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Sport activity and sport motives of mountain bikers and road cyclists / Aktywność sportowa i motywy kolarzy górskich i kolarzy szosowych

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Abstract: The study is aimed to establish differences of road cyclists and mountain bikers. The main purpose of the study was to identify the conditions and scope of participating the sport, the recognition of the motives to participate, the environmental effect along with social and demographic characteristics. The study was based on a sample of 68 Slovenian road cyclists and mountain bikers, who completed the questionnaire. The data were processed with the SPSS 16.0 statistical software package. Basic statistics were created for both groups and the differences between them were established by an Analysis of Variance and the Chi-Square Test. Next to the qualitative research we have made additional five depth interviews with selected cyclists from both sports. The study results show that the mountain bikers have slightly different values which are usually typical for extreme athletes. Mountain bikers more often feel the need to take risks and seek new experiences. Compared to road cyclists, mountain bikers seek pleasure in sport and are not burdened by sport activity.

Introduction

Mountain biking is still fairly young in its life compared to other so-called extreme sports such as rock climbing and mountaineering having only really “born” in the early seventies. In this study we want to identify the differences between the road cyclists and mountain bikers. These groups of cyclists were chosen because of the similarity between the sports. The two sports are very similar in the act of riding a bike is the basis of the sport. Duroy [2002] states, that the difference between the two disciplines is the terrain on which the bicycles are ridden. Road cyclists typically ride their bicycles on paved surfaces such as asphalt paths in parks, local city streets and rural highways. Mountain bikers on the other hand typically ride their bicycles on unpaved, varying terrain. This can range from gravel paths to wildly undulating trails in the mountains which include obstacles to be negotiated such as roots, rocks, and streams.

Gary Fisher, one of the fathers of the sport says about the start of the mountain biking, that all depends on whether you are talking about off-roading or mountain biking. People have been

riding bikes off-road since before road were built [Probert 2004].

Mountain biking is now one of the most popular outdoor recreational activities in the world. Despite some decline in the last 5 years, mountain bikes still represent about one third of all bicycles sold each year in the US and Europe. Official competition began in the early 1980s, and the Union Cycliste Internationale (UCI) now identifies three types of mountain bike event: downhill, cross-country and stage races [Impellizzeri & Marcora, 2007].

Sport is becoming a more and more important everyday social practice in today's society. With its social, cultural and economical extensions it is becoming a more important phenomenon of contemporary life. Sport and sport activities offer a possibility of dynamic meeting of people and communicating within a group, taking over different roles, learning social skills, accepting behavioral habits connected with activity, becoming aware of emotions which are not present in other parts of life, acceptance of positive lifestyle elements (healthy diet, resting), adapting to community demands [Doupona & Petrovič 2000].

Beside novelties and other changes the contemporary society brought also a different conception of sports. Olivier [2006] states, that risky leisure activities (including so-called 'extreme' sports) are becoming more interesting on the field of sport and people are getting more involved in them. It is important to state that this is not the case only among professional athletes, who make a living out of these activities. A noticeable outstanding trend of such sports can be noticed also among common/recreation sportsmen, which started with intense, demanding tasks like marathon, mountaineering, canoeing, mountain biking, rafting, skydiving, which are now popular weekend and vacation activities also for "ordinary" people. Because of this raising popularity of these sports among common people, there is also a raising number of "adrenaline parks" and "bike parks" being built. The media has played an important role in the popularization of mountain biking. For example, the sport of mountain biking were once enjoyed by only a handful of serious enthusiasts. Today network and cable television bring the daring exploits of bikers, and their branded gear, into the homes of millions of consumers. Magazines specifically targeted toward consumers interested in sport of mountain biking, help to generate and maintain enthusiasm for the activities while providing a showcase for new products.

These kinds of sports are considered all activities which represent a distinction from common sports, let it be in sporty, spiritual or medial point of view. They represent modern, unconventional, alternating adventurous activities and they are known that to be about something more than usual sports because they bring distress, fear and coquetry with death and performing those extreme sports demands extreme physical effort and devotion. It is about overcoming borders and about the attempt of living life fully with intensive experiences [Rinehart & Sydnor 2003]. As it determined by Le Breton [2000], participating in these sports means freedom without rules and limitations. Even physical limitations or death are not acknowledged as a limit, since they are in contradiction with freedom. The increased degree of risk and danger and the extreme physical effort that is present in extreme sport, makes the sport offer its enjoyer, an even greater satisfaction and an even deeper experience for his effort.

