

## **4. SELECTED SUCCESS FACTORS OF RUNNING EVENTS' ORGANIZERS AND PARTICIPANTS**

### **1. Introduction**

Running events are becoming increasingly popular. This tendency may be observed in many parts of the world, including Poland. A significant increase in the number of sports events and their participants has been noted. In 2013 several runs, among others Biegnij Warszawo (Run Warsaw), Bieg Niepodległości (Independence Run), Półmaraton Warszawski (Warsaw Halfmarathon) hosted more than 10,000 participants; in Maraton Poznański (Poznan Marathon) there were approximately 5,600 participants and in Maraton Warszawski (Orlen Warsaw Marathon) participated 8,500 runners (in all of the abovementioned cases the numbers would have probably been much higher but for the limits of participants). Nearly all cycle events have noted a dynamic growth of the number of participants, frequently a growth of more than 100 % [16].

The emotional character of the runs along with the awareness of the need to treat them as a product, or an undertaking which requires organizational, business and other objectives have been developed [11]. Therefore, it is a valid approach to necessarily consider the quality of the service [13] – a running event – and, consequently, the measurement of clients' satisfaction [9].

In the article the preparatory research results related to satisfaction factors of running events' participants are presented. As the result of a research carried out in focus groups of experts the satisfaction factors have been identified [5, 8, 15], which will support an international study of the quality of running events after creating a questionnaire. The initial results among numerous factors underscore the role of supplements which are used increasingly often also by amateur runners. In the research an initial analysis of the market has been conducted, preferences and popularity in the range of selecting and using supplements have been established in reference to athletes who run on the regular basis.

### **2. Shaping the quality and development of running events in Poland**

The term of client satisfaction research is inextricably linked with the standard of services. Thus, it is an issue of utmost importance to pay attention to the quality of service – a running event – and define its clients. It is an oversimplification to assume that one of the objectives is clients' satisfaction assessment, however, in a broader context we may include VIPs, invited guests, participants' families, fans in the group of clients or stakeholders. In order to define these issues, we ought to establish the research objectives, as we do not conduct the research for its own sake, in each case it is the aim to decide about shaping the quality of a running event.

Planning means creating the conception of a running event and its complete specification. Executing the plan is realization according to its assumptions. The next stage is monitoring the compliance with the accepted model as well as conducting an analysis

mostly of the weakest elements. Then, we may start planning the next edition of the run. It is extremely significant to put emphasis on the client at all of the stages described above.

In general terms an external client is a person which influences a product (service) created by an organization. An external client is not a member of the organization responsible for providing the service (manufacturing the product). It also should be stated that it is necessary to ensure the internal clients' satisfaction, e.g. organizers, volunteers, probably also contractors (time measurement, photographic services).

The questions related to clients' and employees' (internal clients') satisfaction have amounted to an area of discussion for theoreticians and practitioners for many years. The role of customer satisfaction is strongly emphasized by ISO 9000 series, TQM philosophy, Six Sigma and the criteria of the European Quality Award as well as its American equivalent – The Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award. Increasing the quality of services by improving various areas frequently does not bring expected results due to the fact that enterprises frequently are not able to identify the factors which are important for their clients. The modification of the factors is linked with the increase in the customer satisfaction.

The most significant complication is the fact that satisfaction is not a static phenomenon, but evolves in time. Furthermore, it often results from both clients' experiences and subjective impressions before, during and after its measurement [22]. The research problem within this range should be focused not only on the results of the research, but also it ought to make effort to understand the quality of the service provided by the organizer, the differences in perceiving quality and, finally, the adequacy of research methods.

### **3. Scenario of consumer satisfaction research in relation to participants in a selected event from the grand prix category**

During the process of planning an international study related to running event participants' satisfaction in the first quarter of 2014, a preparatory research was conducted. The aim of the preparatory research was to build a complete scenario for the international study concerning running events in Poland, the Czech Republic, Russia and Ukraine. The thesis about varied maturity of runners' expectations has been assumed. Running events in Western Europe have been acknowledged as mature, events in Poland and the Czech Republic as fast-growing, and events in Eastern Europe as the ones having a big potential, but still being immature. The special character of running events should also be noted, as it is linked with the participants' profile and their motivation. The authors have divided the events into three categories:

- long-distance runs – marathons and ultramarathons (in this category ½ IronMan and full IronMan triathlon competitions may be included)
- middle-distance runs – the distance of at least 10 km, in particular halfmarathons
- recreational runs – most frequently the distance of 5 km or runs of a similar distance with other disciplines.

