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Multinational Perspective on Sports Tourists' Motivations for Effective Event Planning and Management

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Abstract:

Purpose: *The purpose of the study was to understand the motivations of sports tourists participating in international running events and to examine how these motivations shape participants' experiences and perceptions of taking part in overseas races.*
Design/Methodology/Approach: *The study was based on a qualitative methodology. Twelve semi-structured interviews were conducted with international runners from the United Kingdom, Germany, and Ukraine who participated in the Poznan Half Marathon 2025. Data analysis was carried out using a thematic approach, allowing for the identification of key motivations and experiences.*
Findings: *The findings indicate three main areas of motivation: (1) identity and lifestyle related motivations – participation as an expression of personal narrative and rituals; (2) socio-cultural motivations – the importance of local culture and social interactions; (3) emotional-hedonistic motivations – emotional experiences related to the event, such as satisfaction, stress, and joy. Together, these dimensions shape the comprehensive experience of sports tourism.*
Practical Implications: *The study's findings suggest that event organizers should design running experiences that account for the diverse motivations of participants, rather than focusing solely on physical and athletic aspects. Integrating cultural elements, social spaces, and emotional support can significantly enhance participant satisfaction and engagement, while also contributing to the development of sustainable sports tourism.*
Originality/Value: *The study provides insights into the multidimensional motivations of participants in international running events, extending beyond traditional performance- or fitness-oriented perspectives. By integrating identity, socio-cultural, and emotional-hedonistic dimensions, the research highlights the complex interplay between personal, social, and cultural factors in sports tourism experiences. This contributes to the literature on event management and sports tourism by emphasizing the need for holistic, participant-centered approaches in the design and promotion of international running events.*

Keywords: *Tourism, sport, motivation, event, planning, management.*

JEL codes: *L83, Z32.*

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1. Introduction

Sports tourism constitutes a dynamically developing and multidimensional segment of the tourism market, combining both a recreational aspect and the professional dimension of sports competition (Zarotis, 2019; Terzić *et al.,* 2021). Contemporary sporting events, such as marathons, triathlons, international tournaments, or extreme sports festivals, attract participants from various regions of the world, generating significant economic, social, and reputational benefits for host destinations (Shipway and Jones, 2007; Chen, 2023).

The literature emphasizes that effective planning and management of sport-tourism events requires not only knowledge of market trends but also the integration of understanding participants' needs and motivations with practical organizational, logistical, and marketing aspects (Greenwell, Danzey-Bussell, and Shonk, 2024).

Sporting events are thus treated as a strategic tool for destinations, allowing both revenue growth and strengthening competitive positioning in the global tourism market (Masterman, 2010). In this context, event planning requires simultaneous consideration of economic objectives, participant experience quality, and the image of the host region.

Effective event management in sports tourism relies on the synergy between strategic and operational planning (Evans, 2024). Strategic planning includes defining event objectives, participant segmentation, market analysis, resource allocation, and designing experiences tailored to diverse participant needs and motivations, whereas operational planning focuses on scheduling, logistics, safety, service systems, and coordination of partners and suppliers.

The complexity of this process arises not only from the number of stakeholders involved but also from the need to account for the cultural and demographic diversity of participants, which affects perceived event value, service expectations, and preferences regarding ancillary attractions (Higham and Hinch, 2018). Effective event management also requires the integration of analytical and communication tools that allow monitoring participant satisfaction, identifying potential problems in real time, and flexibly adapting the event offering to the changing needs of participants from different countries.

Currently, this is most often achieved through new technologies and mobile applications (Pabba *et al.,* 2022; García Revilla, Martinez Moure, and Einsle, 2023; Thirusanku and Ai, 2024). This enables organizers not only to increase operational and economic efficiency but also to build the international attractiveness of the event, which is a key element in global sports tourism development strategies.

