# Motivations of Speedway Event Participants: A Case Study of TŻ Ostrovia Fans

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#### Abstract

Contemporary sport extends beyond physical competition, serving as a complex social, cultural, and economic phenomenon that influences individual and community life. Sporting events foster emotions, local identity, and social integration. Understanding participant motivations – both athletes and fans – is crucial for grasping the social and psychological dynamics of these events. Speedway racing, deeply rooted in local communities and marked by passionate fan engagement, offers a valuable context for such analysis. This study focuses on the motivations of fans of the Polish speedway team TŻ Ostrovia. A quantitative study was conducted via an online survey distributed among TŻ Ostrovia fans between March and April 2025. A total of 241 respondents completed the questionnaire, which included sociodemographic data and motives for participation based on Freyer and Gross's typology: social, emotional, substantive, and result-oriented motivations. Responses were rated on a five-point Likert scale. Data analysis aimed to identify predominant motivations and their relation to demographic variables. The dominant motives identified were: 1. desire for unity and integration with others and support for riders; 2. desire to experience excitement and a special atmosphere; 3. desire to feel the unique event atmosphere; and 4. desire to follow the sports competition. TŻ Ostrovia fans perceive attending speedway events as an emotionally intense experience that provides social connection and temporary escape from everyday life. Participation is not solely entertainment but a significant social and emotional phenomenon. The results offer valuable insights for event organizers seeking to align offerings with fan motivations and enhance engagement.

**Keywords**: *Motivation*; *speedway*; *sport*; *event management*; *TŻ Ostrovia*; *Poland*;

#### 1. Introduction

Contemporary sport is not limited solely to the realm of physical competition and motor activity. It constitutes a complex social, cultural, and economic phenomenon that increasingly influences various aspects of individual and community life (Demel, 1970; Bodasińska, 2007). Sporting events attract large audiences, evoke strong emotions, reinforce local and national identities, and foster a sense of community (Malchrowicz-Mośko, Rozmiarek, 2016). Sport thus becomes not only a lifestyle element but also a tool for shaping the image of cities, and a space for active participation by

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diverse stakeholders, including athletes, fans, organizers, sponsors, and public institutions (Cieślikowski, Kantyka, Herman, 2017).

To fully understand the nature of contemporary sporting events, it is necessary to analyze their specific characteristics, typologies, as well as the social and psychological mechanisms that shape them. Of particular importance in this context are the motivations of participants – both athletes and spectators – which determine their presence, engagement, and level of identification with the sporting event. From the perspective of social sciences, motivation is a key factor influencing human behavior. The term, derived from the Latin *movere* ("to move"), refers to the processes of initiating, directing, sustaining, and terminating actions (Zimbardo, Johnson, McCann, 2010). In psychology, motivation is commonly distinguished into intrinsic motivation – arising from personal needs and satisfaction – and extrinsic motivation, which is related to environmental factors such as rewards, social pressure, or cultural norms. The theory developed by Deci and Ryan further highlights the multidimensionality of extrinsic motivation, identifying different levels of internalization ranging from external regulation to integrated regulation (Deci, Ryan, 1991).

In the context of sport and fandom, motivation takes on complex forms, including the need for belonging, identification with the team, the pursuit of intense emotions, and the reinforcement of community identity. Fans are not merely passive spectators – they often serve as guardians of tradition, opinion leaders, or event organizers. Their loyalty and engagement influence not only the atmosphere of matches but also the well-being and motivation of the athletes themselves. The typology of fans – from ultras and leaders to casual observers – reveals a wide spectrum of attitudes and behaviors that play a significant role in the dynamics of sporting events (Pikora, 2013; Nosal, Kossakowski, 2017).

One of the sports disciplines particularly deeply rooted in local communities and evoking exceptional emotions among fans is speedway racing. Although it is characterized by uniform rules concerning motorcycle construction, safety, and track parameters, its forms of competition are diverse and rich. In addition to individual races (both 20- and 25-heat formats), team competitions, pairs tournaments, four-team matches, and practice sessions are also organized. Each of these formats differs in organizational structure, scoring systems, and the nature of the competition. Team events, such as the classic 18-heat system, emphasize cooperation among riders within the team, whereas pairs tournaments and four-team matches increase tactical complexity and emotional intensity. Speedway as a sport is also distinguished by its flexibility and ability to adapt to spectator expectations and the needs of sports clubs (Polski Związek Motorowy, 2025).

