

# **THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ELITE ATHLETES AND EMPLOYEES OF THE MEDIA IN HUNGARY AT THE BEGINNING OF THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY**

**Abstract of PhD Thesis**

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# 1. Introduction

As a social phenomenon, sport is a widely appreciated and popular part of culture, in Hungary this can be primarily attributed to the excellent international results (Dóczi, 2012). By achieving outstanding results, the performance of the athletes can set an example for the entire society. Sport as a social subsystem embodies numerous educational norms and values. Although appearing in public is not the primary task of athletes, if they wish to mediate values to the members of society, public appearances and the conscious use of media are essential. Silverstone (1999) stresses that public communication is a profession that can be learnt, therefore, the appropriate knowledge and experience is required if one intends to communicate effectively with the public. Due to the intensive development of the media and the fact that sports attract huge crowds, the two fields have been in symbiosis for a long time, however, this relationship has been and is going through continuous changes up until this very day.

In the present doctoral thesis I examine the relationship of Olympians and media workers from a social scientific approach. In order to place the examination of the topic into context, I also discuss in detail how state of affairs have changed in recent decades in the field of the media and within that in the field of social communication opportunities. In connection with that the question arises: to what extent public figures, in this case elite athletes, are aware of the logic behind how the media works, and whether they feel the urge to acquire deeper knowledge in this field. In the course of my research I also examine how the attitudes of elite athletes towards the media can be characterised, and also to what extent Olympians follow, know about and wish to integrate into their lives the continuous changes taking place in the world of media and within that in the field of social communication.

With the appearance of the two-way communication model (Beech and Chadwick 2007) athletes are capable of communicating with the wider public without involving media workers, which has changed the form and content of public communication fundamentally. As a consequence of the expansion of the digital world, we can talk about a new era in communication starting from the 1990's which has dramatically altered the traditional environment of journalism (Boyle 2017). The theoretical framework of the thesis, this new communication model demonstrates the radical changes taking place in the world of media, in addition to the effect this shift in the paradigm in public communication had and has on Olympians and the professionals i.e. the media workers themselves. In this context it appears

to be a relevant research direction to examine the relationship and views of the two parties, and to map how they reflect on the changes taking place in communication.

Due to the functions of sport and media my research is hybrid in nature, which justifies the interdisciplinary approach of the thesis meaning that it primarily utilises the perspectives, terms, modes and methods of sport sociology and media studies while it is also combining them.

## **2. Objectives**

The objective of my empirical study is to get an insight into the extent to which Hungarian elite athletes are prepared for public appearances, and what their attitudes are like towards the media in general and according to age and gender. Additionally, I am intrigued to find out what the relationship of Olympians and media workers is like, and which values, interests, obstacles and conflict situations, and which motivational factors define the nexus of the two parties. A further objective of the study is to shed light on the conflicts and the obstacles that might arise, and by understanding their backgrounds provide explanations, and if possible, I intend to suggest both parties ways of resolving these.

### **2.1. Hypotheses**

I formulated the following hypotheses in connection with my empirical research:

- **H1:** I assume that the training of elite athletes does not encompass to the sufficient degree the fostering of media communication competences necessary for conscious public appearances.
- **H2:** I assume that there are significant differences between individual Olympians in terms of their attitudes towards media.
- **H2a:** I assume that the attitudes of Olympians belonging to the younger age group can be characterised as more open in the field of public communication than athletes in the older age group.
- **H2b:** I assume that there is a significant gender difference between athletes in terms of how open they are to the media: men appear publically significantly more actively than women.

- **H3:** I assume that with respect to the relations of the two parties, there is a significant difference between the motivations of media workers and Olympians, and this factor extensively influences the utterances of athletes in the media.
- **H3a:** I assume that the attitudes of professionals working for the media are definitely shaped by the objectives of mediating news and, depending on the media outlet, increasing readership or number of viewers.
- **H3b:** I assume that the bulk of Olympians wish to limit their media appearances to the sphere of sports, as elite athletes are definitely focused on achievements.
- **H3c:** I assume that, although media appearances can depend on the personality and the situation, most elite athletes are frustrated by being asked to comment on things outside the sphere of sports (e.g. sensationalist focus), as what is expected by media workers to increase the number of views, for the athlete it can pose a risk of public exposure that is far greater than desired.
- **H4:** I assume that the social media use of Olympians is significantly less in terms of volume than the amount the representatives of media would find optimal.

