

## Article

# Modern Running Events in Sustainable Development—More than Just Taking Care of Health and Physical Condition (Poznan Half Marathon Case Study)

Joanna Poczta \*  and Ewa Malchrowicz-Mośko

Department of Cultural Foundations of Tourism, University School of Physical Education in Poznan, 61-871 Poznan, Poland; malchrowicz@awf.poznan.pl

\* Correspondence: jpoczta@awf.poznan.pl; Tel.: +48-61-835-53-52 or +48-609-185-090

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**Abstract:** The aim of the study was to evaluate the motivations to participate in a half marathon among two groups of respondents—those living in large cities (with more than 500,000 inhabitants) and 110 living in rural areas—and evaluate the differences between them. The empirical research ( $n = 342$ ) was conducted during the one of the most important running events in Poland, and recognized the motives for participation in sports events according to the four basic types of orientation: social orientation, sensation-seeking orientation, factual orientation, and result orientation. The division of Freyer and Gross (2002) was the basis for the development of the author's questionnaire survey of motives for participation in running events. The results indicated that the significant difference between urban and rural residents appeared in the results regarding the group of motives in the scope of sensation-seeking orientation. City residents declared that the most important thing for them was the desire to have fun, which was 15% higher than in rural residents. On the other hand, rural residents reported that the most important thing for them was the need to experience strong emotions related to participation, which was 20% higher than in urban residents. In general, the results might help sport managers and city government analyze consumer behavior and utilize the results in the strategic, sustainable planning, marketing, and implementation of physical culture and leisure in connection with massive sport events organizations.

**Keywords:** half marathon; motives for running; mass sporting event; urban agglomerations; rural areas

## 1. Introduction

In today's world, the importance of physical activity has significantly increased in the socio-cultural dimension, including tourism, and sport tourism should be seen as an autonomous phenomenon of our time, reflecting current trends, needs, and lifestyles. At present, there are strong links between sport and tourism, which can be referred as the touristification of sport or as the sportification of tourism. Sport tourism is becoming an important part of people's lives today, where sport plays a significant role in their lives. Never before has sport tourism been so popular, and sport and tourist activities have become a megatrend in the postmodern world. The World Travel Market Report published at the London Sports Tourism Conference in 2011 clearly highlighted that big sporting events sometimes attract more tourists than beautiful beaches, sights, and unusual landscapes, and as many as 80% of the cities and regions hosting the largest sporting events in the world have noticed that not only athletes, but also fans become more typical tourists [1]. Sport tourism stands for traveling away from one's place of residence in order to engage in sports-related activities

for recreation or competition, traveling to spectate popular and elite sporting events, as well as traveling to visit famous sport attractions [2]. The competition among communities to host sporting events is intense, because community leaders focus on the economic impact from event patrons, sponsorship deals, and for the major events, television rights. In recent years, as community leaders have recognized the synergy between sport and tourism, they are increasingly looking to generate tourism by developing a destination image through hosting sports events. Contemporary cities and regions raise their statuses and improve their images not only through mega sport events. Such function is performed also through hosting running events, which don't need expensive infrastructure such as stadiums, swimming pools, etc. (for such events as the Olympics). For many, this way of spending leisure time is a very sustainable way of developing tourism in the city, and is also a good way to promote health and physical activity among citizens. Running events build event and destination loyalty also. Sports tourism is an important part of the travel industry, drawing thousands of travelers and fans to various competitions and championships. Running events are sport tourism attractions taking place in many cities around the globe. Marathons and half marathons in Europe are now extremely popular among many tourists [3]. Many running enthusiasts have the opportunity to travel to incredible places and run through picturesque locations full of interesting attractions and cultural heritage, such as: the Athens Marathon, marathons in Lisbon, Goteborg and Oslo, the Asics Stockholm Marathon, the Warsaw Marathon, the Great Breweries Marathon in Belgium, the SPAR Marathon in Budapest, the International Marathon of Peace in Kosice, the Swiss City Marathon in Lucerne, the Midnight Sun Marathon in Tromsø, the Telenor Marathon in Copenhagen, the Volkswagen Marathon in Prague, the Crete Half Marathon, half marathons in Geneva, Bucharest, Copenhagen, and Poznań, the Wizz Air Half Marathon in Budapest, The Great North Run in New Castle, and The BMW Berlin Marathon (in which almost 50,000 people participated last year).

