

# Analiza medijsko pokrivenost ženskih ekipnih sportova i stavova djevojčica prema nogometu u Hrvatskoj

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**THE EFFECT THAT INSUFFICIENT  
MEDIA COVERAGE OF WOMEN'S TEAM  
SPORTS HAS ON GIRL'S ATTITUDES  
TOWARDS SOCCER IN CROATIA**

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Mentor: doc. dr. sc. Ivan Burić

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## ABSTRACT

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The main objective of this master's thesis is to find a numerical value that represents media coverage of women's team sports in Croatia, and then argue its relevance to the attitude that girls have towards women's soccer. Using content analysis, a quantitative method of research, this paper determined how often the Croatian daily newspapers *Sportske Novosti* and *Jutarnji List* reported women's team sports over a two-month period. Another quantitative research method was conducted, namely a survey, in two different high schools in Zagreb in order to understand the outlook that 16 and 17-year-old girls have towards women's soccer. Conducted research indicated that handball and volleyball are the women's team sports that enjoy the highest percentage of media coverage. Only one article during the time span of two months pertained to women's soccer. The questionnaire conducted with girls in their second year of high school confirmed that 93% of them have heard of soccer being "a man's game" and 72% either mostly or completely agreed that soccer is not a sport meant for girls in Croatian culture. Almost 90% of the participants could not name one female soccer player they recall seeing in the media. This study illuminates the current circumstances of media coverage devoted to women's team sports in Croatian print media and the perception that teenage girls have towards women's soccer.

**Key words:** *Croatia, media, soccer, football, girls, attitude, perception, women's soccer, women's team sports, media coverage, Croatian daily newspapers, quantitative research methods, content analysis, survey.*

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## 2 INTRODUCTION

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The subject area of this thesis paper includes both sport and media. Considering that very little scientific research tackles the problem that media and cultural prejudice pose for female soccer players in Croatia, the purpose of this study is to contribute empirical data on this subject to the scientific community, the sports community and social communities. The most important question is the premise that insufficient media coverage of women's team sports is connected to the attitudes that young girls have towards soccer in Croatia.

This study provides data on the media coverage devoted to women's team sports through content analysis of the daily sports newspaper *Sportske Novosti* and the second highest circulated newspaper<sup>1</sup> in Croatia, *Jutarnji List*. Furthermore, a survey conducted with girls in their second year of high school uncovers the perception that 16 and 17 year-old girls have towards women's soccer.

This topic is relevant to the scientific community because very little empirical research is available on the topic of women's soccer in Croatia. Much like other women's sports, soccer is an under-developed sport in Croatia with massive potential and promise. The Croatian men's national team, a FIFA World Cup finalist in Russia, as of July 25, 2019 is ranked at 7<sup>th</sup> place<sup>2</sup> according to FIFA world rankings. This means that they are one of the top 10 soccer teams in the world. The Croatian women's team, on the other hand, is in 55<sup>th</sup> place<sup>3</sup> and has never qualified to play in a major World or European Cup tournament. Understanding the current circumstances in terms of media coverage and attitudes towards women's soccer will

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<sup>1</sup> *24sata Has the Highest Circulation Revenue, Jutarnji List the Highest Print Advertising Revenue Whereas 7Dnevno and Međimurje Are Best Sold Weeklies* (2018) AZTN, [www.aztn.hr/en/24sata-has-the-highest-circulation-revenue-jutarnji-list-the-highest-print-advertising-revenue-whereas-7dnevno-and-medimurje-are-best-sold-weeklies/](http://www.aztn.hr/en/24sata-has-the-highest-circulation-revenue-jutarnji-list-the-highest-print-advertising-revenue-whereas-7dnevno-and-medimurje-are-best-sold-weeklies/) (Retrieved: 28 July 2019).

<sup>2</sup> *Men's Ranking* (2019). FIFA.com, <https://www.fifa.com/fifa-world-ranking/ranking-table/men/rank/id12623/> (Retrieved 31 July 2019).

<sup>3</sup> *Women's Ranking* (2019). FIFA.com, [https://www.fifa.com/fifa-world-ranking/ranking-table/women/rank/ranking\\_20190712/](https://www.fifa.com/fifa-world-ranking/ranking-table/women/rank/ranking_20190712/) (Retrieved 31 July 2019).

help explain why the situation is such, and what can be done to facilitate improvement. Analysis of the current state is the primary focus of this work.

FIFA (one of the largest and most powerful soccer organizations in the world) in its *Women's Football Strategy*<sup>4</sup> published in 2018, recognizes that women's soccer is in need of fundamental change because years of institutional neglect and a lack of investment have prevented girls and women from playing the game or assuming roles in technical, administrative and governance functions. They aim to grow participation, enhance commercial value, build foundations and utilize the vast number of untapped<sup>5</sup> opportunities in women's soccer. The subject area of this paper is especially relevant to the scientific and sports community because it tackles the environment through which girls are introduced to sports and exposed to soccer in Croatia, which is important to understand in order to keep up with world trends.

In terms of the media, in his book *McQuail's Mass Communication Theory*, Denis McQuail (2005:467) describes how the media can influence public perception through unplanned and long term media effects. Two of the effects he describes include socialization and cultural and social change. Socialization is defined as the informal contribution of media to the learning and adoption of norms, values and expectations of behavior in particular social roles and situations. This means that the public can learn from the media, as well as adopt the information they consume deeply enough to curb their behavior. Furthermore, McQuail (2005:467) describes the media effect of social and cultural change as shifts in the overall pattern of values, behaviors and symbolic forms characterizing a sector of society (such as youth), a whole society or a set of societies. These processes and models of media effects contribute to the argument that media coverage of women's sports can be reflected in the perceptions, attitudes and behavior of the public.

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<sup>4</sup> *Women's Football Strategy* (2018). FIFA, <https://img.fifa.com/image/upload/z7w21ghir8jb9tguvbcq.pdf> (Retrieved: 9 September 2019).

<sup>5</sup> Author Donna P. Lopiano (2000:166) also states that sponsoring and investing in women's sports is an opportunity to capitalize on a virtually untapped market.

In the case of women's soccer, the media establishes a context that the sport has little value when the frequency at which they produce quality content is insufficient. This also deters people from any expectations that girls are interested in, or desire to play soccer. In other words, the absence of extensive and continuous information on games, competitions and/or the players themselves, generates an impression to the mass public that women's soccer is not important, popular or deserving of more attention.

Girls who feel support and encouragement in their decisions will exuberate more confidence<sup>6</sup>, and then possibly grow up to be women in leadership roles both in sports and in business. Removing or reducing the cultural bias towards women's soccer in Croatia could benefit young girls, the athletic community and social communities<sup>7</sup>.

Becoming aware of the current situation of media coverage and common presumptions that girls have towards soccer is the starting point to bring about change. This work is meant to spark conversation about the role that the media play, as well as higher institutions and the common population, in improving the environment through which female athletes are exposed to sports from a young age.

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<sup>6</sup> *Report Shows How Football Boosts Girls' Confidence* (2017). UEFA.com, [www.uefa.com/womenseuro/news/newsid=2470403.html](http://www.uefa.com/womenseuro/news/newsid=2470403.html) (Retrieved: 28 July 2019).

<sup>7</sup> An increase in participation will also increase the amount of money being spent towards cleats, uniforms, club membership fees, tournaments, live soccer games and so on; harvesting economic benefits as well. Author Donna P. Lopiano (2000:166) explains the incentive that sporting goods and apparel manufacturers should have towards meeting the consumer needs of physically active girls and women in the United States because more than 80% of all retail purchase decisions are made by women, and women have purchased more athletic shoes and apparel than men since 1991. In many cases women are buying not only for themselves but for the whole family.



### 3 WOMEN, SPORT AND MEDIA

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This study focuses on insufficient media coverage, women's team sports and attitudes towards women's soccer. All of these terms are referenced to and used often throughout this work. In order to have a common understanding, the definitions that were adopted will be further explained.

The Merriam Webster's Online Dictionary defines the word "insufficient" as being inadequate, especially lacking adequate power, capacity or competence<sup>8</sup>. This study will rely on that definition when arguing that media coverage of women's team sports is insufficient. In other words, it will be said that the current level of coverage is low, as well as lacking in adequate capacity and power to have a stronger impact on the perception that the Croatian public has towards women's team sports such as soccer.

In individual sports, athletes compete individually and have individual results (Franck, 2009). Those individual results can be calculated as part of a team result, such as in bowling, but they do not have to be. Athletes that compete in individual disciplines can practice either in groups or on their own, but their discipline is still considered an individual sport because they are solely dependent on themselves for their result. In team sports, athletes practice mostly in groups and they compete with a team, against another team. At the end of a competition, they share the final result as a collective. Team sports include basketball, handball, volleyball, beach volleyball, beach handball, rowing in pairs, tennis in pairs, table tennis in pairs, rugby, sailing, water polo, synchronized ice skating, and so on. Soccer is a team sport as well, and is further defined as a game of poly-structural motions dominated by movements of a cyclical and acyclical character. This type of activity is composed of simple and complex movements by each member of a sports team, cooperating together during competition (Šamija, Sporiš, Jerković i Jozak, 2010). While conducting content analysis research, this study relied on the

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<sup>8</sup> "insufficient." *Merriam-Webster.com*. 2019. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/insufficient> (Retrieved: 31 July 2019).

aforementioned definition of team versus individual sports to select the articles that formed a data base for further analysis.

Harris Chaiklin (2011) differentiates between a sociological and psychological definition of attitude in his paper on *Attitudes, Behavior and Social Practice*. His description of a psychological attitude is one that identifies a verbal expression as executed behavior, as opposed to the sociological approach that studies verbal expression as an intention to act. Those who accept a psychological definition of attitude attempt to reduce prejudice and discrimination by changing the attitude (Chaiklin, 2011). Both the sociological and psychological definitions of attitude are significant for this paper. The feelings or emotions connected to a fact or state, such as the state of women's soccer, will be examined (sociological) as well as the possibility that those attitudes can be changed (psychological). For example, the survey conducted for this paper inquires both on teenage girls' emotional connection and behavior towards women's soccer through questions on discouragement, media habits and their likelihood of involvement, which is in correlation to the aforementioned definitions of sociological and psychological attitude.

### 3.1 WOMEN IN SPORT

Author Johan Huizinga in his book *Homo Ludens: A study of the play element in culture* (1970:1) explains the longevity of play by stating that that animals have not waited for man to teach them how to play, and also that play is older than culture. He refers to Plato to describe the identity and ritual of play as an escape from reality, quoting that "every man and woman should play the noblest games, and be of another mind from where they are in the present" (Huizinga, 1970:18-19). This means that playing is a way to escape present thoughts; a privilege both men and women should have equally. Nonetheless, women were often perceived as being too weak for sports because of their reproductive system and inferior muscular strength to that of most men, and therefore denied this privilege.

In 1896, Baron Pierre de Coubertin, founder of the modern Olympics, stated: “No matter how toughened a sportswoman may be, her organism is not cut out to sustain certain shocks”<sup>9</sup>. That same year when the first Olympics were held in Athens, no women were allowed to participate. Although over 100 years have passed since this claim was made, the belief that women are born unfit to participate in certain disciplines is presumably very much alive. The combination of this belief and little media promotion of female athletic abilities or achievements, could create a very powerful preconception (and misconception) that pressures young girl’s into choosing alternative activities for their recreational needs or career paths; instead of a sport like soccer.

Everything leading up to the late 1800’s represented a time when women did not have stable footing in the athletic world. This took a turn for the better in the 1900’s with the Summer Olympic games in Paris, France. At that competition, 22 women (2.2%) out of a total of 997 athletes competed in five sports: tennis, sailing, croquet, equestrian and golf<sup>10</sup>.

Around the same time, initiatives in the United States that supported equality for boys and girls playing sports began to emerge, such as the Women’s Athletics committee, formed by the American Physical Education Association. That body was established to draft new and separate standards for women in collegiate sports such as swimming, track and field, field hockey and soccer (Cahn, O’Reilly, 2007). By the 2014 Winter Olympics, women represented 40% of the participants, and in 2016 that number reached a record high of 45% in Rio De Janeiro, Brazil<sup>11</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup> *Women, gender equality and sport* (2007). United Nations, <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/public/Women%20and%20Sport.pdf> (Retrieved: 31 July 2019).

<sup>10</sup> *Key Dates in the History of Women in the Olympic Movement* (2019). International Olympic Committee, [www.olympic.org/women-in-sport/background/key-dates](http://www.olympic.org/women-in-sport/background/key-dates) (Retrieved: 28 July 2019).

<sup>11</sup> *Key Dates in the History of Women in the Olympic Movement* (2019). International Olympic Committee, [www.olympic.org/women-in-sport/background/key-dates](http://www.olympic.org/women-in-sport/background/key-dates) (Retrieved: 28 July 2019).

In 1972 an amendment made to educational laws in the United States was passed by Congress called Title 9<sup>12</sup>, setting the stage for female participation in American sports as it is known today. The statute is enforced by the U.S. Department of Education’s Office for Civil Rights (OCR) with an underlying premise to protect against discrimination based on sex in all educational programs and activities that receive financial assistance from the government<sup>13</sup>.

In her article *A Modern History of Women in Sport*, Dr. Donna P. Lopiano (2000:164) thoroughly describes how the 25 years subsequent to Title 9’s implementation increased the participation of girls in sports. In the table below, it is evident that by 1996 the total percentage of female athletes increased from 15% to 35% in the Olympics, from 16% to 40% at the college level and from 18% to 40% at the high school level. Each institution enjoyed around a 20% increase in female participation in less than 25 years.

**Figure 1 - Female athletic participation growth in the USA from 1972 to 1996 as a result of Title 9.**

1972				1996		
Level	Male	Female	Total Athletes that Are Female	Male	Female	% of Total Athletes that Are Female
Olympics	6,065	1,058	14.8%	7,059	3,685	34.2%
College	172,447	32,853	16%	200,627	128,627	39.1%

<sup>12</sup> The declaration goes as follows, “No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance”.

<sup>13</sup> *Title IX and Sex Discrimination* (2018). US Department of Education (ED), [www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/tix\\_dis.html](http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/tix_dis.html) (Retrieved: 28 July 2019).

High School	3,770,621	817,073	17.8%	3,706,225	2,472,043	40%
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*Source: Lopiano, 2000:164*

This goes to show how meaningful a step in the right direction from the state can be for the participation rates of women’s sports. Even between 1996 and 2000, the year when Dr. Lopiano (2000:164) wrote her doctoral dissertation, over 55 million women registered into sports. Not only did the number of female athletes noticeably increase, but the image of a female athlete and what it meant to be a woman of any age involved in sport also changed. The stereotypical American woman was no longer a house wife, but an honest breadwinner that was skillful, competent and strong (Lopiano, 2000:164). Society opened its eyes to finally recognize the importance and benefits that sports hold for women, and with this support the foundation was laid for a change in the American female stereotype, and a boom in women’s sports for the U.S. on a global scale.

Moreover, it can be deduced that the United States Women’s National Team (USWNT) has benefitted greatly from the increase in participation and desegregation succeeding Title 9 because they consistently prove to be a powerhouse on the world stage for women’s soccer. At the FIFA Women’s World Cup in France, in June and July of 2019, the USWNT won their second consecutive world cup title and fourth title in total. Also, they did that as the only country outside of Europe that advanced to the quarter finals of the tournament<sup>14</sup>. From this fact it can also be speculated that Europe is investing more time, energy and finances to the development of women’s soccer than North, Central and South America who are unable to produce more teams to compete at the highest level.

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<sup>14</sup> *Matches* (2019). FIFA Women’s World Cup France 2019, <https://www.fifa.com/womensworldcup/matches/> (Retrieved: 29 July 2019).

Understanding the historical background of women in sport as well as the attitudes, circumstances and adversity through which female athletes have had to pursue is important in order to fully comprehend the current situation delineated by the research done for this study.