### **3. Methods**

Taking into consideration the interdisciplinary nature objectives of the topic, in order to obtain effective outcomes, I have applied several methods during my data collection and analysis. The foundation of my research strategy is laid by the theoretical framework of the dissertation, the research questions and the hypotheses formulated.

#### **3.1. Methods of data collection**

In the research I relied on three types of data collection, content analysis, survey method and in-depth interviews. During data collection I used the quantitative and the qualitative approach as well. I collected quantitative data for the content analysis and the survey, whereas qualitative data were obtained in all of the selected methods of data collection. Qualitative data were analysed in parallel with the quantitative ones to undertake a more comprehensive and in-depth investigation.

##### **3.1.1. Content analysis**

For the qualitative and quantitative content analysis of my research, five internet news portals were selected. I chose the following websites: **Blikk** (blikk.hu), **Nemzeti Sport**

(nso.hu), Index (index.hu), Origo (origo.hu), and Hír 24 (hir24.hu). Out of the five portals two (Blikk and Nemzeti Sport) have a printed version as well. The selection process was guided by the readership and popularity of the pages. The four selected news portals were the most visited ones in their genre, while nso.hu is the oldest and most viewed sport website in Hungary. The database for the analysis was comprised of the data provided by Observer. The period of data collection was divided into five sub-periods according to the following intervals:

1. 29<sup>th</sup> July – 4<sup>th</sup> August 2016;
2. 5<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> 2016;
3. 12<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> August 2016;
4. 19<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> 2016;
5. 22<sup>nd</sup>-28<sup>th</sup> August 2016.

During the quantitative content analysis I took the following points into consideration: prevalence of the key term ‘magyar csapat’ (Team Hungary) in the period, the media appearances of various sport disciplines, and the number of articles about six selected Olympians - Katinka Hosszú, Danuta Kozák, Éva Csernoviczki, Tamás Kenderesi, Géza Imre, and Dávid Verrasztó.

### **3.1.2. In-depth interviews**

As the initial step in my research, I carried out semi-structured in-depth interviews. In the process I interviewed active elite athletes and professionals working in the media. The two samples were selected with attention to heterogeneity, and according to the following dimensions: experience, sport discipline, media outlet, age, gender. The length of the interviews was between 40 and 80 minutes. The period of data collection lasted from 2 November, 2015 until 30 March, 2016. The findings from the interviews provided the basis for the preparation of the questionnaire used in the survey.

From the elite athletes (N=10) I selected representatives of various sport disciplines, and the questions focused on their attitudes and motivations with regards to the media, their personal positive and negative experience and the potential conflict situations. From the pool of sport journalists I made interviews with employees of the five selected media outlets (Blikk, Nemzeti Sport, Index, Origo, Hír 24), and other experienced sport journalists. These discussions were about their perceptions of the athletes’ motivations and competencies related to the media, their attitudes towards elite athletes and their related experience.

### 3.1.3. Survey-method

I conducted qualitative and quantitative questionnaire-based data collection with Hungarian Olympians who had the quota for the 2016 Olympics, and the media workers who were registered with official media accreditation to the 2016 Olympics by the Hungarian Olympic Committee, so those who actually reported on the Olympians, or conducted personal interviews with them or about them in Rio at the location of the Olympic Games. 160 athletes qualified for the Rio Olympics altogether in 22 different sports, and 104 of them filled in the questionnaire, meaning that the response rate was 65%. The gender and age distribution of the examined sample correlates with the composition of the whole 2016 population of Hungarian Olympians, so the research sample can be regarded representative (Table 1). The questionnaire contained 31 questions, of which 24 were closed-ended and 7 open-ended. The data from the athletes were collected between 15<sup>th</sup> May and 31<sup>st</sup> August 2016.