In an international context, participant diversity presents organizers with additional challenges in communication, promotion, and experience design (Allen, Harris, and

Jago, 2022). A sports tourist from a different cultural background may interpret the significance of competition, social interactions, or cultural attractions accompanying the event differently (Fairley and Tyler, 2009). These differences encompass expectations regarding service standards, perceptions of the value of awards and certificates, as well as preferences for forms of social integration and modes of event participation.

Therefore, incorporating participant motivations into planning and management becomes not only a tool for increasing satisfaction but also a crucial element in creating personalized experiences that meet the specific needs of various cultural and demographic groups (Funk and Bruun, 2007).

Integrating knowledge of motivations with event management practices allows predicting participant decisions, planning appropriate infrastructure and accompanying services, and minimizing the risk of dissatisfaction or conflicts among participants from different cultural backgrounds. As a result, this becomes an effective mechanism for optimizing the economic and reputational efficiency of the event, strengthening its position in the international sports tourism market.

The analysis of participants' motivations has been repeatedly conducted in scientific research in the context of individual events of varying scale, revealing significant differences in the socio-demographic characteristics of the studied individuals (Waśkiewicz *et al.,* 2019; Malchrowicz-Mośko *et al.,* 2020; Gerasimuk *et al.,* 2021; Rozmiarek *et al.,* 2021).

Motivations allow organizers to predict not only decisions regarding event participation but also the length of stay, the types of tourism services used, and the likelihood of additional spending. Understanding specific motivations also enables segmenting participants according to cultural, demographic, and behavioral criteria, facilitating the adaptation of the event offering to different target groups (Alkasasbeh and Akroush, 2025). This approach allows designing experiences tailored to the expectations of various market segments, increasing loyalty, engagement, and the likelihood of recommending the event within the international community.

Additionally, considering participant motivations enables optimizing accompanying programs, the selection of supplementary attractions, service systems, and interactions with partners and sponsors, which consequently translates into increased satisfaction and revenue (Houger, 2015).

Despite the growing importance of sports tourism in the literature, there are relatively few studies focusing on a multinational perspective of participant motivations in the context of effective event planning and management. Most existing analyses concentrate on single countries or specific types of events (Nikolaidis *et al.,* 2019; León-Guereño *et al.,* 2020; Malchrowicz-Mośko and Waśkiewicz, 2020; Whitehead *et al.,* 2022), overlooking the impact of cultural or

behavioral diversity among participants on organizational decisions. In particular, there is a lack of studies showing how diverse motivations – including aspects of competition, physical activity, cultural experiences, and social interactions – can be integrated with strategic and operational event management practices.

Identifying these relationships allows not only a better understanding of the needs of international sports tourists but also supports the optimization of economic, marketing, and social outcomes of events, which translates into increased participant satisfaction, destination competitiveness, and the durability and recognition of the event brand in the global market.

The aim of this study was to gain an in-depth understanding of the motivations of sports tourists participating in international running events and their impact on participant experiences and perceptions of involvement in foreign races.

The analysis focuses not only on identifying motivational factors but also on determining how these motivations can be integrated with event planning and management practices. By combining the participants' perspective with event management processes, the study seeks to indicate practical strategies for creating engaging and competitive events in the international market.

2. Materials and Methods

This study adopted a qualitative research design, with in-depth interviews (IDIs) serving as the principal tool for data collection (Milena, Dainora and Alin, 2008). As emphasized in the methodological literature, IDIs are an effective way to obtain rich, personal accounts and to explore issues that are complex and multidimensional (Fontana and Frey, 2000).

In contrast to group-oriented methods such as focus groups, the individual interview setting enables the collection of more nuanced and tailored information, often encouraging participants to express themselves more openly and provide deeper reflections – particularly when the discussion involves personal observations (Kaplowitz, 2000).