Arthur Raney and Jennings Bryant (2009:247) in their *Handbook of Sports and Media* describe women in sport as some kind of paradox, because sports are a predominantly male field. What it takes to be successful in sport, at least according to conventional wisdom, is the very ideal of a man: superiority, mental and physical toughness, competitiveness, initiative, strength, power, aggression, and confidence. “As children, we learn that men and women are not only different; they are actually opposites. Whatever men are, we know that women must be the very antithesis. How does one describe a woman? Inferiority, weakness, incompetence, cooperation, passivity, timidity and vulnerability. Sport is, according to our commonsense understanding of the world, a celebration of manhood. How, then, can a woman be a successful athlete?”, the authors explained. The answer is very simple, not every sport is the same and not every human is the same. Both men and women can be strong, competitive, driven and confident, just like they can both be the opposite – brittle and passive.

*The Influence of Sex Stereotypes and Gender Roles on Participation and Performance in Sport and Exercise: Review and Future Directions* mentions that in every aspect of life there is a difference between men and women – in politics, education, and in sports (Chalabaev, Sarrazine, Fontayne, Boiche, Clement-Guilltoin, 2013:4). For example, women are less successful in solving mathematical problems than men and, on average, run much slower. Sports psychology explores the reasons behind the differences in sporting activities and while studying team sports claim that it is difficult to compare the performance of men’s and women’s teams directly, because they never play against each other. For this reason, certain variables such as time and distance can be used to determine which gender has better results (Chalabaev, Sarrazine, Fontayne, Boiche, Clement-Guilltoin, 2013:5).

Men often have better results than women, but that is not always necessarily the case: men are better in sports that require strength, endurance and speed while women are better in sports that require calmness, concentration and accuracy (Chalabaev, Sarrazine, Fontayne, Boiche, Clement-Guilltoin, 2013:5). For example, in a biathlon event, although men ski faster than women, they do not perform better in shooting (Bletsou, Gerodimos, & Pollatou, 2006).

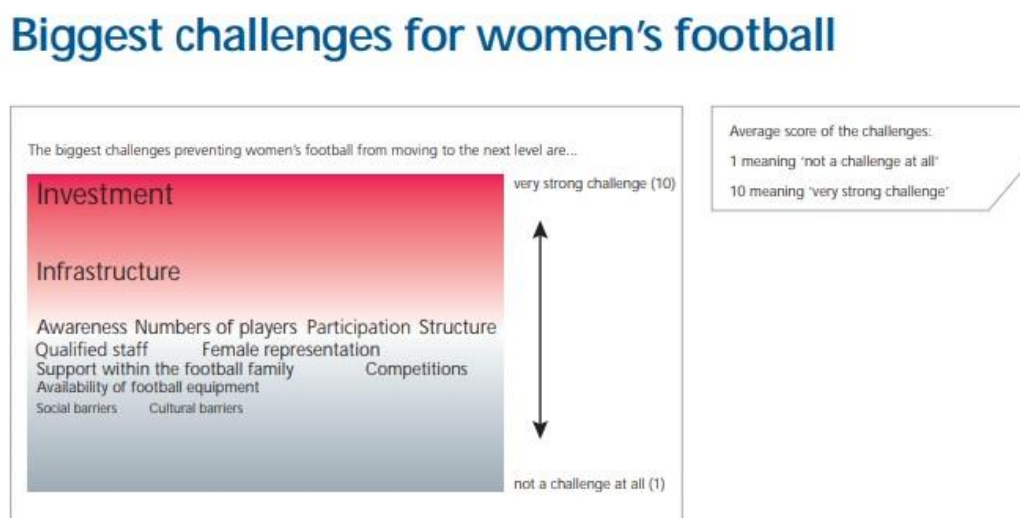
The AEM (2018:11) in their work *Suggestions for Better Coverage of Women's Sports in Electronic Media*, list several assumptions as to why there is inequality and disparity between men's and women's sports. Their first claim relies on historical reasons, such as the aforementioned fact that women were not allowed to compete in the first Olympics of 1896. Then they mention the nature of sports, saying that activities such as running, jumping, throwing, fighting, endurance and using physical strength were all elements used at war, which was a predominantly male activity (AEM, 2018:12). Their last claim was related to financial income. In a day and age where money is everything, profits and income are a common way to differentiate between what is and what isn't valuable. In 2010, male basketball players in the National Basketball Association (NBA) made an average of \$5.5 million while female players of the Women's National Basketball Association (WNBA) made a maximum of \$95,000 (AEM, 2018:12). This difference could easily translate to a cultural perception of worth.

The difference in earning and awarded prize money for women's sports in comparison to men's sports is, even in 2019, still enormous. For example, the teams that competed in the FIFA Men's World Cup in 2018 were fighting for a share of \$440 million in prize money. France, who beat Croatia 4 -2 in the finals, was awarded \$38 million for their achievements. In comparison, teams that competed in the FIFA Women's World Cup in 2019 were fighting to get a share of only \$30 million in prize money (7.5% of the men's prize money from 2018)

and the winners, USA, who beat the Netherlands 2-0 in the final, split a total of \$4 million<sup>15</sup>. This speaks for the global appreciation (or lack thereof) for women's soccer.

FIFA in their Women's Football Survey in 2014 surveyed 177 member associations (MAs) to inquire about their development, governance, participation, investment, awareness and perception of women's soccer. According to the results, the biggest challenges listed by the MA's are investment and infrastructure<sup>16</sup>, followed by a number of other factors such as support, social barriers and cultural barriers.

**Figure 2 - Challenges for women's soccer according to FIFA's Women's Football Survey.**



Source: FIFA, 2014

This speaks for the attitude that higher institutions have towards the development of women's soccer in their respective countries. They are aware that a lack of investment is creating a

<sup>15</sup> Today in the World Cup Final Between the USA and Netherlands – Here's How Much Money is on The Line. CNBC, <https://www.cnbc.com/2019/07/04/womens-world-cup-final-how-much-money-is-on-the-line.html>. (Retrieved: 28 July 2019).

<sup>16</sup> Women's Football Survey (2014). FIFA, <https://resources.fifa.com/image/upload/fifa-women-s-football-survey-2522649.pdf?cloudid=emtgxvp0ibnebltvi3b> (Retrieved 28 July 2019).



problem for the growth of women's soccer. The situation could be similar for other women's team sports, however, considering that this paper mostly deals with the attitudes that girls have towards soccer in Croatia, it is important to understand what the circumstances are for women in soccer on a global scale.

To summarize, throughout history women were excluded from sporting events, sometimes even banned, and culturally discouraged from participating. It can be presumed that some of that animosity still exists today even though women's sports have come a long way. Despite the misconception that women are inferior, weak and incompetent to play sports, as well as the evident disparities in prize money, there are signs of a hopeful future because institutions are recognizing that women's sports are lacking infrastructure and investments.

The affirmation of women's sports in society and the role that the media plays in that process is important because of the social benefits that having confident women in leadership roles can entail. These topics will be discussed further in the upcoming sections.

### 3.2 UTILIZING SPORT AS A MECHANISM FOR THE SOCIAL PROMOTION OF WOMEN

Sports are an important mechanism for the social promotion of women because they have the ability to attract a large audience and change women's status in society.

With an estimated 26 million female players globally, of which 6 million are based in Europe, the evolution of soccer as a sport and as an industry over the last sixty years has been dramatic (Williams, 2011). Modernization of society as well as cultural and social change, have led to a greater inclusion of women in sports and begun the transition from a traditional mindset to a modern mindset that accepts and appreciates women's sports. Although the cultural support has not completely developed in every country, and the financial support is still lacking, there are indications that the current state is improving. For example, The Netherlands saw record

figures, with 5.5 million people, or 88% of the viewing public<sup>17</sup>, tuning in to watch their side play in the final match of the FIFA Women's World Cup against the USA on July 7<sup>th</sup>, 2019.

If other countries, Croatia for example, wanted to encourage girls to engage more in sports, they could also implement laws and regulations that promote women's sports and tackle disparity. The Union of European Football Associations (UEFA) released a report in 2017 confirming that teenage girls who play soccer report higher levels of self-confidence than those who play other sports. The report claims that 80% of teenage girls exhibited more confident behavior thanks to playing with a soccer team or club, versus a slightly smaller 74% that play other sports. Additionally, 48% said they are less self-conscious as a result of playing soccer, compared with 40% that feel the same way, but play other sports<sup>18</sup>.

Higher institutions and governments can increase participation in female sports by implementing regulations and securing financial stability. Since being part of a team environment helps girls become more self-confident, investing in them could pay off not only when they succeed in top level competitions, but also when they take on more leadership roles in sports administrations, organizations, businesses and social institutions. In business, numerous studies show that companies led by women outperform the ones led by men. Up to 50% of Americans would prefer to work for a woman as opposed to a man<sup>19</sup>.

Peakon is an employee engagement platform that on their website claims to be the world's leading platform for measuring and improving employee management<sup>20</sup>. They conducted research on almost 60,000 employees under 3,000 managers to investigate how companies

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<sup>17</sup> *Women's World Cup Final Scores Dutch TV Ratings Record, U.K. Tournament Audience Doubles From 2015* (2019). The Hollywood Reporter, <https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/womens-world-cup-final-scores-dutch-tv-ratings-record-1222803> (Retrieved: 15 August 2019)

<sup>18</sup> *Report Shows How Football Boosts Girls' Confidence* (2017). UEFA.com, [www.uefa.com/womenseuro/news/newsid=2470403.html](http://www.uefa.com/womenseuro/news/newsid=2470403.html) (Retrieved: 28 July 2019).

<sup>19</sup> *Why Women-led Companies are better for employees* (2019). Forbes, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/carolinecastrillon/2019/03/24/why-women-led-companies-are-better-for-employees/#50df517a3264> (Retrieved: 30 July 2019).

<sup>20</sup> Homepage – Peakon (2019). Peakon, <https://peakon.com/>. (Retrieved: 15 August 2019).

with higher female representation in leadership positions differed from those with more male representation<sup>21</sup>. Their findings concluded that employees at women-led companies are more positive and have overall more employee engagement. Having more women in executive roles is not only fair, but it is good for business and the employees (“The Strategic Benefits of Women in Leadership”, 2019).

Sports are also where boys have traditionally learned about teamwork, goal-setting, the pursuit of excellence in performance, the critical skills necessary for success in the workplace and other achievement-oriented behaviors (Bunker, 2002). According to a survey on sports in the lives of women business executives, 80% of the female executives in Fortune 500 companies identified themselves as having been "tomboys" during their upbringing (Bunker, 2002). Supporting and encouraging women to play team sports could give them the skills not only to be great athletes, but also great leaders. Confidence, discipline, organizational skills and teamwork can all be learned from a young age through team sports and, therefore, should be promoted as such.

In theory, giving women's soccer more frequent and quality media attention can make it more popular. With a realization of current sex and gender barriers in sports, it is possible to decrease the marginalization of women's soccer in the public eye, as well as social prejudices related to the averment that “soccer is not joinable with female nature” (Gregurić, 2018). In the long run, more popularity could result in girls desiring to be involved more. This would increase the chances of Croatia producing high performance players who can compete in top competitions around the world, as well as women ready to take on leadership roles in sport and in society.

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<sup>21</sup> *The Strategic Benefits of Women in Leadership* (2019) Peakon, <https://peakon.com/us/blog/workplace-culture/strategic-benefits-women-leadership/> (Retrieved: 30 July 2019).

According to Forbes, some of the most powerful women in sports in 2018 (in the United States) were Michele Roberts, Lesa France Kennedy and Serena Williams<sup>22</sup>. Michele Roberts, executive director of the National Basketball Players Association, is the first woman to hold that position and also the first to lead a major professional sports union in North America. Lesa France Kennedy is the CEO of the International Speedway Corporation (ISC) and vice chairwoman of NASCAR. Serena Williams is the world's highest paid female athlete ("The Most Powerful Women In U.S. Sports 2018", 2018). The kind of adversity these women had to overcome in order to reach their goals can only be imagined. Now they can stand tall as influential women of leadership, and also as role models for younger girls because they are living examples that women can excel in leadership roles in sports and business. Moreover, sports act as a starting point and mechanism for their social promotion.

Furthermore, the media plays a big role in increasing popularity and making women's sports better understood. An extensive and continuous presence of women's team sports in the media could lead to an increase in appreciation and interest. They could also incentivize changes in social and cultural norms that preset sports like soccer as suitable only for men. Longitudinal research done on the popular Canadian newspapers, *The Globe and Mail*, showed that female athletes were constantly "under – covered" as they received only a quarter of the attention that male athletes enjoyed between 1924 and 1992 (Duncan, 2009:251).

Considering this data, it can be speculated that the media do not acknowledge women and female athletes who have made exceptional careers in sports as much as they could. The role of the media and its effect on the promotion of women's sports will be discussed further in the following section.

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<sup>22</sup> *The Most Powerful Women In U.S. Sports 2018* (2018). Forbes, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/jasonbelzer/2018/03/27/the-most-powerful-women-in-u-s-sports-2018/#13e184d7423f> Retrieved: 30 July 2019)

### 3.3 THE MEDIA AND ITS EFFECT ON THE PROMOTION OF WOMEN'S SPORTS

Research done by Eastman and Billings in 2000 (Duncan, 2009:251) described that even the world's largest newspaper agencies devote much less space to women's sports in comparison to men's. Out of 951 articles in the Sports section of The New York Times, 85% of them covered men's sports and only 11% covered women's sports, while the other 4% covered other topics. The authors stated that even the newspaper USA Today, a corporation that aims to reach out to the female public, didn't produce better statistics in terms of the difference in coverage of men's and women's sports. Research on the European market on the same topic unfortunately produces similar results to those in North America (Duncan, 2009:251-252).

The entire study of mass communication is based on the assumption that media have significant effects, yet there is little agreement on the nature and extent of assumed effects (McQuail, 2005:456). In other words, it is difficult to prove the effect that media has on people's perception or behavior, but there are theories worth exploring that tackle that issue. Framing, priming and agenda-setting are amongst the most important techniques used by the media to influence the public mind.

McQuail (2005:378) defines framing as the way that news is contextualized or shaped graphically, meaning that they literally set a "frame" in the consumer's mind through which the consumer understands content. This is very closely related to priming, which is the connection between that frame and an association with something a person has seen or heard before – in other words, an image in the consumer's head that is immediately used for association. The priming theory explains how information from the media is commonly stored in the human mind (through pictures and associations), and also how that influences decision making in the future. The next, and most important theory of media effects for this paper is agenda-setting. The media always has an agenda of topics they plan to cover in a certain time frame. The more frequently they report on particular issues, the more important

those issues seem to the public. The order of presentation and frequency have the ability to influence the importance and relevance associated with content in the public mind. It is assumed that the more media attention given to a topic, the greater its importance (McQuail, 2005).

For example, if content on women's sports are rarely on the media's agenda, contextualized in the shadow of male sports and framed with very little text (as well as little to no graphical imaging), then the public might perceive women's sports as insignificant and unpopular. However, if content on women's team sports were regularly available, framed with pictures, statistics and plenty of information that can help the consumer associate with (or relate to) top level professional women's teams and players, then the public mind would feel that women's team sports are successful, important and worth an investment of time and/or money.

The main goal for any organization is to maximize their audience and profits; mass media organizations are no different (McQuail, 2005:284). Conventional means of mass communication aim to enhance their reach and consumption, and in doing so they report on topics that are considered engaging and popular. As Trenaman and McQuail (1961:178) pointed out, the evidence strongly suggest that people think *about* what they are told but at no level do they think *what* they are told. Agenda-setting sets the stage for public discourse with topics and information that people will think and talk about, in other words, they are essentially framing what the public is exposed to, what people will perceive are currently the main issues and what people will think about or talk about, but not necessarily what each person thinks of a given topic.

Nonetheless, convincing people that women's soccer is currently (or can be) popular, that it is a sport suitable for women and that it deserves more media coverage is an uphill battle in countries where the level of play in leagues (and the national teams) are not yet high enough to compete with countries like the U.S.A, Holland or France. Creedon, Cramer and Granitz (1994:182) mention in regards to the promotion of women's sports through the media, that

the relationship between the woman athlete and promotion is a struggle between empowerment and pander. Although media images of female athletes can be empowering when they are portrayed as role models, athletes must find ways of satisfying the media's obsession with sex, winners, conflict and controversy as well. This insinuates that women's sports not only have to fight for more media space in order to increase popularity and thereby participation numbers, but they also have to beware that the media will eat up contentious material to excite their audiences if things go even slightly wrong. This can be dangerous because too much controversy can paint the wrong picture (priming) about the nature of women's sports.