**Table 1. Characteristics of the whole elite athlete population and the research sample**

	Examined sample 104 persons		Whole population 160 persons	
	persons	ratio	persons	ratio
<b>Gender</b>				
Male	63	60.6%	93	58.1%
Female	41	39.4%	67	41.9%
<b>Years of age</b>				
14-20	16	15.4%	21	13.1%
21-26	33	31.7%	61	38.1%
27-32	40	38.5%	61	38.1%
above 33	15	14.4%	17	10.6%

The HOC accredited altogether 28 media workers for the 2016 Olympic Games, who represented 22 different media outlets. 22 of them filled the questionnaire on 25<sup>th</sup> May 2016 in the headquarters of the HOC at an Olympics briefing. Six persons were absent from the event, they filled the questionnaire online. The responses to the online questionnaire arrived between 25<sup>th</sup> May and 10<sup>th</sup> June 2016. All 28 media workers accredited by the HOC filled the questionnaire, so in their case the response rate is 100%. The questionnaire sent to the media workers contained 26 questions of which 20 were closed-ended and 6 open-ended. The complex response rate was 82%. I analysed the data using the SPSS statistics program. The significance level was 0.05, which is the usual and accepted value in social sciences. I

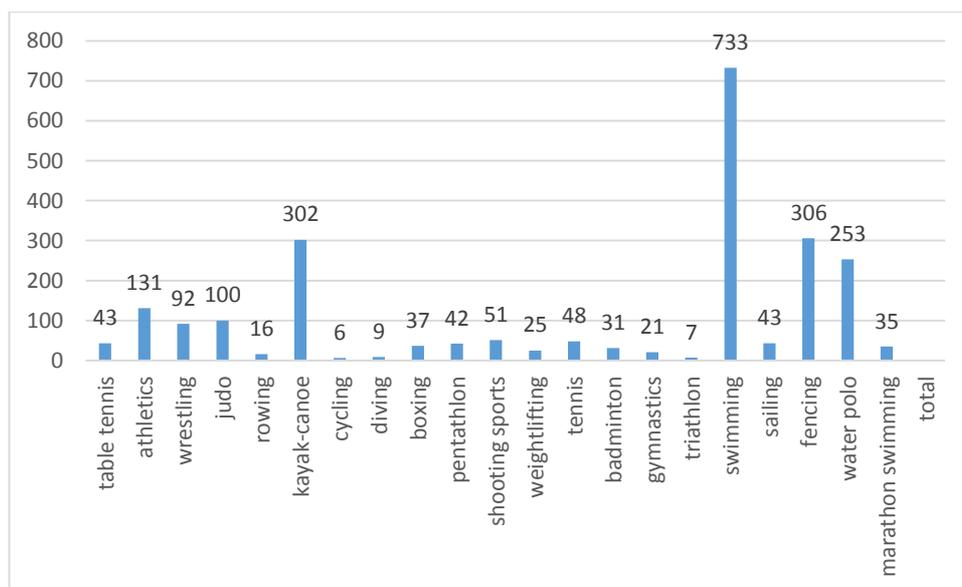
analysed the results utilising descriptive statistics, the chi-square test and the ANOVA test. I interpreted the data separately and also by comparing the responses of the two groups.

## 4. Results

### 4.1. Media appearances of sports and the Hungarian Olympic team during the time of the 2016 Rio Olympics

From the data measured with the contribution of the Observer, I present the following: the quantitative occurrence of the collocation “Hungarian team”, the appearances of the 22 sports that had Hungarian contestants and the quantified appearances of the selected six Olympic athletes on the five chosen news portals while illustrating the results with qualitative data.

Based on the number of appearances of sports it can be stated that swimming was the most covered sport, I found 733 articles altogether during the examined period. Fencing comes in second with 306 pieces of writing, and kayak-canoe comes in third place with 302 appearances. The least amount of media coverage was dedicated to cycling, only 6 appearances, which sport is just slightly behind triathlon with 7 articles (Figure 1).



