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# ATTITUDES OF THE SLOVENE PUBLIC TOWARD SOME CONTENT-RELATED QUESTIONS CONCERNING SPORTS CULTURE

# STALIŠČA SLOVENSKE JAVNOSTI DO NEKATERIH VSEBINSKIH VPRAŠANJ KULTURE ŠPORTA

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# **Abstract**

The objective of the research was to establish, on a representative sample of the adult Slovene population (n=1851), the structure of attitudes toward some questions which to a large extent concern the issues of the development of sports culture in Slovenia. Indeed, it is the public which can decisively contribute to the orientation of sports in a given social environment.

In order to attain as representative an assessment of the opinions of the Slovenes as possible, we used an adjusted quota sample, corresponding to the Slovene population with respect to the place of residence, gender, age, and education. The content of the subject of research was focused on the most acute problems of the development of Slovene sports (assessment of the successfulness of athletes, the method of financing sport, assessment of the quality of sports facilities, assessment of the benefits of sport from the aspect of prevention of pathological social phenomena, assessment of the importance of sports education in making people more interested in following sport, assessment of the cultural diversity of physical education in school from the aspect of the diversity of sports). The data on the attitudes were obtained by means of a survey questionnaire of a closed-ended type in June 1998.

The results showed a high degree of validity consensus of the surveyed sample in the majority of the attitudes. In the individual attitudes, a high bipolarisation of the answers was established. The results of the research confirmed the basic hypothetical assumption, that among Slovenes there is a similar opinion of the majority as regards the assessment of sports achievements, quality of sports facilities, financing of sports, benefits of sports from the aspect of prevention of social pathological phenomena and content orientation of physical education.

Key words: culture of sport, values, attitudes, public opinion

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# Izvleček

Namen raziskave je bil, na reprezentativnem vzorcu odrasle slovenske javnosti (n=1851), ugotoviti strukturo stališč do nekaterih vprašanj, ki v veliki meri zadevajo problematiko razvoja kulture slovenskega športa. Prav javnost je tista, ki lahko odločilno prispeva k usmeritvi športa v določenem družbenem okolju.

Da bi dosegli čim bolj reprezentativno oceno mnenja Slovencev smo uporabili prilagojeni kvotni vzorec, ki bi ustrezal slovenski populaciji glede na regijo bivanja, spol, starost in izobrazbo. Vsebina predmeta raziskovanja je bila usmerjena na najbolj pereče probleme razvoja slovenskega športa (ocena uspešnosti športnikov, način financiranja športa, ocena kvalitete športnih objektov, ocena koristi športa z vidika preprečevanja socialno patoloških pojavov, ovrednotenje pomena športne vzgoje pri ozaveščanju ljudi za spremljanje športa, ovrednotenje kulturne pestrosti šolske športne vzgoje z vidika različnosti športnih zvrsti). Podatke o stališčih smo pridobili s pomočjo anketnega vprašalnika zaprtega tipa v mesecu juniju 1998. Rezultati so pokazali visoko stopnjo vrednostnega konsenza

Rezultati so pokazali visoko stopnjo vrednostnega konsenza anketiranega vzorca v večini stališč. Pri posameznih stališčih je bila ugotovljena visoka polarizacija odgovorov. Rezultati raziskave so potrdili osnovno hipotetično predpostavko, da med Slovenci obstoja večinsko podobno mnenje o vrednotenju športnih dosežkov, kvaliteti športnih objektov, financiranju športa, koristnosti športa z vidika preprečevanja socialno patoloških pojavov in vsebinski usmerjenosti športne vzgoje.

Ključne besede: kultura športa, vrednote, stališča, javno mnenie

# **INTRODUCTION**

The subject of the present research study was to establish the structure of the attitudes of the Slovene public toward some content-related issues in sports culture. The research thus limits its subject and problem of studying to some selected thematic clusters of the components of sports culture: marketing in sport, the system of animation in sport, successfulness of athletes, social conditions in which athletes live and work, financing of sport, sports facilities and infrastructure. Sports culture is not something that emerges by itself. It is a product of an individual, a group, and of the entire society, where according to Schein (1990) basic prerequisites and suitable value structure should be provided for its development. It is precisely the values in which according to Musek and Pečjak (1995) the convictions about what is right manifest themselves, so that it seems valuable, good and precious to

