



## Running Tourism in Poland Example of Tourist Activity of Polish Marathon Runners

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### Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration between both authors. Both authors designed the study, supervised the work, performed the statistical analysis and jointly wrote this manuscript. Both authors managed the analyses of the study, wrote the first draft, managed the literature searches, read and approved the final manuscript.

### Article Information

DOI: 10.9734/BJESBS/2015/13374

#### Editor(s):

(1) David A. Kinnunen, Department of Kinesiology, California State University Fresno, USA.

#### Reviewers:

(1) Beat Knechtle, University of Zurich, Switzerland.

(2) Marília Martins Bandeira, Department of Physical Education and Humanities, Faculty of Physical education, University of Campinas, Brazil.

(3) Anonymous, Taiwan.

Complete Peer review History: <http://www.sciencedomain.org/review-history.php?iid=817&id=21&aid=7105>

Original Research Article

Received 14<sup>th</sup> August 2014  
Accepted 24<sup>th</sup> October 2014  
Published 8<sup>th</sup> December 2014

### ABSTRACT

**Aims:** Tourism is a social phenomenon and a kind of measure of quality of life. Polish domestic tourism is developing along with the recreation since the very start of the process of dynamic development and mass popularization of recreational activity. It is also a rapidly growing business sector. Presentation of a newly developed social phenomenon in Poland – tourism of people practicing recreation sports, specifically runners, taking part in marathons and street runs, was the main goal of this research.

**Methodology:** This study included a group of 669 Polish amateur runners. Diagnostic survey was applied as the method, using the technique of own authorship questionnaire. To evaluate the extent of participation of Poles in street runs abroad documents such as completed final results with detailed information of the finished competition, published by the running event (marathon) organisers have been analysed.

**Conclusion:** Active participation in mass street running generate national and international tourism. Cognitive aspects (cultural and natural values) are much more important motives for the selection of sports and recreational events than sporting aspects. The development of mass forms of recreation

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including sports and recreation events is a chance for regions lacking invaluable natural and cultural values of sightseeing, because they fit in the development and promotion of cities and regions.

*Keywords: Sport tourism; sport and recreational events; running; marathons.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Polish domestic tourism is developing along with the recreation since the very start of the process of dynamic development and mass popularization of recreational activity. The growth of event tourism sector is no longer based merely on the greatest sporting events organized in Poland (like Euro 2012 and other international championships), but also benefits from massive recreational events which bring together thousands of participants, their families, friends and local supporters (marathons, half marathons, city-runs accompanying the celebrations of historical events, Nordic walking or triathlon competitions). The dynamic development of mass running events in Poland has been observed since 2007 [1].

Throughout the world the growing role of sport in tourism is observed since the late 80s [2]. More and more people of all ages want to spend their leisure time actively. In parallel, health consciousness of the societies of Central and Eastern Europe increases and thus the popularity of active tourism and qualified tourism is also growing. Recreation centers having sports and recreational base at their disposal and offering sports activities in the visited area definitely enjoy growing recognition and are acclaimed by tourists [3]. Percentage of people regularly practicing physical activity, differing far from statistics of Western Europe, is likely to increase due to a growing number of sports and recreation events dynamically developing – and so is industry related to sports (training equipment, sports clothing, gadgets). The mass, egalitarian events forming the spectacle with thousands of active participants educate to an active lifestyle – not only inspiring to changes in the system of everyday health behaviours, but shaping the cognitive needs related to the place of organised event as well [4,5].

Even though event tourism sector in Poland is still in a development phase, it already generates a noticeable amount of touristic traffic and revives regions - not only popular tourist destinations (often visited cities – hosts of marathons) but also small towns, until now almost non-existent on the map of tourist attractions. Event tourism adds to active tourism

in this sector with an increasing share, in line with the growing awareness of the important role of physical activity in a healthy lifestyle, by the way widely promoted nowadays [6,7]. Piechota [8] described the growing influence of this kind of events on the development of urban tourism and role of sport tourism in development of promotion the Polish cities.

