

Review

UDK: 796.332.015.8(497.5)"2012/2021"

005.332:796.332.093.1

Received: 19.4.2025

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.58984/smb2502067m>

Accepted: 17.6.2025

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## THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PARTICIPATION OF THE CROATIAN SOCCER REPRESENTATION IN LARGE COMPETITIONS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOCCER IN CROATIA

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**Abstract:** This paper contributes to the understanding of the economic impact of the Croatian national football team's participation in the World and European Championships on the overall development of Croatian football. The successes of the Croatian national football team are an incentive for children and young people who, delighted by their successes, start training football, that is, they enter the football "world". Also, the successes of the Croatian national football team, reflected in the economic aspect, have an economic impact on society, the federation, clubs and individual football players. Namely, the greater the success, the greater the financial reward, both for the athletes and for the sports association, which repeatedly affects the development of Croatian football. Through the topic of the research, the goal was to analyze and present whether there is and to what extent the economic impact of the participation of the Croatian national football team in major competitions on the development of football in Croatia. Scientific methods of induction and deduction, method of description and compilation were used. The empirical results of the research or the set variables point to facts where it is noticeable how big, significant and economically visible the success of the Croatian football team in major competitions has on the income of the Croatian Football Association, and thus immediately on the development of football in Croatia.

**Keywords:** football, Croatian national football team, impact, development

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## Introduction

Football has a long history. Football in its present form originated in England in the mid-19th century, however, alternative versions of the game existed much earlier and are part of social, sporting and football history. Different forms of ball games, which included kicking, were recorded all over the world, including in China, Japan, Australia, Ancient Greece, Rome, England, etc. Football and major sports competitions are two global social phenomena that gather a large number of people. The rapid and dynamic development of the mentioned phenomena throughout history is the reason for their wider study. The rapid development and wide spectrum of football's scope, as well as the active life of a person, created the prerequisites for the connection of these two terms. The best football players in the world, the best football teams-representations of the world gather at major sports football competitions. For research, the World and European football championships fall under major sports competitions. The aforementioned sports events attract a large number of fans and tourists in one place during the time of the event. The organization of such manifestations enables the host country to receive great global media attention and various other economic and social positive effects. Today, football and large sports events are the subject of research due to their economic and social potential. Large sports events are, as a type of sports tourism, one of the main branches of sports tourism based on their mass attendance, large economic consumption and potential. The success of holding large sports events for organizers and participants is evaluated according to various variables in a very complex way, and the final decision on profitability is often of a subjective nature. The participation and success of football players and teams or national teams in major sports competitions gives athletes, football players, sports federations, clubs and countries a lot of media attention, popularizes football, affects the construction of the infrastructure necessary for the said sport, etc., but also an economic benefit that is significant and important. Since the topic of this research is "the economic impact of the participation of the Croatian national football team in major competitions", the paper analyzed and presented the same using the example of the Croatian national football team.

## Social effects of sport events

For a number of people today, football as a sport and social phenomenon is the most important secondary thing in the world. For many, it is not secondary, but the primary thing in the world. At the time of major sporting events and the success of the Croatian national football team, there are even more people who become sensitized to football. For them, football and the football matches of the Croatian national football team

represent the most important thing at that moment. Considering the number of people gathered by the World and European Football Championships and the economic effects, the mentioned socio-economic phenomenon is considered one of the phenomena of the modern economy. Due to the extremely rapid development that began in the second half of the 20th century, sports events are an activity that has enormous influence and power in all social and economic aspects of everyday life. Organizations of sports events are closely related to sports, but also to tourism as a relatively young scientific discipline, which constantly achieves large economic consumption and stimulates the economy to a large extent. This makes it the third largest economic sector in the world, behind the chemical industry and the fuel industry. There are different criteria according to which manifestations, or events, are classified, and the basic classification of events (manifestations) is planned and unplanned. When we talk about planned events, we mean events that are the subject of the study of "event management" and they require setting up, management, organizers and executors and a certain time. The social effects of large, international sports events can be defined as the way in which sports events affect changing collective and individual values, patterns of behavior, community structure, way and quality of life. Three main aspects of the social effects of sports events can be identified through: sport and participation in sports - the degree to which sports events stimulate the sports sector and especially stimulate participation in sports, attitudes and beliefs - the degree to which sports events influence people's beliefs, attitudes, norms and values, social cohesion - it is a constant process of developing common community values, common challenges and equal opportunities, which are based on a sense of trust, hope and reciprocity. Although there are a number of positive impacts of sporting events, it is also important to point out that there are also a number of negative impacts. The positive social effects of sports events can be cited as an increase in mass participation in sports and physical activities, an increase in health awareness, an increase in (national) pride, the stimulation of a sense of satisfaction and connection, an increase in social cohesion, inclusion and social capital, the construction of social identity, various psychological benefits such as feelings of euphoria, transcendental effects. The negative effects of sports events can be cited as excessive crowds, security risks, traffic jams, social exclusion, vandalism, noise, etc. Aspects such as degradation, employment of foreigners rather than domestic and local population, and non-compliance with cultural norms (such as not shoulder coverings in the Middle East), are just some examples of the negative impacts of sports tourism. Sporting events can also result in negative impacts on host cities, these can include: displacement of local communities, crowds, hooliganism, crime and disruptions to the normal life of local residents. Of course, sports events are not organized to produce negative effects, but on the contrary, to produce as many positive effects as possible, both social, economic and all other.