**Figure 1. Media appearances on the online news portals according to different sports**

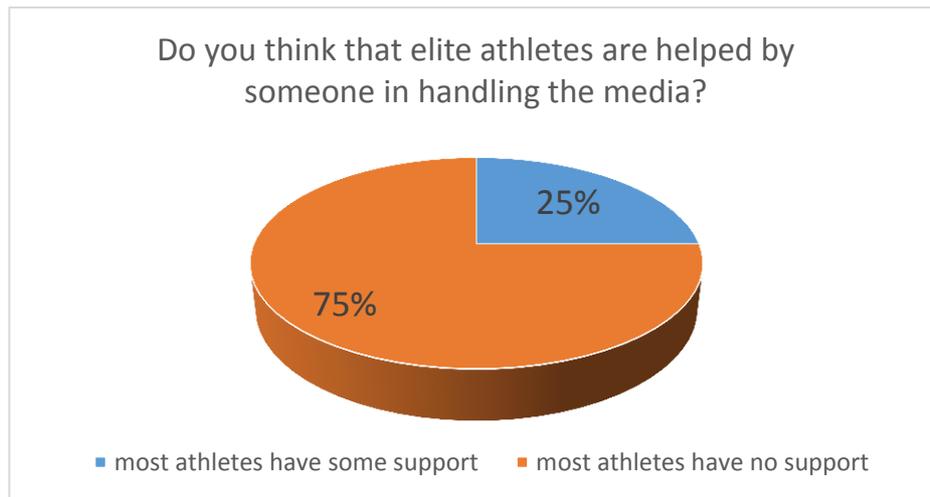
Source: own figure/Observer

If we take a look at the average number of appearances per competitor of a given sport during the examined period, we find the following: swimming: 22 appearances per person, kayak-canoe: 20 appearances per person, fencing: 30 appearances per person, triathlon: 1.75 appearances per person, cycling: 6 appearances per person. Based on these it can be said that fencing comes on top in terms of appearances per person ratio.

Examining the number of articles about individual athletes distributed among the news portals I found that except for one athlete (Éva Csernoviczki) all Olympians had the most news coverage on Origo.hu. In terms of Katinka Hosszú and Tamás Kenderesi, Blikk comes in second, and Nemzeti Sport for all other examined Olympians. At third place for Katinka Hosszú and Tamás Kenderesi there is the Nemzeti Sport, for Danuta Kozák and Dávid Verrasztó it is Blikk and for Géza Imre it is 24.hu, while for Éva Csernoviczki Origo comes in third place on the imaginary podium. Based on the results we can draw the conclusion that from a sensationalist point of view from the six selected athletes Katinka Hosszú and Tamás Kenderesi proved to be the most interesting.

#### **4.2. The relationship of competitors and employees of the media: attitudes, opinion, motivation**

It is often expected of elite athletes to behave like role models and to be open-minded towards employees of the media, nevertheless, the question arises whether they are supported in any way in this field. In the light of the results it is clear that nearly half of the Olympians receive little to no support in how to handle the media, and even those who get some help, their aids are usually family members or the coach, who most probably do not have any formal training in the operation of the media. In contrast, 75% of the employees of the media suppose that athletes do not receive any help in handling the media (Figure 2). This feedback differs significantly from the responses of the athletes ( $\chi^2=9,583$ ;  $df=1$ ;  $p\leq 0.005$ ).



**Figure 2. The opinion of employees of the media on whether elite athletes are helped by someone in connection with their media appearances**

Approximately two thirds of Olympians believe that they do not need any help when keeping contact with the media. Significant difference can be found in this case as well when comparing responses with the opinions of the employees of the media ( $\chi^2=30,643$ ;  $df=1$ ;  $p\leq 0.001$ ) as 96% think that Olympians need more support in connection with handling the media.

*“It is my experience that about 90% of athletes do not get any help in how to handle the media. In my opinion the sports management market is not really functioning right now in Hungary as one can’t make a living out of it. It would be necessary for athletes to have at least some basic knowledge in this field, especially before the Olympics, as they have to give interviews in the mix zone and it definitely matters how the athlete is able to do that.”*  
(Online journalist with 20 years of experience.)

In the course of my research I found significant difference between the opinions of Olympians and employees of the media about how enthusiastic athletes are about appearing in the media. Less than half of the Olympians (44%) like appearing in the media and every second of this half wish to appear only in connection with their sports profession, while 75% of the employees of the media suppose that most athletes like to express thoughts in front of a wider public at least in connection with the sports profession (Table 2).

