

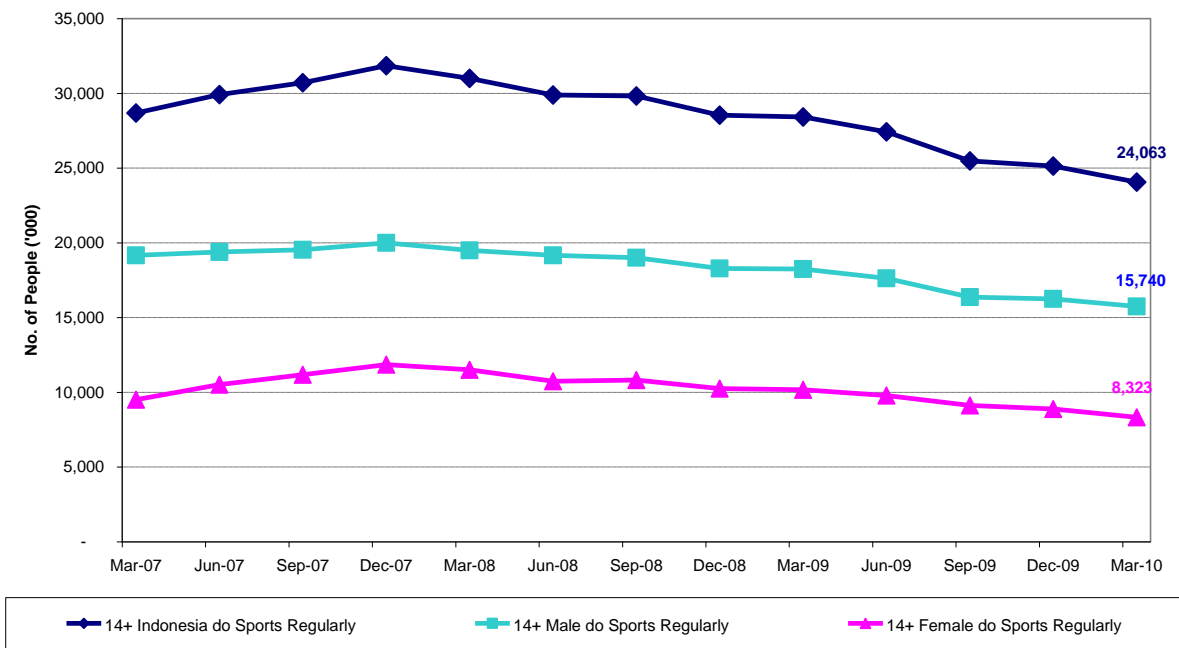
Will The World Cup Have A Lasting Effect on Sales?

With eyes glued to the magic box night after night, I am revelling in the camaraderie tribal contests foster all over the world. Inevitably, Indonesia’s absence from the world arena comes up for discussion almost every evening. The presence of cigarette advertising adds insult to injury, conjuring up images of local soccer heroes with smoking appendages dangling from their lips. Reminiscent of forgotten advertisements in old archives, reassuring audiences of yesteryear that smoking was good for them. That was then, this is now.

Sports is big business everywhere today, but the lines have yet to be drawn in Indonesia. A look at fitness and sports at this juncture of life in soccer-crazy Indonesia would be appropriate I thought. Upon scrutiny, the picture that emerges is none too flattering for the nation, young and old alike. But I have curbed the urge to pull out the old cliches about sports, shunning the ones about character-forming and nation-building.

All indications reconfirm the suspicion that the country isnt exactly bursting with enthusiasm about sports. Quite the contrary. The number of people “doing sports regularly” is in fact trending downwards, with only 24 million people 14 years and older actively engaging in any formal game during the January-March quarter of this year. This is true of both men and women, with only 22 per cent of men and 11 per cent of women actively participating this year, so far. Any enthusiasm that the World Cup may have rekindled would have been dampened by the seemingly endless rains. “Walking for exercise” is, not surprisingly, the most popular sport among Indonesians of all ages. 38 per cent of the population are walkers. The activity is even more popular among women, with 52 per cent claiming to push themselves regularly.

HOW MANY "DO SPORTS REGULARLY"?





For men, the most popular sport today is soccer, sharing top honours with walking. One in three men are actively participating in one or the other, or both. Then comes jogging, at about half the number. A distant fourth is badminton, with about 9 per cent of the population claiming to be regular shuttlers. The game is also popular among about 5 per cent of women today.

Leading the bottom end of the country's 10 most popular sports is volleyball in fifth spot with 7%. Then comes marathons or distance running, with about 6 per cent of the population pushing themselves hard, almost all men. This sport is waning, not gaining in popularity. Sharing the same spot are cycling, a sport enjoyed by both men and women alike, and fishing, enjoyed mostly by men. The wheels are followed by basketball, netting 4 per cent of the population and a slightly bigger share among women. Bringing up the tail is swimming, with a greater number of women rather than men interested in the sport.

Beyond the Top 10, there are even more significant differences by gender. Surprisingly, about 2 per cent of women actually play soccer. But very few men professed any interest in aerobics, opting for table-tennis instead. Sports like golf, horse-riding or motorcycling are so small, so elitist, they can hardly be measured as a percentage of the population. What will worry parents and doctors alike is the decline in recent times among people who say "I love to do as many sports as possible". In just three years, their ranks have dwindled from 39 to 27 per cent of the population 14 years and older.

Equally worrying perhaps is the decline in the number of spectators watching sports "live" at a stadium. From 38 million who went to a game in 2007, the number has slipped to just 28 million in the last 12 months. The decline is both among men and women, with men going down from 29 million in 2007 to 22 million today and female spectators 9 million three years ago to 5 million today. Of all spectators who went to watch a live sporting event in the last 12 months, soccer remains the unchallenged No.1. Over 90 per cent of male and 70 per cent of female spectators went to a soccer stadium. A distant second is badminton with about 20 per cent of all spectators, including 30 per cent of all women enthusiasts. Motor sports come third for men and women, followed by basketball for women and boxing for men.

Sponsors of sports on television have less reason to worry. The decline in active participation does not have a similar trend among TV viewers. For the last three years, a steady 38 per cent of men and 24 per cent of women watched "sports on TV in the last 7 days". As that saying goes, where there is a problem there is an opportunity. Clearly, that opportunity for marketers and media owners alike is in the future of Indonesian sports. Without more support from big business, neither the level of excellence nor viewership will go up any time soon. Events like the World Cup will only offer occasional spikes, at best. These opinions are based on Roy Morgan Single Source, the country's largest syndicated consumer survey with over 25,000 respondents annually. The findings are projected to reflect over 85% of the population 14 years and older.

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