Sports events bring together the multitude of contestants and their fans who are interested in physical activity. They also influence social inclusion and stimulate teamwork and the development of local communities. Sociologists believe that the future will offer far fewer opportunities to pursue a career than what is happening today. It will result, among others, from a reduced number of jobs in general, as well as a reduced number of hours spent on it, which will cause a continuous increase in free time in a post-industrial society. People will therefore look for the opportunities for a challenge, and fulfilment in discovering their passions and skills also in the area of entertainment and leisure time. For this reason, R. Stebbins has already introduced the concept of "serious leisure", and many forms of modern tourism (including cultural or sport tourism) in the form of tourist participation in sporting events have already entered into the current trend of "serious leisure" [4,5]. People taking up sports and recreational activity more frequently feel the need to increase their loads and enhance their efficiency, participate in situations posing an opportunity to verify their own accomplishments, constantly check back, and achieve a high level of stimulation. Such a phenomenon, which is defined as the search for sensations—sensation seeking [6]—can nowadays be one of the most important factors influencing the choice and effectiveness of various forms of sports and recreational activity. According to the outlined direction of developmental changes in contemporary sports and recreational activity—from recreation to excitement [6–8]—participants are increasingly looking for extreme excitement related to self-improvement and competition, and, above all, experiencing exciting and intentionally controlled risk [9].

All of the concepts of recreation recognize a specific set of activities that relate to physical activity and movement as its integral component. In this article, this type of activity is referred to as sports and recreational activity [10]. Today, this activity includes not only the general pursuit of restoring the lost physical and mental fitness (classic recreation), it also involves the desire of improvement that goes beyond the limits of the status that is genetically inherited as progressive recreation. It can also be associated with the radical crossing of borders in the form of extreme leisure activities. The latter depends on increasing the dosage of exercise or undertaking risky forms of sports and recreational activity, leading to extreme emotional tension, i.e., excitement [11]. Contemporary

sports and leisure activities, regardless of the type of the field, more frequently have forms that are perceived as progressive and even risky. This is connected with the increasing demand for stimulation of its participants. Of course, there are some forms of high-risk sports and leisure activities, such as rock climbing, bungee jumping, deep water diving, paragliding, car races and car rallies, or all sorts of survival activities. However, in every sports and leisure activity that is much “milder” in its form, the elements of risk may be found or deliberately triggered. For example, running, which is a seemingly safe discipline that usually fails to deliver excessive sensations to its participants, for the personal satisfaction of participants or their desire to impress others, takes extreme forms such as a multiplied marathon. As a result, running leads to a fight against their own weaknesses, and often puts them at risk of health loss.

The sense of a high quality of life and the sense of joy resulting from an active lifestyle are conditioned not only by the course of motivational processes, but also by the level of satisfaction of psychological needs, which are a prerequisite for achieving satisfaction from one’s own physical activity [12]. The current impact of civilization progress on the comforts of everyday life results in leisure time mostly being spent on rest and recreation, combined with various forms of physical activity. This phenomenon has made participation in organized sports events an extremely attractive form of physical recreation that is practiced by an increasingly growing number of sports enthusiasts. The popularization of running and active participation in running events is multifaceted. Its most significant components concern health care and physical and mental health. Along with the emotional nature of running, there is also growing awareness of the need to treat running as a product and project that requires regulation, and entails organizational goals, as well as business, health promotion, and physical activity goals. People more often want to become amateur athletes and take on the challenges of a sporty lifestyle. They seek strong sensations and emotions provided by sports rivalry, and look for opportunities to establish ties and social relationships (the desire to feel the sense of community during the events).