**Table 2. The attitudes of Olympians towards media appearance: according to the athletes and employees of the media** ( $\chi^2=21,502$ ;  $df=3$ ;  $p\leq 0,001$ )

Do you / do Olympians like to appear in the media?	Not at all	Not really, but I know it is necessary	Yes, but only concerning professional matters	Yes, concerning any topic	Overall
Olympians N	2	56	23	23	104
Olympians %	1.9%	53.8%	22.1%	22.1%	100.0%
Employees of the media N	0	7	19	2	28
Employees of the media %	0.0%	25.0%	67.9%	7.1%	100.0%
Overall N	2	63	42	25	132
Overall %	1.5%	47.7%	31.8%	18.9%	100.0%

Based on the results, it can be deduced that Olympians in general do not like to appear in the media, nevertheless, they feel it is their duty to do so, primarily because they wish to represent themselves and their own sport. However, most Olympians do not prefer to talk about private matters (Table 3).

**Table 3. Which topics are preferred by Olympians when appearing in the media, according to the opinions of elite athletes and employees of the media (on a scale of 1-4).**

Response	Olympians		Employees of the media	
	Mean	STD	Mean	STD
Competition, sports achievements	3.75	0.535	3.93	0.262
Social activity (charity, volunteering...)	2.94	1.056	3.18	0.670
Other sports topic (registration transfer, preparation, sponsors...)	2.78	0.986	3.04	0.881
Current events (positive)***	2.45	1.245	3.75	0.518
Leisure activities (hobbies, travel, cooking...)	2.23	1.081	2.11	0.934
Opinion about current events that are not connected to the athlete	1.78	0.945	2.25	1.041
Other public appearance (quiz show, TV shows...)	1.76	0.907	2.11	0.892
Current events (negative)	1.62	0.938	1.64	1.096
Private life (relationships, family)	1.58	0.823	1.68	1.090

In the relationship of elite athletes and the employees of the media both sides probably have suppositions, mutual prejudices, negative and positive attitudes based on preconceptions,

previous experiences or rumours. More than 60% of Olympians stated that they have already seen such news about themselves published that they would have preferred not to see.

*„Many people can't see how much work is invested into our achievements, they approach us from the wrong angle, and do not sense what is really behind the things we do. There is too much negative news, it would be so great to read more about the principles we stand for.” (Female athlete).*

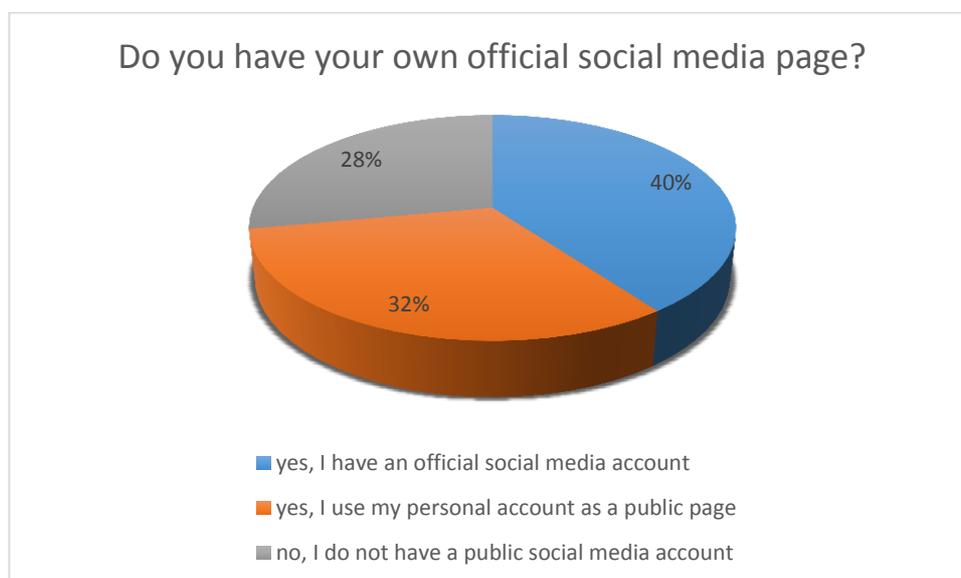
The quality of the relationship of athletes and employees of the media cannot be generalised, as many different positive and negative experiences result from a variety of situations. Additionally, the preparedness of elite athletes and media workers about one another is not the same either. Most of them got into conflicts with one another, but the question is, how one could handle the situation and how one could move forward.