In the present case an event, or in fact the whole cycle of events of the third category – short-distance runs forming a Grand Prix cycle (several events at a given location, participating in a given number of them allows runners to be awarded). It is one of the most popular running events in Poland, for which key satisfaction factors have been identified.

Characteristic features of a Grand Prix cycle:

- forest courses;
- nationwide range (11 cities and towns);
- identical distance (5 km) and course in every town;
- competition for everybody – from a novice to a pro, from a newborn to a pensioner (additionally during each event there are special runs held for children and youths in 5 age categories and Nordic walking marches);
- family character of the event;
- regular minute plan and schedule of the event;
- learning from experiences – the practices that were successful in one town are used at different locations of the event;
- social aspect (tea and croissants after the competition, which favors integration);
- by communication and actions advantages of healthy lifestyle and being environment-friendly are stressed (e.g. the same participant numbers in all towns used in the course of the whole cycle);
- formal closing ceremony (after the competitive part of the event) along with medal-awarding for each runner who completed 4 out of 6 runs, summary presentation of a given edition (mostly pictures taken during the event, so as everybody may find themselves in the presentation);
- organizers are runners and young people.

Organizers of running event cycles establish the following objectives:

- creating a recognizable and positively perceived brand;
- efficient service provided for participants; a good product at a low price;
- caring for brand management of their partners, but also of their own – maximal unification of promotional materials;
- events in all cities with the population of over 100,000 (38 locations), in 2014/2015 edition in all provincial capitals (16 locations);
- constant growth of popularity in all cities and towns;
- building a society related to the brand (in the future possibly organizing camps, selling products with the event's logo etc.);
- promoting healthy lifestyle.

In the case of the analyzed Grand Prix, in particular due to its character and objectives, there has been introduced a division of clients according to their motivation for participation in the event:

- interested in competing (mainly club runners, but also ambitious amateurs);
- interested in overcoming their weaknesses (people who begin to run and want to check their abilities);
- interested in “good fun” (people who treat the competition as an opportunity to make new friends);
- families with children (people who attend the event with whole families, parents participate in the main run and children in side events).

Clients according to their involvement:

- interested in the cycle (people who want to be awarded a medal and complete the minimal number of 4 runs);
- uninterested in the cycle (people who know the event, but participate in 1–2 runs);
- new participants (people who join the cycle in its course and have no chances to complete all the runs).

There has been appointed a 10-person team comprising representatives of organizers, participants and researchers dealing with the problem of quality management in sports. The aim of the undertaking is to identify the characteristics of the event and a runner's participation, which at further stages of the research will be assessed in order to grant them the importance status. In a broader perspective the results may amount to the basis for making adequate decisions in order to assure the expected quality of the event.

On the basis of professional literature and experience, the first set of criteria related to running event participants' satisfaction was developed. The criteria were verified especially in order to eliminate the ones that are inadequate in reference to the analyzed event.

Participant satisfaction factors were divided into following categories: organization of the run, infrastructure, costs of participation, achieved results, packages and medals, self-organization of runners, communication, others.

In the frames of a given category there was a multisession identification of satisfaction factors conducted with the use of Ishikawa diagram:

- organization of the run: accessibility of information, beverages, catering in the finish area, track marking, accessibility of volunteers, deposit, toilet accessibility, organization of the start area, organization of the finish area, time measurement, photographic/video services, possibility of finishing the run with a child, attractiveness of the course, number of participants hindering the run, available beverages on the course, available food on the course, information about the completed distance, information about the time;
- infrastructure: assuring protection from unfavorable weather conditions, possibility of taking a shower, a parking lot;
- participation costs: admission, traveling costs, costs related to the necessary outfit, accommodation costs before and/or after the run;
- achieved results: achieving desired results, beating one's personal best, overcoming other participants;
- packages and medals: a start package, the price of the package, a rich package, a rich package/reasonable admission, a bib, a medal, designing the medal;
- self-organization of the runner: support from measurement devices (e.g. a watch, a heart rate monitor, a pedometer, GPS), mood and attitude (independent of the run), listening to music during the run, adequacy of outfit for the weather conditions, using mobile applications during the run, using energy gels, using isotonic beverages, diet prior to the run;
- information: accessibility of the information about the run on the Internet website, information about the completed distance during the run, information about the time during the run, information about the time at the finish line, contact with the organizer;
- others: satisfaction from the preparation of the run, conscientious realization of the training plan, presence of relatives, favorable weather, festive atmosphere, big number of participants, popularity of the run.

Selection and evaluation of adequacy of factors related to the quality of the running event and participant satisfaction amounted to a basis for creating a questionnaire and conducting a research which aims at the detailed evaluation of the given phenomenon. However, the future research will be related to participants in long-distance runs – marathons and triathlons – and will have the international dimension.

