

FOOTBALL MANIA – THE CHANGE IN ATTITUDE TOWARDS FOOTBALL IN SLOVENIA

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NOGOMETNA EVFORIJA – SPREMINJANJE ODNOSA DO NOGOMETA V SLOVENIJI

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Abstract

The article deals with the attitude of the inhabitants of Ljubljana and Maribor towards football. The historical, cultural and political circumstances that greatly influenced the shaping of the attitude towards football in Slovenia were taken in consideration. On the basis of a statistical research, the article tries to establish, if there are statistically significant differences regarding the attitude towards football among the respondents from Ljubljana and Maribor, among people of Slovene descent and respondents with an ancestral background. The article also tries to establish, if the appearance of the Slovene national football team at an important sporting event such as EURO 2000 can statistically affect people's attitude towards football. The article is based on research covering 50 respondents from Ljubljana and 50 respondents from Maribor (surveyed before EURO 2000) and 50 respondents from Ljubljana (surveyed after EURO 2000), i.e. 150 subjects in total. The sample includes the variables of residence, nationality and attitudes towards football. Two-factor analysis of variance was used for establishing the differences between the selected variables. The research results show that the inhabitants of Maribor have a much more positive attitude towards football than the inhabitants of Ljubljana. A comparison between respondents of Slovene descent and those of non-Slovene descent proved that football is still the most popular sport. The respondents of non-Slovene descent have a distinctly more positive attitude towards football than the respondents of Slovene descent. The answers given by the respondents from Ljubljana show that their attitude towards football changed significantly after EURO 2000 in all the attitudes, which proves the hypothesis that a positive attitude towards a sports discipline and good results in that discipline are greatly interconnected.

Keywords: football, attitude, Ljubljana, Maribor, nationality, difference

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Izveček

Članek obravnava odnos prebivalcev Slovenije oziroma natančneje Ljubljančanov in Mariborčanov do nogometa. Pri analizi smo upoštevali zgodovinske, kulturne in politične okoliščine, ki so bistveno vplivale na oblikovanje odnosa do nogometa v Sloveniji. S pomočjo rezultatov raziskave smo ugotavljali ali obstajajo statistično značilne razlike v odnosu do nogometa med anketiranimi Ljubljančani in Mariborčani, med Slovenci in Neslovenci. Ugotavljali pa smo tudi ali lahko nastop slovenske nogometne reprezentance na takšnem športnem spektaklu, kot je Euro 2000, statistično značilno izboljša odnos ljudi do nogometa glede na odnos pred mega športnim dogodkom Euro 2000. Članek temelji na raziskavi v katero je bilo vključenih 50 Ljubljančanov in 50 Mariborčanov (anketirali smo jih pred začetkom EURO 2000) in pa 50 Ljubljančanov, ki so izpolnili anketo po končanem prvenstvu, torej skupaj 150 ljudi. Vzorec spremenljivk predstavljajo: kraj, nacionalnost in odnos do nogometa. Za ugotavljanje razlik med izbranimi spremenljivkami smo uporabili dvo faktorsko analizo variance. Rezultati raziskave so pokazali, da imajo Mariborčani veliko bolj pozitiven odnos do nogometa kot prebivalci Ljubljane. Primerjava med Slovenci in Neslovenci je potrdila, da je nogomet na področju bivših jugoslovanskih republik še vedno najbolj priljubljena športna panoga. Anketirani Neslovenci imajo namreč veliko bolj pozitiven odnos do nogometa od anketiranih Slovencev. Odnos anketiranih Ljubljančanov do nogometa se je po Euru 2000 glede na stanje pred Eurom 2000 korenito spremenil (seveda v pozitivnem smislu) prav v vseh stališčih, kar potrjuje tezo, da sta si dober rezultat in pozitiven odnos do neke športne panoge v veliki soodvisnosti.

Ključne besede: nogomet, odnos, Ljubljana, Maribor, narodnost, razlika

Introduction

Slovenes scored the best results in the sports disciplines of a distinctly individual character. It holds true that in the times of the former Yugoslavia it was hard to defy the 'master-strategists' from Belgrade, which is why Slovenia's sports authorities saw no national strategic interest in football (like some other European nations similar in size, such as the Catalonians, the Basque, the Irish, the Scots, the Croats...) and conformed to sports officials from Belgrade. It took the success of the national football team and of the Maribor football club (which qualified for the Champions League in the 1999/2000 season) to open the eyes for Slovenes. Thus, Slovenia got the opportunity to see the dimensions of modern football that manifest, among other things, in an indisputable international prestige and affluence.