Duncan and Messner (2002:171-174) researched television content in the United States and compared the coverage given to men and women through three dimensions: time, technical quality in production and audience building. In 6 weeks of television news, men's sports were awarded 92% of the total minutes, women's sports received 5% and the other 3% went to sport-neutral topics. These disappointing statistics are very similar to those mentioned by Eastman and Billings in 2000 for the newspaper industry. In terms of technical quality in production, the authors claim that male sports were shown with far better frames, camera angles, editing and sound. This makes male sports seem like a "spectacle of historical importance" in comparison to "boring" women's sports (Duncan and Messner, 2002:171-174). Reducing the quality of production has a framing and priming effect that also reduces the chances that an audience will enjoy and continue to watch that content.

Lopiano (2000:166) describes another struggle that female athletes have with the media, and that is the representation of their appearance. She describes a double standard with a society that is supportive and encourages women to be involved in sports on one hand, but then expects them to look good on the other hand. A woman's appearance even when they are sweating, working, training and practicing under daunting and incessant conditions needs to be made seemingly effortless, which is a draining task not required of a man. "It's not enough to play golf. Women must look good playing golf. Wearing the same golf outfit or golf shoes

every day, as many men do, is not the female expectation” (Lopiano, 2000:166). This standard puts pressure on women that could even take their focus away from the game.

Furthermore, authors Christopherson, Janning and McConnell (Duncan, 2009:256) when studying the 1999 Women’s World Cup found that one-third of the articles they analyzed contained mention of the female athlete’s (or female spectators) sexuality, body and physical appearance in traditional print media. They also pointed out that the factor of sex appeal was frequently used to explain the popularity of a team.

According to statistics, the media is not very kind to women’s sports. In a paper about sex stereotypes in sport and exercise, authors point out that in the United States, sports media generally dedicate only 5% to 8% of coverage to women’s sports, even though 40% of sports participation is by women (Chalabaev, Sarrazine, Fontayne, Boiche, Clement-Guilltoin, 2013:7).

UNESCO, advocating for fairer media coverage of sportswomen after the PyeongChang Paralympic 2018 Winter Games, also published statistics that show very low percentages. They claim that that only 4% of sports media content is dedicated to women’s sport and 12% of sports news is presented by women<sup>23</sup>. Some authors say that the future and success of women’s sports is reliant on media attention because their ability to increase attendance and television ratings will increase revenues from ticket sales and game day sales at event venues (Mumcu, C., Lough, N. L., Barnes, J. C., 2016). In order to increase attendance and develop a larger fan base (which could also affect sponsorship opportunities as well as advertisement and broadcasting contracts) consumers’ views of women’s sports need to be better understood.

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<sup>23</sup> UNESCO call for fairer media coverage of sportswomen (2018). UNESCO, <https://en.unesco.org/news/unesco-calls-fairer-media-coverage-sportswomen> (Retrieved: 28 July 2019).



The Agency for Electronic Media in Croatia published a document in 2019 called *Suggestions for Better Coverage of Women's Sports in Electronic Media*. They took the three most watched television channels with national concessions in Croatia (HRT - HTV1, RTL Televizija, Nova TV) and used content analysis to research their central news broadcasts in an effort to uncover how much media space is granted to women's sports (AEM, 2019:15). Around 7 hours of news was analyzed during the months of February, March and April of 2016. Their results concluded that in Croatia, women's sport in national television news take up less than 4% of the total content broadcasted, shown in the table below.

**Figure 3 - The amount of media coverage devoted to both men and women's sports over a 3-month period in 2016.**

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Number of Pieces</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Male	319	86%
Female	14	3.76%
Both	37	9.94%

*Source: AEM, 2019*

The results clearly show that male sports take up over 85% of media attention in the three most watched national news channels. Reports on women's sports, unfortunately, don't even make up for 10% of the total media coverage. An audience that uses television to stay informed on news and sports is presented with a miniscule amount of information pertaining to women's sports.

Based on the numbers it can be concluded that women's sports generally enjoy very little media coverage (both in the U.S. where there is little to no segregation between male and female sports, and in Croatia), and the appearance of female athletes in the media is scarce

and insufficient. The next section steps away from data that pertains to media coverage generally, and delves further into detail about women's sports and media coverage in Croatia specifically.

### 3.4 WOMEN'S SPORTS AND MEDIA COVERAGE IN CROATIA

A report published by the Agency of Electronic Media (AEM) titled *Equality between men and women in the sport programmes through audiovisual media services* points to data from 2013 that suggests how large the gap is between male and female athletes that are registered under the Croatian Olympic Committee (HOO).

According to the Commission of the Croatian Olympic Committee, in 2013 Croatia had 280,790 registered athletes in all age groups, of which only 17% (or 47,734) were women<sup>24</sup>.

Most of those athletes were 1st division athletes, exactly 18,646 of them, which accounted for 14% of the overall number of 1st division athletes who were registered (AEM, n.d.). The other 86% were male athletes.

The HOO estimated that 192,000 athletes were registered in national sports teams who represent the country in their respective disciplines, of which only 26,800 were women. They also categorized athletes based on their current status and accomplishments, giving certain athletes privileges in school or work. Professional athletes, for example, have slightly more benefits than amateur athletes. Out of all of the athletes who acquired HOO categorization in 2013, only 36% of them were women (AEM, n.d.).

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<sup>24</sup> Equality between men and women in the sport programmes through audiovisual media services (n.d.) Agency for Electronic Media, <file:///C:/Users/Panther/Downloads/Women%20and%20Sport%20-%20Croatia.pdf> (Retrieved: 31 July 2019).

This data goes to show the small amount of female athletes that are registered in comparison to their male counterparts. If Croatia does not have very many female athletes to begin with, it is hard to expect that they would be able to continuously produce high quality players (especially in a wider range of disciplines) or be able to compete in international competitions.

In the same report published by the AEM, some of the biggest successes of Croatian women's team sports were also listed. Recognition was given to the Croatian women's national volleyball team for their silver medal at the 1995, 1997 and 1999 European Championships, as well as the volleyball club OK Dubrovnik for winning the women's Champions League in 1998. The handball club team RK Podravka won the Women's Champions League in 1996, EFH Supercup in 1996 and Regional League in 2009. The women's handball club ŽRK Lokomotiva also won the EHF Cup in 1991 and EHF Challenge Cup in 2017.

An important factor to note here is that the women's team sports whose achievements received national recognition were either handball or volleyball. In the results section of this paper, both handball and volleyball stood out in comparison to all other women's team sports because of the amount of media attention they received during the time period that this research was conducted.

According to the *Suggestions for Better Coverage of Women's Sports in Electronic Media* also published by the AEM (2019:20), social stereotypes are one of the biggest obstacles to women's sports. The media use this as an excuse to reduce their attention to women's sports. Society stipulates that there are sports games in which women can participate, such as golf and tennis. But, when women try to engage in sports that are considered masculine, society ignores them because in this way women go against social norms and customs.

In a research paper titled *Attitudes Towards Women's Football in a Rural Environment*, Ksenija Bosnar and Maja Kovačević (n.d.) stated that, “soccer is undoubtedly the most popular male sport in Croatia. This claim can be easily supported by the number of active players, clubs and leagues, the media interest, the number of stadiums as well as the amount of money invested and earned. At the same time, women's soccer is very poorly developed”. It can be speculated that the reasons why women’s soccer is so poorly developed range from its faint popularity and lack of regulation, to the cultural stigma and financial instability it endures.

The upcoming section of this paper will continue to focus on the current circumstances in Croatia by presenting the empirical data obtained through research and analysis on media coverage and public perception.

### 3.5 EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

Thus far, the previous sections of this paper explored, defined and elaborated on women in sports in general, the role that sports play as a mechanism for social promotion and certain media effects as well as women’s sports in Croatia. Going forward, this paper will focus on the empirical research conducted for this master’s thesis, the research methods used, key findings and their relevance to women’s team sports.

#### 3.5.1 Research Methods

The purpose of this study is to explore the attitudes that girls have towards women’s soccer in Croatia through quantitative methods of research, as well as the amount of media coverage devoted to women's sports in Croatian daily newspapers.

Two quantitative methods of research were used, content analysis and a survey. According to Wimmer and Dominik (2010:156), content analysis is a popular method with mass media researchers because it is an efficient way to investigate content. For example, the number and types of commercials or advertisements in broadcasting or print media can be determined through content analysis. Wimmer and Dominik (2010:185) also define two major types of surveys: descriptive and analytical. A descriptive survey attempts to describe or document current conditions or attitudes (that is, to explain what exists at the moment) and an analytical survey attempts to describe why situations exist by examining two or more variables that investigate research questions, or test research hypotheses.

This research paper is focused on content analysis that is objective and resulted in a number of articles that talk about women's team sports, as well as a descriptive survey that will describe the current attitude that girls have towards women's soccer.

Content analysis of *Sportske Novosti*, a daily sports newspaper, and *Jutarnji List*, a Croatian daily newspaper, was conducted for empirical evidence of media coverage pertaining to women's team sports over a span of 2 months. *Sportske Novosti* was chosen because of its focus on sports and *Jutarnji List* was chosen because it is one of the three most consumed daily newspapers in Croatia, with high circulation and readership<sup>25</sup>. Analysis was conducted from February 1<sup>st</sup> to March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2019 using an analytical matrix that broke down each article, or unit for analysis, based on certain criteria.

After content analysis research was completed and results were recorded, a questionnaire was constructed to survey the general knowledge, opinions and media habits of 16 and 17-year-old girls. The questions were designed to inquire whether they could name a female soccer player they recall seeing in the media, whether or not they would play soccer before playing

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<sup>25</sup> *24sata Has the Highest Circulation Revenue, Jutarnji List the Highest Print Advertising Revenue Whereas 7Dnevno and Međimurje Are Best Sold Weeklies* (2018) AZTN, [www.aztn.hr/en/24sata-has-the-highest-circulation-revenue-jutarnji-list-the-highest-print-advertising-revenue-whereas-7dnevno-and-medimurje-are-best-sold-weeklies/](http://www.aztn.hr/en/24sata-has-the-highest-circulation-revenue-jutarnji-list-the-highest-print-advertising-revenue-whereas-7dnevno-and-medimurje-are-best-sold-weeklies/) (Retrieved: 28 July 2019).

another (more popular) team sport that seemingly enjoys higher media attention<sup>26</sup>, whether or not they have ever been discouraged from playing soccer by their parents or peers and if they have ever heard that “soccer is a man’s game”; an assertion from which it can be deduced that there is a cultural stigma associated with women’s soccer in Croatia.

### 3.5.2 Research Objectives

This study utilized content analysis as an explorative research method to better understand the current media environment in Croatia. The objective of exploratory research is the development of hypotheses, rather than their testing, along with formulating a problem for more precise investigation (Kothari, 2004:4). Therefore, there were no hypotheses defined prior to conducting content analysis research.

The goals of conducted research were:

#### 3.5.2.1 *CONTENT ANALYSIS*

1. To determine the amount of media coverage that is devoted to women’s team sports over a span of two months.
2. To determine which women’s team sports experience the most media coverage.
3. To uncover the size and graphical presence of the articles about women’s team sports.
4. To determine the focus of each article (whether they pertain to competitions, business ventures or the physical attributes of the players).
5. To determine if women’s team sports are ever on the cover page of the newspaper.

#### 3.5.2.2 *SURVEY*

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<sup>26</sup> The research conducted for the purpose of this master’s thesis concluded that women’s handball and volleyball enjoyed higher media attention than soccer over the span of two months.

6. To determine the percentage of girls who have heard that “soccer is a man’s game”.
7. To determine if teenage girls have ever been discouraged from playing soccer by their peers or family members/guardians.
8. To determine the attitude that teenage girls have towards women's soccer.
9. To explore whether teenage girls can name one professional female soccer player they recall seeing in the media, and if they can, who that is.
10. To determine which platforms, if any, girls use to stay informed on women’s soccer.

According to the aforementioned goals, the following hypotheses were defined before conducting a survey with 16 and 17 year-old high school girls in Zagreb.

### **3.5.2.3 HYPOTHESES**

1. A majority of girls in their second year of high school in Zagreb have heard that “soccer is a man’s game”.
2. Two-thirds of the participants have felt discouraged from playing soccer by their peers.
3. 10 % of the participants have felt discouraged from playing soccer by a parent, family member or guardian.
4. More than two-thirds of girls in their second year of high school cannot name one female soccer player they have seen in the media.
5. Girls in their second year of high school list their own internet research and social media as the most common platforms responsible for their exposure to women’s soccer.

### **3.5.2.4 SAMPLING**

One goal of scientific research is to describe the nature of a population—a group or class of subjects, variables, concepts, or phenomena (Wimmer, Dominick, 2010:87). In this case, the

population is all daily newspapers in Croatia. The sample used for this research was the top sports newspaper in Croatia and the newspaper with the second highest circulation behind the tabloid *24sata*<sup>27</sup>. The reason why women's team sports were analyzed, instead of just women's soccer, is due to the presumption that there would not be enough articles on women's soccer during the time period that research was conducted to offer substantial data. Furthermore, analyzing women's team sports on a whole also allowed for a general understanding of the media coverage (or lack thereof) female team sports suffer from and to what extent.

Both *Sportske Novosti* and *Jutarnji List* are published daily. With 59 days accumulated through February and March of 2019, this adds up to a total of 118 newspapers that were analyzed. 82 articles were originally separated and photographed as a part of the data pool. Upon further contemplation and consulting with a thesis advisor, however, 5 articles were excluded because it was determined that their focus was not on women's team sports. Women's team sports were defined earlier as those disciplines where a team competes against another team, and all of the individuals share the same collective result. The articles that were omitted were either written as a combination of team and individual sports (such as table tennis or tennis in pairs, along with the results and information on singles matches), or both male and female sports (such a beach volleyball competition with both male and female participants). In one case, an article about a bowling team was excluded because although each player was part of a collective team, they bowled as individuals and their results were scored individually. That left a total of 77 articles on women's team sports out of the 118 newspapers.

The population for the survey was defined as all high schools in Zagreb. A non-probability sampling method of a convenience sample was used for this research paper, otherwise

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<sup>27</sup> *24sata Has the Highest Circulation Revenue, Jutarnji List the Highest Print Advertising Revenue Whereas 7Dnevno and Međimurje Are Best Sold Weeklies* (2018) AZTN, [www.aztn.hr/en/24sata-has-the-highest-circulation-revenue-jutarnji-list-the-highest-print-advertising-revenue-whereas-7dnevno-and-medimurje-are-best-sold-weeklies/](http://www.aztn.hr/en/24sata-has-the-highest-circulation-revenue-jutarnji-list-the-highest-print-advertising-revenue-whereas-7dnevno-and-medimurje-are-best-sold-weeklies/) (Retrieved: 28 July 2019).



defined as a collection of readily accessible subjects, elements, or events for study (Wimmer, Dominick, 2010:92). This method was used because a lot of schools were unwilling to participate under the claim that they were currently undergoing too many activities and did not have enough time. Even though more than 20 high schools were contacted, only two were willing to conduct the survey with their students, the *III. High School* of Zagreb and the *X. High School "Ivan Supek"*.

An open-source statistics program called JASP was used to analyze the collected data from both research methods. Microsoft Excel was used to record data and create all of the graphs.