The history of speedway racing dates back to the 1920s. The symbolic beginning of modern speedway is considered to be the event held on December 15, 1923, at the West Maitland track in Australia. In the following years, the discipline developed rapidly in Europe, especially in Great Britain, where in 1929 the first speedway league was established and international competitions

were held (Błaszkowska, 2018). In Poland, speedway's origins trace back to 1930, with the first national championships taking place just two years later (Noga, 2016). Today, the Polish Speedway Ekstraliga is recognized as one of the strongest leagues worldwide, and speedway enjoys immense popularity across many regions of the country.

Against this background, the analysis of the motivations of speedway fans becomes particularly interesting, as they often demonstrate a high level of loyalty, emotional involvement, and active participation in the life of sports clubs. Understanding what drives their presence at stadiums, the emotions they experience, and the needs they fulfill through participation in speedway events represents an important area of research from the perspectives of sports psychology, sociology, and management. Therefore, the aim of this article is to investigate the motivations of participants in speedway competitions using the example of fans of the TŻ Ostrovia team. The choice of this topic stems from the growing interest in motor sports in Poland and the specificity of the speedway fan culture, which combines elements of local identity, communal rituals, and intense emotional experiences. This study is based on empirical research conducted among fans attending events organized by the TŻ Ostrovia club and aims to provide in-depth knowledge about the factors determining their engagement.

#### 2. Materials and Methods

The study was designed to identify and analyze the motives driving fans to participate in speedway competitions organized by the TŻ Ostrovia club. The main research question addressed: What are the motives behind fans' participation in the speedway events of the TŻ Ostrovia team? The hypothesis assumed that the dominant motivation among participants is the need for social integration and the desire to experience intense emotions.

The research was quantitative in nature and conducted via an online survey distributed through social media within the TŻ Ostrovia fan community. Data collection took place from March to April 2025. A total of 241 complete responses were obtained. The questionnaire consisted of two parts. The first part gathered sociodemographic data such as age, gender, place of residence, level of education, and frequency of attending speedway events. The second part focused on identifying participation motives based on the typology of motivation developed by Freyer and Gross (2002). According to this typology, four main types of motivation were distinguished: social, emotional, substantive (event-related), and result-oriented.

The questionnaire used was based on the Polish version of the instrument developed by Poczta and Malchrowicz-Mośko (2019), which accounts for the specifics of sporting events in the context of the Polish audience. Respondents rated their agreement with individual statements on a five-point Likert scale.

The analysis of the collected data enabled the identification of which types of motivation predominate among TZ Ostrovia fans, as well as the

examination of whether and how these motivations depend on sociodemographic characteristics. The results obtained were used to verify the research hypothesis and formulate conclusions regarding the mechanisms underlying engagement in speedway event participation.

### 3. Results

The first table presents a detailed sociodemographic profile of the respondents (N = 241). It includes a division between residents of Ostrów Wielkopolski who attended the events and visiting spectators.

The results indicate that the majority of participants were men (58.5%), although the gender distribution was relatively balanced. The largest share of fans belonged to the age groups 36–50 and 26–35, which together accounted for over 60% of respondents. Regarding education, a significant portion of participants reported having completed secondary education (38.6%). In terms of employment status, most respondents indicated that they were professionally active (78%).

**Table 1.** Sociodemographic Characteristics of TŻ Ostrovia Fans.

	TŻ Ostrovia Speedway Te	eam Events – Fans – N =		
Sociodemographic	241			
Characteristics	(198 residents of Ostró	(198 residents of Ostrów Wielkopolski / 43		
	tourists)			
Gender	N = 241	%		
Male	141	58,5		
Female	100	41,5		
Age	N =241	%		
<18	19	7,9		
18-25	45	18,7		
26-35	73	30,3		
36-50	76	31,5		
51-70	27	11,2		
71 and more	1	0,4		
Employment Status	N = 241	%		
Pupil	23	9,5		
Student	20	8,3		
Employed	188	78		
Unemployed	5	2,1		
Retired	3	1,2		
Disability pensioner	2	0,8		

Source: Created by the authors, based on own research data.

One of the questions in the survey concerned the frequency of respondents' attendance at speedway events. This question aimed to gain a better understanding of their engagement and level of interest in this sport discipline. The responses obtained allowed for an assessment of the popularity of such events and served as an important indicator of fan activity.

**Table 2.** Frequency of Speedway Events Attendance among Respondents.

Frequency of participation in speedway events					
Response N = 241 %					
Once	13	5,4			
Twice	8	3,3			
Three times	6	2,5			
Four times	8	3,3			
Five times	8	3,3			
Six times	3	1,2			
More than six times	195	80,9			

Source: Created by the authors, based on own research data.