Often such kind of athletes decide for the escape from society, back to nature and freedom, which can also mean an escape from the fast and intensive tempo of city life and its other burdens. The question appears why people choose the escape from society into a totally different kind of life, into

nature. Why don't they decide for an escape into nature as tourists or observers but as performers of different kinds of sports? Boredom and dissatisfaction with ordinary life and social demands encourage the need for putting into force the confrontation with dangerous life. The excitement and danger have disappeared from everyday life. They seek activities in which they can find rest and relaxation and to find new strength for everyday problems [Probert 2004].

Athletes performing extreme sports are often marked as unreasonable, wild or even as suicidal maniacs with no respect towards their own life. The conclusion for people like these – is that they have a mutilated view on life or some kind of pathological suffering. This is due to the fact that we fear what we do not know, as it is with most of the prejudice in life. Research done on the psychological profile of such sportsmen showed that those sportsmen are in a great deal similar to top sportsmen, just that their demand for stimulation is higher, which could be a plausible explanation why they are performing extreme sports [Kajtna 2007].

Kavčič [2006] states, that there seem to be two lifestyles important for those people and they reflect their relationship and view on mass and mainstream culture, which is supposed to reflect their music preference and shopping habits. Extreme sports differ from common sports in the sense that they do not tend towards achievement (winning or losing). The desire for comparison and the media influence have given it some competitiveness, but it has not become crucial. The sense of performing such sports is in other areas, because their philosophy is based on pleasure and amusement.

They ignore stable standards and outperform the social necessary thing only to satisfy their needs. This is not about being addicted but it is about a life philosophy, an idea of freedom and in fact, about a lot more [Probert 2004].

Methods

Sixty-eight cyclists, 32 male road cyclists (age $23,94 \pm 4,18$ years) and 36 mountain bikers (age $22,21 \pm 5,25$ years) completed questionnaire. The average age was $23,05 \pm 4,8$ years and the difference in age between the two groups of cyclists was statistically not significant ($p=0,145$). Criterion for the inclusion in study was, that athletes must be the owner of Union Cycliste Internationale (UCI) license. The athletes had $8,6 \pm 4,94$ years of previous training. The data was gathered with a survey questionnaire and also by interviewing the five well known cyclists from both sports. The aim of the research was

to find out about the conditions and the amount of being employed in this sport; about the motives and reasons of being involved in this sport; the influence of the environment and of socio – demographic characteristics on cyclists. From June and July 2006 the cyclists were administered a questionnaire and the chosen cyclists also a depth interview. For statistical analysis the statistical package SPSS 16.0 was used to verify the differences between groups at a 0,05 alpha level of significance. For the basic analysis of the chosen variable descriptive statistics were used (frequency division, arithmetic mean). Differences were verified by means of the second group (road cyclists and mountain bikers). Basic statistics were created for both groups and the differences between them were established by an Analysis of Variance and the Chi-Square Test.

Results and discussion

The results of the research have shown that road cyclists earn their living with their sport – they perform it professionally (68,8%) and compared to that Slovene mountain bikers (0% of them perform

Statistically significant differences between the two groups of the cyclists appear at the importance of some motives, reasons and personal decisions for performing this sport continuously. Mountain bikers belong into a group of athletes with different values than those that are common in ordinary competitive sport activities. The philosophy of mountain bikers is based on seeking pleasure and satisfaction [Rinehart & Sydnor 2003]. The results of the survey proved that the main reason for the performance of mountain bikers is the love toward the sport itself. The road cyclists are driven by the wish for sport results, reputation and money. This can also be seen on hand of the following road cyclist's statement: *“The main motive today is of course the motive of money, because you have to make a living. I have been performing this sport for such a long time, that it would be impossible for me to be successful in any other activities. When I was absent from competitions this year, it seemed to me, that there is something missing in my life. So, there is a kind of dependence on the bike, but there is also the wish for money.”*

Road cyclists in comparison with mountain bikers put more emphasis on the motive of the achievement at competitions and they like to compete more

Table 1: Means \pm standard deviations and statistical significance ($p < 0.05$) of motivation for sport involvement between road cyclists (RC) and mountain bikers (MB)