2.1 Sample Size

The study involved twelve international runners – eight men and four women – who took part in the Poznan Half Marathon 2025. Participants were evenly distributed across three nationalities: four from the United Kingdom, four from Germany, and four from Ukraine. All had a minimum of two years' experience in traveling abroad for running events, which qualified them as active sports tourists.

This research formed part of a broader investigation into the sports tourism experience, which encompassed aspects such as travel logistics, dietary habits, and

physical activity in international settings. Sampling was purposive, based on two inclusion criteria: (1) permanent residence outside Poland and travel to Poznan specifically to compete in the half marathon, and (2) at least two years of experience in international sports-related travel.

To increase the diversity of information-rich cases and improve recruitment, purposive sampling was complemented by a snowball approach in line with Patton's (2015) guidelines, whereby initial participants recommended other eligible runners. Individuals under the legal age or those not meeting the criteria were excluded from the study.

2.2 Justification for Sample Size

The participant count was established in accordance with qualitative research standards, where the primary benchmark for finalizing sample size is the attainment of data saturation. Saturation is reached when further interviews fail to generate new insights or meaningful patterns aligned with the research objectives. In this study, saturation occurred after twelve interviews, confirming that the dataset was sufficient to produce a comprehensive and nuanced account of the phenomenon under investigation.

This number aligns with established recommendations in qualitative methodology (Boddy, 2016; Hennink and Kaiser, 2022). Although relatively modest, the sample size was well-suited to the study's exploratory nature, enabling the detection of context-specific themes and subtle psychological processes that would be challenging to capture through quantitative methods.

In assessing saturation, the decision was based not only on the recurrence of themes but also on the breadth and diversity of perspectives represented in the data. The analysis considered the multidimensionality of the dataset, ensuring that the identified themes reflected a wide range of viewpoints rather than simple repetition. This evaluation involved examining the richness and fine-grained variations in coding across participants, as well as determining whether subsequent interviews continued to deepen the explanatory scope of the coding framework.

2.3 Procedure

The research utilized semi-structured interviews, enabling an open examination of participants' views through adaptable, open-ended questions. All interviews were carried out in English during April 2025, each lasting around one hour on average. Audio recordings were made only after obtaining explicit permission from the participants.

The study was conducted in strict accordance with established ethical guidelines for academic research. Participants received a detailed explanation of the study's aims,

procedures, and their right to withdraw at any point without repercussions. Informed consent was obtained for both participation and audio recording. Anonymity and confidentiality were fully safeguarded, with results reported in a way that prevented the identification of individuals.

To maintain methodological coherence, all interviews were conducted by the same researcher, ensuring consistency in delivery and fostering trust, which encouraged open and candid responses. The semi-structured format, based on a set of pre-prepared core questions, supported thematic alignment while still allowing flexibility to explore personal experiences and context-specific insights in greater detail.

2.4 Data Analysis

Interview data were examined using a structured four-step thematic analysis. The process began with transcribing the audio recordings and immersing in the material to develop a thorough understanding. In the second stage, participant statements were organized and recurring ideas identified, which were subsequently consolidated into broader thematic categories in stage three.

The final step involved interpreting these themes and drawing conclusions. Each stage followed established qualitative research principles, ensuring both reliability and interpretive validity. The analysis was informed by Braun and Clarke's (2006) widely recognized thematic analysis framework, which offers a clear, systematic approach to identifying and structuring patterns in qualitative data. Using this model ensured the analytic process remained methodologically rigorous and transparent.

To enhance the depth and credibility of the interpretation, the analysis adopted an iterative, multi-phase approach. After transcription, interview transcripts were reviewed repeatedly to capture the nuances of participants' accounts.

Coding was carried out in two phases: an initial open coding stage to identify significant units of meaning, followed by axial coding to connect related codes and reveal core thematic structures. NVivo software (version 12) supported the efficient organization, retrieval, and cross-referencing of codes throughout the process.