Although football in Slovenia has a long tradition, Slovene football clubs have never been on a par with other clubs of the former Yugoslavia, and were even less important on the European scale. Some influential opinion-makers in Slovenia have actually succeeded in their chauvinistic attempt to portray football as negative and to advance the opinion that football is typical of the 'uncivilised Balkans'. On the other side, the media discourse presented skiing as a typical Slovene tradition, and reinforced the concept of Slovene identity being a skiing identity (Pušnik, 1999). It has to be taken in consideration that historical and political circumstances in Slovenia have had a fundamental influence on the development of football in Slovenia. Consequently, the football standards in other countries are higher and the attitude towards football correspondingly more positive.

With small nations, there is even greater emphasis on gaining international recognition and reputation, and there are of course certain written or unwritten rules that should be considered in this respect. A modern nation, and small nations even more than the large ones, needs symbols to identify with, uniformity and a high level of psychophysical capacity. Small nations will therefore always choose to take part in sports disciplines where they can make their way to the top, even if only ten countries are actively involved. Self-esteem should always be built on a country's strong points. Unfortunately, from this point of view football has not been considered a suitable sports discipline.

The outstanding football results in the past three years have provided good grounds for a successful development of Slovene football; in the 1999/2000 season Maribor FC qualified for the Champions League, the year after the Slovene national team qualified for EURO 2000 (Plesec, 2001). All this culminated last year when the Slovene national team qualified for the World Championship.

Based on statistical results, the article will try to establish whether there are statistically significant differences in the attitude towards football between the respondents from Ljubljana and those from Maribor, between the respondents of Slovene descent and those of non-Slovene descent. It will also investigate, if appearance at such an important sporting event like EURO 2000 can produce a statistically significant upswing in the attitude towards football.

The article deals with the attitude of the inhabitants of Ljubljana – the capital of Slovenia and the biggest city (350,000 inhabitants) and Maribor – Slovenia's second biggest city (170,000 inhabitants) towards football. While Ljubljana has become a middle European capital and gained political, financial, cultural and academic monopoly in Slovenia, Maribor had to face a harsh economic reality after losing the important Yugoslav markets. Once a prosperous industrial city, after 1991 Maribor had to face high-rate unemployment. In recent years, the city's only promotional gems are the famous international skiing event 'Zlata lisica', the city's football club 'Maribor Branik' (which competed in the Champions League in the 1999/2000 season) and the Lent cultural festival. The city's identity, supported by the media and by the local politicians (who regularly attend the matches), is now based on two main promotion gems: the Lent cultural festival and the 'Maribor Branik' football club (Vežjak, 1998).

The opposite to Maribor, where important industrialists (sponsors) were actively engaged in the football scene and local politicians tried to 'buy' votes by appearing at football matches, is the football in Ljubljana, staggering behind in a state of disorganisation that does not seem to end soon. Neither many famous football clubs such as Ilirija, Ljubljana, Svoboda and Slovan who are on the brink of extinction nor the lavish and disorganised Olimpija FC can provide for a complete all-level modernisation that could bring about good results and increase people's interest in one of Slovenia's oldest sports disciplines. Ljubljana does not have a football

club or a football stadium that would be on a par with its cultural or social standards.

The focus of the analysis is to find out whether the popularity of this sports discipline has increased after the recent success of the Slovene national football team. The research (Jošt, Sila, Leskošek, & Močnik, 1998) shows that football in Slovenia is ranked as the twelfth most popular sports discipline. It is true that Slovenes most often attend football matches, but they prefer alpine skiing to football on television (Petrovič, Ambrožič, Sila, & Doupona, 1997). Considering these somewhat paradoxical facts, this article aims to explain, from a socio-cultural point of view, the prevalent attitude towards football in Slovenia.

Methods

The population includes the respondents from Ljubljana and Maribor. These two cities were chosen particularly because of their football tradition. All respondents were over 15 years old ($M=35.5$; $SD=16.5$). The first population sample, surveyed before EURO 2000, consists of 50 randomly chosen respondents from Ljubljana (32 men and 18 women; 35 of them being of Slovene and 15 of non-Slovene descent) and 50 respondents from Maribor (30 men and 20 women; 45 of them being of Slovene and 5 of non-Slovene descent).