One of the theories that successfully explains the importance of psychological needs for the structure of motivation for action in different spheres of life, including physical activity and sport, is the theory of self-determination. Its assumptions constitute a three-pronged core that is the foundation of human development, and consists of the psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relations [13–16]. The need for autonomy reflects the desire for human self-determination of behavior and the choices that a man experiences when he perceives his functioning as a result of his own decisions [17]. The need for competence refers to the tendency for effective interactions in situations that give experience and allow for presenting one’s own skills and capabilities. In turn, the need for relations can be satisfied when a person experiences good relationships with their near and dear who are important to him, or when he or she has a sense of belonging to a particular social context [18]. Deci and Ryan [15] mention that every man has the individual level of saturation of psychological needs and their non-hierarchical nature, emphasizing the importance of their active participation in sports events for the sense of a high quality of life based on psychological development. The environment that provides stimuli to meet the discussed needs enables self-determination in action, the satisfaction derived from it, and internal localization of motives for the undertaken activity, which leads to a sense of pleasure and identification with the activity that is of a non-compulsory nature [19]. Pelletier et al. have created Sport Motivation Scale (SMS) [20], which is a tool that examines the diversity of motivational processes related to participating in sports and distinguishes three dimensions: intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, and amotivation. It consists of seven subscales that are used to measure the three above-mentioned types of motivation, including three subscales describing intrinsic motivation (knowledge, accomplishment, and stimulation), and three subscales concerning extrinsic motivation (identification, introjection, and external regulation). The seventh subscale, being simultaneously the third dimension, concerns the aspect of amotivation [21]. This method is greatly valued by the world literature of sports psychology—it is considered to be accurate and present a high level of internal consistency [20]. The SMS scale has been widely used not only in sports psychology, but also

in mass studies into the conditioning of recreational activity in Greece and France [22,23]. It has been adopted for research in many countries [24–26]. Curtis and McTeer [27] used the unfinished sentence method, and based on the answers given, determined that the main reasons for taking part in marathons were: achieving one's own goals, influencing others, and mental well-being. Summers et al. [28,29] used the same method to examine the three reasons for marathon participation. He determined their frequency of occurrence, grouped them into categories based on similarity of content, and found that the most frequently mentioned were achievement of self-goals, self-esteem test, physical fitness, and the influence of others. Johnsgård [30], using the questionnaire, surveyed the main motives for running, and his respondents reported physical fitness, mood control, and self-image. Clough et al. [31] also asked the marathon runners about their reasons for running, and by means of factor analysis, they identified six factors according to the influence of power: challenge, form/health, well-being, social factors, status, and addiction. The author's tools for investigating the factors driving people to run marathons also began to appear: Gill and Deeter [32] used the Sport Orientation Questionnaire (SOQ), which measures the achievement orientation in sport; Crowne and Marlow [33] created the Marlow Crowne Social Desirability Scale (MCSD), which is a scale for seeking social approval; Carmack and Martens [34] used the Attentional Focussing Questionnaire (AFQ), which measures the associative/dissociative attention orientation in sport; Masters et al. [35,36] developed the questionnaire "The Motivations of Marathoners Scales (MoMS)" measured marathon runners' motives for running marathons; M. Dybala [12] adapted this tool to Polish conditions where it had never been used before, considering it the most professional in term of psychometrics and content. The final version of the Polish adaptation of the instrument was composed of nine scales: general health orientation, weight care, affiliation, appreciation, competition, achievement of personal goals, psychological coping, self-assessment, and sense of life. The questionnaire was shortened mainly in the area of psychological motives; Freyer and Gross [37] distinguished four main types of orientation among the motives for participation in sports events: (a) social orientation, which was focused on the relationships of visitors to each other; (b) sensation-seeking orientation, which was most often concerning the positive experiences, in the form of, for example, relaxation, which is a kind of compensation for the hardships of everyday life; (c) factual orientation/sports discipline orientation, referring to the sports events themselves and to their specificity—in this case, to the specificity of running; (d) result orientation, which is triggered by the need to identify with success, and in the case of failure, by the need to show sympathy and solidarity. The classification developed by Freyer and Gross was the basis for the development of the author's questionnaire survey of motives for participation in running events. The questionnaire was used during the 6<sup>th</sup> Poznan Half Marathon to evaluate the motivations to participate in a half-marathon among two groups of respondents—those living in large cities (above 500,000 inhabitants) and 110 living in rural areas—and also evaluate the differences between them. The inspiration to check these differences was the respondents' different lifestyles. Rural residents usually have less entertainment, less stress, and less rush, which suggests that motivation might be different between these two sub-groups. That is why the following were considered worthwhile: what they lack, their needs and motives for traveling to the city, and their motives for participation in mass sport events, which are positively perceived by the society. The organization of large sports events involves, among others, the economic aspects, promoting cities and regions, and building a positive image [38]. They affect the residents and their sense of social identity in a positive way. They encourage work on health and physical condition. They activate the community to actively participate in sports events. The observed tendency raises the question of the motives behind marathon runners, particularly since in the context of everyday life, both training and running marathons itself are kind of a luxury. They require time and good health. 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 [39]. Physical culture and tourism are

areas that markedly impact the social integration, activate local communities, and encourage their development (not only in terms of the economy). 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 and physical culture in general. Current research on the motivation of the running event participants was 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 look for the experiences and emotions that come with recreational sport.

