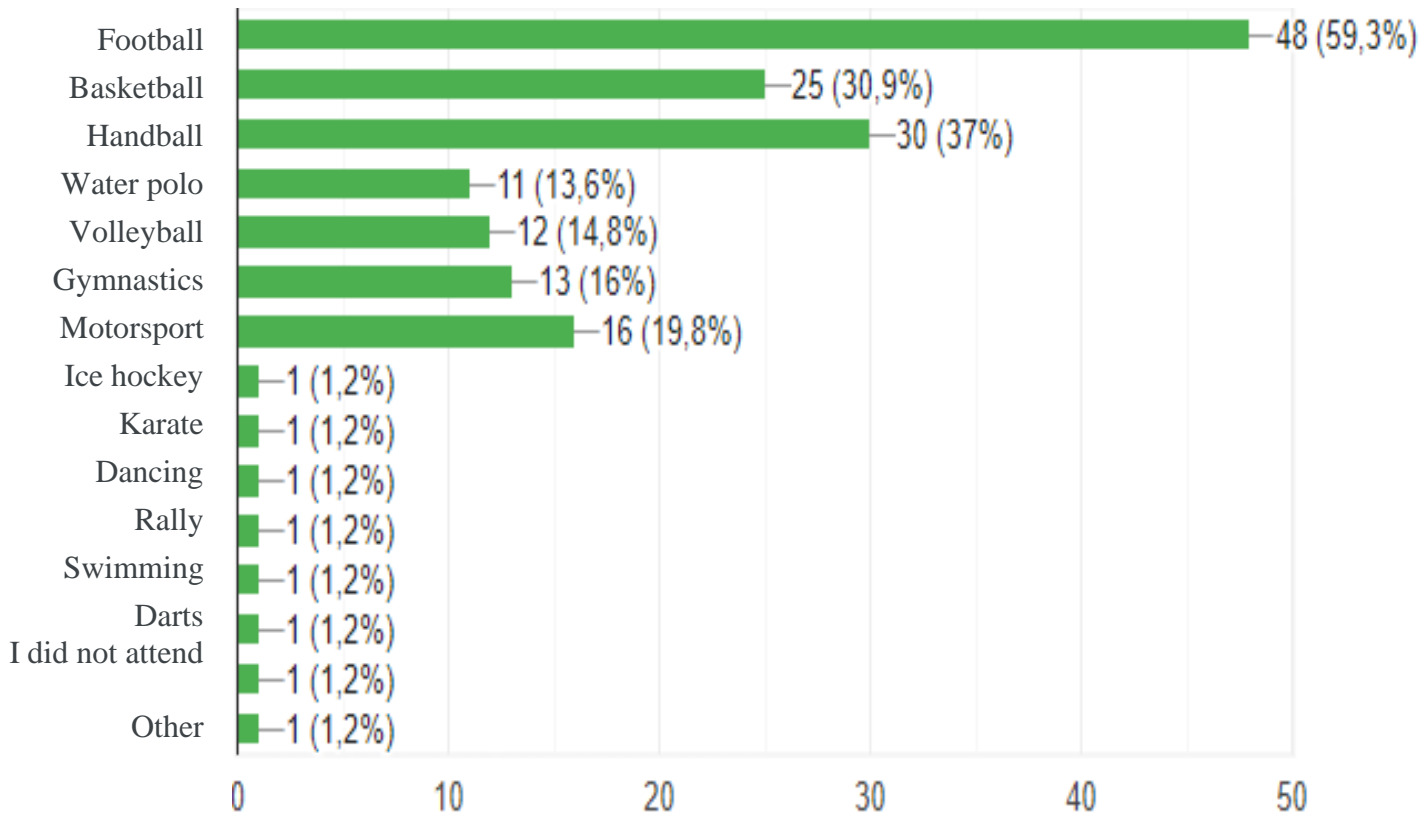
Question11: Where do you follow your favorite team/player from?



