

Motivation for running in a half-marathon among university students

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Abstract

Introduction. The purpose of the study was to examine the motivations to participate in a half-marathon among two groups of university students (local university students and sport-tourists university students) and also to evaluate the differences between them. **Material and Methods.** The sample comprised 178 university students (59% of male and 41% of female) that participated in the 6th Poznan Half Marathon. To evaluate the motivation to participate in the half-marathon event, a self-constructed questionnaire was used. **Results.** Results indicated that local university students and sport-tourists university students have similar forms of motivation and similar meanings to the event participation with some significance differences. **Conclusions.** In general, the findings of the present study provide an understanding of motivation to participate in a half-marathon event in different university student groups. These results might be useful for sport managers to analyze consumer behavior and utilize the results in their everyday practice, especially in the strategic planning, marketing and implementation of massive sport events.

KEYWORDS: motives of participation in a running event, runners, half marathon, university students.

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Introduction

A trend of *healthism*, which can be described as an opposite to a passive attitude towards health, has been developing for a few decades now. It is related to focusing on health that constitutes a basis for defining and reaching one's well-being. An individual may achieve that through a lifestyle change. Those that oppose to this trend, frequently call it a *health cult* or even a *health obsession*; it may be referred to as an ideology of treating a body as a symbol indicating one's health condition. For those people that adopt this ideology, (good) health is not only a mean that enables life, but a goal itself. Such an understanding of health influences changes in the role of medicine, which not only just cures, but also takes a preventive approach, through education and control testing. The term "healthism" was coined in the 1980s in the US. R. Crawford used it for the first time in 1980. He described an ideology which was an important aspect in the new health awareness of the American Society in the 1970s. That awareness was shaping in the American culture alongside with the growth of the popularity of the sport, which was reflected by individual efforts to look after one's health, numerous health-promoting campaigns, providing an increasing health-related information in the

media, such as the advertisement of products consumed for health reasons, etc.

In the last few years, the ideology of healthism has been developing in Poland, too. This trend is particularly visible in mass running events, in which Poles participate eagerly. The scale of this social phenomenon is surely an unusual occurrence on many levels, as a number of interdisciplinary factors should be taken into account. Taking care of one's physical (and mental) well-being is undoubtedly a leading reason for participating in mass sport events in Poland, especially since the concept of "sport for all" has been lately strongly promoted in media. Moreover, the postmodernism in sport might indicate individuals are tired of the repeated success of professional athletes and watching sport events as spectators because they all seem similar. Individuals are migrating from passive sport consumers to active sport consumption which translates in a sporty lifestyle [30, 12]. Nowadays, sport events promote health and physical activity (PA) among fans [16]. The dynamic growth of mass sport events, however, which are positively perceived by the society, is a result of different factors, too. We may highlight the search for strong emotions and experiences, among others (as we live in an experience-centered society, see G. Schulze theory), which are brought to us through sporting rivalry and the possibility of making social relationships (the need to feel unity during such events) in a period of time where we live in a society of individuals [19]. J. Stempień notices that active participation and participation in running events is also a form of display of social status, prestige, and even snobbery [23]. We should also take into consideration an economic factor: sport events contribute to financial movement and profit and "might contribute" to build a positive image of cities and regions in the eyes of potential sport tourists [3].

They attract a throng of players and their fans who are interested in PA, sport and participation in a broadly defined contemporary sport life. We deal here with what can be called a sport movement. Its first type concerns athletes traveling in order to participate in sport events or trainings. The second one is related to spectators, passive participants of a sport event, who bear significant costs to be a part of it. Physical culture and tourism are areas which markedly impact the social integration, activate local communities and encourage their development (not only in terms of economy). Such a phenomenon accompanies also sport events in which an entertainment purpose is governed by marketing and business goals, but hosts usually try to encourage as many people as possible to take part in the

competition as they expect multiple kinds of profits and or legacies, such as promoting health, PA and physical culture in general. The research on the motivation of the running event participants aimed at determining how meaningful some aspects are. These aspects were not only a willingness to stay fit, healthy and slim, but also to build social relationships and to look for experiences and emotions that come with recreational sport.