According to experts working in the team, it is necessary to place great importance on the questions of nutrition, in particular of supplements supporting the preparation,

performance and recovery after the race. In accordance with the common opinion that because of significant determination we may observe in both amateur and professional sports, even bigger in reference to middle-distance and long-distance events, the use of nutrients and supplements becomes immanent.

#### **4. The possibility of using nutrients/supplements in order to enhance stamina and strength of sportspeople**

Maintaining the organism in good shape results from leading a healthy lifestyle, i.e. from a balanced diet, the proper amount of sleep as well as from keeping fit by dint of appropriate physical exertion. It must be underscored that physical exertion, in particular at the professional level, causes the growth of the organism's needs for nutritional elements, necessary for its proper functioning. [2, 4]. The diet should support the growth of physical ability and fast recovery after intense physical effort. Moreover, the composition of meals, their schedule and energetic value ought to be linked with the size of energy losses and metabolism typical of training workload [4, 12].

Proper nutrition, along with genetic predispositions of sportspeople, demanding trainings and regular mode of life, amount to necessary conditions for satisfying sport results. Providing the organism subject to frequent and demanding trainings with a big amount of food necessary to keep it in shape is practically impossible. Therefore, in nutrition of athletes and people who train intensively some specially developed preparations, so-called nutrients and diet supplements for sportspeople play a significant role [1, 2, 3, 7, 12]. The supplements complement the basic diet. Their effect depends mainly on ingredients, dosing and the way of applying [3, 7, 14]. There is a variety of ready-made products for various consumer groups of intense physical activity [7, 14]. Supplements are produced in different forms – as beverages and gels for direct consumption, food ready to consume of solid consistency (chocolate bars, snacks), powder concentrate, granules ready to prepare according to the producer's recipe (e.g. diluting in milk or water), and medications (pills, capsules, ampoules, tablets) [3, 14].

Not only is using diet supplements becoming increasingly popular in the world of professional sports but also among recreational sportspeople (including runners). Supplements are mostly utilized by athletes of high class who have appropriate knowledge of them and, therefore, use them sensibly. Sadly, recreational athletes copy this trend and most frequently choose the products of this category without proper consideration, mostly being influenced by commercials, fashion and unconfirmed information [7].

Supplements are products made up by nutrients and are treated as complementary elements to the everyday diet. They amount to a concentrated source of vitamins, minerals and other substances whose aim is to lower the risk of deficiency of an ingredient, occasionally improve the efficiency of the organism, and support weight loss or gain. Forecasts depict that the market, which is estimated to be worth 2,5 billion PLN, is likely to grow in the time period 2015-2018 by 9-10% annually. Sports supplement area, as a part of this market, is worth 1 billion PLN and the expected dynamics of the growth is at the level of 20-30% increase annually [17]. This data reflects the popularity of these products among the growing number of physically active people.

Among supplements highly regarded by sportspeople on the Polish market we may distinguish:

- protein nutrients – proteins belong to the substances which decide about the biochemical processes determining any existence. Apart from water (the main

element of our organism) proteins amount to approximately 20% of our weight. Proteins are the main component of skeletal muscles and brain, but may also be found in each cell of our body. Proteins are 56% of the weight of a human being when we discount water. Proteins, while taking part in metabolic processes, undergo changes which lead to their disintegration. Growth and multiplication of new cells as the replacement for the lost ones (or the ones being disintegrated) call for incessant supplies of proteins to the organism through food. For example, each muscle cell exchanges its proteins every six months using the organism's amino acids or with the use of amino acids provided through food [2, 4]