## 2. Aims of Study

The first aim of the study was to evaluate motivations to participate in a half-marathon among two groups of respondents: those living in large cities (above 500,000 inhabitants) and 110 living in rural areas. It was also interesting to check whether there was a difference between the motives for running in half marathons between the inhabitants of large cities (over 500,000) and the inhabitants of rural areas (rural areas in Poland are inhabited by 38.5% of the population, occupying 93.2% of the country's total area, with over 43,000 rural settlement units, and are characterized by a dispersed settlement network and generally a small number of inhabitants of particular rural settlements. Their functions are primarily agricultural; although they are also under the influence of the policy of multifunctional rural development, changes that relate to the dynamic development of non-agricultural functions (social, economic and cultural) are also observed. Meanwhile, rural areas in the vicinity of large and medium-sized cities perform, first of all, housing functions that are supplemented by the market services. Apart from being a neighboring zone of the town, rural areas perform functions related to food production, and in the areas of high natural attractiveness, they additionally have tourism as well as sport and recreational functions. What is more, in Poland, there are rich and poor communes (*gmina*), the ones that are developing, and those that are increasingly stuck in stagnation; there are also rural areas located in close proximity to large agglomerations. The latter aspect essentially affects the standard of living of those villagers who work in the city, as well as their health awareness, which is connected with sport and physical activity.). The study of the differences between people living in cities and rural areas is related to there definitely being fewer running events organized in rural areas in Poland. Residents of cities such as Poznań have a lot of opportunities to participate in such an event (both as an active participant and as a fan). It is important to get to know the motives of rural residents, who put in the effort to travel and participate in the half marathon in their free time.

The second aim was an attempt to answer the question: what is creating the need for stimulation (sensation-seeking), and how does it manifests itself in people taking up competitive, progressive forms of recreation? We also examined whether this need may be related to the efficiency in the field of running. It was important to recognize the motives for participation in sports events according to the four basic types of orientation: social orientation, sensation-seeking orientation, factual orientation, and result orientation.

## 3. Materials and Methods

### 3.1. Research Design and Data Collection

In Poland, running and participation in mass running events such as marathons and half marathons have become very popular. The number of organized events and their participants has grown noticeably since 2000. More than 15 large marathons are held in Poland each year. This number only accounts for those events in which the participants are counted in thousands. Poznań is an example of a city with a population of over 500,000, and with a very wide offer of sports events. More than 500 events at various levels are organized annually in the city and the Wielkopolska region, which puts Poznań among the leaders of running events nationally. The Poznań Half Marathon is one of the biggest running event in the city and the whole country. That is why the research by means of the diagnostic survey method was conducted using a standardized interview technique. The sample was



selected in a way that ensures the good representativeness of the obtained results. The scheme of simple random sampling without replacement was used. In determining the number, information from the organizers on the expected number of participants of the event was used. In the calculations, the formula for sample size for a finite population was used. The assumption was made that the maximum error of estimate (e) at 95% confidence level should not exceed 4%.

A self-constructed questionnaire was used for the study, which was conducted by the authors during the course of the race, and personally filled out during the conversation with the runners. The questionnaire had 25 questions. The first part of the questionnaire focused on socio-demographic variables (Table 1). Questions about motifs of participating in sporting events formed the second part of the survey (questions 1–18). The next part of the questionnaire was designed for people who were not residents of Poznan (questions 19–23), and the last part was designed 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. The authors (Freyer and Gross, 2002) distinguished four main types of orientation among motives for participation in sports events: (a) social orientation, which is focused on the relationships of visitors to each other; (b) sensation-seeking orientation, which is most often concerning the positive experiences, in the form of, for example, relaxation, which is a kind of compensation for the hardships of everyday life; (c) factual orientation/sports discipline orientation, referring to the sports events themselves and their specificity; in this case, to the specificity of running; and (d) result orientation, which is triggered by the need to identify with success, and in the case of failure, by the need to show sympathy and solidarity. The results concerning different types of motives consisted of more than 100%, because in each group of motives, participants could tick more than one answer (maximum three answers). The questionnaire and appropriate details concerning data selection were provided by a single researcher.

