

# PERSPECTIVES OF THE SPORT-ORIENTED PUBLIC IN SLOVENIA ON EXTREME SPORTS

Samo Rauter and Mojca Doupona Topič

*University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Sport, Ljubljana, Slovenia*

Original scientific paper

UDC 796.61(035) (497.4)

---

## Abstract:

The purpose of the research was to determine the perspectives of the sport-oriented people regarding the participation of a continuously increasing number of athletes in extreme sports. At the forefront, there is the recognition of the reasons why people actively participate in extreme sports. We were also interested in the popularity of individual sports and in people's attitudes regarding the dangers and demands of these types of sports. The research was based on a statistical sample of 1,478 sport-oriented people in Slovenia, who completed an online questionnaire. The results showed that people were very familiar with individual extreme sports, especially the ultra-endurance types of sports. The people who participated in the survey stated that the most dangerous types of sports were: *extreme skiing*, *downhill mountain biking* and *mountaineering*, whilst the most demanding were: *Ironman*, *ultracycling*, and *ultrarunning*. The results have shown a wider popularity of extreme sports amongst men and (particularly among the people participating in the survey) those who themselves prefer to do these types of sports the most. Regarding the younger people involved in the survey, they typically preferred the more dangerous sports as well, whilst the older ones liked the demanding sports more. People consider that the key reasons for the extreme athletes to participate in extreme sports were entertainment, relaxation and the attractiveness of these types of sports.

**Key words:** *sports activity, risk sports, attitude*

---

## Introduction

The modern way of living and contemporary sports trends confirm that more and more people actively participate in extreme, adventurous activities, which can be particularly noticed amongst younger people. Greater numbers of people are becoming involved and participating in these activities; this fact is put to profitable use by increasing numbers of providers of sports and tourist services. Times, as Olivier (2006) states, are dramatically changing, so we can easily say that activities thought to be completely insane and highly dangerous twenty years ago are now considered relatively safe.

The key role in the increase of these types of sports can be attributed to the influence of the media and to the development of new technologies that make it easier for people to participate in relatively risky sports activities. The presence of the media and their influence enables larger crowds of people to be presented with these sports, and also renders the growth and the popularity of these sports possible. Wheaton (2003) concludes that the media influence the social comprehension of the reality, the spectators and the popularity, and (simultaneously) the athletes themselves. The duality of the relation

between the media and extreme sports is crucial in this matter. Doubt arises with regard to the completely independent origin of extreme sports with no assistance from the media, supposing that perhaps they were created and constructed for the needs of the media (Kavčič, 2008). Extreme sports, which include striking power, reputation, suspense, the proximity of the event and its uncommonness, are interesting to the media. People desire entertainment, information; they desire spectacle, being able to identify themselves with the heroes; they are fascinated by everything new, dynamic and attractive.

Palmer (2002) states that the everyday life has lost its excitement and danger. Therefore, dissatisfaction with ordinary life and social requirements are supposed to have enforced the need for stimulation. Every person can satisfy this need by participating in "extreme" activities. However, it can also happen that the inexperienced persons too often participate in these activities in an overly naive manner. This can lead to serious injuries, in the worst case even loss of life, which also influences the image of these sports amongst the public.

Extreme athletes are, as Probert (2004) states, from the perspective of the media, introduced to the public primarily as people who take unreasonable risks in their exploits and ventures and, in this way, risk their lives; thus, the media have characterized these activities as illogical and as indicators of insanity. Therefore, according to Reil (2005), it is highly interesting that athletes actually participate in these activities, although they realize beforehand that with every extreme sport activity they risk their own health and that they can lose their lives.

Due to this, we cannot refer to a competition in the sports sense of the word, as it is about something more with these types of people; it includes special, different values. Nevertheless, as Kavčič (2008) states, we can say that these kinds of athletes search for happiness, satisfaction, their inner selves, their own personalities and their validation. They do not care about the established norms and they perform socially required activities only to be able to fulfill their wishes.