The organisers of running competitions lay the run routes out allowing for their sightseeing advantages. Promotion of event is inextricably linked with the promotion of the town in which it takes place, therefore participants often receive numerous promotional materials from the organisers (like folders, brochures, leaflets, tourist guides, gadgets with symbols of the region, discounts on tickets to museums, local attractions); especially when the city hall or marshal office is a co-organiser of the event. There are in Poland – and develop – just as around the world – companies specialising in organising trips to the biggest international marathons e.g. in Berlin, London, New York, Prague and in many other cities. Those organisers are creating a lifestyle based on travel in order to start each time in another place in the world. Until the 90s tourism associated with running was to develop discipline, lifestyle, where health training is realised every day. Now it is a new, but already a recognised field of tourism - a profitable strategy for economic recovery of the region. Cyprus and Dubai are good examples as a venue for numerous events, multi-day running festivals and training camps for amateur runners. More and more runners travel to take part in competitions, contributing to the development of domestic tourism in particular. Those of them who are more advanced in their sporting passion, for which competition in the recreational activity is a way of life, more and more travel to the most remote corners of the world to participate in running events [9]. Most of them spend at least one night in a place where the event is organised, in the company of other runners (community of runners), eating meals together and also combining sporting rivalry with visiting local attractions and purchasing souvenirs [10]. Integrative function of sports and recreation events contributes to the development of this type of tourism. A sense of membership in the international community of people with similar

interests may be a factor determining the adoption of a particular style of life. Scientific studies show that passive sports tourism (travelling to watch, be a fan) does not result in a formation of social identity in a significant way – and an active participation in the competition has great potential for this. During an international competition the mentioned identity is extended interculturally [11,12]. Showing a newly developing social phenomenon of tourism for recreational sportsmen – runners taking part in marathons and other street runs is the main goal of this research.

Mass recreation and support programs, adjoined by an offer of subsidies from EU funds (ERDF), aimed at supporting beneficiary's organizational and promotional capabilities - are operating in Poland only since 2007. In the course of last three years Polish Tourist Organisation (operating since 2006) has been increasingly interested in analysis of mass recreation market and supporting its promotion. However, analysis of tourist activities focused on recreational events is not being done in separation from other types of tourism, just as research on the goals of short (mainly weekend) outings of Poles – domestic and foreign – was not aimed at screening out event tourism [13]. Hence the need to diagnose the sector numbering tens of thousands of runners and their families, and also their decisions (or decision-making processes) regarding participation in the national and international events, as well as the motives which are guiding them.

## **2. MATERIALS AND METHODS**

The research was conducted on a group of 669 Polish amateur runners (women – 6.4% of the examined group, men – 93.7%) from September 2010 to February 2011; on participants in street runs at distances from 10 km to the marathon length (42.2 km).

Diagnostic survey was applied as the method, using the technique of own authorship questionnaire which put two open-ended questions – about motives for starting abroad and in the farthest destinations (cities that are farthest away from the place of residence of the interviewed runner and where the respondent competed in running competitions). Intentional selection was used.

The questionnaire was handled to 1620 people who actively participated in different long-

distance runs several times during the previous year. 41.3% of them filled the questionnaire completely. This group was divided into a group of runners who had never participated in competitions outside of Poland (413 people) and those who had participated in them at least once (256 people). The survey was sent to runners registered on the biggest Polish website for runners (maratony.polskie.pl) – all of surveyed runners have confirmed runner web-profile (presentation of results, frequency of participation in competitions, history of their running).

To evaluate the extent of participation of Poles in street runs abroad documents such as completed final results with detailed information of the finished competition, published by the running event (marathon) organisers have been analysed. A formal analysis technique of 50 documents was used for this summary – for detailed analysis the base of events was narrowed to five largest world marathons (with the largest number of participants) and four great European marathons, in which the Poles have been taking part for years, proximity of the venue of the marathon or possibility of convenient flight (thus – the low cost of travel) being one of the reasons, and a reasonable entrance fee being the other. Five running events have been chosen for analysis because of the exoticism of the run venue (mountain Swiss marathon in Bienne-Biel, in Marrakech - through the desert, in Dubai, Kilimanjaro and Antarctic Marathon).