### ***Sports events and correlation with sports tourism***

Sports events are an important driver of the economy, thus of time and tourism, and are prominent in the development and marketing plans of most destinations. The roles and impacts of planned events in tourism are well documented and are of increasing importance for the destination's competitiveness. Events (or planned events) are a spatio-temporal phenomenon and each one is unique due to the interactions between events, visitors and the management system (organization and implementation of events). Sports events are increasingly used to build the brand of the host destination. Events can play different roles in relation to a destination: as co-branding partners, as an extension of the destination or as a feature of the destination. Since each role presents different opportunities, risks and requirements, events must be strategically incorporated into a destination's marketing plan. The strategic inclusion of sporting events in destination branding requires that each event be compared to others in the destination's portfolio of events, as well as to the destination's other sporting activities and attractions (Aguar-Noury; Garcia-del-Barrio, 2022). It is important to point out that the contribution of sports events to the brand of the destination will be complete when their importance is not exclusively related to sports, but also with all the accompanying benefits of sports events. Getz gives a simple definition of sports events "sports events are, in the simplest terms, current matches or meetings during which sports activities take place" (Getz, ). Getz also classified events into four categories: mega (large) events, periodic significant events, regional events, and local events. Major events are those such as the Olympic Games and the World and European Football Championships, and usually involve large investments, complex decision-making from many different parties and large potential impacts.

### ***Football as a social phenomenon***

Every day, large numbers of people sit in stadiums or in front of screens, whistling and shouting as they watch 22 players chasing the ball on a grass-covered field. Football, as it is known today, has become a global phenomenon. The history and origin and global spread of football has already been previously presented in the literature. So, modern football originated in England in 1863, and the rules of the game designed by the Football Association created the foundations for the way the sport is played today. The factors that turned football into a world pastime, i.e. the king of sports, are the following: simple rules of the game - when you watch the game for the first time, you don't need to try hard to understand it, a sense of social cohesion - whether you watch the game in the stadium or at home, in front of the television set, it's always fun to watch and comment on the game with friends, big stars and big amounts of money. Fortunately, money can't buy titles, and it's the players who always have to prove their

abilities. As long as the game lasts, and there are eleven players against eleven players on the pitch, anything is possible. Football has spread all over the world, cities, towns and even small villages have their own football clubs. Whether it's the spirit of the game, the emotions of the players, brilliant technique or stunningly beautiful goals, everyone will find something to enjoy in football. Considering all these factors that contribute to its immense popularity, it is safe to say that.

### ***European and world championships***

Although the first European Championship was held in 1960, the idea for it was born much earlier. It dates back to 1927, when the manager of the French Football Association, Henri Delaunay, first proposed holding a pan-European football tournament. The European Championship, formally the UEFA European Championship, also referred to as the "Football Euro", is a quadrennial tournament held between member countries of the Union of European Football Associations. The European Championship is the second most prestigious after the World Cup among international football tournaments. The World Cup, formally the FIFA "Football World Cup", is a tournament held every four years that crowns the world champion of football. It is probably the most popular sporting event in the world, which attracts billions of television viewers, and has enormous economic significance. The first competition for the cup was organized in 1930 by FIFA. 32 national teams participate in the tournament, and before the tournament, elimination international qualifying tournaments are held, the 32 winners of which play in the final tournament. It has already been mentioned that European and world championships are international "mega" sporting events, for which countries must compete in order to secure hosting.