Because of this differentiation, their lifestyle is supposed to be rebellious or at least an alternative to the lives of ordinary people. The individuality of extreme athletes should be mentioned, but in many cases there are friendships formed and then connected to communities, which can be labeled as specific subculture scenes. The more recognizable groups of extreme athletes are the subcultures of: *mountain bikers, surfers, skaters, snowboarders*, who are more or less connected to each other, although with their individual specific characteristics. They all form their own way of talking and their appearance, which originates in their sports activity and then expands into other areas of their lives. These athletes are mostly younger, carefree, easygoing and unburdened. They value heroism, audacity, fearlessness and the desire to take risks (Rinehart & Sydnor, 2003).

The characteristic of extreme sport is therefore its differentiation from the ordinary sport, be it from the sports, mental, or the media aspect. It represents modern, unconventional, alternative, adventurous, extreme activities. Various attributes apply to these sports, such as extreme, risky, adrenaline, lifestyle, etc. However, as Rinehart and Sydnor (2003) state, this description does not capture the essence of these sports, i.e. the adventure and the extreme. Therefore, the choice of which expression to use is, on one hand, left up to the researchers who choose the term "risky" sports and on the other hand, to journalists and the general public who often prefer to use the expression "extreme sports", perhaps because it sounds more unusual, more different and thus is more attractive (Kajtna, 2007). Extreme sports are, in this perspective, those that develop and express one of their characteristics and then accentuate and practice it to the extreme in comparison to other sports. We are aware that this

definition is certainly not definitive; nevertheless, it appears prudent to examine the heterogeneous pattern of various extreme sports. For this research, it is therefore sufficient that these sports are "extreme," i.e. extraordinary, outmost in one of their extensions, be it danger, exertion, duration, innovation, even "entertainment," just so it can be called an "extreme sport."

We could thus place only the extremely dangerous and demanding activities in the category of extreme sports. Simultaneously, we need to understand the fact that each individual who participates in these sports is not necessarily an extreme athlete. It is typical for the sports that we regard as extremely dangerous or as "thrill" types of sports that, as Probert (2004) states, they primarily include a higher risk, as each athlete demands more and more of himself or herself and puts himself or herself into ever greater danger once again. In this way, extreme sports are different from other top-level competitive sports, which are also extreme, but not in the sense of taking risks (Velepec, 2007).

This research included this dilemma, as we, for instance, did not know where to classify sports such as ski jumping, alpine downhill skiing, etc. All these are examples of how traditional Olympic sports can also be performed in an extreme way. At the same time, we could also claim the opposite, i.e. that we can participate in extreme sports in a relatively safe way. Therefore, extreme sports can be only a more dangerous derivative of ordinary types of sports, or they can be something completely new or "crazy" in the sense of exceeding existing sports. Similarly, every individual also has a different high limit of danger perception and also the "extremity" of his or her actions. As determined by Le Breton (2000), especially those people who do not actively participate in a certain type of sport very often completely differently sense danger and the level of risk in comparison to the athletes who have been rigorously and extensively training in their chosen sport. They have a feeling of being able to keep things under control all the time. This provides them with feelings of satisfaction as they are presented with mastering dangerous circumstances which they perceive to be more of a challenge than danger.

Therefore, the purpose of the research was to determine and analyze in detail public opinion with regard to participation in extreme sports, and the public's knowledge of these sports. We were also interested in the popularity of the individual types of sports and in the perspectives on the stress and the danger of the individual types of extreme sports. We also verified whether the stereotypes, such as dangerous participation in sport itself, regardless of actual sports accomplishment and the hedonistic lifestyle (supposedly typical for the representatives of extreme sports) really exist or were just – stereotypes.

Several research projects (Kay & Laberge, 2002; Kavčič, 2008; Schneider, Butryn, Furst, & Masucci, 2007) emphasize that the reasons for participating in extreme sports activities are different from those of top-level athletes in traditional sports, who actually make a living out of the sport they participate in, contrary to the extreme athletes who participate in their sport for different reasons, such as the love of sports, enjoying the company of friends, entertainment and relaxation. Nevertheless, these research projects primarily examined only the athletes, regardless of whether they participate in extreme sports as a whole or individually in each type of sport.