### 3.2. Participants

Data was collected during the sixth Poznan Half Marathon (Pol. 6. Poznań Półmaraton). A sample of 342 runners: 232 respondents living in large cities (above 500,000 inhabitants) and 110 living in rural areas, participated in the event voluntarily and completed a questionnaire. More than half of the inhabitants of the large cities were male: 143 (61.6%), and 89 (38.4%) were women (Table 1). The participants were mainly 26–35 (44.4%—139) and 19–25 (37.5%—136). Among the surveyed residents of large Polish cities, the majority of runners were aged between 26–35 (44.4%—103), followed by those aged between 19–25 (37.5%—87). Among the urban residents, people with higher education constituted the vast majority of 56% (130), 14.7% (34) possessed incomplete higher education, and 24.1% (56) were people with secondary education. Even a greater percentage of professionally active participants were urban residents: 60% (139) of them were professionally active. Similarly, among the runners living in rural areas, more than one-half were male: 57.3% (63), and 42.7% (47) were women. Most of the inhabitants (49) of rural areas were aged 19–25 (44.5%). Rural residents running in that sixth Poznan Half Marathon had completed a higher education level (30.9%), 38.2% were people with secondary education, and 25.5% had higher vocational education (Table 1). The employment statuses defined by the respondents were very good, because over 45% (50) of participants from rural areas were professionally active, over 33% were students (in addition, pensioners: 8.2%, unemployed: 7.3%). However, the dependence analysis showed that the runners who were inhabitants of rural areas were mostly at non-working age, which correlates with the other indications: most of them were students.

**Table 1.** Socio-demographic characteristics of respondents.

Socio-Demographic Characteristics	City ( <i>n</i> = 232)		Rural Area ( <i>n</i> = 110)		All
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	
<b>Sex</b>					
Men	143	61.6	63	57.3	206
Women	89	38.4	47	42.7	136
<b>Age</b>					
<18	10	4.3	2	1.8	12
19–25	87	37.5	49	44.5	136
26–35	103	44.4	36	32.7	139
36–50	24	10.3	12	10.9	36
51–70	8	3.4	11	10	19
<b>Education level</b>					
Primary education	7	3	0	0	7
Vocational education	5	2.2	6	5.5	11
Secondary education	56	24.1	42	38.2	98
Incomplete higher education	34	14.7	28	25.5	62
Completed higher education	130	56	34	30.9	164
<b>Employment status</b>					
School pupil (<18 years)	15	6.5	6	5.5	21
Student	67	28.9	37	33.6	104
Professionally active	139	59.9	50	45.5	189
Unemployed	4	1.7	8	7.3	12
Pensioner	7	3	9	8.2	16

### 3.3. Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics (percentages, means, and standard deviations) were calculated for all of the variables. For the differences between responses, a Chi-square test was used. Statistical significance was set at  $p \leq 0.05$ . All of the statistical analyses were conducted using Statistica Software 10.0 (StatSoft Inc., Poland, Cracow, 2011).

## 4. Results

The Poznan Half Marathon is one of the most important running events in the field of mass sport in Poland, in which both amateur and professional athletes can participate. The division of motives developed by Freyer and Gross was the basis for developing the author's questionnaire for studying motives for participation in running events. The results of the research presented below show the relevance of specific motives. For example, in the first group, the group of motives in the scope of social orientation (Table 2), the most important was the desire to feel unity and integration with other people. This was reported by 49.6% of the surveyed urban residents (115) and 52.7% of rural residents (58).

Belonging to the subculture of runners was mentioned by almost 25.4% of respondents living in large agglomerations (59), just like the need for recognition, while 27.3% of rural residents (30) identified with the importance of belonging to the running subculture, and 25.5% identified with the desire to sense equality during the race (28). None of the motives listed in this group was mentioned by almost 28.4% (66) of the urban residents. The statistically significant difference between these two groups of respondents was found in these four motives of social orientation ( $p \leq 0.05$ ).