For this question, there were multiple choices. The question was about where people follow their favorite team/player from. 24 fillers said they watch it from the location, live, whenever it is possible for them. 49 responses came to the television section, following the

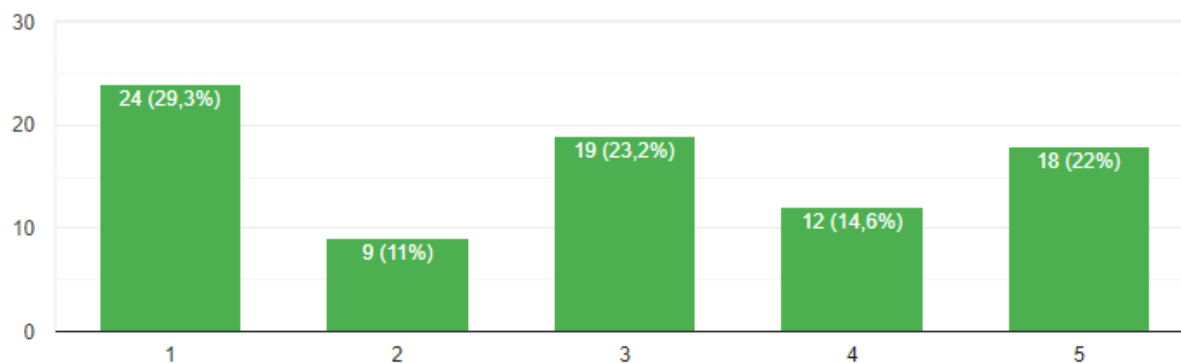
‘smartphone’ choice with 45 answers. 17 people gets the news from the news or newspapers, and 7 from somewhere else.

Question12: What sports events did you attend as a spectator or fan?



This question was also a multiple choice. 48 attended football matches, 30 attended at handball matches. The third most responses were for basketball. Then motorsport, gymnastics, volleyball, and water polo followed. There were some other ones, where only 1 answer came. Some of these were: ice hockey, combat sports, swimming, darts, rally.

Question 13: How much did the restrictions on attending sporting events affect you?

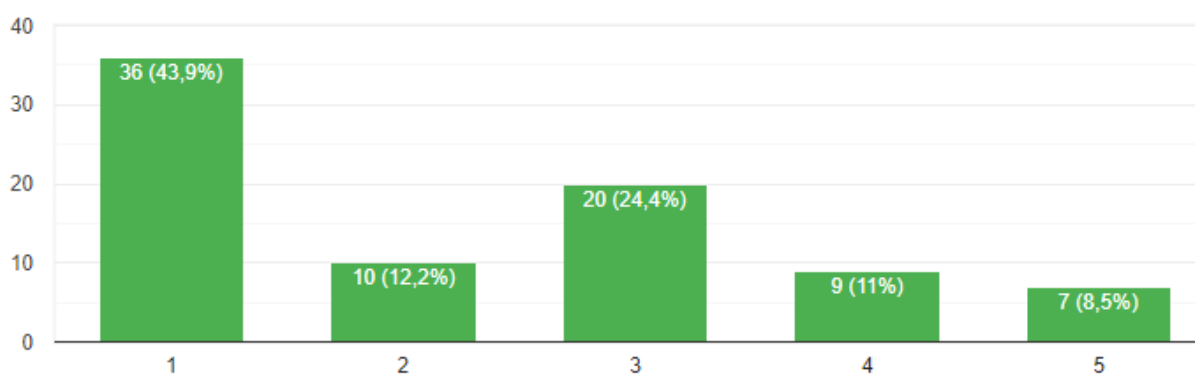


1 – Not at all

5 – Fully

24 people said that the restrictions did not affect them at all, considering the attendance on sport events. For 19, it was average. However, the restrictions had a huge impact on 18 people. These people probably visited the matches on-site, and could not attend, thank to the new rules.

Question 14: Did you lose interest in doing sport exercises during this situation?