## Methods

### Participants

The sample of participants was taken from the sport-oriented people in Slovenia who decided to complete our online questionnaire. The average age of the respondents was  $29.2 \pm 10.2$  years in a range from 10 to 71 years old. The sample in our research was not a representative sample of Slovenian population. For easier understanding and describing the group of participants in the survey we used the word *people* or *sport-oriented people*. The number of participants was 1,478, amongst which 746 (50.5%) were males and 732 (49.5%) were females. To find a different attitude towards the types of extreme sports, we divided the respondents into four groups. Those who loved to participate in extreme sports such as *mountain climbing, diving, ski mountaineering, snowboarding, skydiving, mountain biking* were placed in the first group. The second group consisted of people who liked team sports the most (*basketball, football, team handball, volleyball, ice hockey*). The third group consisted of people who loved the individual endurance sports such as *running, biking, cross-country skiing, swimming* and *rowing*. The fourth group was composed of people who liked mostly recreational forms of sport activities such as *hiking, rollerblading, dance* and *aerobics*.

### Variables

The survey consisted of the following independent variables: *gender, age* and *the group of the most popular sport activity*. We ranked extreme sports according to danger and demand; each individual had to choose the three sports activities that seemed most dangerous and demanding. In the survey, we also used the following dependent variables - *people's attitude towards the popularity of various extreme sports* (answers ranged from 1=not familiar; 2=do not like; 3=like). In addition, we looked at the reasons (entertainment, relaxation, strain, exploration, friendship, escape from reality, risk, health, the

impact of the media, reputation and money) why athletes are involved in extreme sports. A closed type of questionnaire was used with a five-point Likert scale (answers ranged from 1=completely irrelevant to 5=the most important).

## Procedure

For the purpose of the survey, an online questionnaire was established by Rauter and Doupona Topič (2008). The measure obtained a satisfactory degree of internal reliability as reflected in Cronbach's alpha (.627). The survey was conducted during July and August 2008. During this time, the questionnaire was available online at <http://www.sport-slo.net>. A link to the online questionnaire was sent to the email addresses of people from the Olympic Committee of Slovenia database. These people then forwarded this link to their friends, etc. Multiple answering by a single person was disabled in such a way that a second entry from the same IP address was blocked. Participation was voluntary and anonymous.

## Data analysis

To analyze the data we used descriptive statistics parameters and to verify the differences according to age, gender and the group of sports activities we used the chi-square test as well as the analysis of variance (ANOVA) at the .05 alpha level of significance.

## Results

The results of the present research showed that 63.1% of people were engaged in sports activities a few times a week, while only 12% were inactive in sports. We noticed that men were still more active than women ( $p=.000$ ). We discovered that sport-oriented people in Slovenia liked to do cycling (19.8%), hiking or mountaineering (15.2%), and running (14.5%). Differences were obtained between the two genders since women chose hiking or mountaineering more often (23.9%), while men preferred cycling (26.8%). All the results showed many similarities with the study of the sport-recreational activity of Slovenians, where hiking, swimming and cycling were amongst the most popular sports (Berčič & Sila, 2007).

The respondents were classified into four groups of sports that they most liked to do and obtained the results shown in Table 1. Most noticeable was that more men tended to engage in extreme sports and team sports, while many women preferred to engage in non-competitive, recreational sports activities.

We also found that preoccupation with certain kinds of sports affects people's attitude towards extreme sports, which is shown in Table 2; those who engaged in such sports had a better opinion of them than those who preferred other kinds of sports.

Table 1. Display of kinds of sports that people like most to engage in during their spare time; divided according to sport groups and gender

SPORT groups	M (%)	F (%)	TOGETHER(%)
ex_sport	20.2%	4.7%	12.4%
te_sport	17.4%	9.3%	13.3%
end_sport	53.4%	42.4%	47.9%
recreational	9.0%	43.7%	26.3%

Legend: ex\_sport (extreme sports); te\_sport (team sports); end\_sport (individual endurance sports); recreational (recreational forms of sports)

The comparison of popularity of individual kinds of sports showed that *mountain biking (downhill)* was very popular among men (81.9%) and those who liked to engage in different extreme sports (88.9%). These kinds of sports are also well known to the public, which is a result of the fact

that the Mountain Bike World Cup has been held in Maribor for the past few years, and has been very well represented in the media.