### 3.5.3 Research Instruments

#### 3.5.3.1 **CONTENT ANALYSIS MATRIX**

The content analysis matrix used for this study contained 14 components that were examined for each article. The articles that were identified in accordance with the aforementioned definitions of team sports were given a code, photographed and dated to avoid confusion in the analysis process. Then the following data was recorded in an excel table:

- Code
- Name of the newspaper
- Day of publication
- Month of publication
- Was there mention of women's sports on the cover of the newspaper
- The team sport of focus in the article
- The main theme of the article
- The reason for publishing the article
- Type of article

- Size of the article
- The presence of any graphical depiction
- Contents of any graphical depiction
- Size of graphical depiction
- The type of headline

### **3.5.3.2 QUESTIONNAIRE**

The survey was conducted on a sample of 150 girls in their second year of high school who were over the age of 15. At the ages of 16 and 17, teenagers are already aware of mass media and social media, thereby giving them the maturity level needed to properly understand and answer questions on cultural stigma as well as their honest attitude towards women's soccer in Croatia. The survey contained 11 questions in total. A majority of the questions allowed for only one answer, however, one question allowed for more than one answer to be selected.

## 4 RESEARCH RESULTS

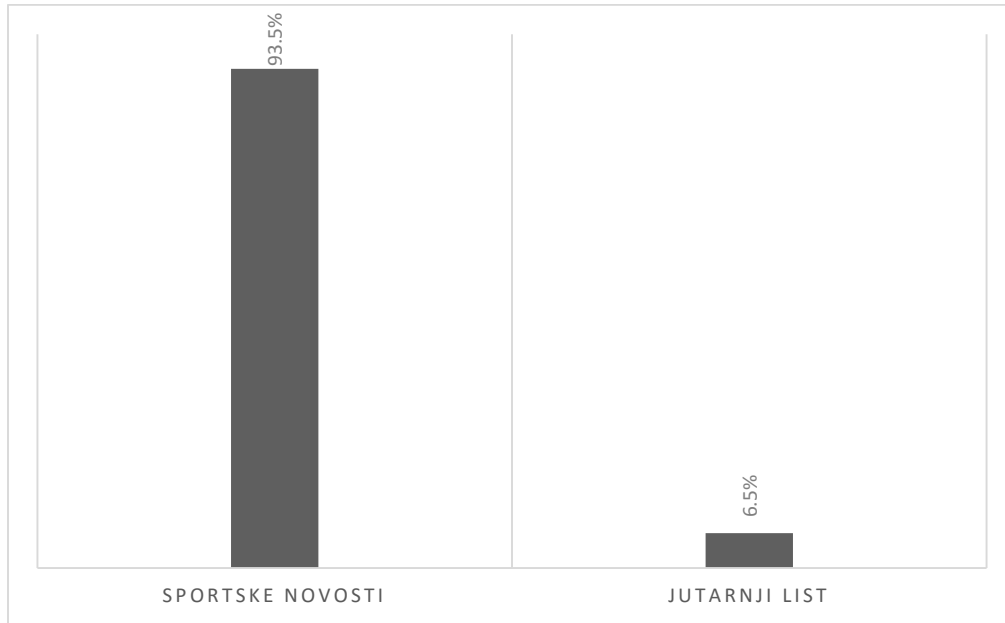
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### 4.1 CONTENT ANALYSIS

Considering that in 118 newspapers of roughly 30 pages of content there were less than 80 articles in total pertaining to all women's team sports, it can generally be said that media coverage of women's sports is insufficient in Croatia.

72 of those articles were located in *Sportske Novosti*, whereas only 5 were in *Jutarnji List*. It could be expected that both newspapers would have published more articles on women's team sports, especially *Sportske Novosti* that is a daily newspaper focused specifically on sports. The percentages are shown below.

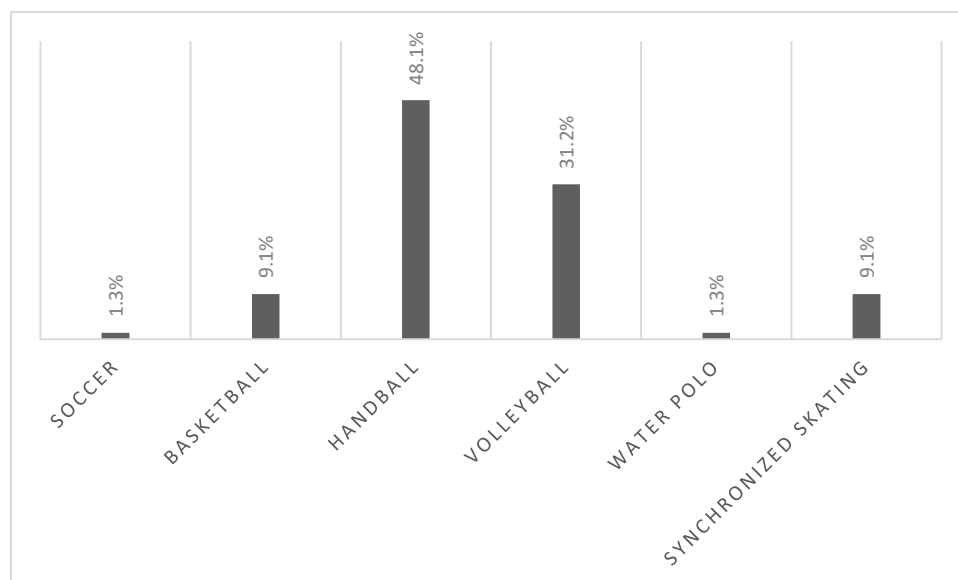
**Figure 4 - Percentage of articles belonging to each newspapers that was analyzed during the research conducted for this paper.**



Source: Author's research

Of the 77 articles that were analyzed, the graph below depicts which sports were the main focus of each article and the amount of articles published for each sport.

**Figure 5 - Percentage of articles regarding women's team sports in Jutarnji List and Sportske Novosti throughout February and March of 2019.**



Source: Author's research

From the graph it is evident that the team sport that experiences the most media coverage are women's handball with 48.1% of the articles, followed by volleyball at 31.2%.

Basketball and synchronized ice skating share the same amount of exposure with 9.1% each, as well as water polo and soccer that made up 2.6% of the total amount of articles.

It is crucial to emphasize that only 1 article was devoted to women's soccer during the period of February and March of 2019, in two daily Croatian newspapers. Below is the article on women's soccer describing the arrival of a Taiwanese player, Tseng Shu-O, to the women's soccer club ŽNK Split, a team that competes in the 1<sup>st</sup> Croatian women's league. In the article Shu-O talked about her hometown and favorite soccer player, Luka Modrić, and also promised to score numerous goals in the upcoming season.

Figure 6 - An article about women's soccer published on March 15th, 2019 in Sportske Novosti.



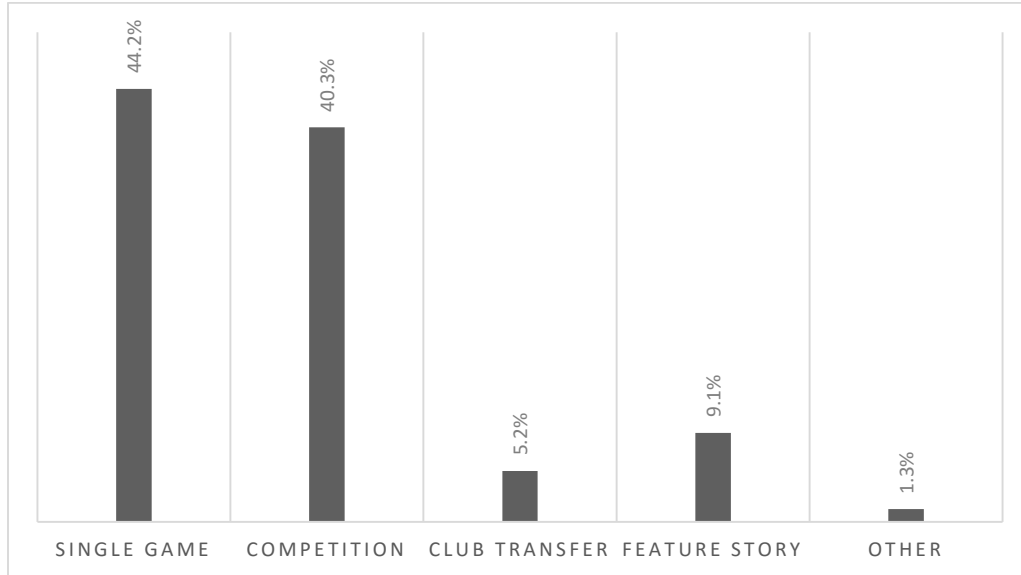
Source: Author's research

The main theme of each article was analyzed to determine whether the focus was on sports activity, business, the physical characteristics of players or their private lives. 93.5% of the articles were focused on sports activities such as results and athletic performance, 5.19% of the articles reported on the private lives of players by describing their health, relationships or family matters, and only 1.29% of the articles was about business activity such as endorsements, contracts and financial ventures. It is important to mention that not one article focused on the physical appearances of the female players. In a paper about female

athletes in the media, Christopher J. Maley (2012) used content analysis to examine every copy of Time Magazine issued from 2007 to 2009, and showed that female athletes are seen less for their athletic accomplishments and more for their off-the-field endeavors. His key finding indicated that of the 32 articles and interviews found, at least 40 percent was dedicated to the female's off-the-field activities. During the research for this paper, the assumption that female athletes receive media exposure that focuses on their appearance cannot be confirmed.

Furthermore, to continue elaborating on the kind of content being published about women's team sports in Croatian media, the reason behind each article was also determined. While conducting the content analysis for this study, the reason for publishing each article was considered different from the theme. The theme described a general direction, while the reason went further into detail about what was being covered. The results can be seen in the graph below.

**Figure 7 - Reasons behind the publication of each article regarding women's team sports in Jutarnji List and Sportske Novosti throughout February and March of 2019.**



*Source: Author's research*

A majority of the 77 articles described the results or athletic performance of a single game or competition, exactly 84.5% of them. This is in correlation with the above mentioned statistics that the main theme of a majority of the articles was sports activity - as opposed to business ventures or their private lives.

Although there weren't many articles found during the two-month period that didn't pertain to games or competitions, there were a few feature stories published on either sporting activities, the private lives of players or club transfers.



Figure 8 - A feature story about the private life of a synchronized ice skater published on February 8<sup>th</sup>, 2019 in Sportske Novosti.



Source: Author's research

In the article above, Jana Jambresić, a member of the synchronized ice skating team “The Zagreb Snowflakes” (cro: Zagrebačke Pahuljice) describes her family life as being heavily oriented around her skating career.

The one article that fell into the category “other” was about the coach of a women’s handball team getting fired. This article, displayed below, encompassed 16% of the total number of articles.

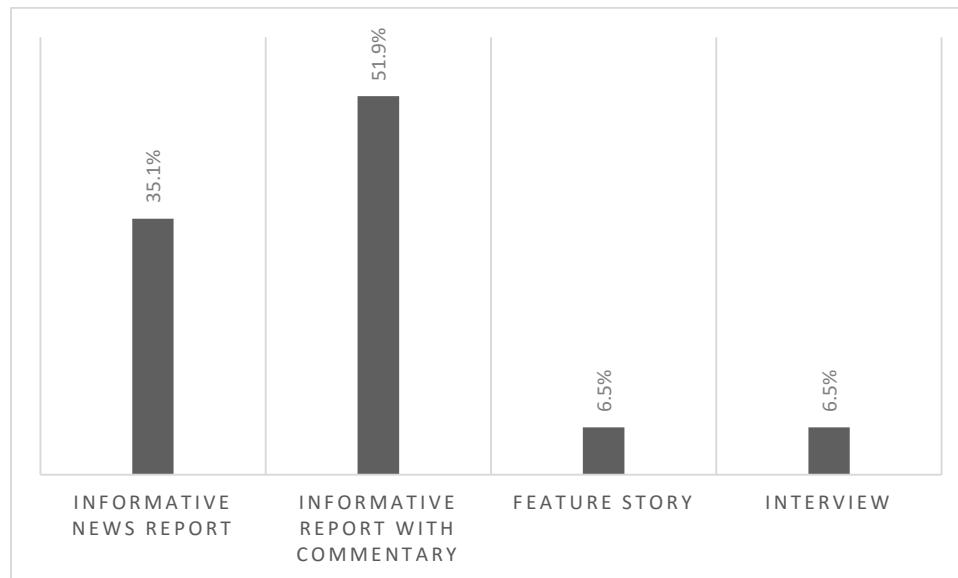
*Figure 9 - An article about a handball coach getting fired published on March 15th, 2019 in Sportske Novosti.*



*Source: Author's research*

The type of article was also determined. Each article was categorized as either informative with or without commentary, a feature story and an interview. This helps explain the approach that the media take when covering women's sports, in other words, whether there is a variety of different angles or the journalistic style is monotonous. Feature stories and interviews are expected to be more descriptive, while informative news stories and reports are direct and to the point. Results are displayed in the graph below.

**Figure 10 - Types of articles published regarding women's team sports in Jutarnji List and Sportske Novosti throughout February and March of 2019.**



*Source: Author's research*

52% of the articles were informative reports which, along with results and statistics, contained commentary from players or coaches. 35% of the articles were straightforward, informative news reports and the remainder were either a feature story or interview that escaped from the norm of basic reporting and embraced more elaborate detail and explanation. This information goes to show that the media mostly inform the public on women's team sports using a very direct approach. A majority of the comments given by players and coaches pertained to the specific event being covered, such as their thoughts or experiences from a game or future plans going in to the next competition. It seems as though not much investigation or questioning takes place to better understand the world of women's sports.

Previously mentioned research by Duncan and Messner (2002:171-174). delineated that in late night Sunday television news and sports reports, the men's sports news was supported with interviews of players and coaches in a much bigger quantity than women's sports, and

because of that women's sports seemed to lack "excitement" in the public mind. This data is again tied in with the media techniques of framing, priming and agenda-setting. Less coverage in quantity, along with less "attractive" coverage, together speak for the effect that insufficient media coverage has on the public view towards certain topics because they lack depth and contextual understanding.

*Figure 11 - An article about a club transfer in volleyball published on February 3rd, 2019 in Sportske Novosti.*



*Source: Author's research*

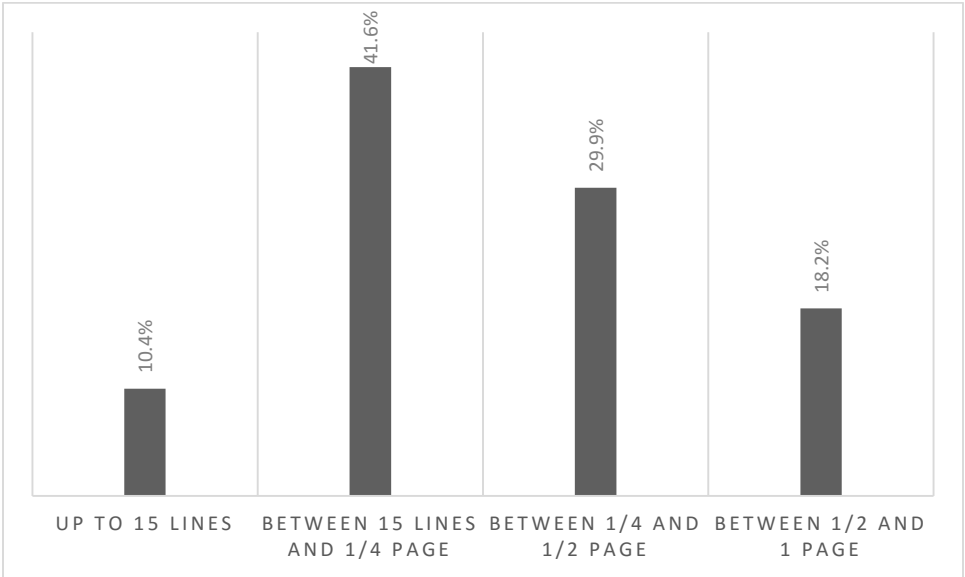
The size of each article can speak for the amount of space (or importance) awarded to women's team sports in the Croatian daily newspapers studied. For example, the article above is about a volleyball player, Ana Starčević, who has played in many strong clubs and leagues all over Europe. Her career started in Croatia, but she then moved on to play in Turkey, Slovenia and Switzerland. At 33 years of age, she signed a new contract to play for an Italian club called La Reale Mutua Fenera Chieri, which was the news being covered in this article. In terms of size, this article was marked down to be between 15 lines and a quarter page.