The presented data indicate that speedway events are most popular among individuals who attend them regularly. As many as 80.9% of respondents participate in these events more than six times, suggesting that for this group, speedway is a constant element of their lives, and attending the competitions constitutes a significant part of their recreational activities. Only 19.1% of respondents reported attending speedway events up to five times, with the smallest portion (just 5.4%) having participated only once. The results show that speedway, within the study group, is not treated as a sporadic attraction but as a regular event to which participants repeatedly return. At the same time, the data indicate a slight division between enthusiasts who regard these events as an important part of their activity and those who do not attend frequently enough to consider them a fixed point in their calendar. The regularity of attendance at speedway events may thus be a result of strong identification with the sport and also reflect a high level of engagement within the speedway community.

**Table 3.** Future Participation Intentions in Speedway Events.

Do you intend to participate in a speedway event in the future?					
Response	Response N = 241 %				
Definitely yes	209	86,7			
Probably yes	18	7,5			
I don't know yet	6	2,5			
Probably not	4	1,7			
Definitely not	4	1,7			

Source: Created by the authors, based on own research data.

The question regarding the intention to participate in future speedway events aimed to determine the potential future attendance as well as the durability of interest in this sport discipline. A clear majority of respondents, as many as 209 people (86.7%), declared their willingness to attend upcoming

speedway competitions. This indicates a strong attachment to the sport and a high level of loyalty toward this form of leisure activity. The response "probably yes" was indicated by 18 people (7.5%), reflecting a positive attitude among participants, though this may be influenced by external factors such as finances or distance. The group of undecided respondents consisted of 6 people (2.5%), who might decide to participate in the future based on promotional efforts or positive experiences of acquaintances. A marginal group of respondents who declared "probably not" or "definitely not" may have had negative past experiences with the sport or simply lack interest in it. Overall, over 94% of those surveyed expressed a willingness to participate again in speedway events. This is a positive signal for the development of this sport and can also be seen as an element of social and cultural identity.

**Table 4.** Influence of Participation Frequency on Plans for Future Attendance.

Does the frequency of participation have an impact on the willingness to attend future events?					
Frequency of participation / Willingness to participate	I don't know yet	Probably not	Probably yes	Definitely not	Definitely yes
Once	3	3	5	1	1
Twice	1	0	1	1	5
Three times	0	0	2	0	4
Four times	0	0	3	0	5
Five times	0	0	1	0	7
Six times	0	0	0	0	3
More than six times	2	1	6	2	184

Source: Created by the authors, based on own research data.

Participation in speedway events tends to reinforce engagement. Individuals who attend regularly not only consolidate positive experiences but also build a stronger emotional connection with the event, its atmosphere, and its participants. From the organizers' perspective, this is highly significant information: more frequent attendance translates into greater loyalty and predictability of participant behavior in the future. It can therefore be assumed that each subsequent participation increases the likelihood that a person will become a regular, loyal spectator. In practice, this means it is worthwhile to invest not only in attracting new viewers but also in retaining those who have already attended – because they are the ones most likely to declare their intention to return.

**Table 5.** Impact of Gender on Willingness to Participate in Future Speedway Events.

Does gender play a role in the willingness to participate in the future?					
Willingness to 1					Definitely yes
Male	1	1	7	2	130
Female	5	3	11	2	79

Source: Created by the authors, based on own research data.

The data show that men are more likely than women to express a willingness to attend future speedway events. At the same time, women more frequently selected less definitive responses such as "I don't know yet" or "Probably yes," which may indicate caution or a need for deeper emotional engagement before making a decision. This phenomenon may suggest that men are more inclined to treat such events as a regular form of leisure activity, resulting in more decisive responses. Women, on the other hand, may exhibit a greater need for specific values or personal relevance before committing to recurring participation.

**Table 6.** Impact of Employment Status on Willingness to Participate in Future Speedway Events.

Does employment status influence the willingness to participate in the future?					
Employment status / Willingness to participate	I don't know yet	Probably not	Probably yes	Definitely not	Definitely yes
Employed	4	3	13	3	165
Student	1	0	3	0	16
Pupil	0	1	0	0	22
Unemployed	1	0	1	1	2
Retired	0	0	0	0	3
Disability pensioner	0	0	1	0	1

Source: Created by the authors, based on own research data.