*Windsurfing* was found to be among very popular extreme sports. The share of those who like this sport was 80.8%, and was larger among women ( $p=.02$ ). *Snowboarding* was also very popular: 77.1% of people liked this sport, even 68% skiers liked snowboarding despite the well known conflicts on ski slopes, more often coming from skiers (Vaske, Dyar, & Timmons, 2004). Therefore, we expected that this sports activity would be the least popular among people who chose alpine skiing as their preferred sports activity.

The results in popularity showed statistically significant differences by age ( $p=.000$ ) and gender ( $p=.000$ ).

Despite many successful Slovenian athletes who compete in ultra endurance sports like *ultra-cycling, ultrarunning, marathon swimming*, these

Table 2. People's attitude towards extreme sports' popularity according to gender, age and group of sports activities they engage in the most

SPORT		ALL	GENDER			AGE			SPORTS ACTIVITIES GROUPS				
			%	M	F	p	younger	older	p	EX_sports	te_sports	end_sports	Recr.
MTB (dh)	not familiar	2.1	1.2	3	.000	1.9	2.5	.23	1.3	2.4	1.7	3.4	.000
	do not like	27.4	16.9	38.1		26.1	29.8		9.8	31.7	22.8	42	
	like	70.5	81.9	58.9		72	67.8		88.9	65.9	75.6	54.6	
Skydiving	not familiar	5	5.1	4.9	.300	4.8	5	.93	3.9	4.3	6.1	4	.720
	do not like	23.8	22.1	25.5		24.1	23.3		22.9	26.8	23.8	23.5	
	like	71.2	72.8	69.5		71.7	71.7		73.7	68.9	70.1	72.5	
BASE jumping	not familiar	46.3	31.1	61.4	.000	47.5	44	0	21.6	46.3	44.5	63	.000
	do not like	20.7	22.4	19		34.8	29.3		22.2	18.3	22.4	21.3	
	like	32.9	46.5	19.1		17.7	26.7		56.2	35.4	33.1	15.7	
Deep free diving	not familiar	4.6	6.4	2.7	.020	3.9	5.8	.06	3.9	46.3	44.5	2.2	.170
	do not like	23.8	24.4	23.2		22.7	26		27.5	18.3	22.4	24.1	
	like	71.6	69.2	74		73.4	68.2		68.6	35.4	33.1	73.8	
Mountaineering	not familiar	2.6	2.8	2.3	.000	2.7	1.9	0	2.6	3	2.7	3.4	.000
	do not like	32.6	26.4	38.9		37.6	22.7		22.2	52.4	26.8	37.3	
	like	64.8	70.8	58.7		59.6	75.4		75.2	44.5	70.5	59.3	
Windsurfing	not familiar	4.8	4.8	4.8	.060	4.7	5	.94	6.5	4.3	5.6	4.9	.910
	do not like	14.4	17.3	11.5		14.3	14.7		17.6	14.6	15.8	14.5	
	like	80.8	77.9	83.7		81	80.4		75.8	81.1	78.6	80.6	
Snowboarding	not familiar	2.1	2.5	1.6	.000	1.3	3.5	.02	2	0	2.5	2.8	.190
	do not like	20.8	26.3	15.2		19.4	23.8		17	18.9	23.3	20.4	
	like	77.1	71.2	83.2		79.3	72.7		81	81.1	74.2	76.9	
Ultra	not familiar	5.3	2.3	8.3	.000	6	3.7	.000	3.9	4.9	3.2	10.2	.000
	do not like	48.4	40.3	56.6		52.5	40.5		43.8	59.8	35.7	61.7	
	like	46.3	57.4	35.1		41.7	55.8		52.3	35.4	61.1	28.1	

Legend: Numbers are expressed in %; p - ( $\chi^2$ ; statistical characteristic in case  $<.05$ ).