The second population sample (after EURO 2000) consists of 50 randomly chosen respondents from Ljubljana (33 men and 17 women; 46 of them being of Slovene and 4 of non-Slovene descent).

Quota sampling has been used for statistical analysis. Ljubljana was divided into five districts: Šiška, Moste – Polje, Bežigrad – Center, Vič and Trnovo – Rakova Jelša. Maribor was also divided into five districts: Ljudski vrt – Center, Nova vas, Studenci, Tabor and Pobrežje. In every district ten surveys were carried out. The first surveying took place in April 2000 and the second in August 2000.

In both samples, male respondents are predominant (63% and 68%). The reason for this is that women were less willing to co-operate (37% and 32%). In data interpretation the predominant male response has to be taken into account, which is probably conditioned by women showing less interest in football.

Most respondents are of Slovene descent (80% and 20%). In the first sample, 20% of respondents of

non-Slovene descent included Serbs (10%), followed by Croatians, Bosnians and Montenegrins (each 3%) and Macedonians (1%). All respondents were Slovene citizens. The sample is not completely identical to the nationalities' structure in Slovenia, but comes fairly close to it. In the second sample only 10% of respondents are of non-Slovene descent.

The sample includes the following variables:

- Residence (Ljubljana, Maribor)
- Nationality (Slovene, non-Slovene)
- 14 attitudes towards football. Each of the items contained a question followed by a Likert five-point scale with 1 labelled 'strongly disagree', 3 labelled 'neutral' and 5 labelled 'strongly agree'. To provide validity for the attitude items Cronbach's alpha was used to assess inter-item reliability. The scale was highly reliable. Cronbach's alpha for attitude towards sport was 0.81.

In each district, ten surveys were completed. The surveying was done on the streets or in respondents' homes. A great part of people that were asked to complete the survey on the street refused to co-operate, mainly because they did not have time, so the prevalent part of the surveying took place in respondents' homes. The response here was hardly satisfactory: averagely every fifth respondent from Ljubljana or Maribor completed the survey. The most common reasons for refusal were: lack of time, lack of interest in sports or football, reluctance to co-operate.

The basic statistical parameters were calculated for the residence, nationality and 14 attitude variables. The two-factor analysis of variance was used for establishing the differences between the attitudes towards sport and residence, nationality, before and after EURO 2000.

Results

1. Attitude towards football according to the residence

The respondents from Maribor provided more positive answers than the respondents from Ljubljana. The comparison of answers from the respondents from Ljubljana and those from Maribor shows statistically significant differences in 7 attitudes.

Analysis of the results of the attitude '*I always take time to watch a good football game on the TV*'

Table 1: Attitude towards football before EURO 2000 (residence)

	Ljubljana		Maribor		p(F)
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
The most important pastime activity	2.96	1.51	3.10	1.37	0.629
I always take time to watch it	2.98	1.55	3.78	1.31	0.007*
I'd like my son to play football	3.92	1.32	4.40	0.97	0.041*
The show I like best on the TV	2.78	1.49	3.16	1.60	0.218
Sport No 1	3.71	1.24	3.64	1.34	0.775
I attend football matches	1.33	0.85	1.86	1.44	0.028*
Slovenes will never be a football nation	2.27	1.17	3.32	1.08	0.809
EURO 2000 - excellent promotion	4.49	0.71	4.68	0.68	0.178
I rejoice with the success	4.14	1.14	4.70	0.73	0.005*
Slovenes don't like football	2.31	1.10	1.86	0.86	0.027*
Watching the Slovene national team	3.71	1.38	4.44	0.95	0.003*
Football is a primitive ball game	1.51	0.84	1.22	0.54	0.045*
Football is for the lower social classes	1.90	1.18	1.56	1.01	0.129
Football is a ground for political abuse	2.14	1.37	2.12	1.17	0.929

Legend:

p(F) - statistical significance of difference between means

* statistically significant difference ($p \leq 0.05$)

shows that respondents from Maribor are much more regular TV viewers of football than respondents from Ljubljana. Many hypothetical reasons could be provided for this. The most important one is the fact that Maribor is traditionally a football and skiing town; watching football on TV - and hence the positive attitude towards it - is a logical consequence. Another important reason is the success of the city's football club 'Maribor' that played at the most elite football competition in Europe - the Champions League, in the 1999/2000 season. The inhabitants of Maribor, who are fans of their football club, were eager to watch their footballers' play against some of the most prominent international football clubs. An important reason could also be found in the town's somewhat less favourable economic situation, as 17,969 inhabitants of Maribor are unemployed (Statistical Yearbook, 2001) and have time to watch football games.