### **4.3. The impact of the appearance of digital media on Olympians and media workers**

Journalists need great stories that can sell the content, and in the era of digital media these can generate more clicks and views (Nicholson et al. 2015). Social media has transformed the real-timeness of news as an hour after publication the news item becomes obsolete (Billings et al. 2015). The advent of the internet and social media has brought about a radical change in the lives of athletes and media workers and in their relationship. Although the profession of media workers is to generate news items for the public, they also needed some time to be able to adapt to the application of new digital tools.

*„With the spread of smartphones in 2013 a lot of things perceivably changed in connection with publishing the news. In this new information revolution people want to be notified of the news and also the results immediately.” (Online journalist with twenty years of experience.)*

Less than half (40%) of the Hungarian Olympians who qualified for the Rio Olympics had a public social media page prior to the Olympics, one third of them used their private pages to publish official news, and more than a quarter of them did not communicate at all about themselves on any of these new innovative platforms (Figure 3).



**Figure 3. The presence of Olympians in social media**

Less than a quarter of elite athletes believe that it is important to appear on social platforms, while over 40% does not prefer to be present on these sites. Employees of the media would prefer if athletes were more actively present on social media platforms as that would aid them in keeping up-to-date, as a consequence, 96% thinks this question is important (Table 4). A significant difference can be found related to this question between elite athletes and the media workers.

**Table 4. Opinions of Olympians and media workers about the importance for elite athletes to represent themselves on social media (1: not important at all – 4: very important)**

		1	2	3	4	Sum
		not important at all		very important		
Olympians	N	8	37	37	22	104
	%	7.7%	36.6%	35.6%	21.2%	100.0%
Employees of the media	N	0	1	7	20	28
	%	0.0%	3.6%	25.0%	71.4%	100.0%
Sum	N	8	38	44	42	132
	%	6.06%	28.78%	33.33%	31.81%	100.0%

If we compare the opinions of Olympians and the employees of the media in connection with the shares of athletes on social media, we get the same results as in the case of the

qualitative responses. Employees of the media would prefer to see more news on the social media platforms about the Olympians than what is currently available.

#### 4.4. Media representation of elite athletes: opportunity or obligation?

In this chapter of my dissertation I examine the Olympians by category, in a way that I divided the elite athletes in the examined sample into three groups: media refrain, neutral, media friendly. I defined the groups according to the following aspects: I categorised the responses to the nine-element Likert-scale questionnaire that examined the attitudes of Olympians towards the media. Based on the examination of the responses and the categories we can draw the conclusion that athletes belonging to the media friendly group are more open to media appearances that are not exclusively connected to sports, while media refrain Olympians are characteristically more inclined to accept media appearances only connected to the theme of sports (Table 5).

**Table 5. The attitudes of Olympians towards their media appearances according to gender and age in the light of the three groups**

Examined population: 104 persons	Media refrain		Neutral		Media friendly	
	persons	ratio	persons	ratio	persons	ratio
	42	40.4%	41	39.4%	21	20.2%
<b>According to gender</b>						
Male	22	34.9%	25	39.7%	16	25.4%
Female	20	48.8%	16	39.0%	5	12.2%
<b>According to age</b>						
14-20	9	56.3%	21	43.8%	0	0.0%
21-26	12	36.4%	16	48.5%	5	15.2%
27-32	16	40.0%	14	35.0%	10	25.0%
Above 33	5	33.3%	4	26.7%	6	40.0%

For all three groups the greatest motivation for appearing in the media is to represent their sport discipline. There are significantly greater differences between the categories in terms of the results of media appearances that are not connected to the athletes' role in sport according to the following aspects: because of the sponsors, can be beneficial for the future of the athlete, to boost popularity, the athlete likes to be in the limelight, so examining the three

categories it can be stated that athletes differ in terms of the amount, quality and quantity of their inclination to appear in the media.