SPORT (the kind of sport we examined); ALL (the entire sample); AGE: (older  $>30$  years; younger  $<30$  years); SPORTS ACTIVITIES GROUPS (the kinds of sports in which an individual engages most often); EX\_sport (extreme sports); TE\_sport (team sports), END\_sport (endurance sports); Recr. (Recreational forms of sports).

kinds of sports did not prove to be as popular (46.3% of people liked these sports) as we had expected. Otherwise, the results in popularity of ultra endurance kinds of sports showed that there were statistically significant differences between gender ( $p=.000$ ) and age ( $p=.000$ ) since this type of sport proved to be more popular amongst men and people older than thirty.

The results also showed the low popularity of all extreme sports with people who preferred team sports (Table 2) where risk is mostly not even required in order to achieve enjoyment and results. That might also be the reason why these people did not see any sense in involving themselves in such risks and why these kinds of sports were not so popular with them.

As shown in Table 3, people have listed the following as the most dangerous extreme sports: *extreme skiing, downhill mountain biking, mountaineering*, etc.

In the category of sports activities that are (in their opinion) the most strenuous were *Ironman, ultracycling* and *ultrarunning*, in which, as previously mentioned, Slovenia has its representatives among the world's most successful contestants. One interesting fact is that *mountaineering* and *deep free diving* have appeared amongst sports activities that stand out due to danger as well as demand.

The people's perspective on the reasons athletes participated in extreme sports was very similar, which is shown by the results in Table 4. The most important reasons were entertainment ( $4.05 \pm .99$ ) and relaxation ( $4.00 \pm .92$ ). As regards various groups, statistically significant difference between genders were obtained in comparison to the older individuals who value entertainment and relaxation. It was similar with those who themselves prefer to engage in extreme sports.

Table 3. People's choice of the five most dangerous and strenuous "extreme sports"

DANGEROUS EXTREME SPORTS	1 <sup>st</sup> choice	2 <sup>nd</sup> choice	3 <sup>rd</sup> choice	STRENUOUS EXTREME SPORTS	1 <sup>st</sup> choice	2 <sup>nd</sup> choice	3 <sup>rd</sup> choice
Extreme skiing (freeride)	191	223	207	Ironman	442	268	176
Mountain biking (downhill)	227	200	138	Extreme ultracycling	306	281	188
Mountaineering	237	160	129	Ultrarunning	95	202	197
Deep free diving	154	160	129	Mountaineering	206	92	114
BASE jumping	176	77	44	Marathon swimming	60	152	190

Legend: number of votes in 1<sup>st</sup>; 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> choice. Every individual had to choose three sport activities that stand out the most according to the degree of danger and strain.

Table 4. People's attitude towards the importance of different motives for engaging in extreme sports according to gender, age and the kind of sports activity they most often engage in.

	ALL	GENDER			AGE			SPORTS GROUPS			
		M	F	p	Younger	Older	p	ex_sport	te_sport	end_sport	recr.
Entertainment	4.05	3.98	4.12	.007	4.18	3.78	.000	4.29	3.98	4.00	3.95
It's interesting	3.59	3.52	3.65	.007	3.72	3.33	.000	3.81	3.62	3.54	3.47
Relaxation	4.00	3.89	4.10	.000	4.07	3.85	.000	4.14	3.90	3.93	3.97
Friendship	2.68	2.73	2.64	.460	2.70	2.64	.217	3.01	2.75	2.66	2.57
Strain	3.51	3.52	3.51	.843	3.46	3.63	.000	3.48	3.41	3.60	3.45
Exploration	2.76	2.74	2.78	.330	2.81	2.67	.002	2.99	2.79	2.70	2.72
Escape from reality	3.14	3.10	3.18	.163	3.12	3.19	.223	3.05	3.08	3.19	3.19
Risk	3.20	3.05	3.36	.000	3.22	3.17	.481	2.97	3.24	3.13	3.38
Health	2.91	2.88	2.94	.243	2.97	2.81	.004	3.03	2.96	2.93	2.81
The impact of media	2.27	2.21	2.33	.14	2.18	2.46	.223	2.05	2.45	2.25	2.40
Reputation	2.42	2.41	2.43	.738	2.37	2.53	.004	2.22	2.62	2.41	2.44
Money	2.13	2.01	2.26	.000	2.20	1.99	.000	1.81	2.36	2.07	2.33