All analysis was undertaken by the same researcher who conducted the interviews, ensuring consistency and an in-depth contextual understanding of the material. This continuity enabled more nuanced interpretations and coherence in the thematic framework. Given the exploratory and interpretive focus of the study, no formal inter-coder reliability testing or peer coding was conducted.

Instead, methodological rigor was upheld through a reflexive thematic analysis process, supported by a detailed reflective journal documenting coding decisions, emerging insights, and theoretical considerations.

Analytical uncertainties, alternative interpretations, and theoretical influences were systematically recorded to create an internal audit trail, ensuring transparency and accountability.

Final codes were critically assessed and compared to secure an internally consistent and robust analytic framework. The findings were then interpreted in light of the small but relevant body of academic literature, enriching their contextual meaning. Throughout the process, a reflexive, methodical approach was maintained, with continual cross-checking of themes against original data excerpts to safeguard analytic transparency and interpretive objectivity.

3. Results

The analysis of the collected qualitative data allowed for the identification of three main motivational areas that guided the participants of international road running events. The identified categories include: (1) identity- and lifestyle-related motivations, in which running constitutes an integral part of self-identification and the organization of everyday life; (2) socio-cultural motivations, emphasizing the need for community, engagement with the host culture, and experiencing the event's atmosphere; and (3) emotional-hedonistic motivations, associated with the pursuit of intense experiences, the joy of movement, and self-reward through participation in races held in attractive locations. A detailed description of each of these areas, along with representative participant statements, is presented below.

3.1 Identity-and Lifestyle-Related Motivations

The analysis of in-depth interviews revealed that, for many participants in international running events, taking part in such activities goes beyond mere physical exercise or tourist curiosity. Running has become an element of their personal identity, closely intertwined with their lifestyle, self-identification, and a symbolic narrative of themselves as active, curious, and independent individuals.

Respondents often described running not as a one-off event but as part of a broader way of being – their travel choices, annual calendars, and even social relationships were organized around participation in races. Competitions abroad were not an addition to their lives but its focal point. A participant from Germany stated, "I am a runner who travels. This has become part of my lifestyle," adding, "I choose events that are well-organized because I know the whole trip will then go smoothly." Similarly, a participant from the United Kingdom emphasized, "I don't plan my holidays like most people.

I choose the race first, and everything else falls into place around it. It brings me great joy." These statements indicate a process of internalizing the runner identity – the boundary between sport and life becomes somewhat blurred.

Particularly in women's accounts, running emerged as a way to create personal order and meaning, often in contrast to the chaos of daily life. Quotes included: "Every trip goes similarly for me: I check the route, register for the race, then prepare for the start, pack my things, and go run. It's my way of detaching from everyday routine and reality," adding, "I appreciate it when the organizer provides detailed maps, schedules, and logistics information in advance – it makes me feel safer."

Another participant said, "Races are my way to reset – a different space, different people, different thinking." In this context, running functions as a mechanism of emotional and structural self-regulation, and participation in a race becomes an element of an identity constructed through action – individuals organizing their experiences through repetitive and meaningful activities.

Among many participants, especially men from the United Kingdom who traveled to Poznan by plane, a theme of an activist identity emerged – seeing themselves as dynamic, enterprising individuals who collect experiences. Participants said: "Some people collect magnets, and I collect race entries and medals from running events across different places – so far, across Europe," and, "Every race is a new story and a new adventure – especially when organizers create a unique atmosphere, like decorations, music, and punctual start times."

These narratives align with the model of symbolic sports tourism, where the individual does not merely sightsee but participates – through their own body, emotions, and thoughts.

One participant from Ukraine also emphasized the significance of running as an opportunity to redefine herself – the race allowed her to be someone different from her everyday life, illustrating the dualistic structure of her identity. She said, "In daily life, I am a mother, I work in an office, I have responsibilities. But when I go to run – I become someone else, a woman ready for challenges." This statement demonstrates a compensatory mechanism – running as a space for reclaiming agency, strength, courage, and life motivation.