Sports culture is thus primarily the product of the spiritual culture of an individual. According to Jambrek (1997), however, every product of spiritual culture has three possible components: an emotional, a value-related, and a cognitive one. Sports culture is a living spiritual component of every-day social life and shows in each time period in a different way and through changing manifestation forms. We could say that sports culture will achieve its true meaning once it is present in the consciousness of the widest possible circle of members of the general and sports public. The agents of the development of sports culture should, therefore, know the value attitudes of the general public toward some essential questions concerning the development of sports culture. If we adapt the thought by Kuhn (taken from Jambrek, 1997), "in the field of any practice and hence also in the field of sports practice, the truthfulness, correctness and factuality of the acting and thinking can be attained once they obtain a voluntary consent of the majority of the relevant community." The opinions of the individuals can, in fact, be different; however, as a whole they reveal a certain kind of common culture of the population (Adler, 1991).

Doherty and Chelladurai (1999) explain the organisational structure on a continuum of diversity and similarity. The diversity emerges owing to various personal characteristics of the individuals such as age, gender, race, nationality, religion, marital status, family status, physical abilities (Mail-Dalton, 1993; Robbins, 1994; Wright, Ferris, Hiller and Kroll, 1995), while similarity manifests itself in a similar way of thinking, a similar value system, similar use of language, symbols, customs, and behaviour of individuals (Adler, 1991; De Sensi, 1994; Robbins, 1994). The knowledge of the structure of the value attitudes of the re-

levant public could help all those who take care of the strategic development of Slovene sport and perform managerial functions in the various sports and other management organisation associated with sport. The basic hypothetical assumption of the present research was that individuals do not differ significantly in their attitudes toward some essential issues of sports culture and that a high level of consensus between them can hence be expected. Only sport that will attract a multitude of individuals to engage in sport activity will really become a socio-cultural phenomenon (Curry and Jiobu, 1984; Snyder and Spreitzer, 1983) and will awake the interest in and the motivation for sport in the nation ( George and Feltz, 1995).

#### **RESEARCH METHODS**

The sample of the research subjects comprised 1851 (52.1 % male and 47.9 % female) subjects randomly selected from the adult population of the Republic of Slovenia. The surveyed subjects were completely randomly selected in all eight electoral regions of Slovenia (Kranj 268, Postojna 226, Ljubljana - Centre 332, Ljubljana - Bežigrad 137, Celje 215, Novo mesto 196, Maribor 226, and Ptuj 251). A large similarity of the composition of the surveyed subjects and the composition of the population of Slovene citizens enables us, taking into account statistical limitations, a hypothetical assessment of the representative opinion and the attitudes of all citizens of Slovenia above 18 years of age.

The sample of variables was designed on the basis of the content concept of the task. The variables or questions are given in the chapter dealing with the results and interpretation. The surveying was carried out by specially trained students of the Faculty of Sport who were previously acquainted with the objective of the research and the method of surveying. The surveying was carried out in June 1998.

Obtained data was processed with the statistical package SPSS for Windows 10.0. Extent of involvement in individual opinion and attitudes was evaluated by absolute (n) and relative (in %) frequencies of cases (answers).

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### **RESULTS**

The results of the research are given separately by individual questions or attitudes (see Tables 1-4). The re-

sults of the research confirmed the hypothesis that in the majority of the attitudes of the surveyed subjects a consensus of the majority exists.

The majority of the respondents (61.9%) support (Table 1) that top-level athletes appear as a means of marketing and advertising to a normal extent. The following of sports events affected to the same extent as it did not affect the recreational sports pursuits of the surveyed subjects (45%). The organisers of sports events should promote these even more in the public (70.4%).

Possible failures of favourite athletes (see Table 2) do not turn the majority (72.9%) of the surveyed subjects away from further following of sports events. The majority of the surveyed subjects is, however, satisfied with the results of Slovene athletes in the highest international competitions; however, 61.7% of the respondents are of the opinion that they could be even better. Only 3% consider the outfitting and up-to-dateness of the sports facilities on which they appeared in the role of spectators very good or excellent. For the

Table 1: Structure of answers on attitudes of sport as a part of marketing value chain

Question	Answer
Do you think that it is right that top- level athletes are increasingly beco- ming a marketing tool via advertising and mass media?	I don't know. Yes, very much. No 7,3% 11,9% 18,8% Yes 61,9%
Does watching the sports events, athletes and equipment influence the extent and the selection of sports products and articles recently bought by you?	I don't know. Yes, very much. 4,7% 7,6%  Yes 37,3%
Did following the sports events influence your active participation in sports recreation?	No, because I do not engage in sports. 9.2% Yes, very much. 10,1% Yes, occasionally. 34,9% influence. 45,7%
Do you think that the organisers of sports events should even more promote them in the public?	No. 11,3% I don't know. 18,3% Yes. 70,4%

majority of the surveyed subjects (64.1%), the medals of Slovene athletes in the various sports have the same weight or value.

