

# Factors Determining Participation in Running Events. A Lithuanian Case study.

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## Aim and Research Questions

The present study aims to determine the factors of runner's participation in running events in Lithuania. The research objective of the paper is: what factors determine the choice and participation of participants in a running events in Lithuania.

## Background and Literature Review

Running is becoming increasingly popular as a recreational activity or hobby and its growth has been noticeable in recent years. Individuals can run recreationally or take on the challenge of taking part in numerous running events. The significant increase of running popularity and different types of running events (e.g., park runs, city runs, themed runs, extreme runs and obstacle runs) shows that they are more and more consider running as an appropriate alternative for recreation based physical activity (Ridinger et al., 2012). The individual's participation in running events increase overall sport participation and physical activity (Bauman et al., 2009; Misener et al., 2016) as well the socialization which is an important aspect individuals scrutinize when choosing to take part in. Previous studies have identified different factors related to running motivation, as the desire to affiliate with other runners, an increase in self-esteem, physical motives for general health benefits, improving quality of life, coping with negative emotions and many more (Zach et al., 2017). Participants of the running events are also more motivated to take part in if they have strong motivation towards physical activity and social support from family, also knowledge about running events. Promotional campaigns increasing participant's knowledge of running events may stimulate participation in such events (van Dyck et al., 2017). Large or small scale sporting events are thought to have a positive impact on the physical activity behaviour of the events participants (Murphy, 2007). As a result, event organizers are trying to offer unique experiences to ensure retention of participants.

## Research Design, Methodology and Data Analysis

For representing the Lithuanian study, the qualitative and quantitative data was used from the ongoing Run for Health (Erasmus+) Project ([www.runforhealth.eu](http://www.runforhealth.eu)). Quantitative research was used to investigate the impact of running events on participants' physical activity, motivation, attitudes and expectations to participate in running events. The questionnaire was constructed by the project team and was validated in past research (Alexandris et al., 2009; Kyle et al., 2004). Data were gathered after the race with questionnaires online from 3 running events (CITADELE Kaunas Marathon, 3rd Birstonas Half Marathon, Olympic day 2019) that took place in Lithuania between 4 May and 9 June 2019. Collectively at these events were around 8000 participants. All running events offer the 1,5K, 5K and 10K distances, two offer 1/2 marathon distance and only one marathon distance. A total of 418 respondents filled out the survey of which 62.6% is male, 36.9% is female and 0.5% other. The standardized questionnaire consisted of 38 questions. Both cluster and multiple regression analyses are used.

## Results/Findings and Discussion

Respondents seem to run more than before. On average, respondents participated in 7.73 running events in the past twelve months. Most respondents (60.5%) participated in Urban running events (city run, urban trail, local jogging, etc.) and Theme running events (ladies run, Colour run, Santa run, etc.) (23.7%). When looking at the preparation for the event, 48.4% of the respondents increased sport participation

before the event and 51.6% of the respondents did not specifically increase sport participation before the event. The majority of participants (229) in the study were shorter distances runners (5K, 10K), the third part (124) 21K runners. In general, respondents were most satisfied with Registration procedure, the event as a whole and Atmosphere during the event (mean = 4.45). Then, they were most satisfied with Time and distance measurement during event (mean = 4.25), Travel time to the event (mean = 4.23), The start of the event in general (mean = 4.12) and Value for money (mean = 4.06). The aspects Personal performance on the event, Number of toilets, Entertainment, Number of spectators and Number of drinking points were all rated with a mean of 3.73. The main reasons to participate are: To compete with myself (mean = 4.23), To have fun (mean = 3.91) and To improve my mood (mean = 3.91). The reason that counted the least was To earn the respect of my peers (mean = 2.16).

### **Conclusion, Contribution and Implication**

Preliminary analyses show that the frequency of practicing sports of respondents on average during the past twelve months is growing in Lithuania. Participating in a running event do not increased sport participation. The majority of running events participants were short distances runners and almost all participants were satisfied with the events and spoke in favour of attending the events next year. Most of them has the strong motivation to participate in events is to compete with themselves.

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