The analysis of the attitude 'I see a football game at least twice a month' shows a great difference in answers between respondents from Ljubljana and those from Maribor. Reasons for that can be easily found. In Maribor, football is the sport No 1. It could be said that the city's proletarian character provides a suitable setting for a strong football libido. Maribor is thus comparable to some industrially similar environments, especially those in England. The media stereotype of the city's 'football identity' also

has to be taken 'into' account, and the reputation of the 'Ljudski vrt' stadium which is frequently visited by prominent Slovene politicians.

On the other hand, the Ljubljana fans appreciate only top results and sports spectacles that, for the time being, only the Slovene basketball club 'Olimpija Ljubljana' can provide. The quality of football played in the capital does not meet the requirements of the more hard-to-please fans, since they got 'spoilt' by watching the matches of the high-quality football clubs of the former Yugoslavia. Another important reason for explaining why people from Ljubljana rarely attend football matches could lie in the fact that Ljubljana's football infrastructure is below all standards. Such a state of affairs discourages potential football fans from attending matches and does not offer the appropriate setting for watching sports and socialising. A situation far from that of the 1960s when people from Ljubljana were regular football-match goers.

The respondents from Maribor are in the whole more enthusiastic about the recent success of Slovene football than those from Ljubljana. The sensational success that has stirred great enthusiasm in practically all of Slovenia and was also a first-class surprise abroad can be ascribed exclusively to the Slovene national football team and to the Maribor FC. Most probably, this difference in residence is due to the fact that people from Maribor can look

forward not only to the good results of the national team, but also of their own club.

Analysis of the attitude 'I attended or viewed the performance of the Slovene national team at EURO 2000 and kept my fingers crossed' shows that the respondents from Maribor have a strikingly more positive attitude towards the Slovene national team if compared to those from Ljubljana. The insinuations that Maribor fans are interested solely in the local scene are therefore overruled. Significantly enough, there were three Maribor players compared to one 'Olimpija' player at EURO 2000, which may explain the fact that people from Maribor show greater interest in football.

The analysis of the comparison of the attitude towards football between the respondents from Ljubljana and those from Maribor shows that people from Ljubljana have a more stereotypical attitude towards football than people from Maribor. This is clearly shown in the following attitudes: 'Slovenes don't like football' and 'Football is a primitive ball game'.

2. Attitude towards football according to nationality

At most attitudes the respondents of non-Slovene descent showed a far more positive attitude to-

wards football than the respondents of Slovene descent; five attitudes providing conspicuous evidence in support of this assertion.

Taking into account that the Serbs, the Bosnians, the Macedonians and the Croats unanimously claim football their No 1 sport, which has made quite an enviable success internationally (FC Red Star from Belgrade won the European Cup Final in 1991), and facing the fact that all but none of the non-Slovene respondents descends from those countries, the incoming results came as no surprise. Not irrelevant, too, that not a small percentage of the former Yugoslav population would also describe football as a matter of prestige and as a possible means for broader public affirmation.

The further analysis of some eligible attitudes, which statistically and semantically do not diverge, shows what the non-Slovene respondents think of 'Slovenes will never be a football nation'.

Blame either scepticism or lack of confidence to account for the fact that 40 % of the respondents of non-Slovene descent and only 26.3 % of the respondents of the Slovene descent called it a deception. Apparently, the respondents of non-Slovene descent think more optimistically of the, as far as football is concerned, allegedly rather enthusiastic and well informed Slovene than the latter do of themselves.