It turned out that among motives in the scope of sensation-seeking orientation (Table 3), in urban residents, the desire to have fun is at the level of 61.6% (143). The next one, according to the importance, is the desire to experience strong emotions that are associated with participation, which obtained 53% (123) of indications; in the third place was the mood and atmosphere throughout the whole event, which was 49.6% (115).

**Table 2.** Motives within the scope of social orientation.

Groups of Motives	City ( <i>n</i> = 232)		Rural Areas		All	<i>p</i>
			( <i>n</i> = 110)		( <i>n</i> = 342)	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%		
<i>Group A</i>						
<i>Motives within the scope of social orientation</i>						
Desire to feel unity and integration with other people	115	49.6	58	52.7	173	−0.01
Belonging to the subculture of runners	59	25.4	30	27.3	89	−0.03
The desire to sense equality during the race	50	21.6	28	25.5	78	0.01
Desire to gain recognition in the eyes of others	47	20.3	26	23.6	73	−0.08
Prevailing fashion—participation in sports events is currently fashionable	32	13.8	11	10	43	0.16
None of the motives listed in this group	66	28.4	26	23.6	92	0.02

**Table 3.** Motives within the scope of experience (sensation-seeking) orientation.

Groups of Motives	City ( <i>n</i> = 232)		Rural Areas ( <i>n</i> = 110)		All ( <i>n</i> = 342)	<i>p</i>
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%		
<i>Group B</i>						
<i>Motives within the scope of experience orientation</i>						
The desire to have good fun	143	61.6	50	45.5	183	−0.12
The desire to experience strong emotions associated with participation	123	53.0	79	71.8	202	−0.11
The desire to sense the unusual mood during the whole event	115	49.6	50	45.5	165	0.02
The desire to have enjoyable leisure time/entertainment	65	28.0	29	26.4	94	−0.00
The desire to express happiness e.g., resulting from winning/success	46	19.8	28	25.5	74	0.10
The desire to get away from everyday life	46	19.8	19	17.3	65	−0.12
I am allured by the attractiveness of the city in which the event takes place	6	2.6	9	8.2	15	−0.03
None of the motives listed in this group	15	6.5	4	3.6	19	−0.06

It also turned out that within this group of motives, the residents of rural areas recognized the desire to experience strong emotions that are associated with participation as the most important. In this case, over 71.8% (50) of runners surveyed expressed this opinion. Motives such as the atmosphere, the spirit of the event, and the need for good fun took only second place with 50 people (45.5%).

It turned out that the residents of rural areas travel to participate in the half marathon because they are looking for strong emotions associated with it. While living in the countryside, they are not able to participate in the social and cultural life that large agglomerations provide. The statistically significant difference between these two groups of respondents was found in three motives of experience orientation ( $p \leq 0.05$ ): the desire to sense the unusual mood during the whole event (115 urban residents, 50 residents of rural areas), the desire to have enjoyable leisure time/entertainment (65 urban residents, 29 residents of rural areas), and I am allured by the attractiveness of the city in which the event takes place (six urban residents, nine residents of rural areas).

Motives included in group C—within the scope of factual orientation—showed that the most important was the desire to develop passion (Table 4). It was a statistically significant difference reported by 71.1% (165) of the urban residents surveyed and by 69.1% (76) of the rural residents surveyed. The second most statistically significant difference in this group of motives was “I am drawn by the attractiveness of the sports part of the half marathon”, which was indicated by 59 urban residents and 31 residents of rural areas, and none of the motives listed in this group (40 urban residents, 22 residents of rural areas).

Among the motives from group D (in terms of the result orientation), the most frequently indicated was the one concerning the desire to test themselves (Table 5). This result is at the level of 80.2% (186) of all indications of urban residents, and at the level of 70% (77) of rural residents. The motive associated with the desire to achieve the avowed goal was also highly rated and statistically significant; it was indicated by 58.2% (135) of the surveyed athletes who were residents of cities, and 62.7% (69) of rural residents. Participation in sports competition was more important for runners from cities (101)



than from urban areas (34), and this motive was statistically significant ( $p \leq 0.05$ ). The desire to win a high (international) rank in this sports event was statistically significant too, and more important for residents of rural areas.