Professionally active individuals, pupils, and students are more likely to declare their willingness to participate in future events. This highlights the particular importance of these groups for the continued development of speedway events. It suggests that active individuals – whether professionally or educationally – are more inclined to build a connection with such events and view them as an attractive way to spend their free time. This tendency may stem from a need to unwind from daily responsibilities, to seek intense emotions, or to enjoy a social atmosphere. From an organizer's perspective, this is a clear signal that these groups should be given special attention in communication, promotion, and event offerings, as they represent an active, engaged, and

promising segment of the audience. In the long term, investing in relationships with these participants can lead to higher attendance and lasting loyalty to the event brand.

**Table 7.** Motivational Factors for Participation in Speedway Events (Group A).

Motivation for participating in a speedway event (Group A)				
Response	N = 241	%		
Desire to feel unity and integration with others or desire to support the participating riders	163	67,6		
Desire to accompany people performing in other shows or desire to learn something new	13	5,4		
Current trends / prevailing fashion	1	0,4		
Desire to express admiration for those actively taking part in the speedway event	47	19,5		
Desire to show something interesting to a child	42	17,4		
None of the listed motives in this group	48	19,9		

Source: Created by the authors, based on own research data.

The most frequently indicated motive was the desire to feel unity and integration with others, as well as to support the riders. This response was chosen by 163 participants, indicating a strong emotional component and a sense of community. Respondents perceive speedway events as social gatherings. This social aspect is also reflected in responses such as the desire to express admiration for the participants (19.5%) and the desire to show something interesting to a child (17.4%). A total of 48 respondents stated that they did not identify with any of the listed motives, which may suggest that their reasons for participation stem from more individual or different motivations not captured in this question. Far fewer participants selected the motives related to accompanying others, learning something new, or following trends. The results of this question show that fans attend not only for the sake of sports competition, but also to experience a sense of community, show support for the riders, and spend meaningful and active time with family. A noteworthy point is that nearly 1/5 of the respondents did not identify with any of the given motives, which may indicate a need for further exploration of individual reasons behind fan participation.

Table 8. Motivational Factors for Participation in Speedway Events (Group B).

Motivation for participating in a speedway event (Group B)				
Response	N = 241	%		
Desire to experience something exciting	148	61,4		
Desire to feel a unique atmosphere or desire to have fun / enjoy leisure time and entertainment	139	57,7		
Desire to express joy, e.g., due to the victory of one's favorite	94	39		
Desire to escape from everyday life	93	38,6		
None of the above-mentioned motives in this group	12	5		

Source: Created by the authors, based on own research data.

Motives for participating in a speedway event in Group B represent the main reasons for respondents' attendance at the event. The most frequently mentioned motive was the desire to experience something exciting and to feel a unique atmosphere. This answer was selected by 148 individuals (61.4%). It shows that speedway events are perceived as a strong source of emotions and unique experiences, which attracts a large portion of the audience. The second most frequently chosen answer was the desire to have fun and spend free time pleasantly – 139 respondents (57.7%) selected this option. This indicates that not only is the emotional aspect important, but also the recreational nature of the event, which provides an engaging way to spend leisure time. 94 individuals selected the desire to express joy, for example, due to the victory of their favorite. It can be concluded that participation in speedway events also has a communal and fan-based dimension. For many, it is an opportunity to celebrate the success of their team or favorite rider. Only slightly fewer people (93 individuals) indicated the desire to escape from everyday life. This shows that sports events also serve as a form of 'escape' from daily routine. They offer a moment of relaxation as well as a temporary distraction from everyday life problems. Only 12 respondents (5%) selected the option of not identifying with any of the motives in Group B.

**Table 9.** Motivational Factors for Participation in Speedway Events (Group C).

Motivation for participating in a speedway event (Group C)		
Response	N = 241	%
Desire to develop a passion for speedway (I ride / I'm a fan)	133	55,2
Desire to feel a unique atmosphere	159	66
Desire to satisfy aesthetic needs	10	4,1
I'm attracted by the appeal of the sports program	42	17,4
I'm attracted by the appeal of the cultural program	8	3,3
I'm attracted by the appeal of the overall offer	7	2,9
None of the listed motives in this group	17	7,1

Source: Created by the authors, based on own research data.

The most frequently indicated motive in group C was the desire to feel the unique atmosphere (159 people). This clearly shows that the atmosphere at speedway events is crucial and is one of the main factors attracting participants. The second most common response was the desire to develop a passion for speedway (133 people). This means that more than half of the respondents see speedway events not only as entertainment but also as an opportunity to develop their passion and interests. The appeal of the sports program motivated 42 people (17.4%), indicating a moderate interest in the sporting aspect of the competitions themselves. The cultural program's attractiveness drew 8 people, which may be an important area for future development. For most respondents, aesthetic values are not a significant factor

in participating in speedway events. Seventeen people did not identify with any of the motives listed in this group.