Physical education (Table 3) in the primary and secondary school did not prepare sufficiently well the spectators for following sports events (41.3%), or it could do more (30.4%). More frequent participation in sports activities would contribute to the reduction of socially detrimental phenomena (89.8%). School sports education should impart the knowledge of the widest possible range of sports (70.1%). In sports events, prohibition of smoking and drinking of alcoholic beverages should be enforced (76.2%).

With the statement (Table 4) that the conditions of living and training of Slovene athletes are good agreed partly 40.8% and did not agree 31.2% of the surve-

Table 2: Structure of attitudes about successfulness of Slovene top level athletes

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Question	Answer
Do possible failures of your favourite athletes turn you away from further watching and follo- wing the sports events?	I don't know. Yes, very much. 3,3% 2,2% Yes, only partly. 21,5% No. 72,9%
Are you content with the results achieved by Slovene athletes in the highest international competitions?	No, they are much too bad. 1,5% 1,6% 1,6% 1,6% 1,6% 1,6% 1,6% 1,6% 1,6
With what place of our athletes in the highest competi- tions (Olympic Ga- mes, world cham- pionship, world cup) would you be satisfied as a spec- tator?	Already the qualification for competition itself In the first half of suffices. the placed competitors. 9,4% To 3rd place. 15,8% To 6th place. 32,3% To 15th place. 28,5%
Do you think that the medals won in the highest interna- tional competitions (Olympic Games, world champions- hips) in the various sports have diffe- rent weight and va- lue?	Yes. 18,4% 17,6% No. 64,1%

Table 3: Structure of attitudes about cultural and social aspects of sport

Question	Answer			
Do you think that sports events have the same cultural value as concerts, theatrical performances, film performances?	I don't know. 12,8% No. 45,6%		Yes. 1,6%	
Do you think that more frequent participation in sports could substantially contribute to the reduction of socially detrimental phenomena?	No, it would not I don't know.contribute. 5,3% 4,9% Yes, it would contribute. 36,0% contribute very much. 53,8%			
Do you think that		n	%	
sports education in	Yes, completely.	232	12,7	
the primary and se- condary school	Yes, but it could do more.	556	30,4	
prepared you well	No.	754	41,3	
for the role of a	I don't know.	285	15,6	
spectator and visitor of sports events?	Total	1827	100	
Do you think that		n	%	
compulsory school sports education should contain on- ly selected sports?	Yes, only some selected sports would be enough.	79	4,3	
	Yes, only some sports should be taught, others only informatively.	300	16,4	
	No, it is necessary to impart the knowledge of all sports performed in the Slovene competition sports.	438	23,9	
	No, it is necessary to learn to know the largest possible number of world sports irrespective of the competition rank.	846	46,2	
	I don't know.	169	9,2	
	Total	1832	100	
Do you support		n	%	
the prohibition of smoking and	I do not support any prohibition.	163	8,9	
drinking of alco- holic beverages during sports events?	I support the prohibition of alcohol.	111	6,1	
	I support the prohibition of smoking.	59	3,2	
	I support both prohibitions.	1394	76,2	
	I don't know.	103	5,6	
	Total	1830	100	

Table 4: Structure of attitudes on financing in sport and the quality of sport facilities

Question	Answer		
Do you agree with the opinion that the conditions in which Slovene ath- letes live and train are good and enable them sports preparation of the same quality as available to their peers in the world?	I don't know. Yes, com 15,7% 12,2  No. 31,2%		
What do you think of the outfitting and up-to-dateness of the facilities you visit as a sport spectator?	Excellent. 25.2% Very bad. 25.2% 3.6% Very good. Good. 41.9%		Bad. 26,2%
Do you think it is right that the Slovene state finances sports from the budget funds?	I don't know. 20,2% No. 11,1%		Yes. 58,7%
Would you contribute with a self-imposed contribution your share for the modernisation of sports facilities and areas in your residential environment?	I don't know. 20,5% No. 17,1%		Yes. 2,4%
Do you think that		n	%
sports in Slovenia	Yes, only selected sports.	52	2,8
should be selectively financed from budget funds?	Yes, but also other top achievements in other sports.	406	22,1
	No, all sports in which Slovene athletes appear in the international competition system.	566	30,8
	No, all sports in competition sports.	605	32,9
	I don't know.	209	11,4
	Total	1838	100

yed subjects. The Slovene state must finance sport from budget funds (68.7%). In general, the majority of the surveyed subjects would contribute their share in the financing of the modernisation of sports facilities with a self-imposed contribution (62.4%). The majo-

rity of the surveyed subjects (63.7%) do not support selective financing of sports in Slovenia from budget funds.