- carbohydrate nutrients – the cheapest, easily digestible, well-absorbable and the most economical source of energy. Despite the significant role played by carbohydrates in athletes' nutrition, research has shown overly low intake of them. It is advisable to use special carbohydrate supplements which support the participant before the start, after approximately 2 hours' running during the marathon/halfmarathon/triathlon, and directly after exertion (regeneration of glycogen) – in order to develop mass runs [3, 4, 12],
- protein-and-carbohydrate nutrients (gainers) – most frequently a complex of long-chain carbohydrates and proteins of the highest quality from whey, the product designed to support the organism in all disciplines, in particular for sportspeople who are determined to increase the body weight and the energetic resources during intensive trainings. Gainers are mainly consumed by people who practice high-speed and strength disciplines in a recreational way or in order to improve their body shape – for these people the priority is to enhance strength and muscle abilities along with simultaneous reduction of fat [7, 12, 14],
- creatines – a combination of creatines assures their more efficient penetration of the bloodstream and reduction of their transformations into inactive creatinine. This combination allows achieving the growth of muscles and strength as well as increasing stamina [4, 7, 12],
- multivitamins,
- BCAA – branched-chain amino acids (leucine, isoleucine and valine) used in order to enlarge the muscle tissue and protecting it during intensive exertion, they increase stamina [3, 7],
- full-day amino acids – nutrients of high bioabsorption designed for fast complementation of amino acid deficit caused by intensive training and insufficient protein intake. They are mostly complexes of amino acids and micropeptides obtained from hydrolyzate of concentrate of whey proteins, milk proteins, albumen proteins [2, 3, 4],
- L-glutamine – a product made in order to achieve perfect and rapid regeneration after intensive physical exertion, provides necessary amino acids directly after the training by dint of which having influence on regeneration period as well as significant acceleration of the recovery process and earlier readiness for further challenges [3, 7],
- HMB (3-hydroxy-3-methylbutanoic acid) – including the product in the everyday diet and using it for a long time will cause among others: body recomposition by decreasing fat tissue and increasing muscle tissue. Many research results prove the effectiveness of the product when used for a long time along with everyday diet [3, 4],
- supplements supporting thermogenesis, i.e. burning of fat tissue by heat production.

In order to establish the level of interest in reference to people who are amateurs, but exercise systematically, a questionnaire was conducted. The aim of the questionnaire was to establish the meaning and frequency of consumption as well as to determine preferences in the range of supplement selection for sportspeople who exercise in the gym regularly (at least 2 times a week). The questionnaire was realized in April and May 2014 by e-mail in the frames of an engineer thesis prepared by a student of the Commodity Science Faculty at Cracow University of Economics [6]. In the survey there were 167 respondents, 80% of whom were men. The majority of them, i.e. 70% belong to the 18–25 age bracket. To the next group are people under 18 years old (17%) and between 26 and 35 (11%). The oldest respondent is 45 years old. 52% of respondents declared exercising in the gym 3–4 times every week. 5% of respondents declared exercising in the gym every day and 17% 5–6 times a week. 41% of respondents regularly, 29% of them occasionally did some sports apart from exercising in the gym. Many respondents (78 people) declared they run, 64 people ride a bike, 64 people do some team sports – volleyball, basketball, soccer. The majority of respondents (52%) declared diet is important to them, but they did not manage to follow the rules of nutrition. Simultaneously 15% of people is following their individual diet plans. 11% of respondents do not see the clear connection between the physical efficiency of the organism and dieting. It should be highlighted that 74% of respondents declared using supplements designed for sportspeople [6].

Despite the fact that the majority of respondents assessed their knowledge of supplements for sportspeople as good or quite good, 72% of them considered it to be insufficient and admitted that they choose supplements frequently in a random way (they are often motivated by commercials, discounts, recommendations). The most popular source of information about these products is the Internet (94%). Unfortunately, the data accessible online is not seen as reliable, because it is presented on the websites of Internet shops who sell these preparations or on thematic forums where it is extremely difficult to evaluate if the expressed opinions are objective. Respondents harmoniously underline the inaccessibility to credible, factual data based on scientific research about the ways of application or possible side effects caused by the analyzed substances. The respondents also complain about unprofessional shop assistants who are not able to advise them on the type of the preparation they should choose in order to achieve a given goal [6].

The frequency of using supplements for sportspeople among gym-goers is varied. 19% of them take supplements twice a day, 18% of them – several times every day. On the other hand, the same percentage of people does not use them at all. People who frequently or very frequently use these substances claim that the main reason for their actions is the desire to: complement the deficit of necessary elements of the basic diet (59%), support the possibility of maintaining the proper weight and muscle gain (42%), improvement of the exertion capability and sport results (39%), possibility to increase strength and delay the symptoms of tiredness and stress (34%) and possibility to replace a regular meal when there is no time for it, e.g. gainers (25%) [1, 6]. It also ought to be underscored that approximately 81% of respondents who decided to start using these substances “definitely” or “rather” can see the positive effects they have on the organism. Merely 14% “rather” or “definitely” cannot see them. Simultaneously, opinions whether supplements may be addictive and harmful for the person who uses them are polarized – 47% claim they may not, whereas 36% claim they may. Among undesirable side effects of these preparations the following are mentioned: intensive perspiration, acne, worse mood, tympanites and diarrhea, hypertrophy of the heart muscle. Among the most popular brands of diet supplements the following are mentioned: Olimp, Hi-tec, Trec, Activlab. Universal,

FA Nutrition, however, the loyalty of clients is not strong as their choices are dependent on availability and the present price of the product. Respondents slightly more seldom mention Vitargo, Vitafit, Biogenix. The preferable forms of supplements for sportspeople are powders (70%), capsules (44%) and pills (35%). People interested in acquiring these products most often order them in Internet shops (60%) and sports gear shops (48%). Apart from these two answers the following sources were enlisted: drugstores, gyms and special stalls in shopping centers [6].