For a player of that prestige and experience, however, an interview or feature story could have been done to find out more about what women's volleyball has to offer in Italy, and

also how the working conditions of the sport vary in different countries. Those kinds of inquiries would better inform the public on women's team sports, and also help readers draw comparisons to help them understand the conditions and realities that female athletes experience. An article with more detailed information would have certainly been longer as well.

Furthermore, the more space an article takes up in the newspaper, the more likely it is to be noticed by a reader. The range of article sizes in this study were determined to be either very short (up to 5 lines), relatively short (between 5 and 15 lines), between 15 lines and a quarter of a page, a half a page long, a whole page or more than one page. A graph with the article sizes is shown below.

**Figure 12 - Sizes of the articles published regarding women's team sports in Jutarnji List and Sportske Novosti throughout February and March of 2019.**

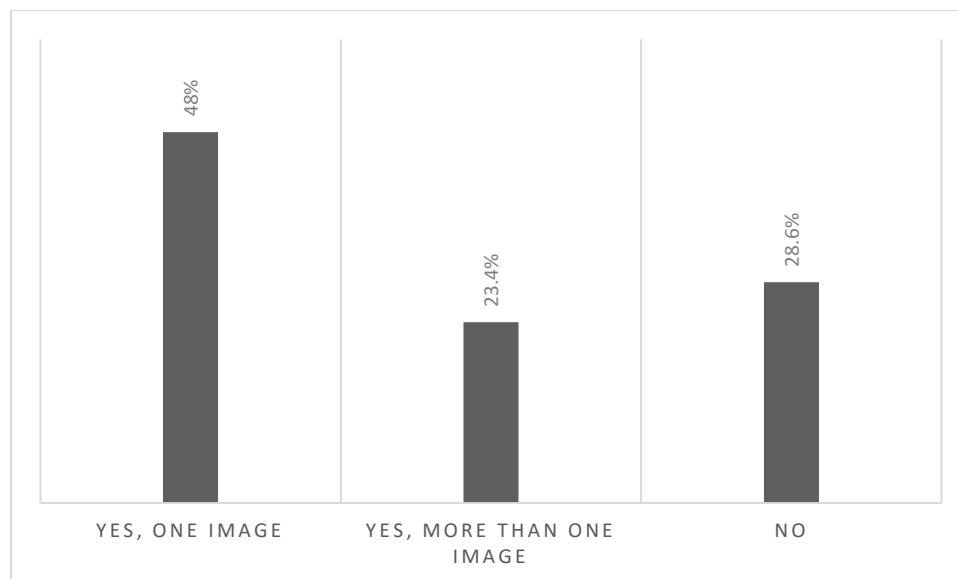


*Source: Author's research*

There were no articles that could be categorized as very short, or less than 5 lines, but there were also none that were more than a page long. 10% of the articles were relatively short, or less than 15 lines long. Most of the articles were between 15 lines and a quarter page long. In combination with the articles that were up to half a page long, this would make up 71.5% of the 77 articles analyzed, which goes to show that although the frequency of articles on women's team sports is not substantial, at least the articles are of a decent size. 18% of the articles were between a half page and a whole page long.

The following question during content analysis research pertained to whether the articles were supported by some kind of graphical image; such as a picture, graph or both. Considering that the size, design and graphical presentation of an article attract attention from readers, these factors are viewed as framing techniques, which were explained more in detail earlier in this paper. The results are shown below.

**Figure 13 – Percentage of articles regarding women's team sports that contained graphical images in Jutarnji List and Sportske Novosti throughout February and March of 2019.**

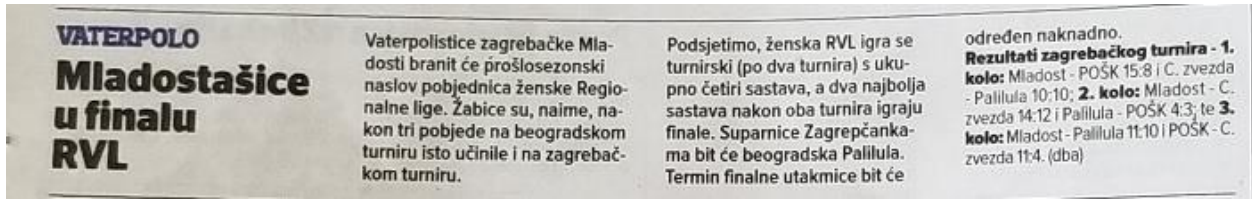


*Source: Author's research*

48% of the articles were supported by one image, while 23.4% had more than one image. 28.6% of the articles were not graphically supported with an image at all. 55 of the articles, therefore a majority of them, were supported with some kind of image.

Below is an article that fell into the 28.6% that had no graphical support, about a women's water polo team fighting to defend their crown as the first place team in the regional women's water polo league.

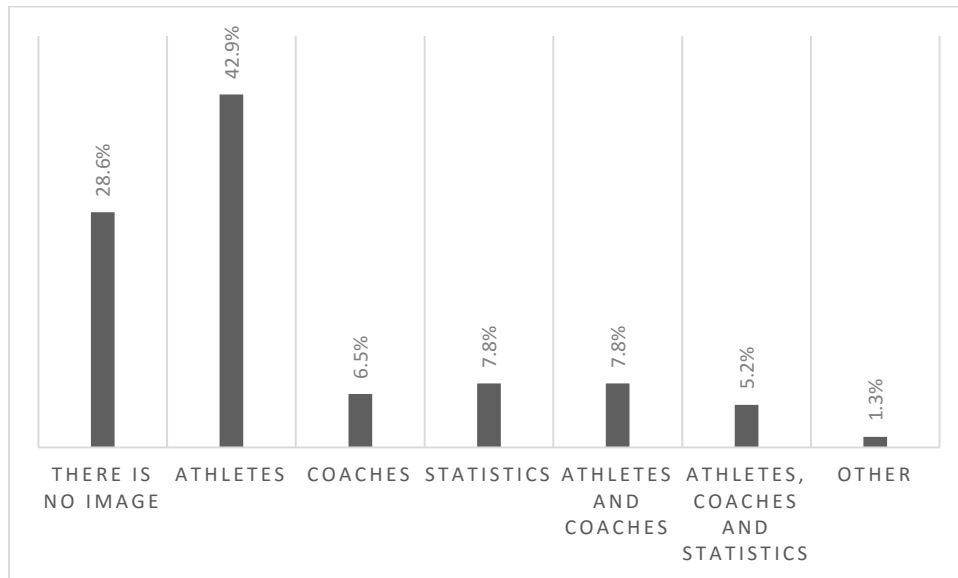
*Figure 14 - An article about a water polo team published on March 5th, 2019 in Sportske Novosti.*



*Source: Author's research*

Of the articles that had images, the content of each image was also analyzed to determine what the main focus of the images were. A graph with the results is shown below.

*Figure 15 - Content of graphical images that supported articles regarding women's team sports in Jutarnji List and Sportske Novosti throughout February and March of 2019.*



*Source: Author's research*

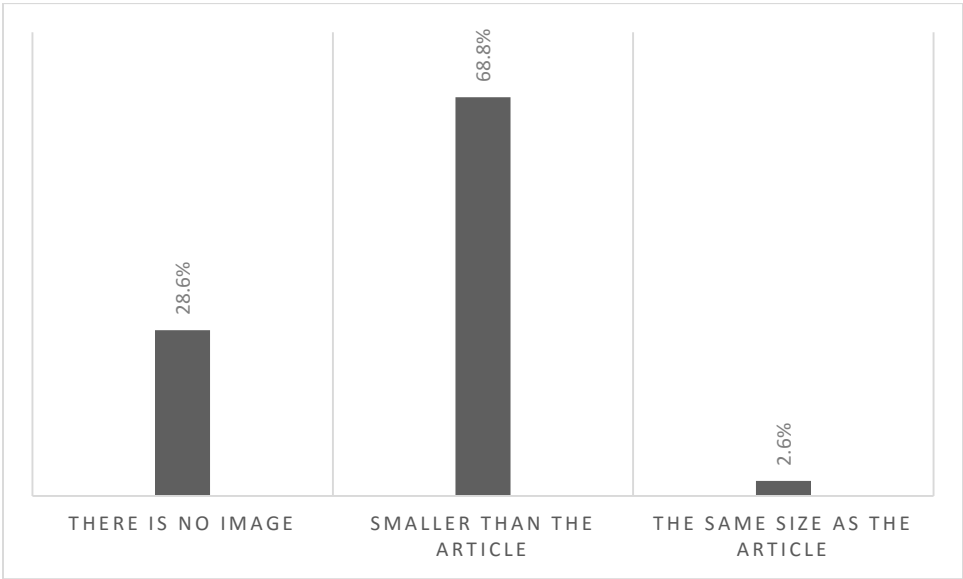
In correlation with the previous graph, 57.2% of the articles supported with a graphical image were of the athletes, coaches or both. Alongside athletes and coaches, 5.2% had



statistical images as well. 7.8% of the articles only included images of a statistical nature, such as tables with results and rankings, or graphs of a statistical nature. It is expected that a majority of the images would be of the athletes involved in the sporting activity being covered. The one image that fell into the category of “other” depicted athletes with their fans, which was a parameter that had not been defined as a possibility when the content analysis matrix was constructed.

A crucial parameter to consider when trying to capture the attention of readers is not only the image itself, but the size of the image. Articles with several or bigger images are, subjectively speaking, more likely to intrigue a reader. Unfortunately, as shown in the graph below, of the articles that contained images, 68.8% of those images were relatively small or smaller than the article itself.

***Figure 16 - Sizes of graphical images that supported articles regarding women's team sports in Jutarnji List and Sportske Novosti throughout February and March of 2019.***



Source: Author’s research

Although it could be said that it is common for images to be smaller than the article text, sometimes it does happen that the images are about the same size as the text. This happened in exactly two cases, or 2.6% of the articles, but in no cases were the images larger than the actual text.

Below is an article about a women's handball team competing in the quarter finals of the European Handball Federations Cup tournament. This article was up to a quarter page long with an image that is smaller than the article text.

*Figure 17 - An article about a handball game published on March 1st, 2019 in Jutarnji List.*



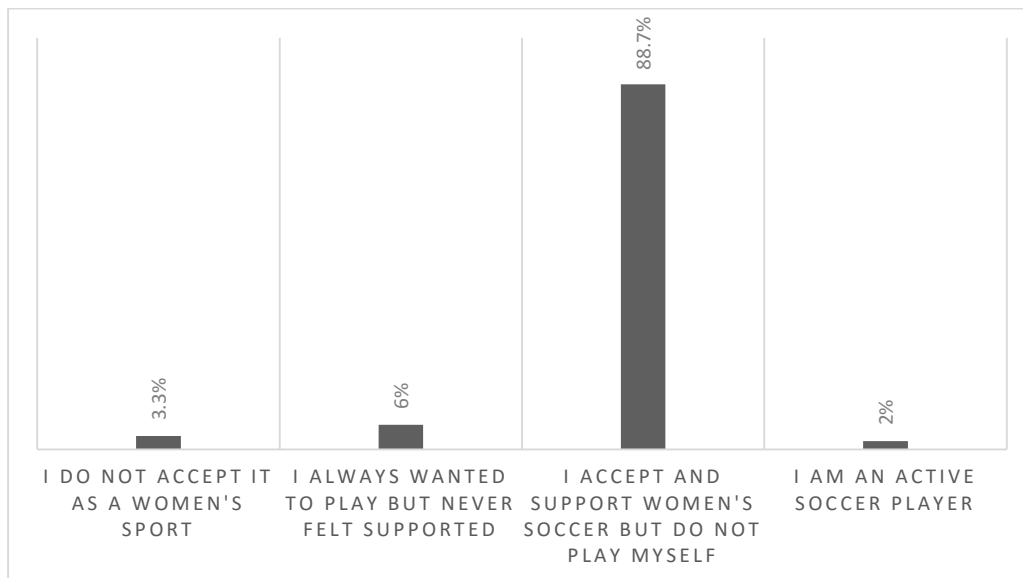
Source: Author's research

Furthermore, there were absolutely no cases of there being a women's team sports mentioned on the cover page of the newspaper. This was one of the goals of content analysis research and yet another parameter that can speak for the importance that the media put on promoting women's team sports.

## 4.2 SURVEY

After looking at the results of the content analysis research conducted on two daily Croatian newspapers, the focus will now be shifted to the results of the survey. As previously mentioned, the goal of the survey was to determine the attitudes that teenage girls have towards women's soccer in Croatia. Shown below are four statements that describe a certain attitude towards women's soccer. Participants were asked to choose the statement that they agreed with the most.

**Figure 18 - The attitude that girls in their second year of high school express towards women's soccer.**



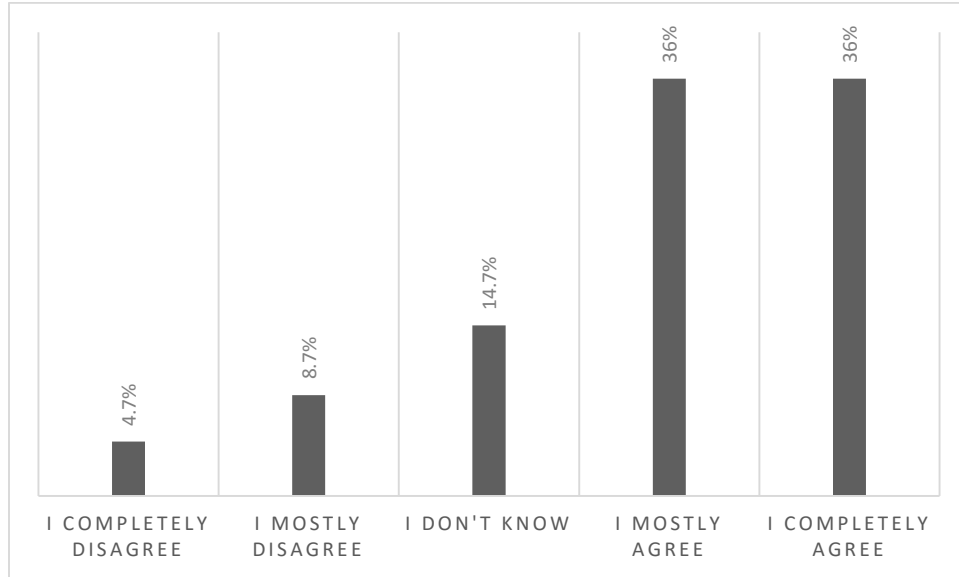
*Source: Author's research*

A majority of participants, 88.7%, responded that they accept and support women's soccer but do not play themselves, while 6% said that they always wanted to play but never had support - which is further confirmed with the slim 2% that are active soccer players. Considering the amount of participants who accept women's soccer but do not play themselves, it is expected that very little of them are active soccer players, however, this can also speak for the general popularity of the sport. 3.3% of the respondents explicitly stated that they do not accept soccer as a sport for women, a slight but powerful indicator of the cultural stigma surrounding women's soccer in Croatia.

Furthermore, participants in the study were asked to express their attitude towards certain statements about women's soccer using a five point Likert scale (1 – I completely disagree, 2 – I mostly disagree, 3 – I don't know, 4 – I mostly agree, 5 – I completely agree). These statements investigated whether soccer is considered “a man's game” in Croatian culture from the perspective of young girls, whether they perceive women's soccer as unpopular, the probability that they would follow soccer more if information was published more often in the media and if they would choose to play handball or volleyball before playing soccer.

The results of responses to each of the four statements are shown below.