## 5. Conclusion

Studying the operation of the media is a learning process, a profession, nevertheless, it can be beneficial for people living in the limelight if they possess the up-to-date and adequate level of background knowledge. Consequently they could generate a more conscious, balanced and more effective communication and media appearance, be it social media or public appearance in the traditional sense. Most athletes claim that they do not need any training in communication, but this attitude can lead to unexpected difficulties later on. Athletes, when participating in competitions, are accustomed to setting goals and attaining them. If a stronger consciousness could set in connected to media appearances, and they could feel that they are in charge of their own public communication, so they control what is happening and why, then they could set goals about what explicit and implicit messages they wish to send to the general public. It is important to stress that Olympians, besides representing themselves, represent their nation and numerous other organisations – such as the sport department, national sport federation, the Olympic Committee –, so the importance of their public appearances has to be emphasised from different perspectives. Although in the course of my research it became evident that the attitudes of Olympians differ in terms of public communication, acquiring basic knowledge about handling and understanding the media could be beneficial and a value-adding activity for all Olympians.

### 5.1. Testing the hypotheses

- **H1:** The hypothesis stating that the training of elite athletes does not encompass to the sufficient degree the fostering of media communication competences necessary for conscious public appearances proved to be true. According to the athletes, in most cases they do not receive enough support to handle the media.
- **H2:** The hypothesis that claims that there are significant differences between individual Olympians in terms of their attitudes towards the media can be considered as proven. By dividing athletes into three distinct categories in terms of their appearances in the media it could be demonstrated that there are athletes who are completely open to the media no matter what the topic is. In contrast with this, there

are Olympians who definitely do not like to appear in the media and give interviews only because they feel this is their duty.

- **H2a:** The hypothesis stating that the attitudes of Olympians belonging to the younger age group can be characterised as more open in the field of public communication than athletes in the older age group was rejected. Older Olympians are the ones who have more negative and positive experiences, and on the one hand they sense that they can enhance the prestige of their sport through their personal example and in general advocate the respect for and importance of sport, exercise and body culture, on the other hand, they have already faced the fact that the attention of the media is very often not directed towards their outstanding sporting achievements.
- **H2B:** The hypothesis, according to which there is a significant gender difference among athletes in terms of how open they are to media and that men appear publically significantly more actively than women can be considered as proven. Probably male athletes exert less effort to protect their private lives and are open to more topics in terms of their media appearances, and it can be assumed that because of this they can select from a wider variety of media invitations than their female counterparts.
- **H3:** The hypothesis stating that with respect to the relations of the two parties, there is a significant difference between the motivations of media workers and Olympians, and this factor extensively influences the utterances of athletes in the media proved to be true. Originating from the given professions, there are of course basic motivational differences, however, without the adequate and conscious partnership, the dominant presence of digital media, news competition and sensationalist journalism strengthens the common interests of the two parties.
- **H3A:** The hypothesis claiming that the attitudes of professionals working for the media are definitely shaped by the objectives of mediating news and, depending on the media outlet, increasing readership or number of viewers proved to be true. The immense news competition in today's world prefers sensational news items and overlooks the mediation of social values.
- **H3B:** The hypothesis according to which the bulk of Olympians wish to limit their media appearances to the sphere of sports, as elite athletes are definitely focused on achievements proved to be partially true. Categorising the athletes proved that they are a minority within the group of Olympians. There are Olympians who like to appear

publicly regardless of the topic, and there are athletes who are of the opposite opinion as they prefer not to appear in the media connected to any topic.

- **H3C:** The hypothesis claiming that although media appearances can depend on the personality and the situation, most elite athletes are frustrated by being asked to comment on things outside the sphere of sports (e.g. sensationalist focus) proved to be true, as what might be a way to boost views from the perspective of the media worker, can pose risks of increased public exposure far greater than the athlete desires.
- **H4:** The hypothesis stating that the social media use of Olympians is significantly less in terms of volume than the amount the representatives of media would find optimal proved to be true. The majority of Olympians do not have their own official social media page. In contrast with this, media workers would definitely need that, as they would be able to prepare more thoroughly for interviews or reports, and would be able to acquire information about the Olympians in certain cases even without an interview.