## DISCUSSION

The results of the survey research show us (1) that Slovene public agrees with the opinion that Slovene top-level athletes are increasingly becoming an important part of the marketing value chain by advertising and mass media as well. The majority of the surveyed subjects (61.9%) are of the opinion that top level athletes should be presented as a marketing tool just in a normal extent. For the majority of the surveyed subjects (50.4%), the following of sports events, athletes, and their equipment did not affect the scope and the selection of sports products and articles recently bought by them. In the large part of the surveyed subjects (37.7%), however, this has despite all partly affected their purchase.

The largest part of the respondents (45.7%) were of the opinion that watching sports events did not affect their recreational sports activities (Table 1). A considerable part of the surveyed subjects (34.9%) obtained by watching sports events an additional encouragement for pursuing recreational sport activities; however, this occurred only occasionally. The proportion of the subjects with a positive opinion is approximately the same as that of the subjects with a negative opinion, and approaches one half of the total sample of the surveyed subjects. This means that following or watching sports events despite all to a considerable extent encourages people to pursue recreational sports activities.

Failures of favourite athletes (Table 2) do not turn the majority of the surveyed subjects (72.9%) away from the further following of sports events. However, this has only partly affected approximately one fifth of the sample of the surveyed subjects (21.5%). Such a result can mean that the public understand a sports event in a broader sports cultural context, in which, not only the achievements of own athletes, but of all athletes are appreciated. Every competition separately brings with it also the hope of succeeding. As a rule, this hope never runs out and precisely this is the magnet attracting all participants to sport.

The largest part of the sample of the Slovene public (84.7%) was satisfied with the results achieved by Slovene athletes in the highest international competitions (Table 2), which gives a special greatness to a numerically small nation. If Slovene athletes have better general conditions for competition and training, we can expect achievements of world importance also in the future. Indeed, the last Olympic Games in Sydney

confirmed these expectations with two gold medals won by Slovene athletes.

More than a half of the surveyed subjects (64.1%) did not agree (Table 2) that medals of Slovene athletes from different sports could have a different worth in the Olympic Games. A little less than one fifth (18.4%) were of a different opinion: that the medals won by Slovene athletes in the Olympic Games have a different worth. This realisation is very interesting since some experts and managers in sport have come to a conviction that the medals in individual sports have a different worth and value. Taking into account the fact that medals always have an extremely broad validity and value connotation, it would be necessary to open a wide professional and scientific discussion on this issue.

As regards the opinion on whether sports events have the same cultural value as concerts, theatrical and film performances (Table 3), the surveyed subjects gave a completely bipolar answer. The percentage of those who ascribe the same cultural value to sport events as to culture and art (41.6%) is almost the same as the percentage of those whose opinion is quite the opposite (45.6%). The result of the survey research points to the fact that sport manifests itself more and more also as a component of the cultural life of people. Sports culture does not emerge unconsciously, but only based on the conviction and activity of the majority of any public (Moorhead and Griffin, 1995). It was certainly necessary to make the public aware of the cultural value of sports events and activities through various approaches (Lawrence and Werner, 1998). Sports culture shows completely the same basic components and structure as all other cultures and should therefore not be of lesser importance. To this contributes, in all probability, insufficient information and animation of the public for the following of sports events.

The largest number of the surveyed subjects (41.3%) were of the opinion that physical education in primary and secondary school did not sufficiently prepare them for following sports events (Table 3). Approximately one third of the surveyed subjects were of the opinion that physical education positively contributed to the following of sport events, yet physical education could do even more. Only 12.7% of the respondents agreed with the opinion that physical education influenced the education of spectators for following sports events to a sufficient extent. Such results of the survey research point to the fact that physical education did not to a sufficient extent instil into the individual the need or motivation for following sports events. Physical education should become a driving force of the cultural transformation of the consciousness of youth in sport. However, such a transformation is not possible if too little is done in this direction in the process of active system socialisation.