**Table 10.** Motivational Factors for Participation in Speedway Events (Group D).

Motivation for participating in a speedway event (Group D)				
Response	N = 241	%		
Desire to follow the sports competition	189	78,4		
Desire to experience success (thanks to the victory of one's favorite and identification with them)	123	51		
High (international) status of this sports event	28	11,6		
None of the motives listed in this group	13	5,4		

Source: Created by the authors, based on own research data.

The data analysis for motivation group D shows that the most frequent response was the desire to follow the sports competition, indicated by as many as 78.4% of respondents. Next, 51% of participants expressed the desire to experience success through their favorite competitor's victory and identification with them. Much less frequently, respondents referred to the high status of the event (11.6%) and the lack of identification with any of the listed motives (5.4%). These data emphasize that participation in speedway events is primarily of a sporting and emotional nature – respondents come to actively support and share in the emotions related to the competition, rather than because of the prestige of the event or its general character.

#### 4. Discussion

The results showed that the main motivations for respondents' participation in the TŻ Ostrovia speedway events are: 1. The desire to feel unity and integration with other people and to support the competing riders; 2. The desire to experience something exciting and to feel a special atmosphere; 3. The desire to experience the unique atmosphere of the event; 4. The desire to follow the sports competition.

Therefore, fans' participation in the TŻ Ostrovia speedway events stems from the need for emotional engagement, a sense of belonging to a community, and involvement in a unique sporting event, which confirmed the research hypothesis.

The conducted research is also supported by the literature. Ryśnik (2019) studied the identification and evaluation of factors motivating sports fans' participation in international sports spectacles, based on research among volleyball fans. His study highlighted motives related to emotions, sporting experiences, and the sense of belonging to a fan group. The similarity of these results suggests that regardless of the sport discipline, and both in international and local contexts, fans experience emotional engagement and group identification. These two factors play a key role in motivating participants to attend sports events.

Similar conclusions were also drawn by Krzyżanowska and Reda (2022) in their analysis of motivations for participation in mass sports events. Their study, conducted among 207 respondents, identified the main motivating factors as the desire to support a team or athlete, the opportunity to experience strong emotions, and the wish to experience a unique atmosphere. Likewise, in the research on TŻ Ostrovia fans, emotional and social motives predominated. Both in the current study and in the work of Krzyżanowska and Reda, it was emotions and social identification that motivated fans. This confirms their key role in the culture of sports participation.

The results of the present study can also be compared with findings by Poczta and Malchrowicz-Mośko (2019), based on research conducted at Cavaliada. Their findings showed that the dominant motives were the desire to spend free time in an interesting way, to experience sporting emotions, to feel a connection with other participants, and the unique atmosphere of the event. Despite the different nature of the sport, in both cases respondents emphasized the importance of community experience, intense emotions, and the need for social integration. This points to the universality of certain motivations for participation in sports events, regardless of the type of sport.

A potential limitation of the conducted research is the relatively small sample size, as this number of respondents may not fully represent the views of the entire TŻ Ostrovia fan population. Additionally, since the study of motivations falls into the psychological and subjective category, some respondents' answers may have been influenced by their current emotions, mood, or other factors, which could have affected the results.

From a scientific perspective, the research expands knowledge in the fields of sports psychology and fan sociology. It provides up-to-date data on the motivations for participation in local speedway events. In a social context, the study highlights the role of sport as a factor that integrates society. The presented results can be useful for sports event organizers to expand their commercial and marketing offers, adapting them to fans' expectations.

In the future, a valuable extension of the research would be to conduct it on a larger sample group, allowing for a broader view of the results. Another interesting aspect would be longitudinal studies analyzing changes in motivations over time, for example depending on the team's situation, the season, or sporting successes.

#### 5. Conclusion

The aim of this study was to examine the motivations of fans participating in speedway events, using supporters of the TŻ Ostrovia team as an example. The analysis of the results showed that respondents most often indicated the desire to experience strong emotions, feel the unique atmosphere, support the team or rider, and integrate with others. It can therefore be concluded that fans perceive attending speedway events as a unique experience that allows them to momentarily escape everyday life and experience intense sensations. Participation in speedway events is thus not merely a form of

entertainment, but an important social and emotional experience. Organizers, by utilizing the obtained data, can better understand participants' motivations, enabling them to tailor future offerings to fans' needs.

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