### **Subject goal of the work and research questions in research methodology**

The subject of the research is the economic significance and impact of the participation of the Croatian national football team in major competitions on the development of football in Croatia. From the subject of the research comes the goal of analyzing and presenting, is there any economic impact of the participation of the Croatian national football team in major competitions on the development of football in Croatia? In order to fulfill the goal of the research, the authors asked research questions that were answered in the paper. The questions covered the following areas: what are the most important sports and football events, what does the sports infrastructure in football include, the sustainability of sports facilities in the Republic of Croatia, motives for the participation of states in the organization of large football events, what are the successes and effects of the participation of the

Croatian national football team in large competitions? Scientific methods of induction and deduction, description and compilation were used during the research.

In the research, secondary theoretical research was carried out using secondary sources of data, namely books and professional articles related to the topic of the work, as well as various publications on the Internet. In order to achieve the goal of the work and collect useful information that improved knowledge about the research problem, which is the economic impact of the participation of the Croatian national football team in major competitions. Research to achieve the goal of the work and were collected through qualitative research using the method of research interviews with experts in the field of football, sports events and economic effects. Conducted qualitative research, using the research interview method. Based on the analysis of individual facts, using the inductive method, the research reached a conclusion about the general court, that is, using the deductive method, general and individual conclusions were drawn from the general courts. In the research, the method of description was used in the research to describe facts, processes and subjects without scientific interpretation and explanation. When taking over other people's observations, attitudes, conclusions and knowledge, the compilation method was used.

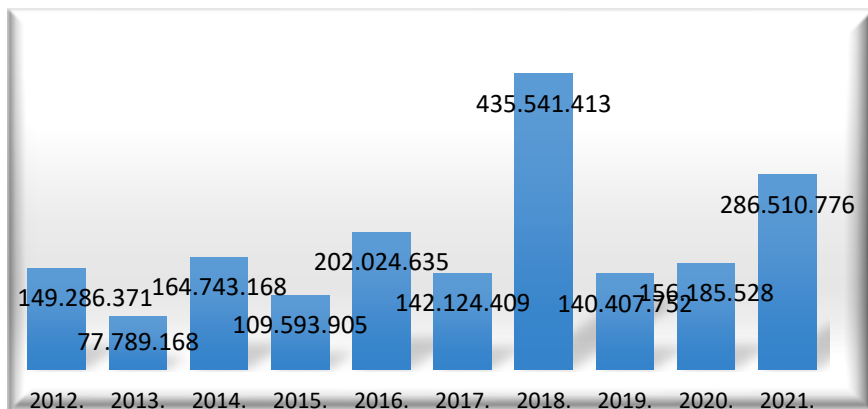
## Research results

Thanks to winning second place at the World Cup in Russia 2018, the national team's success brought Croatia and its economy at least HRK 3.2 billion, which was the first concrete estimate of how much this great result affected the increase in GDP. The Croatian Football Association continued to invest significant funds in infrastructure in 2020, allocating more than 2,000,000 euros so that Croatian clubs would have the best possible conditions for work and the creation of new playing values. In the past year, HNS financed the installation of artificial grass on six playgrounds with its own funds in the amount of 1,100,000 euros. The project was realized in cooperation with cities/municipalities and/or clubs that were in charge of preparatory work, while HNS financed the purchase and installation of artificial grass. Investments in infrastructure continued with the installation of artificial grass on three more playgrounds as part of a project funded in the amount of 2,000,000 euros from UEFA's HatTrick program, after HNS's project was approved by the umbrella organization of European football. The project continues in 2021 with the installation of artificial grass on five more fields. In 2020, the Croatian Football Association allocated more than 1,000,000 euros in financial aid to Croatian clubs for the construction

of their infrastructure, and the same trend will continue in 2021. After the installation of hybrid turf in six Croatian stadiums (Rijeka, Koprivnica, Zaprešić, Kranjčevićeva, Maksimir, Pula) significantly improved the quality of Croatian first league football, which is reflected in the more pronounced minutes of the so-called "clean game", the higher number of goals scored and the lower number of player injuries, HNS will continue with the installation of hybrid lawns in the stadiums of the Croatian first league teams in 2021. Kustić states that "investments in infrastructure are a fundamental part of our approach to the development of Croatian football.

After the construction of hybrid lawns for the first league players, we continued our investments in infrastructure in the form of financing the construction of fields with artificial grass, and our investments will continue in the coming years. Without the high-quality work of the football base in Croatia, we would not have such a successful national team, and the Croatian Football Association is persistent in helping the base in all the ways available to us".