Legend: average value: 1 - completely irrelevant; 5 - the most important; > p - (ANOVA; statistical characteristic in case <.05)

SPORT (the kind of sport we inspected); ALL (the entire sample); AGE: (older >30 years; younger <30 years); SPORTS ACTIVITIES GROUPS (the kinds of sports in which an individual engages most often); EX\_sport (extreme sports); TE\_sport (team sports); END\_sport (endurance sports); Recr. (Recreational forms of sports).

The results showed that earnings ( $1.81 \pm .76$ ) and reputation ( $2.22 \pm 1.00$ ) have been assessed lower by those who themselves participated in extreme sports than by those who most preferred to participate in team sports.

The respondents assessed the motive of staying healthy as highly important for themselves ( $3.91 \pm .987$ ), whilst it was not the key factor in participating in extreme sports ( $2.91 \pm .974$ ).

The need to participate in risk in the everyday lives of people was assessed lower ( $2.12 \pm .934$ ) than in the cases in which people have expressed their attitude towards the motive of risk with extreme athletes ( $3.20 \pm 1.086$ ). In contrast, those people who participated in extreme sports assessed the need to take risks as less important with extreme athletes ( $2.97 \pm .930$ ).

## Discussion and conclusions

The phenomenon of preoccupation with contemporary, alternative forms of sports activities is becoming increasingly popular among people and, as Oliver (2006) says, these forms of sports are currently more acceptable and more popular for the public than they used to be.

Through the survey in which we have determined the perspectives of people on various extreme sports, it has been shown that the people were fairly well-acquainted with these types of sports. The reason for this is undoubtedly the high support of the media, especially due to the spectacular and attractive qualities of these sports. The numerous successes of the Slovene "extreme athletes" on the global stage also contributed to this. Slovenians have had and still have world-renowned mountaineering expeditions and alpinists (Humarč, Karničar, Grošelj, etc.).

The comparison of popularity of individual kinds of sports showed us that the "fun" sports like *snowboarding* and *windsurfing* were the most popular ones. We must emphasize that the popularity of *snowboarding* and *windsurfing* is greater among younger people, perhaps due to characteristics that apply to this group of athletes, who prefer a carefree life and enjoying the moment, which reflects a new view that offers pleasure and fun in being different, in testing all the possible unusual, unpredictable and exciting actions.

*Skydiving*, *downhill mountain biking*, *mountaineering* and *BASE jumping* are just a few of the so-called "thrill" sports kinds that challenge danger directly and allow no mistakes. Kay and Laberge (2002) have found that men dive into risky activities, while women prefer activities in which they can control the risk. In her study of female skydivers, Gidney (2004) has encountered numerous stereotypical opinions, asserting that this kind of sports activity is not suitable for women. Gilchrist (2004) found similar results. He summed up some of the

opinions of the British public regarding motherhood and preoccupation with risky activities. If we consider the case of the tragic mountain-climbing accident on K2 that ended in the death of a young mother, we see that the public generalizes and judges female mountain climbers by saying that K2 simply is not meant for women.

Amongst all the extreme types of sports dealt with in the research, people were less familiar only with *BASE jumping*, a more dangerous form of skydiving. *BASE jumping* involves parachuting from any of the following: buildings, antennae, span (bridges) and earth (cliffs). This kind of sport is even forbidden. The main reason for the danger is that initiation of the jump can be lower than the parachute opening height for the conventional skydiving, with jumpers having only seconds to deploy their parachutes (Olivier, 2006).

As stated by Schneider et al. (2007), extreme athletes have a greater need to participate in risky activities, which is reflected in the current research. People tend to share the conviction that these athletes intentionally subject themselves to risk and, in this way, compromise their health.