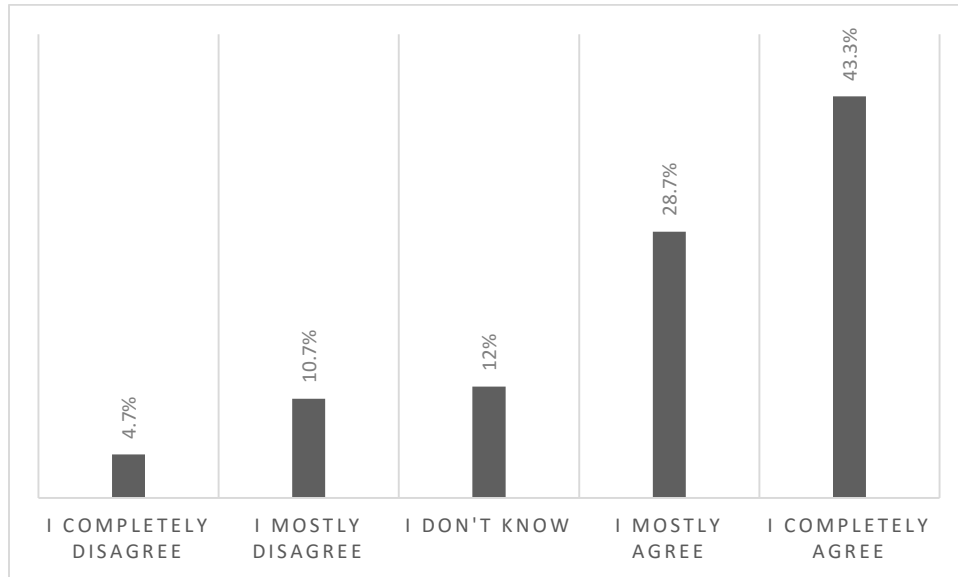
**Figure 19 – Opinions expressed by girls in their second year of high school when asked if soccer is considered a man’s game in Croatian Culture.**



*Source: Author's research*

72% of participants responded that they mostly or completely agree that soccer is considered “a man’s game” in Croatian culture. Only 13.4% said that they mostly or completely disagree and 14.7% responded that they don’t know.

**Figure 20 - Opinions expressed by girls in their second year of high school when asked to confirm that women's soccer is not popular.**



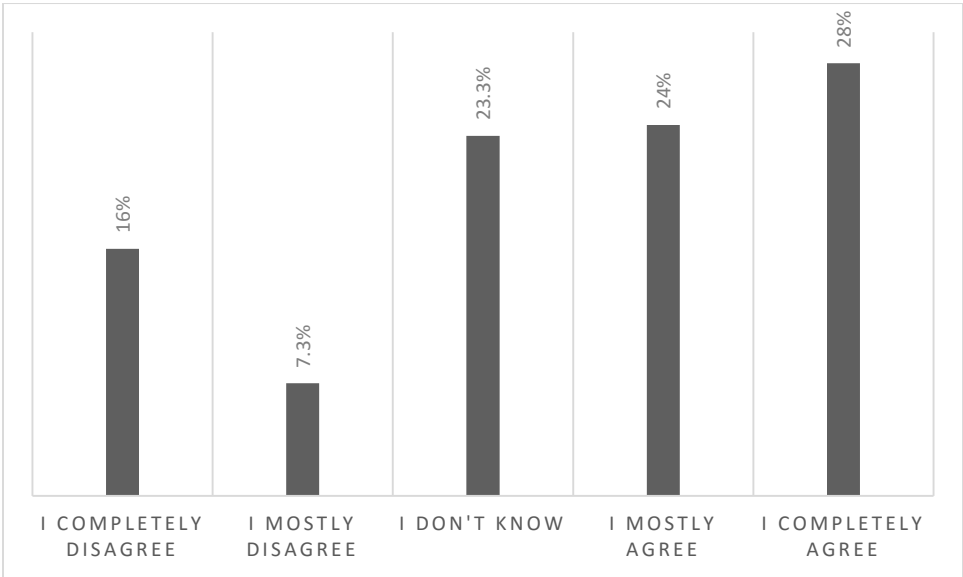
*Source: Author's research*

72% of the participants again responded that they mostly or completely agree with the assertion that women's soccer is not popular. It is possible that those who agreed that soccer is regarded as a "man's game" in Croatian culture, also said that it is unpopular as a women's game. 15.4% of the participants responded that they mostly or completely disagree that women's soccer is unpopular and 12% responded that they don't know. Saying that women's soccer is not popular is a bold statement considering that there are high level competitions regularly hosted and enforced by institutions such as FIFA and UEFA. Nonetheless, girls in Croatia have been primed through media and their cultural surroundings to the point where more than two-thirds of them feel comfortable asserting that it is unpopular.

The next task is to try and make it more popular, for example, by granting women's soccer more media coverage. The following question tackled whether or not girls would follow

women’s soccer more if the media made a bigger effort to keep them informed. The results are shown below.

**Figure 21 - Opinions expressed by girls in their second year of high school when asked to confirm that they would follow women’s soccer more frequently if it were published more in the media.**

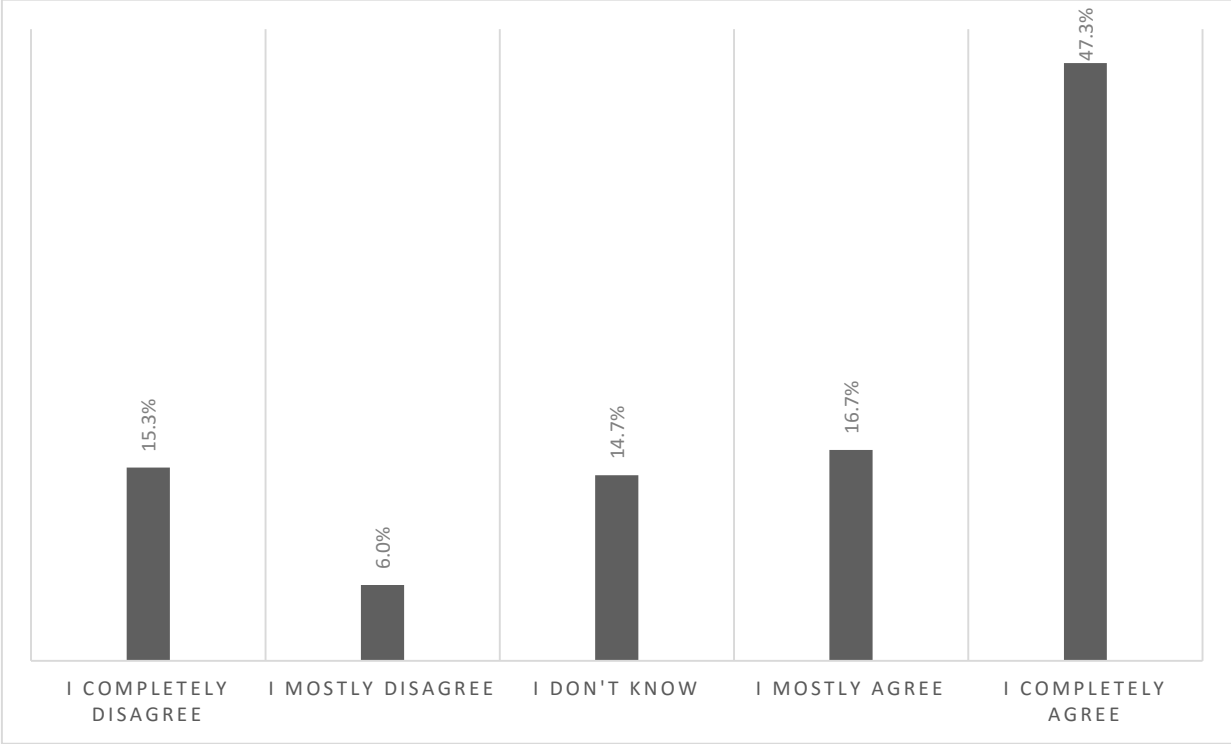


*Source: Author’s research*

52% of the participants responded that they mostly or completely agree, while 23.3% said they mostly or completely disagree. 23.3% also said they don’t know if they would follow women’s soccer more frequently in the case that content was presented to them more often in the media. If more than half of the participants would show a greater interest in women’s soccer in response to more content, this should be enough for the media to pursue a change in their allocation of coverage and finances. Media houses would also benefit from having more readers and consumers follow, share or buy their content.

Participants were also asked to specify whether they would choose to play soccer before playing handball or volleyball. The results are shown below.

**Figure 22 - Opinions expressed by girls in their second year of high school when asked if they would choose to play volleyball or handball before playing soccer.**



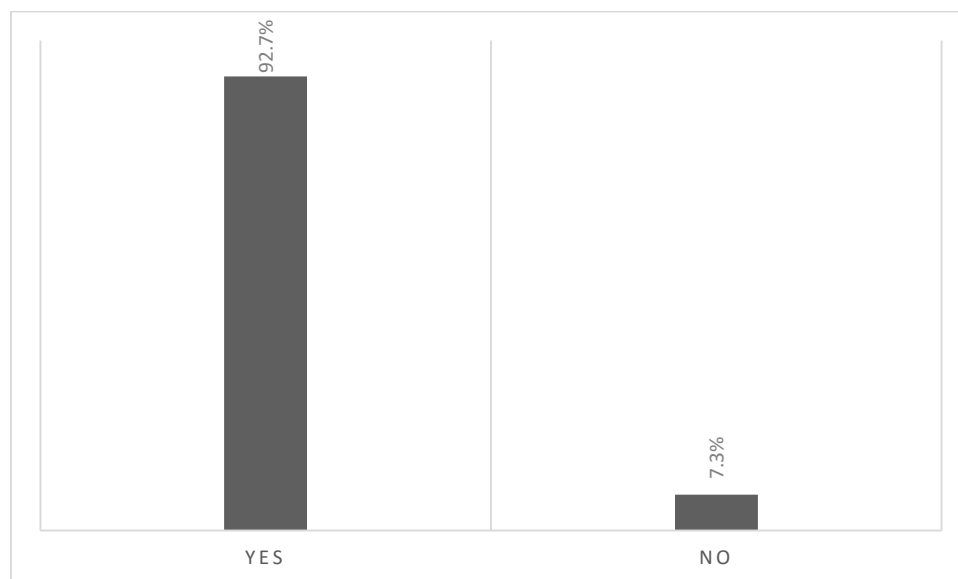
*Source: Author's research*

64% of the participants responded that they either completely or mostly agree that they would play handball or volleyball before playing soccer. Only 21.3% completely or mostly disagreed and 14.7% said they don't know. Handball and volleyball were chosen specifically because it was evident from the explorative content analysis research that they experienced the most media coverage in comparison to other sports. More than half of the participants feel strongly about playing the more popular sports when given the choice.



In the survey participants were asked to confirm whether or not they have ever heard that “soccer is a man’s game”. Girls could have heard this statement from a peer or adult that told them directly, they could have overheard it being told to someone else or they could have seen mention if it in the media. This question was meant to delineate the cultural surroundings through which girls are exposed to women’s sports.

**Figure 23 - Percentage of girls in their second year of high school that have heard the statement that “soccer is a man's game”.**

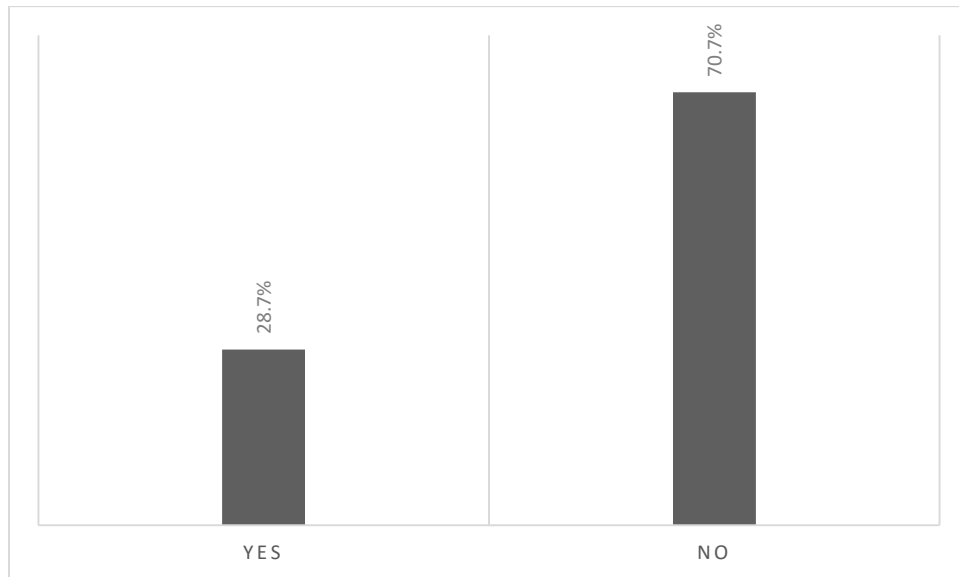


*Source: Author's research*

The answer “Yes” encompassed 92.7% of the responses, meaning that almost 100% of the girls surveyed have heard that “soccer is a man’s game”. The remaining 7.3% of the responses indicated that they have not heard of soccer being classified as a man’s game.

Having heard that girls are not fit to play soccer, many could be discouraged from even trying to play. Shown below are the results that depict how many girls have felt discouragement from their peers or family members when expressing an interest in soccer.

**Figure 24 – Percentage of girls in their second year of high school that have been discouraged from playing soccer by their peers.**



*Source: Author's research*

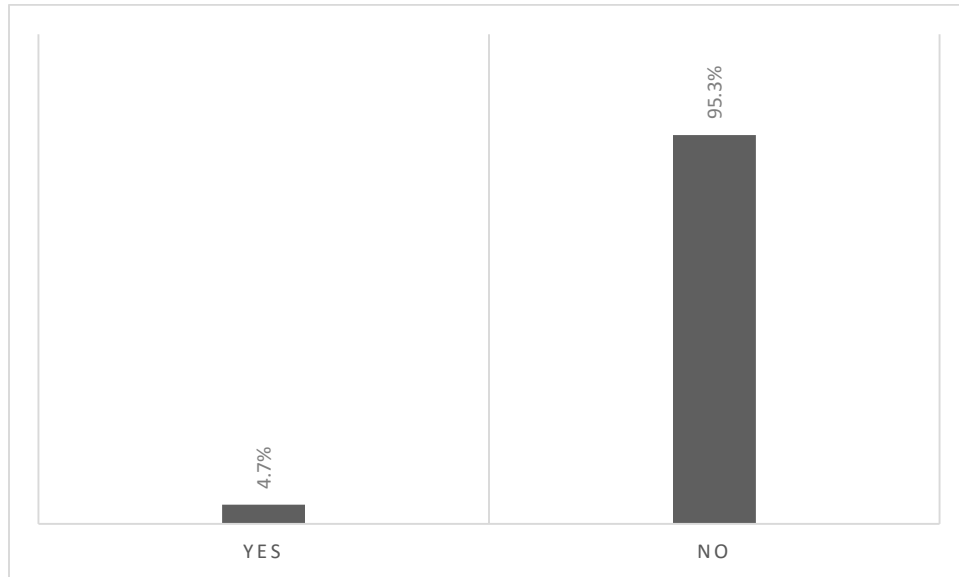
Contrary to suspicion, only 28.7% responded that they have felt discouraged from playing soccer by friends or acquaintances. Although it is difficult to define exactly what the feeling of discouragement really means to every individual, the Merriam Webster Online Dictionary defines discouragement as a deprivation of courage, or feeling disheartened<sup>28</sup>.

According to these results 70.7% of the participants have no recollection is being averted by their peers from playing soccer in this way.

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<sup>28</sup> "discourage." *Merriam-Webster.com*. 2019. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/discourage> Retrieved: 31 July 2019).