The vast majority of respondents pay attention to labels and information placed on the packaging of supplements – it was declared by 75% of them. The respondents are interested in ingredients and dosing. The respondents also observed the lack of information about potential contraindications and side effects. Consumers would also like more comprehensive recommendations in reference to using the preparations before, during and after trainings [6].

In general, the supplement market for sportspeople and physically active amateurs is growing very dynamically, however, it is spread and needs to be reorganized.

## 5. Conclusion

A running event's success is a multifactor question. The problem gains importance in light of the extremely dynamic development of running events, which is reflected in the number of runs and their participants. The key to the proper approach to it is the identification of the run's characteristics, which are the basis for the participant's satisfaction and, consequently, the success of the organizer.

In the article the preparatory research results are presented. The research has led to the identification of running grand prix cycle and satisfaction factors in reference to running events' participants. The initial analysis allows us to establish further research objectives and amounts to an incentive to focus on several significant factors, including the issue of nutritional support reflected in both participants' results and satisfaction. The conclusion has a broader context as it is directly linked with the quality of life, people's activity, conforming to fashion, increase in the popularity of healthy lifestyle. In the pragmatic range continuation of the actions aiming at professionalizing research in running event participants' satisfaction and the quality of these events, conscious support before, during and after the run in a significant manner reinforce their development.

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## Summary

The growing interest in healthy lifestyle, the trend and increasing number of running events add up to their enormous popularity. This tendency may be observed in many parts of the world, including Poland. Hence, running events are becoming a product that requires proper organizational and business regulations. The quality of these events begins to be extremely significant, including the question of internal and external clients' satisfaction. The success of running events is a problem influenced by multiple factors. The key to the proper approach to it is the identification of the run's characteristics, which are the basis for the participant's satisfaction, and, consequently, the success of the organizer.

In the article the preparatory research results are presented. The research has led to the identification of running grand prix cycle and satisfaction factors in reference to running events' participants. After creating a questionnaire the preparatory research will support an international study of the quality of running events. The initial results underscore the role of nutrients which are used increasingly often also by amateur runners. In the research an initial analysis of the market has been conducted, preferences and popularity in the range of selecting and using nutrients/ have been established in reference to athletes who run on the regular basis.

The analysis allows posing further research objectives, but also amounts to an incentive to look into several factors, including the ones linked with supportive diet which is reflected on both the results achieved by the runner and their satisfaction.

# NIKTÓRE CZYNNIKI SUKCESU ORGANIZATORÓW I UCZESTNIKÓW IMPREZ BIEGOWYCH

## Streszczenie

Rosnące zainteresowanie zdrowym trybem życia, swoista moda oraz coraz liczniejsza i ciekawsza oferta imprez biegowych sprawiają, że stają się one coraz popularniejsze. Jest to tendencja właściwa dla wielu części świata, w tym dla Polski. Imprezy biegowe stają się tym samym produktem, który wymaga regulacji pod względem m.in. organizacyjnym czy biznesowym. Znaczenia nabiera kwestia ich jakości, w tym satysfakcji zarówno klientów zewnętrznych jak i wewnętrznych. Sukces imprezy biegowej to zagadnienie wieloczynnikowe. Kluczem do właściwego podejścia jest identyfikacja charakterystyk biegu, które są podstawą zadowolenia uczestnika, a następnie sukcesu organizatora.

W artykule przedstawione zostały wyniki badań przygotowawczych, które doprowadziły do identyfikacji biegów cyklu grand prix oraz identyfikacji czynników satysfakcji uczestników imprez biegowych. Po skonstruowaniu kwestionariusza ankietowego posłużą one międzynarodowym badaniom jakości imprez biegowych. Wstępne badania podkreślają znaczenie odżywek dla sportowców, po które coraz częściej sięgają zawodnicy amatorzy. W pracy dokonano wstępnej analizy ich rynku i określono zainteresowanie i preferencje w zakresie wyboru i stosowania odżywek/suplementów diety dla sportowców przez osoby regularnie, choć amatorsko uprawiające sport.

Przeprowadzona analiza pozwala na postawienie dalszych celów badawczych, ale składnia także do zgłębiania kilku istotnych czynników, w tym dotyczących kwestii wspomagania żywieniowego, co przekłada się na wyniki uczestników imprez biegowych i ich satysfakcję.

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