## **3. RESULTS**

Runners, including marathon runners, travel more and more to take part in the events outside of their own country. Marathons and shorter distance street runs are intended to be mass events fully accessible to people with different levels of efficiency and disability, of different ages, sexes and races. Internationalisation adds to prestige of an event and is its valuable attribute. In 2009 the Warsaw Marathon was finished by 3164 runners, of which 145 were foreigners from 15 countries; in 2013 – 229 runners from 58 countries (Table 1.).

Organisers of Polish marathons and street runs are seeking to boost their international status, often lifting the entry fees for foreign runners who want to take part in the Polish sport and recreation events.

The table below (Table 2.) shows the number of runners who in 2009 and 2013 completed the

most prestigious marathons – prestigious not only because of the number of participants, but also because of the event's traditions and high sports level. Only runners with Polish citizenship and holding the Polish identity card (without Poles starting as citizens of other countries) are included in the table.

The above tally reveals that despite the considerable distance (trip to the USA), limitations – such as visa problems for this country, high fees for participating in the marathon, Poles willingly participate in intercultural events.

New York Marathon – the largest marathon in the world – in 2009 was finished by 120 Poles (98 – 4 years later); it is almost ten times more than the two other prestigious marathons with a long history, that have been organised for years in the U.S. (Chicago and Boston – the oldest marathon in the world; in 2009 each of them was completed by 13 Poles). Most Polish runners (included in data presented above) participated in the Berlin Marathon (410 people in 2009, 1201 – in 2013), which can be explained by the proximity of the destination, convenient public transport connections and above all, the reputation of the mass event, for years renown in runners' environment for excellent organisation, for its high level of sports (world records were broken in the marathon for men and women), great facilities, attractive prizes and starter packs, enormous number of fans and the atmosphere of the German capital, which also influences the attractiveness of the running route, connecting the most important symbols of the city.

It has only been over the last few years that the awareness of influence active leisure has on human health condition and of possible satisfaction drawn from rivalry in physical recreation combined with tourist qualities of the event location has been emerging in Poland. It may be noted that in the last few years running has been gaining in fashion in Poland; There are many associations of running aficionados and three nationwide hobby magazines for them (in spite of many web sites). Equally high dynamics of this phenomenon in such a short time are not recorded in the neighbouring countries. For example in 2009 in the Czech Republic, a country with a long tradition of running and recreation developed among people of all ages, 859 open running events were held, while in Poland – 1297 (for comparison – in 2000 nearly six times less of them were held, only 207). In

2013 – 1650 in the Czech Republic, 2705 in Poland.

The dynamics of the participation of Polish runners in street races abroad (especially in marathons) can be seen mainly in the last six-seven years. The dynamics of these changes over the last 13 years are illustrated in Table 3.

Polish runners are increasingly opting for running in competitions held in very exotic places around the world – like race to the peak of Mount Olympus in Greece, marathon on Mount Kilimanjaro, the volcanic slopes of Tenerife, the largest sand deserts (including the Sahara Marathon in Algeria), in faraway countries of Latin America - Buenos Aires Marathon or Rio de Janeiro, also in Tokyo, Australia and New Zealand, on the Arctic Circle in Scandinavia and even in an exclusive marathon in Antarctica, in which only 16 people from around the world took part in 2009. Table. 4 presents a list of examples of events, in which Poles participated in edition 2009 and 2013. One Pole took part in Kilimanjaro Marathon (in 2009, none – in 2013), one – in Antarctic Ice Marathon (1 – in 2009, 1 – in 2013).

In the survey conducted on 669 amateur runners 256 admitted that at least once they had competed in a race abroad. Among the other 413 runners (so far competing only in races in Poland) 43.3% declared explicit willingness to participate in international street races in the near future (179 runners). The other runners leave the question open, making the planning of starts abroad dependent on financial situation in the future, health, progress in training. Only 6 people in this group (i.e. 1.5%) declared total lack of interest in participating in this kind of rivalry in running abroad.

When choosing races abroad the surveyed runners mostly go to Germany (17.6% of answers), Italy (7.8%) and the Czech Republic (7.4%). Among the 12 of most visited countries (also Spain – 6.3%, Great Britain – 5.9%, France – 5.9%, Sweden, Norway, Greece, Ireland, Austria, The Netherlands and Switzerland – 2.4-6% of answers) they did not mention any country east of the Polish border, while Slovakia (very popular for Polish tourists) was mentioned only by 2% of them (statistically insignificant). Respondent runners when asked about their motives for participation in international competitions gave more than 30 reasons (opened question with the possibility of giving a few key sport and non-sport motives). Fig. 1 (below) presents the 11 most common reasons.

