

**Factors Influencing Consumer Behaviors Preparing for Marathon Events:
A Longitudinal Study of Long-distance Runners**

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**25-minute oral presentation
(including questions)**

For two decades, the running industry has experienced unprecedented growth until participation numbers reached a pinnacle in 2016 (RUSA, 2017). Most recently, RUSA (2017) reported just under 16 million people finished a running event, and most importantly, a record number of events were hosted (30,400), demonstrating the increasingly competitive marketplace within the running sector. Thus, researchers have begun to pay considerable attention to the consumer behaviors of these athletes; however, the majority of this research has been cross-sectional in nature (Baker, Jordan, & Funk, 2018; Yoshida & James, 2010). This investigation seeks to determine the ebb and flow of motivation, constraints, behavioral intentions, and actual running behaviors through the training season of participants completing a half or full marathon, and how those related to goal achievement at the running festival.

Motivation has received a considerable amount of attention in the current literature. For instance, researchers have established autonomous motivation is a better predictor of the distance in which runners participate (Aicher, Karadakis, & Eddosary, 2015), their level of involvement with running (Aicher, Rice, & Hambrick, 2017), and the events they select to participate (Aicher & Newland, 2017), compared to controlled motivation. To this point, the majority of studies were completed with a cross-sectional, post-hoc analysis design. While valuable, Deci and Ryan (2008) argue individuals' motivations may vacillate over time. Thus, we predicted individuals' motivations will vary during the training season (Hypothesis 1).

Similarly, constraints to participation have been well researched, largely focusing on cross-sectional designs in both a priori and post-hoc analyses (e.g., Kennelly, Moyle, & Lamont, 2013; Pritchard, Funk, and Alexandris, 2009; Ridinger, Funk, Jordan, & Kaplanidou, 2012). As individuals attempt to negotiate these constraints, their levels of perceived constraints and subsequent behaviors within the sport may fluctuate through the training season. Therefore, we predicted individuals' reported levels of constraint will vary throughout the training season (Hypothesis 2), with those who reported higher levels of constraints in a time period hypothesized to engage in less actual running behavior than intended (Hypothesis 3).

Recently, researchers have called into question the value of behavioral intention compared to actual behaviors (i.e., Armitage & Conner, 1999; Bagozzi, 1992). For instance, Yoshida, Heere, and Gordon (2015) found no relationship between intentions and future attendance, and Baker et al. (2018) established previous behavior with an event is a much stronger predictor of actual behavior compared to intention measures. Given this investigation is centered around training behaviors, rather than repeat purchase behaviors, it is feasible the reported amount of intended behavior will be comparable to actual behavior. In particular, runners tend to follow their plan consistently, and if they do deviate, the amount they run tends to be lower compared to higher levels of training. To test this, we predicted individuals' running intentions for the upcoming month will be less than the actual training behaviors (Hypothesis 4).

The last purpose of this manuscript was to determine if each of these variables (i.e., motivations, constraints, intentions, behaviors) relate to goal achievement. A goal is achieved when pre-specified criteria for evaluating degree of goal attainment are met or exceeded (Schlosser, 2004). Goal confidence and difficulty are common predictors of goal achievement. This investigation sought to account for both consumer behaviors and contextual factors contributing to goal achievement. Our model postulates motivations and constraints will influence individuals'

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running intentions which will lead to actual behaviors, and ultimately lead to goal attainment, as evaluated by previously established goal criteria.

In partnership with four community running clubs in the Midwest United States, 132 club members participated in the study, with data collected five times over two 17-week periods leading up to two running festivals. Participants were initially invited to participate in the first online questionnaire via a message from their running club. The four subsequent online questionnaires were distributed directly from the researchers. The questionnaire utilized established tools to measure the study variables and capture change over time.

Data analysis is currently ongoing. First, reliability and validity testing will be computed for the scales used in the investigation. Next, we will test hypotheses 1 and 2 using a time series MANOVA to determine differences between the variables (motivation and constraints). Hypothesis 3 will be tested using an ANCOVA controlling for age and gender as those have previously demonstrated influence over constraints in the literature. Hypothesis 4 will be tested using a hierarchical regression to determine the amount of variance in actual training behaviors explained by running intentions, while accounting for other variables of interest. Finally, the full model will be tested using HLM.

The results of this investigation will provide valuable insights theoretically and practically. From a methodological perspective, the longitudinal design of the investigation may provide a deeper level of understanding of motivation and constraints, as well as their influence on running intentions, behaviors, and goal achievement. Practically, the results may assist running related organizations with the design, marketing, and services of events and programs to establish differentiation in a competitive marketplace and increase the growth of their organizations.

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