There is worldwide concern about low levels of PA among a large proportion of the population. Physical inactivity (PI) is the fourth-leading risk factor for global mortality and estimated to cause 6% of deaths worldwide [26]. PA can reduce the risk for cardiovascular diseases, overweight, falls, obesity, diabetes type II, depression, perceived stress, and fractures. The most important benefits of regular PA include reduced prevalence of many diseases, as well as a decrease in mortality [4, 20, 13]. Indeed, individuals of all ages can gain an array of physical, psychological, social, and emotional benefits from physical activity [14, 25]. On the other hand, inactivity is associated with higher all-cause mortality, coronary artery disease, stroke, and hypertension. While, habitual PA can improve other factors including mental health, social contacts, self-confidence, healthy aging, quality of life. PI is a primary cause of most chronic diseases, where the body rapidly badly adaptes to insufficient PA and, if continued, results in substantial decrease in both quantity and quality years of life [11]. Increasing levels of PA to meet current guidelines during adulthood is a public health priority and PA recommendations have been designed by public health professional organizations [26].

Researchers, health professionals have all sought to explore the reasons why some people are physically active, whereas others are not. Motives of participation in PA are highly complex [22] and motivation is a key factor that influences individuals' initiation and maintenance of behavior [10]. Motivation affects PA participation and it is a critical factor in exercise adherence [1, 2].

Based on self-determination theory (SDT) motivation to engage in PA can include intrinsic and/or extrinsic aspects. Intrinsic motivation refers to engaging in an activity for the pleasure [5]. Intrinsically motivated individuals experience choice in their behavioral dispositions and an optimum level of challenge, thereby fulfilling their needs for competence and autonomy. Extrinsic motivation refers to engaging in an activity for instrumental reasons, such as reward and external pressures. Extrinsically-motivated individuals experience less optimal challenge or autonomy [5, 6].

Extrinsic motives are critical during the early steps of PA adoption, whereas intrinsic motives are crucial for the maintenance of PA [18, 24].

Very limited research has specifically examined motivation for certain types of PA. It is plausible that there is a relationship between motives for participation in PA and the types of PA that individuals choose to spend their time doing. Studies that have reported the correspondence of participation motives with specific types of PA suggest systematic differences [15, 17]. Frederick and Ryan [8] compared the motivation of those who participated in individual sports (such as tennis and sailing) and those who participated in fitness or exercise-oriented activities (such as running and aerobics), using the Motives for Physical Activity Measure (MPAM), which they developed in that study. They found that those who participated in individual sports had higher interest/enjoyment and competence motivation, whereas those who participated in fitness or exercise activities had higher body-related motivation. In one of the few studies on PA motivation, Morris et al. [15] examined five types of activity for PA participation: team sports (lacrosse, netball, basketball, volleyball), individual sports (gymnastics, swimming), racquet sports (tennis, table tennis, squash), exercise activities (aerobics, weight training), and martial arts (karate, taekwondo, tai chi). Results showed that exercise activities participants were discriminated by higher scores on physical condition than participants in other activities.

Individuals vary from one to another; some like to exercise alone, whereas others like to be in a group. Some individuals like their program to be tailored, whereas others prefer some level of personal choice. PA advice, particularly in primary health care, may be an effective tool to promote active lifestyles at the population level [21]. According to SDT, long-term adherence to PA could be improved by designing programs or interventions that target the more autonomous reasons for exercise [27, 28] which should increase intrinsic motivation. It is clear that variables, including the type of activity, age, and gender, do influence PA motivation, so it is important to consider them when developing strategies to promote PA. In particular, selection of a type of PA that will satisfy individuals' primary motives has great potential to enhance intrinsic motivation and encourage long-term participation.

Aims of Study

- Evaluate the motivations to participate in a half-marathon among two groups of university students:

local university students and sport-tourists university students.

- Evaluate the different motivations that lead to participate in a half-marathon event between two groups of university students: local university students and sport-tourists university students.

Participants and Methods

Participants

Data was collected during the 6th Poznan Half Marathon (Pol. 6. Poznań Półmaraton). A sample of local university students (from Poznan city) and sport-tourists university students (from out of town) (N=178, of whom 59% were male and 41% were female) participated in the event voluntarily and completed a questionnaire. The majority of respondents (91.6%) were between ages of 19-25. While only 8.4% were between 26-50 years old. Participants represented different educational levels, the majority had an incomplete higher education (41.6%), the remainder had a secondary education (38.8%) and higher education as well (19.7%). Most of the participants came from urban areas, like cities above 500 thousand residents (37.6%) and from cities with 10-100 thousand residents, but also from rural areas (20.8%). The sample was selected in such a way as to ensure good representation of the obtained results. Simple random sampling, which is a draw without return, was used. Information on the expected number of participants was used to determine the sample size. Calculations were used for the sample size for the finite population. It was assumed that the maximum error of estimation (e) at 95% confidence level did not exceed 4%.