In contrast, the achievements of the most successful Slovenian ultra endurance athletes, such as Robič, Mravlje, Baloh, Strel, etc., have certainly promoted the recognition of ultra endurance sports among Slovenians. Despite that, the length of the ordeal is not the only extreme element with these extremely demanding sports. There are also difficult weather conditions, different possibilities of injuries, lack of sleep and many other unpredictable factors. All of this gives rise to numerous doubts about the reasonableness of these activities, which people, in the words of Velepec (2007), consider insane or science fiction, or both.

A special attitude must be created towards the set goal. That attitude, however, is different from the attitude of an athlete leaving for the Olympics with the desire to win; this is difficult for some people to understand. The lower popularity of these demanding extreme sports, especially among women and younger people, is a consequence of that. Despite that, the results demonstrate a slightly stronger liking for these sports with people who engage in extreme sports and sports such as running, cycling, etc. That is because it has also been shown that these people consider endurance of exertion and strain as an important motive in their everyday life.

Based on the results of the survey, the people consider the key reasons for the extreme athletes to participate in these sorts of activities to be entertainment, relaxation and their attractiveness. The motives of getting reputation and earnings do not influence athlete's decision and the participation in the extreme sports. In general, the people have assessed the motive of earnings as being the least

important for the participation of extreme athletes in these sorts of activities.

Therefore, the attitude of sport-oriented people in Slovenia resembles the attitude of the extreme athletes themselves. Kavčič (2008) found that the key reasons for extreme athletes' participation in their chosen sports were undoubtedly entertainment, pleasure and the sense of relaxation when performing these activities. In their studies Wheaton (2002), Schneider et al. (2007) and Willig (2008) have taken an interest in the reasons for the participation in extreme sports. They have determined that the reasons are, with these extreme athletes, slightly different from those of the athletes participating in the classic, established sports. The philosophy of participating in extreme sports is different and is based primarily on pleasure and entertainment in dangerous circumstances, which they understand as a challenge more than a danger and exposure to risks. At the same time, in top-level competitive sports, all these motives are increasingly replaced by

the motive and the desire to win and, consecutively, by the importance of reputation and money.

We have reached conclusions that can be linked to the findings of Oliver (2006). He believes that the existence of the stereotypes about the extreme athletes is connected to the danger of the participation in sports itself, to the enjoyment and to the state of being unencumbered with the results of a competition.

In this survey, extreme sports were treated as a whole; perhaps in the future it might be reasonable to research the perspectives on participating in each extreme type of sport individually in detail. The idea worthy of research is also comparing perspectives on individual extreme sports competitions. We presume that there are differences in the popularity and in the attractiveness between the adrenaline- and danger-filled competitions, which can last for only a few moments, and between the ultra-competitions, which last from a few hours up to a few days.

## References

- Berčič, H., & Sila, B. (2007). Ukvarjanje prebivalstva Slovenije s posameznimi športnimi zvrstmi – 2006. [The Slovenian population's engagement in individual sports – 2006.] *Šport*, 55(3), (Suppl.), 17-26.
- Donnelly, M. (2006). Studying extreme sports. Beyond the core participants. *Journal of Sport & Social Issues*, 30(2), 219-224.
- Gidney, T. (2004). *Understanding female skydivers: A phenomenological qualitative study based on early life experiences*. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Chicago). Chicago: The Chicago School of Professional Psychology.
- Gilchrist, P. (2007). Motherhood, ambition and risk: Mediating the sporting hero/ine in conservative Britain. *Media Culture Society*, 29(3), 395-414.
- Kajtna, T. (2007). Psihološke značilnosti športnikov rizičnih športov. [Psychological characteristics of high-risk sport athletes. In Slovene.] *Šport*, 55(4), 5-11.
- Kavčič, M. (2008). *Premikanje meja možnega: družboslovna študija o ekstremnih športih*. [Pushing the limits: Sociological aspects of the extreme sports. In Slovene.] Ljubljana: Fakulteta za družbene vede, Univerza v Ljubljani.
- Kay, J., & Laberge, S. (2002). The 'new' corporate habitus in adventure racing. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 37(1), 17-36.
- Le Breton, D. (2000). Playing symbolically with death in extreme sports. *Body & Society*, 6(1), 1-11.
- Olivier, S. (2006). Moral dilemmas of participation in dangerous leisure activities. *Leisure Studies*, 25(1), 95-109.
- Palmer, C. (2002). "Shit happens": The selling of risk in extreme sports. *The Australian Journal of Anthropology*, 13(3), 323-336.
- Probert, G. (2004). *An Investigation into whether mountain biking facilitates escapism and mental freedom*. /on line/. Retrieved July 31, 2006 from the address: [http://www.imba.org.uk/uploads/papers/MTB\\_Escapism\\_Research.pdf](http://www.imba.org.uk/uploads/papers/MTB_Escapism_Research.pdf).
- Rauter, S., & Doupona Topič, M. (2008). *An online questionnaire: Perspective of the public towards extreme sports*. Retrieved June 5, 2008 from the address: <http://www.sport-slo.net>.
- Reil, M. (2005). *The effect of sensation seeking and morality salience on risk-taking behavior in scuba divers*. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation, New School University). New York: Faculty of the Political and Social Science of the New School.
- Rinehart, R., & Sydnor, S. (2003). *To the extreme. Alternative sports inside and out*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Schneider, A., Butryn, T., Furst, D., & Masucci, M. (2007). A qualitative examination of risk among elite adventure racers. *Journal of Sport Behavior*, 30(3), 330-357.