**Table 1. Participation of foreign runners in the biggest marathons of the world in 2013 (in comparison to Polish biggest and most famous marathon race – Warsaw Marathon and marathons in Prague and Vienna - as very popular races with polish runners)**

|   | <b>New York</b> | <b>Chicago</b> | <b>Berlin</b> | <b>London</b> | <b>Boston</b> | <b>Vienna</b> | <b>Prague</b> | <b>Warsaw*</b> |
|---|-----------------|----------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|----------------|
| marathon runners – number of nationalities                      | 86              | <b>129</b>     | 119           | 40            | 79            | 118           | 91            | 58             |
| Percent of foreign participants (and number of foreign runners) | 43,67%          | 21,74%         | <b>59,48%</b> | 9,82%         | 18,07%        | 36,75%        | 50,48%        | 2,69%          |
|   | <b>(21861)</b>  | (8505)         | (21694)       | (3357)        | (3176)        | (3701)        | (2745)        | (229)          |

\* Warsaw – 8509 marathon runners, who finished Warsaw Marathon in 2013

**Table 2. Participation of Poles in the most prestigious marathon races in the world in 2009 compared to neighbouring countries**

| <b>City where marathon was organized</b>    | <b>New York</b> |             | <b>Chicago</b> |             | <b>Berlin</b> |             | <b>London</b> |             | <b>Boston</b> |             | <b>Vienna</b> |             | <b>Prague</b> |             |
|---|-----------------|-------------|----------------|-------------|---------------|-------------|---------------|-------------|---------------|-------------|---------------|-------------|---------------|-------------|
| Year  | 2009            | <b>2013</b> | 2009           | <b>2013</b> | 2009          | <b>2013</b> | 2009          | <b>2013</b> | 2009          | <b>2013</b> | 2009          | <b>2013</b> | 2009          | <b>2013</b> |
| Number of runners who finished the marathon | 43660           | 50062*      | 33701          | 39122       | 35016         | 36474       | 34202         | 35370       | 22843         | 17580       | 5021          | 6877        | 3977          | 5438        |
| <b>Poles</b>                                | <b>120</b>      | <b>98</b>   | <b>13</b>      | <b>56</b>   | <b>410</b>    | <b>1201</b> | <b>11</b>     | <b>18</b>   | <b>13</b>     | <b>15</b>   | <b>102</b>    | <b>209</b>  | <b>206</b>    | <b>186</b>  |
| Czechs                                      | 27              | 36          | 2              | 15          | 0             | 98          | 0             | 2           | 2             | 9           | 54            | 102         | n. a.         | n.a.        |
| Russians                                    | 28              | 58          | 3              | 26          | 32            | 238         | 50            | 13          | 5             | 14          | 8             | 21          | 20            | 33          |
| Swedes                                      | 544             | 832         | 15             | 88          | 749           | 1215        | 91            | 96          | 15            | 48          | 11            | 56          | 29            | 50          |
| Germans                                     | 2452            | 1873        | 195            | 254         | n.a.          | n.a.        | 281           | 342         | 157           | 94          | 944           | 1038        | 295           | 208         |

n. a. - not applicable due to the venue, coincides with the place of residence of the national study group, which excludes participation in running tourism abroad

\* New York – a year after tragedy, when marathon was canceled due to flooding the day before competition, which resulted in a lower attendance the following year