Table 2: Attitude towards football before EURO 2000 (nationality)

	Slovene		Non-Slovene		p(F)
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
The most important pastime activity	2.87	1.42	3.65	1.39	0.030*
I always take time to watch it	3.20	1.52	4.10	1.07	0.015*
I'd like my son to play football	4.05	1.25	4.60	0.68	0.062*
The show I like best on the TV	2.77	1.57	3.75	1.21	0.011*
Sport No 1	3.49	1.27	4.40	1.09	0.004*
I attend football matches	1.65	1.27	1.40	0.94	0.421
Slovenes will never be a football nation	2.35	1.11	2.05	1.15	0.279
EURO 2000 - excellent promotion	4.57	0.73	4.65	0.59	0.649
I rejoice with the success	4.40	1.01	4.50	0.95	0.704
Slovenes don't like football	2.08	0.98	2.10	1.12	0.925
Watching the Slovene national team	4.00	1.32	4.40	0.75	0.197
Football is a primitive ball game	1.43	0.76	1.10	0.45	0.067
Football is for the lower social classes	1.78	1.09	1.50	1.15	0.306
Football is a ground for political abuse	2.08	1.22	2.35	1.46	0.390

Legend:

p(F) - statistical significance of difference between means

* statistically significant difference ($p \leq 0.05$)

The other attitudes, also related to the football image of Slovenes, presenting the respondents of non-Slovene descent as much more positively inclined to the game of football than the respondents of Slovene descent.

3. Attitude towards football before and after EURO 2000

The following research of attitude towards football before and after EURO 2000 compares the first sample (the inhabitants of Ljubljana and Maribor before EURO 2000) to the second sample (the inhabitants of Ljubljana after EURO 2000). The purpose of this comparison was to answer the question of whether there may be any statistically significant relations between the meaningful performance of Slovenia's national football team at EURO 2000 and the general attitude towards football in Slovenia.

The results have proven that EURO 2000 had a positive impact on the attitude towards football in all attitudes; seven of them showing a significant statistical upswing. The most significant differences, however, showed at the attitudes of *'I rejoice with the success we are witnessing lately'*, *'I did/will attend or did/will view the performance of the Slovene national football team at EURO 2000 and did/will keep my fingers crossed'*, *'Appearance at EURO*

2000 was/will be an excellent promotion for a young country like Slovenia'.

Slovenia's unexpected appearance and quite successful performance at EURO 2000 was a definite turning point for all who were anyhow related to sport in Slovenia; the media, the politicians, various promoters of the country and travel agencies unanimously put EURO 2000 and the Slovene national football team in the centre of their interest.

The media relished every opportunity to televise or to write about any peculiarity concerned with this spectacular sporting event. Of course, the grounds for this media expansion were set with Slovenia's qualifying for EURO 2000. The true value of this success is even greater, if one knows that Slovenia not so long ago was thought of as a country which can hardly take a serious part in football, the game which was tinged with negative epithets typical of the Balkans. This, however, proved as a stepping stone for creating the media sensation, namely the Slovene football fairy tale which came in handy especially for the media, the fans, and of course, the football players.

Discussion

The reasons for a negative attitude towards football in Slovenia in the past can be associated with

Table 3: Changes in attitudes towards football

	Slovene		Non-Slovene		p(F)
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
The most important pastime activity	2.96	1.51	3.06	1.36	0.728
I always take time to watch it	2.98	1.55	3.66	1.19	0.016*
I'd like my son to play football	3.92	1.32	4.20	0.99	0.232
The show I like best on the TV	2.78	1.49	3.38	1.44	0.043*
Sport No 1	3.71	1.24	4.08	1.92	0.138
I attend football matches	1.33	0.85	1.54	1.15	0.296
Slovenes will never be a football nation	2.26	1.17	2.20	1.95	0.784
EURO 2000 - excellent promotion	4.49	0.71	4.68	0.68	0.010*
I rejoice with the success	4.14	1.14	4.70	0.73	0.000*
Slovenes don't like football	2.31	1.10	1.98	1.08	0.140
Watching the Slovene national team	3.71	1.38	4.38	1.10	0.009*
Football is a primitive ball game	1.51	0.84	1.38	0.75	0.420
Football is for the lower social classes	1.90	1.18	1.94	1.20	0.861
Football is a ground for political abuse	2.14	1.37	2.38	1.29	0.378

Legend:

p(F) - statistical significance of difference between means

* statistically significant difference ($p \leq 0.05$)

a strong inflow of economic emigrants from the republics of former Yugoslavia which took place exactly at the beginning of the seventies and eighties of the past century. Owing to that inflow, the feelings of being threatened arose among the Slovenes and these feelings gave rise to the rebirth of Slovene nationalism. The feeling of national superiority which by definition accompanies nationalism degraded football completely. This is a logical consequence of the fact that within Yugoslavia, the Slovenes were neither successful as football players nor dominant as cheerers. This fact – which undermined the consistency of nationalistic discourse – obviously resulted in an interesting symbolic shift in the interpretation of the role and importance of football.