The majority (89.8%) of the surveyed subjects were of the opinion that more frequent participation in sport could substantially contribute to the reduction of pathological social phenomena (Table 3) such as alcoholism, drug abuse, various forms of crime, etc. Only 4.9% of the respondents did not believe in the positive effects of sports in reducing such phenomena. The majority of the surveyed subjects (76.2%) supported the prohibition of smoking and drinking of alcoholic beverages during sports events. An opposite opinion was expressed only by 8.9% of the surveyed subjects.

A weak half of the surveyed subjects (46.2%) were of the opinion (Table 3) that physical education should not contain only the selected sport, but that it should also teach the pupils about the largest possible number of the sports known in the world, irrespective of the competition rank. A weak fourth of the surveyed subjects (23.9%) also do not support the selective choice of sports in physical education, but say that the programmes of physical education should contain all sports pursued in competition sport in Slovenia. A considerable part of the surveyed subjects (16.4%) would support, within the programmes of physical education, only some sports, while other sports should be presented only informatively. Only few of the respondents (4.3%) would include in the programmes of physical education just some selected sports. In the Slovene public there shows clearly the general conviction that physical education should teach the young about the largest possible number of sports. In the young, this will elevate the basic physical education and will educate them to become personalities knowledgeable about sport. The majority of the surveyed subjects (70.4%) were of the opinion that the organisers should promote sport events more in the public. Quite a number of the respondents did not state their opinion concerning this issue (18.3%).

The majority of the surveyed subjects (40.8%) agreed only partly with the statement (Table 4), that the conditions in which Slovene athletes live and train are good and that they enable them sports preparation of the same quality, as available to their peers in the world. Approximately one third of the surveyed subjects (31.2%) does not agree with such an opinion or assertion. Such a view of the surveyed subjects can serve as a guideline to all who lead Slovene sport to seriously study the conditions in which Slovene athletes live and work. Unfortunately, in Slovene sports the so-called false professionalism is still too frequently maintained, leading sooner or later to alienation of the athletes and their coaches as well. We can come to a similar conclusion as regards the assessment of the quality of sports facilities. Only 3% of the surveyed

subjects (Table 4) were of the opinion that the state of the outfitting and up-to-dateness of sports facilities, which they visited as spectators, is very good or excellent. The mark good was assigned by the majority (41.9%) of the surveyed subjects. A considerable part of the surveyed subjects (26.2%) evaluated the state of the sports facilities as poor (with the mark bad). The quality of sports facilities is without doubt the largest problem in Slovene sports. Top-level sport events cannot be carried out anymore on unsuitable facilities. In Slovenia, the majority of the most successful sports is faced with the problem of survival in the organisation of largest sports events (Planica, soccer stadium in Ljubljana, grounds for Alpine skiing at Kranjska gora, etc.), when the international associations already threaten with prohibition of competitions.

The majority of the surveyed subjects (68.7%) supported financing of sport from the budget funds (Table 4). A substantial part (20.2%) did not know what to answer concerning this issue. Only a smaller part of the surveyed subjects (11.1%) were of the opinion that it is not right that sports are financed from budget funds. Only 2.8% of the surveyed subjects answered that only selected sports should be financed selectively from budget funds in Slovenia. The majority of the surveyed subjects were of the opinion that all sports, in which Slovene athletes appear in international competition systems (30.8) and all sports in the competition system (32.9%), should be financed in Slovenia. The willingness to contribute their share in the financing of sports facilities and areas with a selfimposed contribution was demonstrated by a weak two thirds of the surveyed subjects (62.4%). A smaller part of the surveyed subjects (17.1%) did not approve of such financial support, while 20.5% of them remained neutral. The above answers point to the willingness of the surveyed subjects to support, with a self-imposed contribution, the development of sports facilities and areas in their residential environment.

Achieving a relatively high level of the consensus is certainly a firm guarantee for future development and integration of sports culture (Schein, 1990) in a given social environment. Sport certainly still has a national connotation. From this aspect, the results of the sample of the Slovene public can be a useful aid in the further guidance associated with the management of Slovene sports. Public opinion resembles the spiritual culture of a nation in the field of sports, which creates the phenomenon of organisational climate for sports and this is, however, a foundation for the development of the organisational sports culture on all levels of sport organisation.

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