**Figure 25 – Percentage of girls in their second year of high school that have been discouraged from playing soccer by their parents, family members or guardians.**

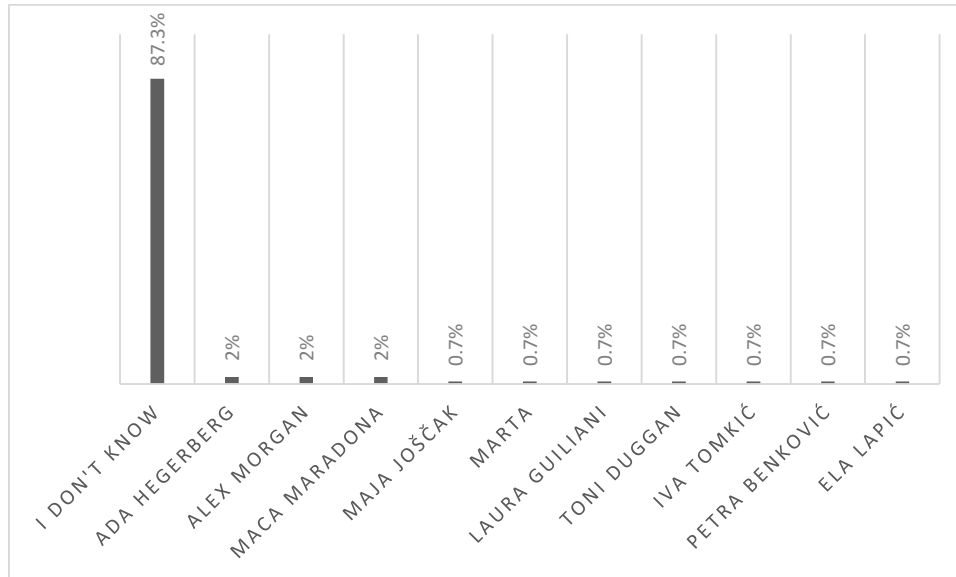


*Source: Author's research*

An even less common occurrence was the discouragement by parents, family members or guardians. Only 4.7 % of participants responded that they have experienced such an incident.

Thus far, the results that speak for the opinions, attitudes and experiences of 16 and 17-year-old girls in connection with women's soccer have been covered. What follows is their general knowledge and media awareness tied to women's soccer.

**Figure 26 – Percentage of female soccer players listed by girls in their second year of high school that they have seen in the media.**



*Source: Author's research*

When asked to name one female soccer player that participants have seen in the media (newspapers, magazines, internet articles, television, radio, social media, etc...), a painful majority of 87.3% responded that they could not think of one player. The remaining 10.9% came up with 10 different names. The most common were Ada Hegerberg (a Norwegian professional footballer who plays as a striker for the Division 1 Féminine club Olympique Lyonnais and the first winner of the women's Ballon d'Or in 2018), Alex Morgan (a U.S. Women's National Soccer Team player, striker for Orlando Pride and two-time FIFA Women's World Cup gold medalist), and Marija Matuzić, known as Maca Maradona, and the most famous Croatian female soccer player.

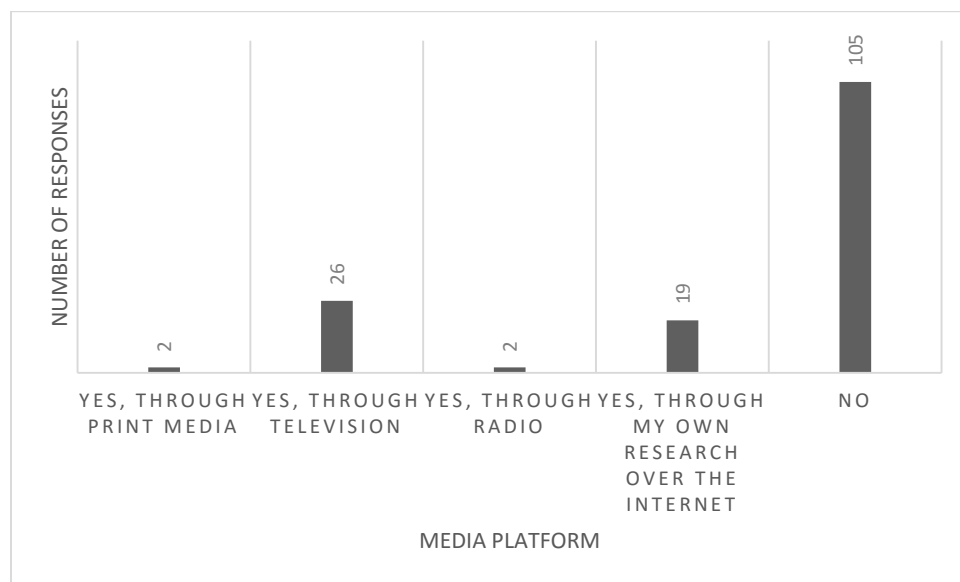
The remainder of the responses included names like Maja Joščak (player for ŽNK Osijek often credited as the best player in the 1<sup>st</sup> Croatian Women's league before retiring in 2019), Marta (the Brazilian forward who is globally recognized as one of the best female soccer players in history), and a few Croatian players like Iva Tomkić, who is a player of

the U19 Croatian women’s national team and Petra Benković, who plays for ŽNK Dinamo Zagreb.

Respondents were not given names to choose from, but rather had to fill in the blank themselves. A few of the respondents mistakenly identified a team or country instead of female players, filling in “Juventus” and the “Denmark” national women’s team. Their answers are not shown in the graph.

The following question investigated the media platform used most often to stay informed on women’s soccer. This was the only question that allowed for more than one answer.

**Figure 27 - Frequency of responses girls in their second year of high school expressed when asked if they stay informed on women’s soccer, and if they do, using which media channels.**



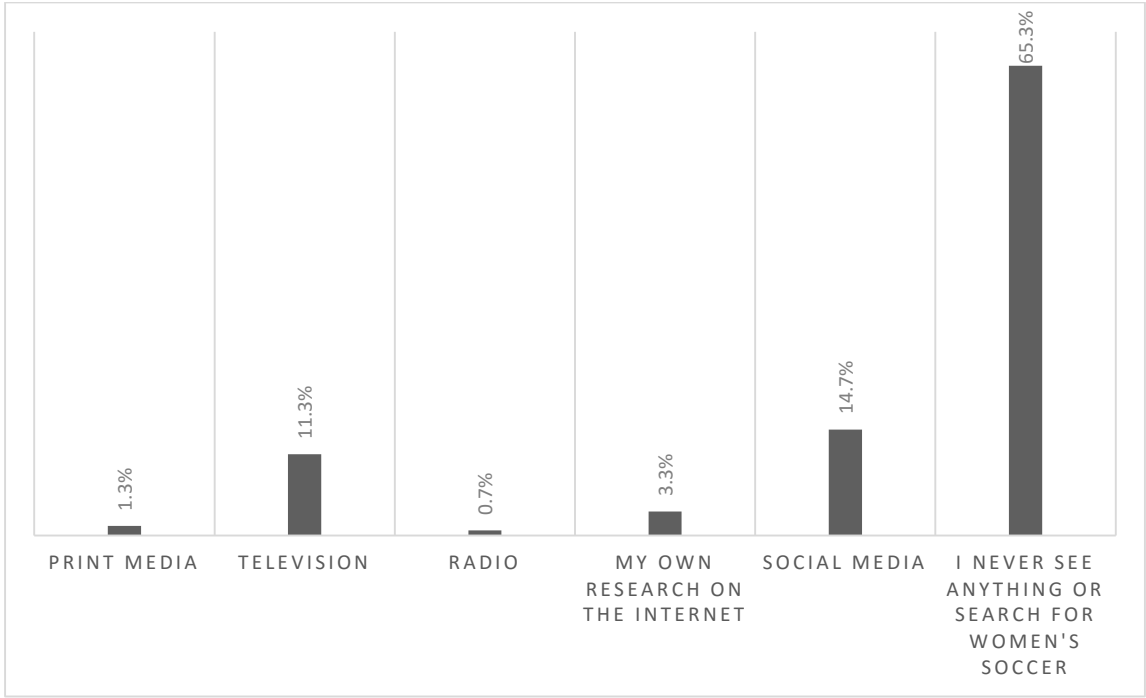
*Source: Author’s research*

Participants could have expressed that they use both television and their own internet research to stay informed on women’s soccer, or any other possible combination.

Unfortunately, teenage girls generally indicated that they do not use the media to stay informed on women’s soccer at all. However, out of the participants that have been informed through the media, the platform with the highest recognition was television, followed by individual internet research. Radio and print media are seldomly used to stay informed on women’s soccer.

At the end of the survey participants were asked to indicate one media platform, if any, that could be considered their primary source of information on women’s soccer. The results are shown below.

**Figure 28 - Percentage of responses girls in their second year of high school expressed regarding their primary source for information on women’s soccer.**



Source: Author’s research

65.3% of participants responded that they do not stay informed on women's soccer at all, however, of those that do, the highest percentage of participants listed social media (14.7%) and television (11.3%) as their primary source of information. Television again proves to be a dominant media channel with more recognition than individual internet research, but still not utilized as much as social media. Social media is seemingly the most common platform used as a source of information on women's soccer. If the participants who never see or search for women's soccer are excluded, social media and individual internet research make up 57% of the responses.

Radio and print media are again not considered a primary source of information for teenage girls on women's soccer.

## 5 DISCUSSION

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The specific goals of this study included determining the amount of media coverage devoted to women's team sports over the span of two months, finding the percentage of girls who have heard that "soccer is a man's game" and investigating the extent to which girls have been discouraged from playing soccer by their peers or family members. Also, this study set out to explore the attitude that teenage girls have towards soccer as well as their ability to name any female players they have seen in the media. In the event that 16 and 17-year-old girls use a certain media platform to stay informed on women's soccer, this research inquired which platform that would be.

The answers to these questions were all discovered through content analysis research and a questionnaire conducted with high school girls in Zagreb.

The content analysis of this research paper determined that there were only 77 articles devoted to women's team sports over a time span of two months, in two different Croatian daily newspapers. That adds up to 0.76 articles a day on all women's team sports, from soccer to volleyball, handball, basketball and even synchronized ice skating. This paper argues that 0.76 articles per day is insufficient media coverage of women's team sports.

Coverage is especially low of women's soccer, which encompassed only one article in two months. Although February and March (the months in which content analysis was conducted) are generally considered the off-season for 11v11 soccer, it is the in-season for women's futsal in Croatia. Futsal is a sport roughly similar to 11v11 soccer in that it is played with the feet, however, the dimensions of the field are smaller, as well as the ball and numerical relationship of the players. Futsal is played indoors, the ball is heavier and smaller (a size four as opposed to size five ball), and there are only four field players and a



goalkeeper<sup>29</sup> in the field at one time, rather than 10 players and a goalkeeper. The women's soccer league in Croatia is in-season in the spring from March to June of each year, and also in the fall from September to December<sup>30</sup>. The futsal in-season in 2018/19 was over the winter from November to March. The height of the season, when a winner of the league is determined, took place at the end of February<sup>31</sup>. None of the futsal league events were covered in *Sportske Novosti* or *Jutarnji List* during this time.

The questionnaire conducted with girls in their second year of high school confirmed that almost 93% of them have heard that soccer is a man's game, and 72% either mostly or completely agreed that soccer is not a sport for girls in Croatian culture. One-third of the participants responded that they have been discouraged from playing soccer by their peers or adults. The term "discouragement" was not defined prior to the participants prior to completing the survey, therefore, it can be speculated that the two-thirds of respondents who claimed they have never felt discouraged might not have been sure how to define that feeling (or they felt some guilt or embarrassment in admitting that someone discouraged them from playing soccer). Nevertheless, the 33.4% participants who answered "Yes" to being discouraged speak to the level of contempt that Croatian culture has for women's soccer. 6% of the participants expressed that they always wanted to play soccer but never felt support in that ambition.

All of the data and information collected either confirms or rejects the hypotheses made before research was conducted. The prediction that a majority of the participants have heard that soccer is a man's game was extremely accurate with the reality of almost 93%. Furthermore, only 29% of girls in their second year of high school have felt discouraged

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<sup>29</sup> *Futsal Laws of the game 2014/2015*, FIFA. [https://football-technology.fifa.com/media/1022/footballs\\_futsal\\_laws\\_of\\_the\\_game.pdf](https://football-technology.fifa.com/media/1022/footballs_futsal_laws_of_the_game.pdf) (Retrieved: 15 August 2019).

<sup>30</sup> *Natjecanja 1. HNLŽ* (2019) Hrvatski Nogometni Savez, <https://hns-cff.hr/natjecanja/1-hnlz/> (Retrieved 15 August 2019).

<sup>31</sup> *U Sutinskim vrelima se igra završni turnir 1. HMNL za žene!* (2019). CROfutsal, <http://www.crofutsal.com/naslovna/u-sutinskim-vrelima-se-igra-završni-turnir-1-hmnl-za-zene/> (Retrieved: 15 August 2019).

from playing soccer by their peers, which is below the two-thirds predicted, and almost 5% have felt discouraged by an adult in their family or a guardian (half of the original prediction of 10%). Many of the original hypotheses were generally supported by the results gathered during research. The only prediction that was proven imprecise was the amount of girls that have felt discouraged from playing soccer by their peers.

The level to which girls are informed on women's soccer players is low, considering that 87.3% of them could not name a player they had seen in the media. This number is in accordance with the hypothesis that more than two-thirds would not be able to come up with an answer. Nonetheless, with only one article published on women's soccer during February and March, it can be inferred that the media does not cover women's soccer enough for these participants to remember any specific names. This is likely also why 70% of the respondents do not use the media to stay informed on women's soccer at all. Furthermore, of the girls that do stay informed on women's soccer, the platform that teenage girls in Croatia use most is social media, followed by television. This partially confirms the hypothesis that a combination of social media and personal internet research would be the most common platforms.

This master's thesis argues that increasing media coverage could result in an increase in popularity, thereby increasing participation rates for girls in sports and the ability for female athletes to become role models. Increasing participation also has economic benefits because more people are spending money to buy the equipment necessary to play. Additionally, research noted throughout this paper emphasizes that girls who play sports, like soccer, show higher levels of self-confidence because of that sport. Giving them the opportunity to play unsparingly could later result in them having the confidence to take on leadership roles in society. Furthermore, investing time and energy into developing women's soccer is in accordance with the key objectives set by FIFA's Women's Football

Strategy<sup>32</sup> which could give Croatia a head start. The current situation with inadequate media coverage and a cultural stigma towards girls playing soccer hinders these possibilities and growth.

This work also suggests that there is a cultural stigma attached to women's soccer as unpopular and inappropriate for girls. A claim that is evident judging by the 72% who either mostly or completely agreed with the statement that soccer is unpopular and the 3.3% of participants who explicitly expressed that soccer is unacceptable for girls.

Print media, according to the results, generally publish articles on handball and volleyball games or competitions that are informative with some commentary. Journalists take a direct approach in their reporting, leaving very little room for elaborate details or feature stories about women's team sports. A positive finding was that there were more than twice as many articles supported with an image of the athletes than there were without any images at all. Also, contrary to expectations, most of the articles were up to half a page long in size, as opposed to relatively short.

There were also no recorded cases of an article that was focused mainly on the physical appearance of the female athletes. From this it can be deduced that *Sportske Novosti* and *Jutarnji List* either never practiced trivializing women's sports by promoting physical appearances more than athletic ability, or they quickly caught on to the research which showed high percentages of such coverage and decided not to follow that trend and instead practice more objective publishing.

The connection between media coverage and teenage girl's attitudes towards women's soccer is best shown by the data that more than half of the respondents would specifically

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<sup>32</sup> *Women's Football Strategy* (2018). FIFA, <https://img.fifa.com/image/upload/z7w21ghir8jb9tguvbcq.pdf> (Retrieved: 9 September 2019).

play handball or volleyball (sports that appear more regularly in the media) as opposed to soccer (that received very little media attention). Giving the public audience more frequent and deeper information could, in theory, help them better understand and become more engaged in women's team sports.

In reflection, it can be theorized from the collected data that women's team sports generally receive insufficient media coverage in Croatian daily newspapers which feeds in to a common misconception that "soccer is a man's game" and women's soccer is unpopular.

The perception that girls have towards women's soccer is a reflection of the circumstances presented by the media, where women's handball and volleyball experience a bulk of the media coverage devoted to women's sports on a whole. Nonetheless, despite prejudice, discrimination and the earnings they obtain, female players can be great and successful in soccer just like their male counterparts (Benotić, 2017). One of the underlying intentions of this study is to analyze and highlight the current circumstances through which girls are introduced to sports and exposed to soccer in Croatia, as well as to spark conversation that encourages social and cultural change that follow a trend of progress and development.