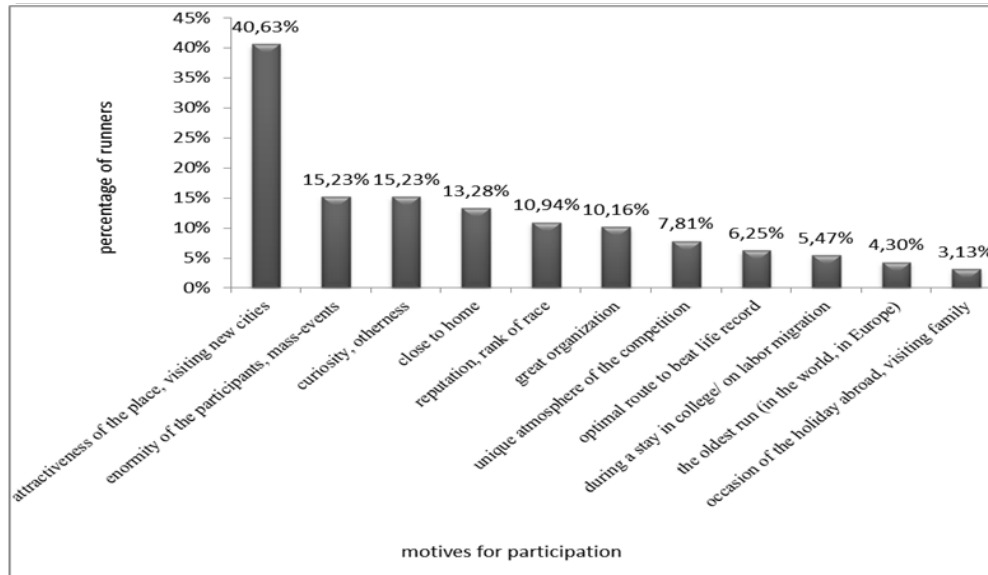
\*\* Boston – bombings during marathon

**Table 3. Number of Polish people competing in marathon races abroad – in 2000, 2009 and 2013**

| City<br>year | New<br>York | Chicago | Boston | Berlin | Vienna | Copenhagen | Budapest | Prague |
|--------------|-------------|---------|--------|--------|--------|------------|----------|--------|
| 2000         | 14          | 3       | 4      | 176    | 82     | 0          | 27       | 40     |
| 2009         | 120         | 13      | 13     | 410    | 102    | 33         | 4        | 206    |
| 2013         | 98          | 56      | 15     | 1201   | 209    | 21         | 94       | 186    |

**Table 4. Number of Polish runners competing in chosen marathon races abroad (during last 5 years – 2009-2013)**

| City<br>Year | Frankfurt | Paris | Hamburg | Dublin | Brussels | Biene-<br>Biel | Marrakech | Dubai | Bratislava | Riga |
|--------------|-----------|-------|---------|--------|----------|----------------|-----------|-------|------------|------|
| 2009         | 80        | 101   | 35      | 7      | 7        | 19             | 10        | 3     | 21         | 10   |
| 2013         | 165       | 158   | 47      | 22     | 24       | 27             | 20        | 14    | 24         | 23   |



**Fig. 1. Motives for participation of polish runners in foreign races**

Most respondents (40.6%) indicated attractiveness of the competition venues – places that can be seen when taking part in the competition as well as explored after the race. Thus, exploration-oriented goals clearly dominate over the other objectives. Proximity of the venue is very important for runners – certainly related to the overall costs, as well as the availability of adequate amount of free time. In this respect international tourism is generated largely by runners from villages near the former border with the Czech Republic, Germany or Slovakia, but also in Pomerania (participants of races in Scandinavia, Latvia and Estonia). Running competitions organised behind the eastern border (Belarus, Ukraine, Russia), where visa restrictions apply, are much less popular and are associated with weaker traditions of recreational

runs in those countries (lack of spectacular prestigious mass events, with the exception of the marathon in the far-from-Poland Moscow). Not without significance is also organisation of these events, poorer when compared with western neighbours of Poland.

When planning a family vacation, a holiday with a group of friends or visiting relatives abroad, runners choose trip times allowing them to participate in the running event and to experience new sensations in a new international and often intercultural environment.

Some of the surveyed runners (6 from 269 – 2.3% of the ones who had competed abroad before taking part in the survey) have a carefully defined strategy for starting in runs abroad,

planning them meticulously in advance according to a specific key, which may be participation in a race in another European capital or on another continent or willing to test themselves in new climate conditions – at the equator, in the tropics, at the polar circle or pole. They are people subjecting a lot to their running passion, whose sporting hobby has become a way of life – involving extensive travelling and preparation of their organisms for rivalry in climatic conditions difficult for Poles.