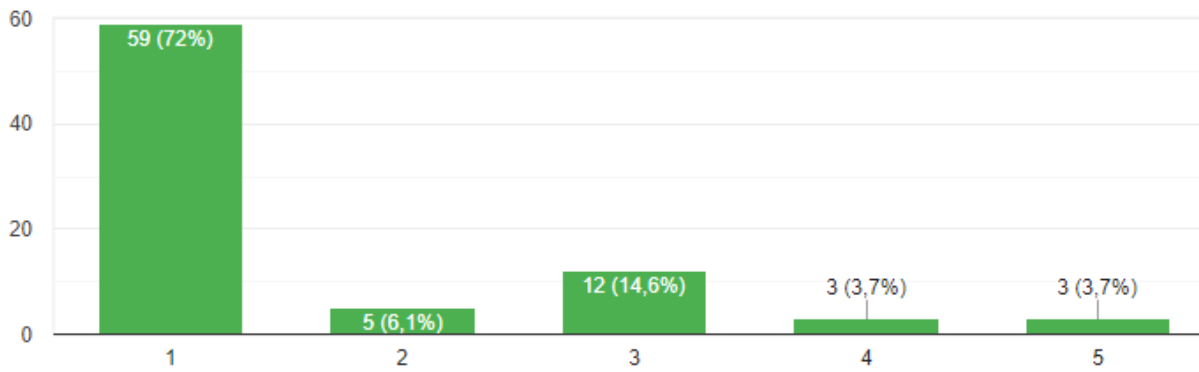


Luckily, 36 people did not lose any interest about doing sports, however 9 fillers chose the 4th category, which I describe as a ‘little bit yes’, and 7 people fully lost their interest. The main reason for this could be the fact, that they cannot do the sport they want to, and do not want any other activity.

1 – Not at all

5 – Fully

Question 15: Has your interest in your favorite sport/team/athlete decreased due to the circumstances?

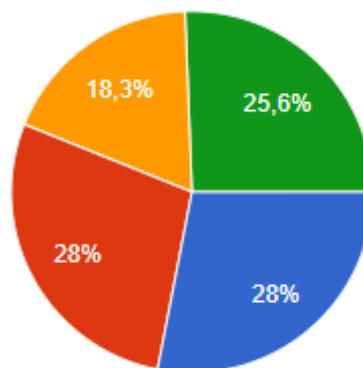


1 – Not at all

5 – Fully

This was one of the most obvious and clear answers on this whole questionnaire. More than 70% of the people did not lose any interest about their favorite sport, team, or athlete. 6 people lost their interest, 3 fully, 3 partly. 12 had average feelings, and 5 people chose the 2nd category.

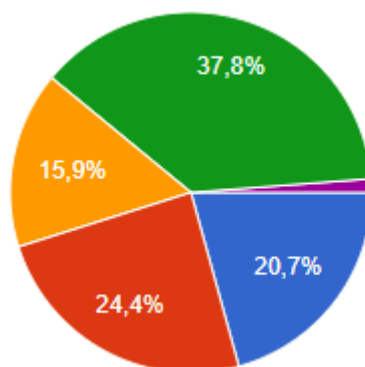
Question 16: Currently, how often do you do sports?



- Less, than before the COVID-19
- The same as before
- More, than before the COVID-19
- I do not do sports

This figure shows if people's sporting habit has changed after the pandemic. 23 people does sports just as often, then before, and also 23 people exercise less. Only 15 people increased the number of occasions, and 21 people are not doing anything exercise related.

Question 17: Currently, how of do you visit sporting events?



- Less times, then before COVID-19
- The same amount of time as bofire
- More times, than before COVID-19
- Do not attend

Currently, 31 fillers do not attend in any kinds of sporting events. 20 people spend the same amount of time on visiting these events, 17 goes less than before the pandemic, and 13 goes more often.

4.4 Summarizing the questionnaire and the interviews

4.4.1. Summarizing the questionnaire

The 82 people who filled the survey left with some interesting and thought-provoking answers. There were almost half men and half women. There were two main type of age category: the young adults (18-24) and the experienced middle-aged parents (31-50). One more than the half of the audience is currently working, nearly a third are university students.