- Vaske, J., Dyar, R., & Timmons, N. (2004). Skill level and recreation conflict among skiers and snowboarders. *Leisure Sciences*, 26(2), 215-225.
- Velepec, U. (2007). Nekaj misli o ekstremnem športu. [Some thoughts on extreme sport. In Slovene.] *Šport*, 55(4), (Suppl.), 12-18.
- Wheaton, B. (2003). Keeping it real. Subcultural media and the discourses of authenticity in alternative sport. *International Sociology of Sport*, 34(2), 157-171.
- Willig, C. (2008). A phenomenological investigation of the experience of taking part in "extreme sports". *Journal of Health Psychology*, 13(5), 690-702.

Submitted: May 26, 2009

Accepted: December 11, 2009

Correspondence to:

Samo Rauter

University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Sport,  
Gortanova 22, SI-1000 Ljubljana, Slovenia

Phone: +386 1 520 77 95

Fax: +386 1 520 77 50

E-mail: samo.rauter@fsp.uni-lj.si



## EKSTREMNI SPORTOVI U PERCEPCIJI SLOVENSKE SPORTSKE JAVNOSTI

Cilj je ovoga istraživanja bio utvrditi kakva su stajališta prema sportu usmjerene javnosti o pojavi sve većega broja sportaša koji se počinju baviti ekstremnim sportovima. U središtu pozornosti bilo je prepoznavanje motiva i razloga za bavljenje ekstremnim sportovima. Zanimala nas je i popularnost individualnih sportova te mišljenje ljudi o opasnostima koje nose te o težini i zahtjevnosti tih sportova. Istraživanje je provedeno na uzorku od 1478 sportski orijentiranih državljana Republike Slovenije koji su dobrovoljno ispunili internetski upitnik. Rezultati su pokazali da su ispitanici vrlo dobro upoznati s individualnim ekstremnim sportovima, osobito sa sportovima ultra-izdržljivosti. Ispitanici su među najopasnije sportove uvrstili: ekstremno skijanje, spust brdskim biciklima te alpinizam, dok su naj-

napornijim sportovima smatrali: *ironman*, ultra biciklizam i ultra trčanje. Rezultati su pokazali da su ekstremni sportovi popularniji u muškaraca (osobito onih koji su sudjelovali u istraživanju) te u onih koji se i sami najviše vole baviti ekstremnim sportovima. Mlađi ispitanici bili su skloniji opasnijim sportovima, dok je u starijih ispitanika prevladavala sklonost prema zahtjevnijim sportovima. Također je utvrđeno da ispitanici smatraju kako su ključni razlozi zbog kojih se ekstremni sportaši bave ekstremnim sportovima zabava, opuštanje te atraktivnost ekstremnih sportova.

***Ključne riječi:*** sportske aktivnosti, rizični sportovi, stajališta