3.2 Socio-Cultural Motivations

Participants' statements also indicated that taking part in international runs did not serve solely as an individual sporting challenge. For many, a significant motivator lies in the socio-cultural aspects of the event, which include the need for a sense of community, engagement with the host culture, relationship-building, and experiencing the event's atmosphere as a collective experience.

A strong theme in the narratives – particularly among women and participants from Germany – was the desire to be part of the running community and to feel the energy of a shared start in an international context. In this narrative, the event creates a temporary emotional community, independent of nationality or social status.

A participant from Ukraine said, “It’s an amazing feeling when you stand at the start with people from different countries and you all have the same goal.” A participant from Germany noted, “At those moments, it doesn’t matter where you’re from.

We run together; you feel unity, even if you hardly know anyone by name,” adding, “Professional sound systems and spectator zones amplify these emotions.” In this sense, the run becomes an enactment of a shared experience, with a strong affective and symbolic component.

British participants often emphasized that the event’s atmosphere is not just an add-on but one of the main motivators for participation. Statements included: “I also run with the Newcastle Frontrunners team at home, but it’s not the same. It’s about the atmosphere – crowd, cheering, a different vibe.”, “Abroad I feel like I live more intensely.

It’s like a festival, just sporting.”, and “Running abroad has something special – you feel the adrenaline already at the warm-up. The crowd, the noise, the whole event setup – it acts like a shot of energy.” In this narrative, there is a clear need for emotional intensification of everyday life, aligning with interpretations of tourism as a search for authenticity and uniqueness.

Some participants viewed taking part in an international run as an opportunity for direct contact with the local culture. This form of running tourism differs from conventional sightseeing – it is deeper, more immersive, and sensory. A British participant admitted, “Running through old city districts that are a hundred years or more old is completely different from looking at them from a bus.”

Meanwhile, a German participant said, “Instead of sightseeing, I run and discover the charms of places this way,” adding, “I love when the race route takes you to corners usually overlooked by tourists.” These statements reflect, to some extent, the concept of performed sightseeing, where experiencing a space occurs through movement, the body, and emotions – contrasting with passive consumption.

For a few respondents, regardless of gender or origin, the theme of building and strengthening relationships through shared running emerged. Participating in the race provided an opportunity to experience closeness – not only with friends but also with strangers who share the same passion.

One participant stated, “I went with a friend – we hadn’t seen each other for months, and this shared run more than made up for our lack of contact. In such cases, I really appreciate the communal relaxation zones where you can talk and unwind.” Here, running functions as a framework for relationships, a space for sharing emotions, strengthening bonds, and rebuilding social connections.

3.3 Emotional-Hedonistic Motivations

The third main motivational area revealed in the study consists of emotional-hedonistic motivations, which encompass the need for intense experiences, the joy of movement, a sense of freedom, and rewarding oneself through sporting experiences in an appealing environment. For many participants, taking part in an international run provides excitement, pleasure, and life affirmation – running is not only beneficial for health but also delivers emotional experiences and satisfaction.

The statements of many participants, particularly men from the UK and Germany, emphasized the importance of emotions connected to the start itself, the movement, and the competitive atmosphere. For some, it was even a need for adrenaline, reminiscent of behaviors associated with adventure tourism. They said things like: "There is something incredible in the moment when you are waiting for the start. For me, it's pure adrenaline.

When the starting signal is precisely synchronized and preceded by a professional countdown, the emotions are even stronger," and "When you start, everything else disappears. It's just you, and you have a single goal ahead. Efficient organization and clear route markings help you fully enter this state."

Some participants noted that running itself – regardless of location or performance – is a source of deep bodily pleasure. They described feelings of connection with their own body and emotions. A Ukrainian participant said, "Running is pure pleasure; endorphins kick in – a state I don't reach in other situations."