Tabela 1. Badanie \pm odchylenia standardowego i znaczenia statystycznego ($p < 0,05$) motywacji do uprawiania sportu pomiędzy kolarzami szosowymi (RC) i górskimi (MB)

| PARAMETERS | RC | MB | P |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-------|
| | M \pm SD | M \pm SD | |
| Importance of competition achievement | 4,91 \pm 0,29 | 4,31 \pm 0,82 | 0,000 |
| I like to compete | 4,78 \pm 0,42 | 4,36 \pm 0,76 | 0,007 |
| Money | 4,38 \pm 0,61 | 3,03 \pm 1,15 | 0,000 |
| Prestige | 3,96 \pm 1,20 | 3,08 \pm 1,18 | 0,035 |
| Fun | 3,09 \pm 1,06 | 4,25 \pm 0,91 | 0,000 |
| Importance of risk | 3,44 \pm 1,16 | 4,19 \pm 0,85 | 0,003 |
| The riskier, the better | 2,88 \pm 1,29 | 3,75 \pm 0,80 | 0,001 |
| Relaxation | 3,34 \pm 1,23 | 4,31 \pm 0,85 | 0,000 |
| Investigating new places | 2,84 \pm 1,27 | 3,58 \pm 0,91 | 0,008 |

Legend: (1- unimportant; 2- less important ;3- middle importance; 4- important 5 most important);

it professionally) are people who dedicate a lot of time for their hobby which means a lot to them. They do it regularly, but they are not professionals who would earn their wage with mountain biking. The results have shown statistically significant differences in organizational and performing sports. Road cyclists devote more time for the training of their sport (75% of road cyclists compared to 6,8% of mountain bikers train more than 20 hours per week). Road cyclists also more carefully plan their training and they participate in more qualitatively competitions.

(78,1% of road cyclists and 52,3% of mountain bikers very like to compete). What road cyclists also find more important is the motive of money and prestige. Between the two groups statistically significant differences can be found. Mountain bikers find it more relevant to perform their sport because of an individual's intrinsic motivation, rather than motivation because of money and prestige. They appreciate risk, the search for new adventures and getting to know more people. An important motive for performing mountain bike is the presence of risk which makes it more interesting. Kavčič [2005] has found in his

research which compared different motives of performing extreme sports, that extreme athletes are more drawn into participation in a risky thing and they like to agree with the statement the riskier: the better.

Mountain bikers can be joined into this group since most of them agree with the following statement: “the riskier the things are the more I like them”.

It is also clearly evident what participating in actually means to mountain bikers or what risk represents in their wish to perform the sport. They rarely or even never think of the consequences a fall might cause in their lives. Their comment is that there actually is no possibility of getting injured during the performance of this sport. It can be said that mountain bikers perceive danger differently than road cyclists. The control of extreme situation causes a feeling of satisfaction of a mountain biker, which also proves a different perception of danger and risk: *“It is possible to break your hand or get scratched during mountain biking. But this is what you have to take into account when going downhill. For me this is no big issue.”*

Danger is perceived as something totally normal by mountain bikers, as it can be seen from the mentioned statement. The study research has also shown that road cyclists on the other hand are not fond of risk and danger. For comparison of these results, the statement of a road cyclist: *“I only take risks when absolutely necessary or when it is about winning or achieving a top result. In other circumstances I do not.”*

If we sum it up, a mountain bike allows its performers excitement, a certain amount of risk and exploration of new areas [Cessford 2006]. The conclusion drawn from this is that mountain bikers have a higher demand for seeking dangerous situations than road cyclists.

Between road cyclists and mountain bikers results of the study have not shown any significant differences about spending their free time. We can say that their style of life is more or less sporty, since they spend most of their free time performing sport activities and it is also noticeable that they do not spend much time partying. Doing other sport activities occupies most of their free time. Both road cyclists and mountain bikers mostly decide to do aerobic sports like jogging, walking, ski running or swimming. The main reason for this might be that those sports serve as an additional exercise to their trainings. There are no other significant differences noticeable between the two groups and their spare time activities preferences. For both groups after aerobic sports, ski sports are the most favorable. This can also be seen in the following road cyclist's statement: *“I engage with other sports aerobic sport*

activities (nordic ski running, ski touring, fitness...) particular in winter months, when there are no conditions for cycling. Otherwise, there is not much time for anything else”. One smaller thing that should not be neglected might be that mountain bikers prefer snowboarding to skiing. Some difference appears between the two groups for other sport activities. Road cyclists choose team sports like basketball, football or volleyball for recreation, while mountain bikers prefer sports that are performed individually like climbing, parachuting, skydiving or motocross. It can be seen that they rather chose sports with higher level of risk.