## **5.2. Closing remarks**

With the transformation of media consumption, as communicators, elite athletes and media workers as well had to adapt to numerous new factors. Although this process is still in progress, taking the constant changes into consideration, we cannot be certain of what the future holds in this respect. Compared with international tendencies, the motivation and actual presence of Hungarian Olympians in the media, moreover, their active content generation in social media is at a relatively low level. Nevertheless, we can observe a tendency that there are athletes in Hungary who take personal branding and also the communication of their personal values seriously, which can be profitable even after their retirement. This research has shown that Olympians are aware of the fact that what they represent could be exemplary to many, but they are uncertain about how and in what form they should communicate this to the wider public. In my opinion, this uncertainty could be mitigated by constant and conscious training and self-education. With the help of conscious media use, it is possible to deliver messages to the public about the athletes, by the athletes, that mediate those values that the

competitors actually stand for. In order to achieve this, most athletes would require to learn public communication competences and conscious media use, with the guidance of relevant professionals, possibly with the support of a sports media mentoring programme.

Olympians constitute an extremely small segment of the whole sports community taking into account other elite athletes or recreational ones. As a field of further research it would be a relevant topic to study the relationship of non-Olympians and the media, i.e. conducting a similar research among the wider sphere of athletes, as the values of sport are potentially carried by all participants, and getting to know these, specifying their types could aid the creation of an effective communication strategy.

The goal of my dissertation was to present the changes taking place in the media and to reflect on these, additionally, to show how athletes and media workers can adapt to this new situation. In the course of my research I acquired answers to other questions as well, and analysing these strengthened my supposition and personal experience that the viewpoints of the two parties are not necessarily the same, the motivation can be different, they relate to each other according to different values, their individual education, personality and dynamics. The findings of my dissertation can shed new light on the relationship between Olympians and the media, and can aid and support athletes in becoming successful and authentic messengers or mediators in public communication. This way the intended messages about athletes and the values affiliated with sports can reach their target audience more productively and effectively.

I recommend the findings of my dissertation to professionals who thrive to deliver the values and competences in sports to the members of society as widely as possible by involving the public mediation power of elite athletes.

### **5.3 Main novelties of the dissertation**

- Elite athletes do not handle the protection of their personalities consciously, and as a result, they do not have sufficient in-depth information about the functioning of the media.
- Compared to foreign athletes, Hungarian Olympians use the platforms of social media at a lower rate, even though the conscious utilisation of these could potentially benefit the athletes and also that could ease the work of the employees of the media.
- Although it became clear during my research that we cannot generalise the attitudes of Olympians towards public communication, still, they can be typified. By identifying

the three groups: media friendly, neutral and media refrain, new perspectives emerge for enquiry into more systemic and in-depth understanding of different attitudes and practices.

- Besides delivering a maximum performance, elite athletes must be aware of the social responsibilities their achievements and successes entail. The media and sport science knowledge mobilised in this study and the findings underpin the necessity of a sport media mentoring programme for elite athletes that could enable a more conscious use of the media, and this way athletes could mediate the values one can acquire through sports to the members of society in the form of public communication.

## **6. Author's publications**

Publications in the topic of the PhD thesis:

**Kovács Á, Dóczy T. (2015)** A sportmédia változásai az 1990-es évektől napjainkig: a média szerepének, és a globalizáció hatásának bemutatása az élsportolók és a média kapcsolatában. *Magyar Sporttudományi Szemle*, 63(3): 35-42.

**Kovács Á.** View of Elite Athletes and Employees of the Media in Hungary: Values, Interests and Conflicts. Gál, A., Kosiewicz, J., Sterbenz, T. (eds) *Sport and social sciences with reflection on practice*. Josef Pilsudski University of Physical Education, Warsaw, 2016: 279-288.

**Kovács Á, Dóczy T. (2018)** The relation between Olympians and Employees of the Media in Hungary: Motivations, Attitudes, Rejection. *Physical Culture and Sport Studies and Research*. Warsaw, Volume 78: 5-12.

**Kovács Á, Dóczy T. (2019)** Élsportolók és média munkatársainak kapcsolata sportszociológia megközelítésből. *Kultúra és Közösség*, 10(4): 29-38.

**Kovács Á, Dóczy T. (2020)** Elite athletes and media appearances: opportunity or obligation? *Sport in Society*, 23(7): 1136-1145.

**Kovács Á**, Dóczy T, Antunovic D. (2020) Social Media Use Among Olympians and Sport Journalists in Hungary. *International Journal of Sport Communication*, 13(2): 181-199.