This statement highlights a key aspect of hedonistic motivation, where running serves as a source of positive sensory and emotional experiences, independent of competition or achievement. The described experience emphasizes how physical activity can be a form of autotelic pleasure, engaging both body and mind in a harmonious, refreshing interaction.

Organized in attractive locations, participants perceived this involvement not as an expression of hard work, but as an affirming and well-deserved experience. A participant from Germany said, "Running in another country is my gift to myself – you can allow yourself something like this once in a while."

A Brit, in turn, mentioned, "After all these tough months, running abroad is a moment of calm and a reward I truly deserve." Such narratives show that sports tourism also fulfills a restorative function.

Several respondents, mainly from Ukraine, described their motivations in ways resembling aesthetic and sensual experiences. Views, light, architecture, and sounds created a unique atmosphere, turning the run into a sensory journey. A Ukrainian woman said, "Part of the run took place amidst green nature. That made me feel

special." Another Ukrainian participant remarked, "In these difficult times of war in our country, running here gives me a moment of respite and allows me to feel the beauty of the world anew."

These statements emphasize that for participants, running during an international sporting event served not only a physical function but also an emotional and therapeutic one, enabling temporary escape from a sometimes harsh reality and a fuller experience of the surrounding world.

Finally, a few participants highlighted the theme of escaping boredom and the monotony of everyday life – the run acted as a tool to enliven daily life, adding color and intensity. A German participant said, "At work, everything is predictable. Here – an unknown city, a foreign language. That's exciting." A participant from the UK mentioned, "Running is a way to break through the daily grayness."

These reflections indicate that, for some participants, running constitutes an important mechanism for diversifying life, allowing them to break routines and introduce an element of novelty, or even a certain kind of excitement.

4. Discussion

The study's results reveal a multidimensional structure of motivations among participants in international running events, indicating that sports tourism is not a monolithic activity focused solely on physical performance, but a complex phenomenon rooted in personal narratives, emotions, and cultural contexts. The identified motives – identity-related, socio-cultural, and emotional-hedonistic – should be viewed not as separate categories, but as coexisting and dynamically interwoven elements of a broader participation project.

Identity-related motivations suggest that participation in international races is perceived by many participants as a form of constructing and expressing the self. Respondents' statements indicate that sports tourism constitutes a space for self-realization and shaping one's personal image – both in relation to others and to oneself.

This interpretation aligns with the concept of identity as a narrative project (McAdams, 1997), in which physical activity serves a biographical function, organizing time, relationships, and space. At the same time, participation in races allows individuals to transcend traditional social roles, which corresponds with the model of hegemonic identity in the context of contemporary sporting lifestyles (Wheaton, 2004).

Such patterns of sporting identity and ways of defining the self through physical activity have also been observed in recent studies (Malchrowicz-Mośko and Poczta,

2018; Monte, 2025), suggesting that the experience of international running events has universal identity functions, regardless of location or cultural context.

Socio-cultural motivations align with an increasingly recognized trend in the literature of viewing sporting events not merely as moments of competition, but as temporary affective communities (Zink, 2019).

Respondents emphasized the importance of shared race rituals, the presence of other nationalities, and the emotional intensity of the event. In this sense, the race functions as a social performance, enabling participation in a symbolic community that is often temporary but deeply experienced.

An important aspect was also the desire to immerse oneself in the local culture through running – the route became not only a physical challenge but also a cognitive medium. This phenomenon supports previous findings that sports tourism constitutes a form of embodied place-based knowledge, where the experience unfolds through rhythm, fatigue, senses, and emotions (Edensor, 2010). At the same time, contemporary studies show that such experiences are strongly shaped by the globalization of tourism and the sports industry (Dehnavi *et al.,* 2010; Orunbayev, 2023).

The third type of motivation – emotional-hedonistic – indicates that sports tourism can be a source of intense sensory and emotional experiences, going beyond performance calculations or traditional forms of active recreation.