#### **4. DISCUSSION**

Tourism is a social phenomenon and a kind of measure of quality of life [14]. It is also a rapidly growing business sector. In Poland, recreational events started to become a tourist product not earlier than 7 years ago, but – as sees it Poland Convention Bureau - historical events get bigger support than cross-country events organized by associations, sport clubs, city councils, MOSiRs (Municipal Centers of Sport and Recreation), foundations, local sports activists, community organizations, universities or even parishes.

Sports-recreational events – like marathons and similar races organised in the centres of big cities and smaller towns – are an effective form of popularization and promotion of the region and may themselves form a touristic value activating the area and actuating the image of the city [15]. Sport tourism is one of the fastest growing market niches in the field of tourism in developed countries, which had been examined already in the second half of the 90s [16,17]. Since then this branch has been getting popular dynamically and already in 1998 sport tourism generated revenues of 27 billion USD in the USA alone [18]. American Association of Tourism Industry reports (already 14 years ago) that over five years (1996-2000) more than 75.3 million individual sport events participants travelled to take part in then [19].

Sporting events in USA generate about 25% of revenue of total revenue expenditure on tourism [20], therefore increase in investment in sports and recreation infrastructure is observed constantly, also in Europe. In the U.S. there is the notion of individual participants in sports tourism. Kurtzman and Zauhar [18] differentiate four types of participants in tourism: 1) organised teams and structures; 2) sports spectators – fans; 3) sports enthusiasts – faithful fans; 4) active participants taking part in competition. According to Gibson [21] active sports tourism

can be divided in to the following typological categories: 1) tourists visiting attractions associated with sport; 2) tourists-spectators, watching live sports and recreation events; 3) active sport tourists, participants of events. The author proved that persons representing the third group have a high level of education, high income and a strong need to challenge themselves, even in retirement age.

Sports and recreation tourism is a booming global business bringing social benefits both in global and local terms. Among many events attracting tourists around the world, marathons (42.195 km to overcome) have permanently gained a place in the calendar of international sports tourism [22]. Although most scientific studies on running tourism emphasise the economic benefits and show the possibility of development of the region and its promotion, we must pay attention to the pro-health advantages and the strong relations between health and leisure tourism and sports and recreation tourism [23,24]. Foreign research on the international or even global running tourism is usually concerned with the marathons or festivals participants (runs on shorter distances associated with marathon). It is the marathons, not popular mass runs at shorter distances, that are the main destination for amateur runners – both in the form of an organised trip (by specialised travel agencies), group and an individual trip. However, to increase the popularity of the marathon and boost tourism, various running festivals are organised as events upholding the atmosphere of the main race. They are an opportunity to raise the turnout of runners and to attract the tourist-runners who are not prepared to overcome the marathon distance yet and are able to start in a shorter race. The festivals also often involve a rich offer of contests, games, recreational games for families and friends of runners.

Certainly one of the major constraints in frequent travelling is having a family; so the organisers are looking for ideas for pulling whole families into running recreationally and making it more attractive. But not every event delivers the expected spectacular results, and achieves its goals. A lack of the scientific literature concerning the disadvantages of the organization of recreational events, especially in Poland, is associated with the specificity of recreational events, which are organized incomparable to sport competition for professional athletes. Only Chłapowski [25] suggested one problem - of achieving goals of recreational and sports

events, treated by author as product in terms of marketing.

For many runners not only an unusual – from a point of view of participants – place and route and the will to test themselves in a different climate are incentives to participate in exclusive, exotic races, but the need to belong to amateur clubs such as Seven Continents (completing marathons on seven continents over 12 months period is a condition of membership). Another incentive is the need to compete against other runners on a number of European capitals in which they took part in marathons, or on participation in the so-called Big Five (the five greatest marathons of the world – in New York, Boston, Chicago, Berlin and London) or participating in marathons with the longest history in the world.

Observing the dynamics of the competition on a global scale, we may conclude that participation in events to - in a way - collect visited destinations and create their own maps of the world – map of starts, is a very fast growing trend. And this happens despite often high costs which have to be borne by the participants of races (for example, 16000 USD for participation in the marathon in Antarctica); despite the amount of time that one has to reserve for participation in this competition and specific preparation for it.