There are some significant differences noticeable about the relationship and friendship within the group of road cyclists and mountain bikers ($p = 0,017$). The results show that the mountain bikers get along better compared to road cyclists, 58% state that this relationship is excellent, while only 31% of road cyclists say so. A mountain biker who has also tried road cycling says: *“We, mountain bikers are quite good friends and get along pretty well, at least in Slovenia it is OK. But amongst the road cyclists everything is more professional. This is even more noticeable if they are from other clubs, then they do not like each-other very much.”*

The influence of media and sponsor is way bigger at road cycling. That is why the presence of the media is compared to that bigger and so consequently is the interest of sponsors. The percentage of unsatisfied with the media reports is lower by road cyclists (25%) than by mountain bikers (66,7%) and the importance of sponsors and their influence on the performance of the sport is significantly higher by road cyclists ($p = 0,000$). The way of how these two groups get their financial supports also shows differences since the road cyclists are mostly supported financially by sports clubs. The settlement of the financial conditions for mountain bikers on the other hand represents a big problem. The research study has shown that there are major investments to be made into this sport and they never pay back in a financial sense but more in a sense of an inner satisfaction.

Conclusion

The research study which aim was to find out about the differences in the lifestyle and motivation for sport participation of Slovene road cyclists and mountain bikers showed differences between these two groups of cyclists. Slovene road cyclists in comparison with mountain bikers perform road cycling in a more planned and professional way and therefore devote more time to it.

There are differences between the two groups of the cyclists appear at the importance of some motives, reasons and personal decisions for performing this sport continuously. It was found out that road cyclists like to participate in competitions and that their main goal is to be successfully in the competitions. A very important feature for their performance of road cycling is money and reputation, which can't be said for the group of mountain bikers. The main motive of mountain bikers is the enjoyment of the sport itself and the feeling of excitement. All these are besides others mentioned also by Kavčič (2006), who says that the philosophy of participating in extreme sports is different and is based primarily on pleasure and entertainment. At the same time, in the top-level competitive sports all these motives are becoming more and more often replaced by the motive and the desire to win and consecutively, the importance of the reputation and money.

There was no difference between the two groups noticeable in the spending of their free time, which is mostly sportive. There are some differences noticeable about the relationship and friendship within the group of road cyclists and mountain bikers. The results showed that the mountain bikers get along better compared to road cyclists. The influence of the milieu is noticeable in the influence of media and sponsorships, which is more spread among the members of road cycling groups.

The results and findings of this research confirm our expectations that mountain bikers represent a group of extreme athletes, where their motives suggest a different understanding of the sport as we have been accustomed to the characteristics of the extreme sports is therefore their differentiation to the ordinary sports. They value heroism, audacity, fearlessness, and the desire to take risks in which enjoyment is the key characteristic.

All this will be of help at finding and getting involved new enthusiasts in the next years. A key element for getting to know the motives for performing this sport is the research of the lifestyle mountain bikers and also road cyclists on grounds of which individuals can decide for or against participation in this kind of sport.

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Słowa kluczowe: kolarstwo szosowe, rower górski, motywy, aktywność sportowa, charakterystyka społeczna i demograficzna

Streszczenie

Celem pracy jest ustalenie różnic między kolarzami szosowymi a kolarzami górskimi. Głównym celem pracy było zidentyfikowanie warunków i zasięgu uczestnictwa w tym sporcie, rozpoznanie motywów uczestnictwa, wpływu na środowisko, a także społeczna i demograficzna charakterystyka. Praca oparta została na przykładzie 68 słoweńskich kolarzy szosowych i kolarzy górskich, którzy uzupełnili kwestionariusz. Dane zostały przetworzone przy pomocy komputerowego programu statystycznego (SPSS 16.0). Podstawowe statystyki zostały stworzone dla obu grup, a różnice między nimi zostały ustalone przy pomocy Testu Analizy Wariancji i Chi-kwadratu. Poza testem jakościowym przeprowadziliśmy dodatkowe pięć dogłębnych wywiadów z wybranymi kolarzami z obu dziedzin kolarstwa. Wyniki badania wskazują na nieznaczne różnice w wartościach, które są zwykle typowe dla sportowców ekstremalnych. Kolarze górscy częściej czują potrzebę podejmowania ryzyka i szukania nowych doświadczeń. W porównaniu do kolarzy szosowych, kolarze górscy szukają w sporcie przyjemności i nie są obciążeni przez aktywność sportową.