Almost $\frac{1}{4}$ of the fillers are from the capital, $\frac{3}{4}$ of them are rural people. More than $\frac{3}{4}$ of them lived in a city during the pandemic, and others lived in a village or in a smaller place. The part of the best did sports before the pandemic, mostly, on a hobby level. Running, GYM, and team sports were the main activities. Exactly the half of the audience had to change their sporting activity during quarantine. When they visited a sporting event, mostly they attended it monthly, but ‘half a year’ and ‘every time I had the chance’ were also a popular answer. The prime cut of the fillers follows their favorite team/athlete through television and their phone. More than half of the audience visited a football event at least once, but handball and basketball were also famous responds. The answers on the effect of restrictions on visiting a sporting event were mixed, still the most popular was that it did not affect at all. With a huge percentage, people did not care less about doing exercises, and did not lose any interest about their favorite sport, team, or athlete. There are more people who exercise less now, than those who exercise more, since COVID-19, and the number of visiting a sporting event has also decreased post the pandemic.

4.4.2. Summarizing the interviews

We can say that every sport, every club had to change something on a large scale. Cutting salaries to keep the financials in balance seemed like the best decision, at least in the Hungarian division. Isolating the fans from the players made a huge impact on the player’s mentality. Playing a match without the crowd made an important match into a training match, and some of the players could not give 100% of their abilities with the lack of the fans. Most of the foreign players could not go back to their family, so this was also a heartbreak for them. Luckily by now, we can say everything went back to normal all over the world.

4.4.3. Evaluation of the data

With the help of the primary research and the result of the secondary research, the previously asked research questions are going to be answered in the following section:

RQ1: What were the major changes in sport events after the outbreak?

For the following question, it is indispensable to use the interviews. From there, it can be stated that coronavirus had a huge impact on sport events. The major changes were due to the restrictions. After the outbreak, many sporting events had to be cancelled. Countries could not let tourists visit the country, because that also increased the spreading of the virus. After the

appearance of the vaccines, in some countries, the government let the events to be organized, but under strict circumstances. Keeping the distance, wearing a mask and things like these were the main rules. In the stadiums, special sections had to be formed. For example, the separation between the players and the fans or the safe zones.

RQ2: What challenges did the pandemic present for the fans, players, and to clubs?

This COVID-19 period caused sleepiness nights for many workers, who belonged to the tourism industry. The biggest fear was that the situation was unknown. People were at a loss and did not know what to expect, or what to do. Panic took over people's life.

This question will be asked with the help of the interviews. For the athletes, the major problem for them was the emotional damage. If we think about foreign players, they could not go home to their family. Not being able to be close to family members when there is a worldwide killing disease around, it must have been difficult. Moreover, they also became jobless, for a shorter period of time. They could not do what have been doing throughout their lifetime, and when it came back, it came with very strict rules. For example, no on-site fans. Playing a very important match in an empty stadium caused lack of concreteness. Thousands of fans who used to cheer for the team until the final whistle was just not there anymore. The other disadvantages were the financials. We could see from the interview that MOL Fehérvár had reduce the player's salary by a given percentage, and we can confidently say that this was not the only club, who had to make this kind of decision.

The club's biggest pain were also the financials. One of the biggest income sources of a sport club comes from the spectators. Purchased tickets, sold food and drinks for the fans at the venue plays a huge role for the budget of the club. The other major income source are the sponsors. It turned out from the interview that many sponsors left the clubs immediately. Being an owner of a club comes with huge expectations and difficulties. If we look at it that way, the main purpose of buying a club is mostly investment. In this strange period, owners could not really count with profit.

To be able to answer what were the difficulties for the audience we can examine the questionnaire. In general, first of all, people were not allowed to enter to the stadiums, fans had to watch the games from home. When things got brighter, clubs could reopen their stands. Wearing a mask was strictly obligatory, there was a time when spectators had to leave some space between the seats, even if they were close friends or if they live together. After the

vaccines, and with the help of immunity card rules have been milder. We can state from the survey that there are people, who lost their interest about visiting any sporting events, and they go less times, than before. On the bright side, we can say that spectators have not lost their interest about their favorite sport or athlete.