For some runners more important than originality of the race is participation in an event with great historic traditions, in event which was taking place in the same location even long before World War II – as the world's oldest marathon in Boston, held for the 118th time this year or Slovak Kosice marathon with 90-year-old tradition – the oldest in Europe, and marathons in Rome or Athens. These historical conditions are also strongly associated with the venue, specific historic reverberation of a running event, usually promoting the traditions of the city hosting the run, local history and against this background – tradition of the marathon in this place.

For several years, also in Poland – drawing from the experience of the developed countries, where physical recreation is well established in the socio-cultural space, supporting races are organised to accompany the main competition – marathon. Examples of such supporting events are races for children and young people and a variety of competitions not necessarily associated with running: racing for skaters or cyclists and Nordic walking.

Presented research shows that the Western model of spending leisure time on mass participation in physical activity quickly adopts in Poland. It is certainly the effect of globalization, which also includes the area of physical culture. The development of the growing recreational needs of society can also be seen from the increase in the volume of sales of sports goods and tourism, thanks to the expansion of the network of specialist sports shops. Very important for the development of the broader dynamic of mass recreation was disseminating knowledge of a healthy lifestyle, which favored the computerization of the country. The increase of modern information and communication technologies, especially during last 20 years, intensified education campaigns, promoting health and healthy lifestyle. Number of sites for active people arose with the development of the Internet. Health counseling, in paper publications form (primarily American) has become very popular especially in the 90s. Thematic television channel formed in 2004, dealing with wider lifestyle, with a distinct mission of promoting health.

Modern commercial mass street races originated in the United States; they also may be attributed to the beginning of tourism when great emphasis was put on sports events and recreation. Not only in highly developed countries, also in Africa (e.g. South Africa) running tourism develops rapidly [26]. It seems that this is a chance for regions deficient in invaluable natural, leisure and cultural values of sightseeing. Minor financial expenditures on supporting available accommodation, food and transport in local sector encourage creation of an attractive touristic product (running event) which might become an advantage attracting tourists-runners from around the world.

According to Getz [27] event tourism is associated with cultural (art, music) and sports events with various forms of participation in these events – passive or active. Sports and recreation events are an important contribution to the economic development of cities and regions, as numerous studies reported [28,29]. In recent twenty years event tourism has become the fastest growing sector of the tourism market [30]. The annually held London marathon reveals the strength of the event. Within 20 hours of 09/05/2010 over 130000 declarations were made to take part in the marathon – including 5500 foreign runners. 45000 runners were randomly selected to take part in the marathon which was



to be held in April 2011. In 2013 – within 3 hours the limit has been reached.

The development of sports and recreation events (mass and open), information flow through electronic media and increasing ease of travel for Poles (no borders within the European Union, abolition of visas for entrance to Canada, increase in the number of flights to Western Europe or Asia) let tourism develop for the practicing amateur runners also in Poland.

Special importance must be attributed to the Internet. We may quickly and easily find information about the run, register for participation, confront the opinion about marathon or other races, organization of the arrival – not only on the organiser's website, but especially through the social networking (social media) and discussions on websites dedicated to the subject. Trendy in Poland became a short 2-3 day trips outside the place of residence, there has been a rapid development serving healthy recreational activity and rest. Studies have reported the development of tourism, including mainly trips abroad [31].

What should be also considered is transformation in the Polish society, significant in the last 20 years, resulting in an increasing awareness of the role of physical activity and active leisure time as a part of human life, better knowledge of foreign languages by the Poles, tolerance and openness to learning and communing with different cultural environment.

The research has been conducted without sponsors or grants, collected and analyzed by the authors as members of non-profit organization Polish Association of Health Trainers.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Active participation in mass street running generate national and international tourism.

Cognitive aspects (cultural and natural values) are much more important motives for the selection of sports and recreational events than sporting aspects.

The development of mass forms of recreation including sports and recreation events is a chance for regions lacking invaluable natural and cultural values of sightseeing, because they fit in

the development and promotion of cities and regions.

In Poland recreational running has never been as popular as today; in this country and even in Europe have never been so many runners, never been so many sport and recreational events organised, gathering so many people at the start. The dynamics of this phenomenon is certainly a phenomenon of social and economic nature, therefore it seems reasonable to further study the environment of runners in this region of Europe.

## COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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