**Graph 1.** Total revenues of the Croatian Football Association in the period from 2012 to 2021 (in HRK).



Source: created by the author according to data from the Register of Non-Profit Organizations, available at: <https://banovac.mfin.hr/rnoprt/Index> (05/02/2022)

Previously, in the aforementioned graph, the successes of the Croatian national football team at major world competitions were presented. The economic impact of the success of the Croatian national football team is reflected in increased income in the years when the aforementioned successes were achieved, as can be seen from the graph. In 2012, the revenues of the Croatian Football Association increased, and

that year Croatia participated in the finals of the UEFA European Championship in Poland and Ukraine. Revenues also increased in 2014, when Croatia participated in the finals of the FIFA World Cup in Brazil. In 2016, Croatia took part in the finals of the UEFA European Championship in France 2016 and reached the round of 16, which can be seen in the increased income of HNS. In 2018, the Croatian national team achieved the greatest success in history by winning the silver medal at the FIFA World Cup in Russia, which can also be seen in the significant increase in HNS income in 2018. At the European Championship held in 2021, Croatia participated in the final and also achieved a significant economic benefit.

Empirical research carried out using the in-depth interview method found that the success of the national team significantly affects society's identification with football, the development of training infrastructure, the increase in income from international club transfers (8,862,243.34 Euros), the increased number of international player transfers, the increased number of issued professional licenses, increased number of trips to international tournaments, increased number of issued official licenses for participation in competitions, etc. The research also found that success: did not affect the construction of football stadiums, financial stability of all clubs from the first three ranks of the competition, increase in gross compensation for coaches and sports workers in the lower ranks of the competition. In the club licensing procedure for the 2020/2021 competitive season. for the first time, an obligation was introduced that women's clubs that wanted to participate in the UEFA Champions League had to obtain a license for that competition. Therefore, at the beginning of the Central Licensing Procedure for 2020/2021. held a workshop to which all clubs I. and II. HNLŽ. A workshop was also held for all clubs I. and II. HNL, and for clubs III. HNL and I. HNLŽ who submitted applications for licenses for 2020/2021 (Table no. 1).

**Table 1.** Number of licenses issued by HNS for official competitions in 17 licensing systems.

Number of licenses issued to clubs	Competition rank
136	Licenses for UEFA competitions
235	Licenses for 1 HNL
296	Licenses for 2 HNL



## Conclusion

All sports events, of greater or lesser importance, are an excellent opportunity for the development of cities, regions or countries to the extent that they stimulate local socio-economic development by contributing to the creation of jobs and the construction and improvement of infrastructure (roads, lighting, hotels, restaurants, shops, etc. ), that is, not only tourists but also the local population benefit. Participation and achieved results in major sporting events represent great opportunities for the economic development of football in a particular country, but also great challenges with a possible negative outcome. The successes of athletes and sports teams at major sports competitions such as the World and football championships, in addition to being confirmation of their dedicated work and training for athletes and teams, i.e. national teams, also bring with them economic benefits, social influences, etc. Successes of the Croatian national football team have been followed since the very beginning, and the greatest successes of the Croatian national football team, since Croatia became an independent state, are 3rd place at the FIFA World Cup in France in 1998 and 2nd place at the FIFA World Cup in Russia in 2018. The paper presents the income of the Croatian Football Association in the period from 2012 to 2021, where it is noticeable how significant the success of the Croatian national football team in major competitions has on the financial income of the Croatian Football Association, and thus immediately on the immediate development of football in Croatia. Which was presented through: the construction of sports fields, economic benefits for sports clubs, increasing the involvement of the number of experts in football, developing social interest in football, increasing the number of systematically organized competitions, increasing the number of young people in football, etc. To fully exploit the potential of the national team's sports results, it is necessary a long-term plan for economic and infrastructural sustainability, as well as proper development and building of the Croatian football brand. In conclusion, focusing on the facts, our empirical analysis of the national team's sporting successes, it follows that the national team's successes are the main force, the flywheel of the development and well-being of Croatian football as a whole, both in terms of social, sporting and economic significance, and entail great potential.

## Conflict of interests:

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

### Author Contributions:

Conceptualization: J. M.; B. Ž.; Investigation: J. M.; B. Ž.; Theoretical framework: J. M.; B. Ž.; Data curation: J. M.; B. Ž.; Resources: J. M.; B. Ž.; Writing – original draft: J. M.; Writing – review & editing: B. Ž.;

All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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