**Table 4.** Motives within the scope of factual orientation (typical for sport discipline orientation).

Groups of Motives	City ( <i>n</i> = 232)		Rural Areas ( <i>n</i> = 110)		All	<i>p</i>
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%		
<i>Group C</i>						
<i>Motives within the scope of factual orientation</i>						
The desire to develop my passion (running)	165	71.1	76	69.1	241	−0.02
I am drawn by the attractiveness of the sports part of the half marathon	59	25.4	31	28.2	90	−0.02
I am drawn by the attractiveness of the extensive program of accompanying events	21	9.1	14	12.7	35	−0.11
None of the motives listed in this group	40	17.2	22	20.0	62	0.02

**Table 5.** Motives within the scope of result orientation.

Groups of Motives	City ( <i>n</i> = 232)		Rural Areas ( <i>n</i> = 110)		All	<i>p</i>
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%		
<i>Group D</i>						
<i>Motives within the scope of result orientation</i>						
The desire to test yourself	186	80.2	77	70.0	263	0.08
The desire to achieve the avowed goal	135	58.2	69	62.7	204	0.01
The desire to participate in sports competition	101	43.5	34	27.9	135	0.01
The desire to win	1	0.4	8	7.3	9	−0.01
High (international) rank in this sports event	1	0.4	7	6.4	8	−0.02
None of the motives listed in this group	11	4.7	7	6.4	18	−0.06

The results from the previous tables show that the inhabitants of rural areas are looking for emotions in their participation in the half marathon, and the inhabitants of cities are especially looking to test themselves and for sports competition.

Both the respondents who were residents of cities and those who were residents of rural areas, when asked about other motives for participation in the half marathon, indicated: the desire to maintain good physical condition and health (Table 6). This motive was reported by 80.2% (186) of the surveyed runners who were city residents, and by 91% (100) of the residents of rural areas. No significant difference between the responses of the participants was found. It was often indicated as a motive, but it was not the most important one (see Table 7).

**Table 6.** Other motives.

Groups of Motives	City ( <i>n</i> = 232)		Rural Areas ( <i>n</i> = 110)		All	<i>p</i>
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%		
<hr/>						
<i>Group E</i>						
<i>Other motives</i>						
The desire to maintain physical condition and health	186	80.2	100	90.9	286	0.09
None of the motives listed in this group	14	6.0	4	3.6	18	−0.12

In each table was a section called *none of the motives listed in this group*. These were the answers to the open question about motives that runners were guided by taking part in the half marathon, which is an overlooked area of new ideas and thoughts. Respondents most often said that they took part in the competition because they wanted to: impress the child or another person from their family, beat their record, prove something to themselves, cross their own barriers, be willing to finish the half marathon, feel the joy at the finish line, and prepare for another marathon. These motives were

connected with the scope of result orientation. Other answers of the respondents (motives within the scope of experience orientation and the scope of social orientation) were: running is a cool, nice way to move, the pleasure of moving through the streets of the city, change of discipline, change of social group, because running fans are wonderful, my husband who also starts motivated me. Respondents also said that the desire to maintain a slim figure and take care of their weight was also important for them, and another reason why they took part in this event.

The respondents were also asked to indicate which group of motives was the most important for them (Table 7).

**Table 7.** Significance of particular groups of motives covered by the research.

Significance of the Motives Group	City ( <i>n</i> = 232)		Rural Areas ( <i>n</i> = 110)		All
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	
Group A <i>Motives within the scope of social orientation</i>	55	23.7	26	23.6	81
Group B <i>Motives within the scope of experience orientation</i>	85	36.6	31	28.2	116
Group C <i>Motives within the scope of factual orientation</i>	21	9.1	14	12.7	35
Group D <i>Motives within the scope of result orientation</i>	98	42.2	43	39.1	141
Group E <i>Other (the desire to maintain physical condition and health)</i>	38	16.4	30	27.3	68

The biggest number of respondents from both groups pointed at group D, which was the one determining result orientation triggered by the need to identify with success, and in the case of failure, show sympathy and solidarity. Motivations belonging to this group—the desire to test yourself, achieve the avowed goal, participate in sports competition, win, and participate in a high-ranking event—are of the greatest importance for the group of the surveyed participants in the race. This is very good information for the organizers of such events. It turns out that the prestige of the event, a large number of athletes, are important for tourists. However, the desire to compete with yourself was more often indicated than the desire to compete with the opponent. The second place was occupied by group B of motives, which included, inter alia, the desire to experience strong emotions associated with participation, and thus confirmed M. Zuckerman's theory.