Method

A self-constructed questionnaire was used for the study. The questionnaire has 25 questions. The first part of the questionnaire focused on socio-demographic variables. Questions about motifs of participating in sporting events formed the second part of the survey (questions 1-18). The next part of the questionnaire is designed for people who were not residents of Poznan (questions 19-23) and the last part for people from Poznan and the surrounding area (questions 24-25). For the purpose of the study, we have focused only on those two parts of the questionnaire. The division of Freyer and Gross [2002], who distinguished four types of orientation among the motives of participation in sporting events, was the basis for the development of the author's questionnaire survey of motives for participation in running events. Authors [Freyer & Gross, 2002] have distinguished four main

types of orientation among motives for participation in sports events: a) social orientation, oriented to the relation of visitors to one another; b) experience orientation, oriented to strong emotional experiences, most often positive, in the form of, for example, relaxation, which is a kind of compensation for the hardships of everyday life; c) specific sport discipline orientation, referring to the sporting events itself and their specificity/discipline; d) result orientation, triggered by the need to identify successfully, and in the case of failure, compassion and solidarity. The results concerning a different type of motives consist of more than 100% because, in each group of motives, participants could tick more than one answer (maximum 3 answers). The questionnaire and appropriate details concerning data selection were provided by a single researcher.

Statistical analysis

Descriptive statistics (percentages, means and standard deviations) were calculated for all variables. For the differences between responses of local university

students and sport-tourists university students, a Chi-square test was used. Statistical significance was set at $p \leq 0.05$. All statistical analyses were conducted using Statistica Software 10.0 (StatSoft Inc., 2011).

Results

Table 1 presents the first group of motives (Group A), the social orientation and the second group of motives (Group B), the experience orientation. The most important motive from the first group of motives, both for local university students and for sport-tourists university students, was “a desire to feel unity and integration with other people” (54.8% and 51.7%, respectively). The statistically significant difference between these two groups of respondents was found in responds “participation in the subculture of runners/skaters/wheelers” ($p < 0.05$). Quoted response was more important for sport-tourists university students than for local university students (45.7% and 2.4% respectively).

In the second group of motives (Group B), for both groups, the most important response was “a desire to

Table 1. Motives for social orientation and for experience orientation

Groups of motives	Local university students (n = 62)		Sport-tourists university students (n = 116)		P
	n	%	n	%	
<i>Group A</i>					
<i>Motives for social orientation</i>					
Desire to feel unity and integration with other people	34	54.8	60	51.7	0.6917
Desire to feel equality during the race	12	19.4	21	18.1	0.8378
The prevailing fashion – participation in sports events is fashionable	11	17.7	12	10.3	0.1610
Desire to win recognition in the eyes of others	19	30.6	33	28.4	0.7588
Participation in subculture of runners/skaters/wheelers	17	27.4	53	45.7	0.0174
None mentioned in this theme group	16	25.8	20	17.2	0.1753
<i>Group B</i>					
<i>Motives for experience orientation</i>					
Desire to experience strong emotions	36	58.1	92	79.3	0.0027
Desire to feel the extraordinary mood of the whole party	35	56.5	63	54.3	0.7844
Have fun	33	53.2	55	47.4	0.4600
Desire to enjoy leisure/entertainment	19	30.6	29	25.0	0.4188
Desire to express joy, e.g. because of winning/success	19	30.6	21	18.1	0.0561
Desire to break away from everyday life	12	19.4	27	23.3	0.5468
It attracts me to the attractiveness of the city in which the event takes place	1	1.6	9	7.8	0.0898
None mentioned in this theme group	2	3.2	1	0.9	0.2431

Table 2. Motives for specific sport discipline orientation, for the result orientation and other motives

Groups of motives	Local university students (n = 62)		Sport-tourists university students (n = 116)		P
	n	%	n	%	
<i>Group C</i>					
<i>Motives for specific sport discipline orientation</i>					
Desire to develop passion	44	71.0	92	79.3	0.2117
I'm attracted by the attractiveness of the sports part of the half-marathon	13	21.0	33	28.4	0.2774
It attracts me to the attractiveness of a rich program of accompanying events	7	11.3	18	15.5	0.4394
None mentioned in this theme group	10	16.1	15	12.9	0.5585
<i>Group D</i>					
<i>Motives for the result orientation</i>					
Desire to check myself	51	82.3	92	79.3	0.6373
Desire to achieve the goal set	43	69.4	80	69.0	0.9573
Desire to participate in sports rivalry	31	50.0	41	35.3	0.0577
Desire to win	0	0.0	4	3.4	0.1392
The high (international) rank of this sporting event	0	0.0	9	7.8	0.0244
None mentioned in this theme group	0	0.0	4	3.4	0.1392
<i>Group E</i>					
<i>Other motives</i>					
Desire to maintain good physical / health condition	52	83.9	94	81.0	0.6387
Still other themes	5	8.1	4	3.4	0.1805