To expand this research and retrieve more accurate data, a larger number of newspapers could be analyzed over a longer time period. Additionally, participants in the survey could be extracted from a larger number of high schools through a proportionate stratified non-probability sample. This kind of sample would include representatives from each high school in Zagreb, instead of the convenience sample that relied on the school's willingness to participate.

## 6 CONCLUSION

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In his book, *The Gold Mine Effect: Crack the Secrets of High Performance*, Rasmus Ankersen discovers the many factors that influence the careers of high performance athletes. One of them is a presence or lack of role models. Ankersen points out that, “You have to first be able to imagine something before you will be able to turn that thing into reality” (Ankersen, 2012), and he also mentions that young runners in Ethiopia get to train alongside Olympic medalists and renowned world class runners, which boosts their confidence and prompts ambition to accomplish the same. Lack of media coverage of women’s soccer in Croatia then, as previously mentioned, takes away the possibility for girls to visualize a successful career through role models that they can look up to. In other words, they eventually lack belief in themselves and their ambitions.

Similar to this, in his book *The Road to Excellence: The Acquisition of Expert Performance in the Arts and Sciences, Sports, and Games*, author K. Anders Ericsson (1996:310), who is internationally recognized as a researcher in the psychological nature of expertise and human performance, emphasizes how influential the environment can be for expert performance by saying that different performance environments foster various forms and uses of knowledge. In relation to schools, he mentions that an active and constructive problem-solving environment helps develop a structure for students to acquire high levels of cognitive competence. This can also be applied to sports because players can reach for high performance achievements in an active and competitive environment much more easily than in a passive and unsupportive environment. If active and driven surroundings facilitate learning abilities and ambition, these claims enforce the need for media coverage and a supportive cultural environment.

Lieke Martens is a Dutch soccer player who plays for FC Barcelona and the Netherlands national team. She was named UEFA Women's Player of the Year and FIFA Women's Player of the Year in 2017. In an article for the Los Angeles Times, she described her

upbringing and early soccer career, saying that she started to play at five years of age, and at that time soccer wasn't a career option for girls in the Netherlands. In the small town where she lived, even playing against girls wasn't an option, which is why Martens played against boys until she was 16.

*"I had a totally different way than the girls in the U.S.... I had talent. I wanted to do something with it. It's better to play [against] the boys..."*<sup>33</sup>

In contrast, when U.S. women's national team striker Alex Morgan was in school, she wrote a note to her mom saying that she wanted to be a professional soccer star like her idols, national team players at the time Kristine Lilly and Mia Hamm. This is what Martens meant when she said that she had a totally different way than the girls in the United States who had clear role models and a career path in soccer. After becoming a European Cup gold medalist and World Cup finalist, Martens can now surely act as a role model for girls in Holland to aspire towards professional soccer careers and global recognition just like girls in the United States look up to players like Alex Morgan, Megan Rapinoe, Carli Lloyd, Tobin Heath and Rose Lavelle.

To sum up, this master's thesis goes to show that women's team sports generally experience insufficient media coverage in Croatian daily newspapers. Also, that 16 and 17-year-old girls mostly agree that women's soccer is not popular and would even choose to play handball or volleyball (the two sports that received the most media coverage during the time of this research) before playing soccer. However, 88.7% of the participants also said that they accept and support women's soccer although they don't play themselves, and 52% agreed that they would follow women's soccer more frequently if it had a greater presence in the media. This data shows that there is a big enough possibility for social and cultural change if the right

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<sup>33</sup> Dutch treat: Increased investment in women's game paying off (2018). LA Times, <https://www.latimes.com/sports/soccer/la-sp-netherlands-martens-baxter-20180929-story.html> (accessed July 25, 2019).

steps are taken, such as increasing media coverage and decreasing the range to which a suggestive opinion that girls are not suitable for soccer is spread across the country.

It is imperative that the media, especially television since it was confirmed through this study as a primary source of information for girls after social media, devote more time and space to women's sports in general, and also specifically women's soccer in hopes to increase its popularity.

Similarly, print media should do the same because of its high circulation and demographic. As the American Press Institute confirms through research of their subscribers, 58% of them described themselves as primarily print oriented and only 28% said they preferred a digital platform<sup>34</sup>. If it is presumed that elderly people follow more traditional media channels (such as print) as opposed to using the internet and digital platforms, then regular reporting in print media as well as television could bring about a social and cultural perspective change in the attitudes towards women's soccer for all generations in Croatia.

Moreover, consumers can show more interest and demand information on women's team sports, such as soccer, pushing the media to cover those topics more frequently and acting as a catalyst for an overall shift in values and behavior. Due to the fact that sport is so closely related to society and social phenomena (Baršić, 2018), changes in society towards a more positive and supportive environment can affect changes in sport.

According to the FIFPro Global Employment Report of 2017, the women's game should be treated as an asset for sports and society rather than a cost because soccer is the people's game, and also the largest sport in the world with a massive societal impact<sup>35</sup>. Confederations

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<sup>34</sup> *Print vs digital subscribers: Demographic differences and paths to subscription* (2017). American Press Institute, <https://www.americanpressinstitute.org/publications/reports/survey-research/print-vs-digital/> (Retrieved: 29 July 2019).

<sup>35</sup> *2017 FIFPro Global Employment Report* (2017). FIFPro World Players' Union, <https://fifpro.org/attachments/article/6986/2017%20FIFPro%20Women%20Football%20Global%20Employment%20Report-Final.pdf> (Retrieved: 29 July 2019).

and federations should invest more money in women's soccer teams, clubs and leagues for girls of all ages, as well as the prize money awarded to women's teams who compete at the highest level. All efforts to improve the current conditions described throughout this thesis paper would benefit young athletes who would feel more self-confident after joining a team, professional players who would be able to visualize and thrive for long-term successful careers and the institutions that would be recognized for their achievements and efforts towards the overall betterment of an underdeveloped, but promising sport.

Lastly, every girl who is told she cannot or should not play a sport she is interested in should push through the adversity of stereotypes and discrimination, pursue the activities that bring her joy, and as a result will increase the amount of active female athletes around the world who are fulfilling their potential.



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## 8 ATTACHMENTS

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### 8.1 CONTENT ANALYSIS MATRIX – WOMEN’S FEMALE SPORTS

1. Code: \_\_\_\_\_
  
2. Newspaper
  1. Sportske Novosti
  2. Jutarnji List
  
3. Day of publication
  1. Monday
  2. Tuesday
  3. Wednesday
  4. Thursday
  5. Friday
  6. Saturday
  7. Sunday
  
4. Month of publication
  1. February 2019
  2. March 2019
  
5. Is there mention of women’s team sports on the cover of the paper?
  1. Yes
  2. No
  
6. What sport is the focus of the article?

1. Soccer
2. Basketball
3. Handball
4. Volleyball
5. Beach handball
6. Beach volleyball
7. Rowing in pairs
8. Tennis in pairs
9. Table tennis in pairs
10. Rugby
11. Sailing
12. Water polo
13. Other: \_\_\_\_\_

7. What is the main theme of the article?

1. Sports activity (results, athletic performance, appearances...)
2. Business activity (contracts, business ventures, court orders connected to sports...)
3. Physical characteristics of athletes
4. Fashion in sports
5. Private lives (health, relationships, family matters...)
6. Public engagement (political, social, humanitarian...)
7. Sports and at least one other theme are equally presented
8. Two or more themes that are not sports related are presented
9. Other

8. Reason for the articles publication

1. Single game
2. Competition (tournaments, league games...)

3. Club transfer
4. Feature story
5. Other: \_\_\_\_\_

9. Type of article

1. Informative news report (results)
2. Informative report with commentary
3. Feature story
4. Interview
5. Promotional piece/endorsements (collaboration with a brand)
6. Other: \_\_\_\_\_

10. Size of the article

1. Very short – up to 5 lines
2. Short – up to 15 lines
3. Between 15 lines and ¼ page
4. Between ¼ page and ½ page
5. Between ½ page and 1 page
6. More than 1 page

11. Is the article supported with graphical depiction (images, illustrations, drawings, tables, graphs, charts)?

1. Yes, one image
2. Yes, more than one image
3. No

12. Who/what is delineated graphically?

0. There is no graphical depiction
1. Athletes
2. Coaches



3. Statistics
4. Both athletes and coaches
5. Athletes/coaches and statistics
6. Other: \_\_\_\_\_

13. Size of graphical depiction?

0. There is none
1. Less than the article text
2. The same size as the article text
3. Larger than the article text

14. What kind of headlines are present?

0. There is no headline
1. Just the headline
2. Just a running line
3. Headline and running line
4. Headline and intro/kicker
5. Headline, running line and intro/kicker
6. Headline and subheads
7. Headline, running line and subheads
8. Headline, intro/kicker and subheads
9. Headline, running heads, intro/kicker and subheads

## 8.2 SURVEY (ENGLISH) - THE EFFECT THAT INSUFFICIENT MEDIA COVERAGE OF WOMEN'S SPORTS HAS ON GIRL'S ATTITUDES TOWARDS WOMEN'S SOCCER

Dear students,

This research paper is being conducted by a student of Communications studies at the University of Zagreb's Centre for Croatian Studies on a sample of girls in their second year of high school. The purpose is to explore young girl's attitudes towards women's soccer in Croatia and the results will be used exclusively for a master's thesis research paper. Please answer each question to the best of your abilities, circle only one answer unless the question specifies otherwise and feel free to raise your hand and ask a question during the survey if something is unclear. If you are interested in the final results of the research send an inquiry on the email address written below:

[hhercigon@hrstud.hr](mailto:hhercigon@hrstud.hr)

Thank you,

Helenna Hercigonja-Moulton

### **Information (I)**

(GI) 1: Age \_\_\_\_\_

(GI) 2: Grade \_\_\_\_\_

(GI) 3: School \_\_\_\_\_

### **General Knowledge (GK)**

(GK) 4: Name one female soccer player you have seen in the media (newspaper, magazine, internet article, television, radio, social media, etc...)?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. I don't know

**Opinion (O)**

(O) 5: Have you ever heard that soccer is a man's game (someone told you, you heard someone tell someone else, you saw mention of it in the media, etc...)?

1. Yes
2. No

(O) 6: Have you been discouraged from playing soccer by a friend or acquaintance saying that soccer is not for girls and/or that you shouldn't play soccer?

1. Yes
2. No

(O) 7: Have you been discouraged from playing soccer by a parent, family member or guardian saying that soccer is not for girls and/or that you shouldn't play soccer?

1. Yes
2. No

(O) 8: Which of the following statements best describes your attitude towards soccer?

1. I do not accept it as a women's sport
2. I always wanted to play but never felt supported
3. I accept and support women's soccer but do not play myself
4. I am an active soccer player

(O) 9: For each statement circle one number that best describes your opinion (**1 – I completely disagree**, 2 – I mostly disagree, 3 – I don't know, 4 – I mostly agree, **5 – I completely agree**).

Soccer is considered a man's game in Croatian culture	1	2	3	4	5
Women's soccer is not popular	1	2	3	4	5
If the media were to publish more information on events related to women's soccer I would generally follow it more	1	2	3	4	5
I would choose to play handball or volleyball before playing soccer	1	2	3	4	5

### Media (M)

(M) 10: Have you ever used the media to stay informed of events or news pertaining to women's soccer? Multiple answers are acceptable.

1. Yes, through print media
2. Yes, through television
3. Yes, through radio
4. Yes, through my own research over the internet
5. No

(M) 11: What channel, if any, is your primary source of information on activities related to women's soccer?

1. Print media
2. Television
3. Radio
4. My own research on the internet

5. Social media

6. None of the above, I never see anything or search for women's soccer

### 8.3 SURVEY (CROATIAN) - ANALIZA STAVOVA DJEVOJČICA PREMA ŽENSKOM NOGOMETU U HRVATSKOJ

Poštovane učenice,

Ovo istraživanje provodi studentica diplomskog studija komunikologije na Hrvatskim studijima Sveučilišta u Zagrebu na uzorku učenica drugoga razreda srednje škole. Cilj je istražiti stavove djevojčica prema ženskom nogometu u Hrvatskoj. Rezultati će se koristiti isključivo za izradu diplomskog rada naziva „Analiza medijske pokrivenosti ženskih ekipnih sportova i stavova djevojčica prema nogometu u Hrvatskoj”.

Anketa je anonimna. Pojedinačni odgovori neće biti prikazani u diplomskom radu, već će se prikazivati zbirni postoci prikupljeni na ukupnom uzorku svih sudionica istraživanja.

Molim da na svako pitanje odgovorite jednim odgovorom, osim u pitanju broj 10 gdje je moguće više odgovora. Odgovorite na način da zaokružite broj ispred opcije vašeg odgovora.

Ako ima ikakvih nejasnoća, molim da dignete ruku u bilo koje vrijeme, pričekate da netko dođe do Vas i postavite svoja pitanja. Ako ste zainteresirani za konačne rezultate istraživanja, pošaljite upit na e-mail adresu:

hhercigon@hrstud.hr

Hvala vam,

Helenna Hercigonja-Moulton

(GI) 1: Koliko imate godina? \_\_\_\_\_

(GI) 2: Razred \_\_\_\_\_

(GI) 3: Škola \_\_\_\_\_

(GK) 4: Navedite jednu žensku nogometašicu koju ste vidjeli u medijima (novine, časopis, internetski članak, televizija, radio, na društvenim medijima...)?

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. Ne znam

(O) 5: Jeste li ikada negdje čuli izjavu da je "nogomet muški sport" (Npr. čuli ste da to netko govori, bilo Vama bilo nekome drugom, ili ste sličnu izjavu pročitali ili vidjeli u medijima)?

1. Da

2. Ne

(O) 6: Jeste li ikad bili obeshrabreni od igranja nogometa (primjerice, od strane prijatelja ili poznanika koji su Vam rekli da nogomet nije sport za djevojčice ili da ne biste trebali igrati nogomet)?

1. Da

2. Ne

(O) 7: Je li Vas ikad roditelj ili skrbnik obeshrabriovao od igranja nogometa?

1. Da

2. Ne

(O) 8: Koja od niže navedenih izjava najbolje opisuje Vaš odnos prema nogometu? (i na ovo pitanje odgovorite samo s jednim odgovorom).

1. Ne prihvaćam nogomet kao ženski sport

2. Uvijek sam željela igrati, ali nikada nisam imala podršku

3. Prihvaćam i podržavam nogomet kao sport prikladan I za žene, ali ga ne igram

4. Aktivna sam igračica ženskog nogometnog kluba

(O) **9:** U idućoj tablici nalazi se nekoliko izjava. Molim Vas da kod svake izjave zaokružite jedan broj koji opisuje u kojoj mjeri se slažete sa svakom od izjava.

Ponuđene su sljedeće opcije odgovora: **1 – u potpunosti se ne slažem**, **2 - donekle se ne slažem**, **3 – ne znam**, **4 - donekle se slažem**, **5 - u potpunosti se slažem**.

Nogomet se u hrvatskom društvu smatra muškim sportom.	1	2	3	4	5
Ženski nogomet nije popularan.	1	2	3	4	5
Da mediji više izvještavaju o ženskom nogometu, više bih ga pratila.	1	2	3	4	5
Prije bih se odlučila baviti rukometom ili odbojkom nego nogometom.	1	2	3	4	5

(M) **10:** Jeste li se ikada posredstvom medija informirali novostima i događajima (npr, rezultatima, natjecanjima, igračicama) iz ženskog nogometa? Možete odgovoriti s više odgovora.

1. Da, putem tiskanih medija
2. Da, putem televizije
3. Da, putem radija
4. Da, kroz vlastita istraživanja putem interneta
5. Ne

(M) **11:** Koji je kanal vaš glavni izvor informacija o ženskom nogometu, ili aktivnostima vezanim za ženski nogomet (i na ovo pitanje odgovorite samo s jednim odgovorom)?

1. Tiskani mediji
2. Televizija



3. Radio

4. Moje vlastito istraživanje na internetu

5. Društveni mediji

6. Ništa od navedenog. Ne informiram se o ženskom nogometu.