For many participants, race participation served as a symbolic reward – not as a training obligation, but as a form of personal celebration and life affirmation. Existing research confirms that participants in endurance events and adventure sports actively seek such emotional and sensory experiences, with satisfaction often linked to self-improvement and personal challenge (Raggiotto, 2020).

Although the presented motives were thematically organized, their mutual interpenetration and synergy should be emphasized. For many participants, identity was built concurrently through emotional experiences and cultural immersion; the running community, in turn, provided deeper emotional experiences, while the pleasure derived from movement was embedded in a socio-symbolic context.

Participant motivations should therefore not be reduced to one-dimensional functional models; rather, they require interpretation that considers the complex relationships among lifestyle, emotionality, and cultural rootedness.

Such a holistic approach is advocated in the sport and tourism literature, emphasizing the need to integrate psychological, socio-cultural, and anthropological perspectives (Dyck, 2004; Funk and Bruun, 2007).

5. Study Limitations and Practical Implications

Several limitations should be taken into account when interpreting the findings of this study. The qualitative approach, based primarily on participants' self-reported experiences, inherently introduces subjectivity, which may have influenced how opinions were articulated. Individual biases, memory constraints, and unconscious factors might not have been fully controlled, potentially affecting the depth and reliability of the data.

Furthermore, the relatively small and homogeneous sample, composed exclusively of runners from Ukraine, Germany, and the United Kingdom, restricts the range of perspectives and limits the generalizability of the results, even within a qualitative research context.

The study's focus on participants of the Poznan Half Marathon further constrains applicability, as local conditions and event-specific factors may have shaped the experiences described. The absence of quantitative data precludes an assessment of the prevalence and statistical relationships of particular behaviors or attitudes, which could have strengthened the study's methodological rigor.

Finally, various psychophysical and contextual factors, including individual health, training load, and situational variables, were not addressed but may significantly influence runners' perceptions.

Despite its limitations, the study's findings have significant practical implications for organizers and promoters of sports tourism. Participants in international running events should be perceived not only as athletes pursuing performance goals but also as individuals seeking experiences related to identity, emotions, and culture.

Designing events with attention to symbolism, course aesthetics, elements of local culture, and emotional communication can enhance event attractiveness and participant satisfaction. Emotional and psychosocial needs, such as affirmation, a sense of community, and a break from daily routines, play a crucial role. Organizers and local authorities should create integrative spaces that allow the race to be experienced as a social and cultural event.

Marketing communication should address the diverse motivations of participants, encompassing not only sporting aspects but also exploration, aesthetics, identity, and emotional engagement. Personalization of messages and the use of storytelling may be more effective than uniform technical communications.

For professionals in tourism and sport, it is important to understand that participant motivation also includes expression, emotional restoration, a sense of agency, and ritualization, requiring support that is physical, psychological, and cultural. Finally, the race experience as an immersive engagement with local culture highlights the

need to design events that promote heritage, local products, and landscapes, providing unique experiences for participants while minimizing the negative impacts of mass sports tourism.

6. Conclusion

Participation in international running events extends beyond athletic competition and physical fitness, carrying significant implications for effective event planning and management. Motivations related to identity and lifestyle suggest that participants seek opportunities for self-expression, the realization of personal values, and the creation of individual rituals, which should be considered when designing event experiences.

Socio-cultural aspects emphasize the importance of local culture and community – engagement with place and people enhances participant satisfaction and motivation, indicating that events should integrate local elements and interactive spaces. Emotional-hedonistic motivations demonstrate that participants expect intense emotional experiences, ranging from joy and pride to stress and tension, highlighting the need to create engaging and multifaceted experiences.

Understanding these diverse dimensions enables organizers to better tailor event strategies, from route design and event narrative to marketing communication and accompanying programs. In practice, this necessitates planning events that not only meet athletic requirements but also address participants' emotional, social, and cultural needs, thereby increasing event appeal and fostering lasting engagement.

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