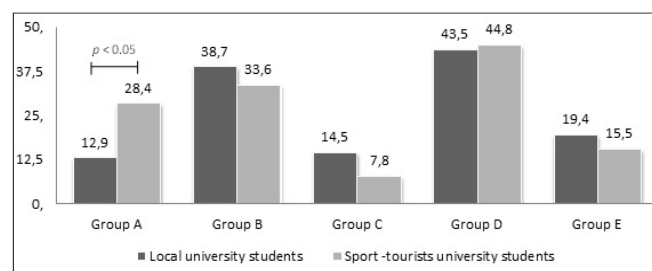
experience strong emotions” (58.1% for university students and 79.3% for sport-tourists university students). Also for the same response, we have found a statistically significant difference between groups ($p < 0.01$). It shows that this motive was more important for sport-tourists university students.

Table 2 presents the percentage of motives for specific sport discipline orientation (Group C), for the result orientation (Group D) and for other motives (Group E). The most frequently indicate response in the Group C, was “a desire to develop passion” for local university students (71.0%) and for sport-tourists university students as well (79.3%). In this group of motives, we didn't find statistically significant differences between groups.

The most important motive from Group D for both groups was “a desire to check myself” (for local university students – 82.3% and for sport-tourists university students – 79.3%). We have reported the statistically significant difference between groups for “the high (international) rank of this group event” response. It was important for sport-tourist university students (7.8%).

In the last group of motives (Group E), the most important were “a desire to maintain good physical/health condition” for local university students (83.9%) and also for sport-tourists university students (81.0%). No significant difference between responses of the participant was found.

Figure 1 presents the percentage of the groups of motives for both groups of students. The most important group of motives was Group D, motives for the result orientation both groups. The least important group of motives for local university students was Group A, motives for social


Figure 1. Which group of motives was the most important for you?

orientation (12.9%). While, for sport-tourists university students the less important was group C, motives for the specific sport discipline orientation (7.8%).

Discussion

To evaluate the motives to participate in a half-marathon among two groups of university students and the differences between them.

We fully expected that we would find the common motives of participation in the half-marathon between a local group of students and students from out of town. For instance, the most important motives for all participants were: the desire to feel unity and integration with other people was the most important in the group of motives for the social orientation; the desire to experience strong emotions in the group of motives for the experience orientation; the desire to develop passion in the group of motives for specific sport discipline orientation; the desire to check myself in the group of motives for result orientation; and the desire to maintain good physical/health condition in the other group of motives. Moreover, motive to win with the others wasn't that important, like motive to fight with one's weaknesses. In addition, the sport-tourists university students were seeking for more powerful emotions. According to this, sport-tourism provides more opportunities to gain emotional experiences than sport in familiar spaces. Additionally, social motives are more important than the motive of health or physical fitness.

Furthermore, we found some motives of participation could be different between those two groups of students. The differences were reported in the group of motives for the social orientation (Group A), for the experience orientation (Group B) and for result orientation (Group D). Participation in the subculture of runners/skaters/wheelers, the desire to experience strong emotions and the high (international) rank of this group's event were significantly more important for sport-tourists university students than for the local university students. The reason might be sport-tourist university students have some extra expectations which ensued from traveling. Additionally, the most important group of motives from all groups were motives for the result orientation. The least important group of motives for local university students were motives for social orientation. While for sport-tourists university students the less important were motives for the specific sport discipline orientation. We note the following limitation and strength of our study: a strength is a number of university students investigated, while a limitation is the self-reporting nature of the surveys.

Definitely, these results could provide some guidelines for sport managers to set and arrange future sport running events. But most importantly, to understand the motives among young adults (university students) to participate in above-mentioned events.

Conclusions

The paper provides data which may be useful for support marketing events like half-marathons. The motives for the result orientation (i.e. desire to challenge myself, desire to achieve the goal, desire to compete, desire to win and the high rank of the sport event) are the most important for all participants. Additionally, the most important group of motives from all the groups were motives for the result orientation. The least important group of motives for local university students were motives for social orientation. However, participation in the subculture of runners/skaters/wheelers, the desire to experience strong emotions and also the high (international) rank of this group's event were significantly more important for sport-tourists university students than for local university students. While for sport-tourists university students the less important were motives for the specific sport discipline orientation. To sum up, the findings indicate that local university students and sport-tourists university students have similar forms of motives and give similar meanings to event participation with some differences.

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