At the first level, football was taken out from the context of 'normal' sports and presented as a markedly 'physical' sport and was for that reason regarded as 'stupid'.

The second level of the symbolic shift was the reorientation of sport interests and pursuits in Slovenia in favour of the sports that are traditionally more characteristic of the Alpine region of Slovenia (the Gorenjska region). A great and unexpected rise of the Alpine skiing, ski jumping, Alpine mountaineering etc. began. In this connection, it must be pointed out that what happened was not merely a simple reorientation from the sports in which the Slovenes are not successful towards the sports in which we can compete, but that – to some extent – the structure of the Slovene national identity was also affected. It is known that the modern theory of identities points out that no identity stands alone, as it always needs something against which it can establish itself. At that time the Slovene national identity was establishing itself above all through breaking away from everything that was 'Balkan'. The Slovene interests and activities began to concentrate around those points which were symbolically far away from the Balkans (the mountain peak Triglav, the slalom skier Križaj, the music group Avseniki, the Planica ski jumping event, the *kranjska* sausage, etc.).

Practical consequences of the Slovene interpretation of football turned out to be one of the key dimensions of preserving certain social hierarchies or, in other words, the social exclusion of the emigrants from the former Yugoslav republics.

The attitude towards football in Slovenia began to change in a positive direction only after the decla-

ration of independence in the beginning of the nineties of the past century. At first this happened predominantly in the countryside, due to the fact that small places got their first-league teams overnight and this, in turn, strongly increased the interest in football in rural environments. At the same time the Slovene national football team began to form and was to face the challenge of first qualification competitions for the classification for the European championship in England in 1996. Of course, the disintegration from the Balkans has undoubtedly reduced the feelings of being nationally threatened and directed thoughts and expectations towards the extolled Europe, where the football standards are completely incompatible with the Slovene interpretation of the most popular European sport.

Today, the positive role of football – the credit for which goes above all to the national team – can be perceived in Slovenia precisely in its function of joining people, especially at the time when real social processes towards large differentiation are taking place. National football represents one among the rare things in the society which enables free communication, free from the hierarchical connotation of social dividing lines. Football creates possibilities for partner relationships among those who are otherwise in life separated by a large social distance and enables a relaxing dialogue between, e.g. new owners of the once common social property and the factory workers, Slovenes and non-Slovenes, supporters of the left and of the right political parties, etc.

Previous research (Horak, Waddington, & Malcolm, 1998) showed that the attitude towards football is more positive in the cities that have football clubs with a certain tradition and a record of good results. In such cities, people often tend to identify themselves with the football club. This thesis basically applies to big industrial cities like Manchester, Liverpool, Dortmund, Turin, Munich etc. where football stadium is a place where people from a specific social background get the chance to express their passions.

The comparison between the inhabitants of Ljubljana and those of Maribor shows that the latter have a more positive attitude towards football than the former which gives the previous thesis more weight.

The comparison between the respondents of Slovene descent and those of non-Slovene descent re-

veals that football is still considered as the most important sport in the republics of the former Yugoslavia. The respondents of non-Slovene descent seem to have a far more positive attitude towards football than their Slovene peers even at the attitudes where the Slovene image of football was investigated.

An individual's attitude towards a sports discipline, in this case football, is by no means mono-faceted. It is rather a multi-faceted structure of a series of factors, set up by means of primary and secondary socialization of every individual. Later on, this primary socialization expands on every step of social life and constitutes, along with social values, the individual's attitude towards a sports discipline (Horak, et.al, 1998).

Today, football represents one of the rare spheres of society that connects fans from different social strata. In such a setting, hierarchical prejudices encountered in everyday life are being ruled out by direct contact and free communication.

Obviously, the dimensions of a football match are far beyond the area of sport. Expanded to politics, economy and cultural field a football match is anything but a simple game of kicking the ball. Football often helps small nations to achieve broader affirmation and stimulates their quest for a national identity.

Apart from that, football may work as a powerful catalyst of social identities. National football teams, clubs and matches usually function as motivational factors and are at the same time a place where various adherents either to religion, ethnicity or class find a way to express themselves (Coelho, 1995). After EURO 2000, the respondents from Ljubljana improved their attitude towards football at all points which only support the thesis that good results and a positive attitude towards some sports disciplines are ultimately interdependent.

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