## 5. Discussion and Final Conclusions

The paper provides data that may be useful for support marketing events such as half marathons. The popularity of marathons and half marathons fulfills a number of important socio-cultural functions in the modern world. The most important include enabling sports tourists to build a sense of connection and integration with other people, thanks to which sports events become a postmodern form of participation in social life. Sporting events also satisfy the desire to experience strong emotions, a need that is at the top of the hierarchy of postmodern human needs. On the side of the hosts and organizers, sports events perform a number of important functions. The most important ones include building a sense of community and local identity. Events also influence the sense of pride among residents due to the organization of important sports events. Sports events are also a stimulus for the development of tourism in the region. Mass sports events also have another important social function: they encourage people to undertake physical activity and lead an active lifestyle. The profile of an active sports tourist participating in a running event in Poland turned out to coincide with the profile of such a tourist in the United States. According to Ross's research [40], young men with higher education, who are professionally active, are the most active participants of running events in the USA. Roberts also indicates that sporting tourists are most often educated men in a good economic situation. This is due to the greater participation of men in sport in general, and the need to incur high financial costs to participate in some sports events [41]. We live in a society of emotions (see the theory of Schulze), and in sports tourism, people look for strong feelings (see the sensation-seeking theory of Zuckerman). Contemporary tourism is based on the experience economy (see Pine and Gilmore's theory). In addition, we live in a culture of individualism, and events create opportunities to be part of

a larger community. Motives focused on emotions and social ties confirm that contemporary sport is full of important social functions, and health and fitness do not count for marathoners, despite the ideology of healthism (Crawford theory). The need to feel strong emotions (in the case of running events often leading to the exhaustion of the body) is part of the concept of modern sports activity, which is more often referred to as the transition “from recreation to excitement”.

Crawford described an ideology that was an important aspect in the new health awareness of the American Society in the 1970s. The researcher believes that healthism is a lifestyle designed with a view of health and fitness, and is based on individual pursuit and building motivation to achieve the assumed health goals [42–46]. Healthism also refers to the way in which we approach social and moral values related to health, while this process is also closely related to the practices of everyday life and how people perceive themselves and the condition of their health against their peers and the social environment. 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.

In the last 30 years (since the great success of the Olympic Games in Los Angeles and Barcelona), many cities, regions, and countries have implemented strategies to systematically organize great sports events, and have allocated human and financial resources to attract elite mega-sports events. Countries are fighting for the right to organize the largest and most expensive sporting events in the world. As a result of the difficult race to win the competition, many cities and regions are turning to smaller sporting events in the field of mass sport that do not require expensive infrastructure. Running events are especially popular among tourists, because running does not require specialized skills, unlike the case of unusual sports.

The article assumes that contemporary forms of sports and recreational activity contain mutually permeating elements of unwinding and relaxation connected with social orientation and factual orientation, as well as elements of sensation-seeking and excitement (result orientation and sensation-seeking orientation), which are typical of the life of the contemporary man. An example of such an interference is recreational running, which is today one of the most popular recreational sports in Poland, and participation in organized running events such as marathons or half marathons is the result of searching for many specific sensations, including: a desire to challenge yourself, to show off, and above all to compete.

The most often indicated motives for the respondents turned out to be: the desire to maintain good physical condition, the desire to test themselves, the desire to achieve an avowed goal, the desire to feel strong emotions, and the desire to have good fun. The significant difference between urban and rural residents appeared in the results regarding the group of motives in the scope of sensation-seeking orientation. City residents declared that the most important thing for them is the desire to have fun, which was 15% higher than among rural residents. On the other hand, rural residents reported that the most important thing for them was the need to experience strong emotions related to participation, which was 20% higher than in urban residents. It confirms the fact that rural residents usually have different lifestyle, less entertainment, less stress, and less rush. That is why sports competition is important to them.

The desire to maintain good physical condition and health is especially important for runners from rural areas (Table 7). This is very important information for event’s organizers; more running events should be organized also in rural areas, rather than only in big cities, to fulfill the needs of athletes from rural areas. The research has shown that running events have significant psychological and social impact on the participants. Moreover, people practicing running as progressive recreation, and taking part in half marathons demonstrates a high demand for stimulation (sensation-seeking). Both urban and rural residents declare result-oriented needs as well.

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