RQ3: Did the pandemic make every day people's sports habits and match visits more difficult?

To get the most appropriate answer for this question it a must to use the survey. From the survey we can declare that the restrictions caused by the pandemic did not affect everyone. For those, who played team sports had to stop their activity. But there were people, who changed their interest. Rather than doing nothing, switching sport was a good decision. For example, switching from football to running or hiking. Unfortunately, only 18% of the respondents does more exercises after the pandemic, in addition, 28% does less. This can be because of the laziness of the people. They did not have the motivation to leave the house. However, we can say that there are a few who kept its sporting routine.

Sporting event visits has also been more difficult. The strict rules, masks, etc. discouraged former spectators. The lack of Immunity Certificate can also be the reason why did people lose interest about on-site visits. Now, that the rules are gone, we can see the result of the survey, that the respondents attend matches more often than before. We can assume, that the reason for this is because when lockdowns entered into force, human beings had the free time to discover and explore things they never did before. Thinking outside of the box could create new hobbies and interests.

5. Conclusion

5.1. Section opening

The final part of the thesis is a conclusion that summarizes the collected information and gives a short summary about the primary and secondary research. Moreover, recommendations will be given, addressed to the tourism industry. These recommendations will be made by the author. The purpose of these suggestions is to try to help the industry in case something familiar pandemic will appear in the future.

5.2. Summary of the dissertation

The main reason this thesis was created to research how this special period entered into everyone's life and from disadvantages people had to live through. The current saturation has caused many emotional and financial pain, from the loss of human lives to enormous income losses.

Starting the thesis with the basics were necessary to get a clear view for the rest of the thesis. After that, in the literature review, the main aim was examined from many aspects. Both primary and secondary research played the main role in the interest to analyze and summarize the goal of the dissertation.

After inspecting all points of view, we can finally summarize the dissertation. The interviews and the survey are the keys in order to do that. The purpose of preparing the thesis was to get a complete picture and broader knowledge about the drastic changes in the world caused by the coronavirus. From the survey, we can say that COVID-19 made some changes in relation to the average people's sporting exercises and had a slight effect on the on-site visits. Some people lost their motivation because of the coronavirus, someone gained motivation from it. It was not easy for the humans to courage themselves to get out and do some exercise. With the help of the interview, we can state many changes that the stakeholders had to make. Hotels had to shut down their facilities for a short period of time. After re-opening, major regulations had to be kept in order to function. Some of these regulations were: keeping the distance, wearing masks were obligatory, more efficient cleaning, frequent sanitizing. When the whole world stopped, even football and many other sports had to pause. This resulted massive income losses and emotional devastation. Athletes had to be separated from the fans, from each other and potentially from family members as well. The clubs lost most of their income, at the expense of the players, because in many situations, in order to get back the losses, the athlete's salary was reduced.

5.3. Recommendations

5.3.1. Recommendations for the workers in the industry

As we saw it from the interview, we cannot really do anything against these epidemics. We were still lucky, that we got away with it this "easily". More serious diseases like plague have had a much bigger influence on the economy of the world. Coronavirus was avoidable

with frequent hand washings, mask wearing, or ventilating. When something familiar appears in the future, all we can do is to keep the rules that the country declared, and to take care of ourselves.

5.3.2. Recommendations for the government

We could hear from both interviewees that the clubs and players did not get help from the government. Even though, the Hungarian Football Association was able to help and balance the costs, the sport tourism industry needs to get more attention from the government.

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I, the undersigned HORVÁTH KEVIN..... hereby declare that the whole thesis submitted for assessment and defence is my own work. I entered the sources used in the bibliography and made the relevant formal references in the text. The thesis not submitted on my or anybody else's behalf to another course or institution. I am aware that any plagiarism (presentation of others' work as my own) will cause the thesis/project work to be invalid, therefore, rejected.

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