

Abstract

The dissertation focuses on the research of the audience and the perception of athletes with a disability, mainly Paralympians, in the Czech Television (Česká televize), which regularly broadcasts a program about disabled athletes called *Paralympic Magazine*. The topic also appears in other news programs (ČT24 and ČT sport). The research aims at showing the media image perception of the disabled sports by the television viewers. The theoretical level emphasises mainly the audience and athletes with a disability.

The dissertation posed the following research questions: How do television viewers perceive athletes with a disability? Does the audience admire or regret them? What do viewers say about the presentation of disabled sports? Can we identify any differences between the presentation of athletes with and without a disability? Are life stories of athletes with a disability important in the reports? Does the Paralympic sport make sense?

The focus group interviews were set to get an answer to the questions above. The audience (50 television viewers) was divided into five groups of ten. The first group consisted of people without a disability who had been watching the *Paralympic Magazine* and had no disabled person in their family. The second group was composed of people without a disability who did not watch the *Paralympic Magazine* and did not have a family member with a disability. In the third group, there were family members of disabled athletes who have been watching the *Paralympic Magazine*. The next group were people with disabilities who were not professional sportspeople. In the last group, there were ten Paralympic athletes with disabilities. Interviews with twenty respondents were used as a complementary method (individual interviews took place before the focus groups).

There were feelings such as regret or admiration in all groups. Even the focus group with family members, who spoke mostly about integration, was also making differences between disabled and non-disabled athletes. Another topic was visual attractiveness. The appearance of the athletes was highlighted not only by spectators who do not watch the athletes with a disability but also by top athletes with disabilities who were aware of the importance of the visual aspect in the presentation of the sport.

The results of the dissertation can be beneficial for researchers and media professionals in the process of creating reports and news about people with a disability.