

## Marathon runners and their environmental attitudes. Are they a good market for environmental CSR interventions?

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Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) witnessed rapid growth in sport organizations, and is part of Positive Organizational Behavior (POB) strategies. It contributes to the promotion of environmentally friendly attitudes to consumer (Babiak & Trendafilova, 2011). Sport organizations use sport events as platforms for interventions (Babiak & Wolfe, 2006). This study explores whether marathon runners could be more receptive to environmentally friendly messages, because they are a unique market, as they are running in the outdoor space and they are in close relationship with the natural environment, almost every day. Marathon events have become an appealing market for CSR activities and POB (Babiak & Trendafilova, 2011). If organizations are concerned about the natural environment and they have environmentally responsible policies and strategies, they are involved in POB (Babiak & Trendafilova, 2011). However, runners' environmental attitudes are not clear or documented in the literature. If a person is taking care of their body training for marathon events, then potentially, this can spill over to taking care the environment as well (Maehr & Braskamp, 1986). In addition, there is a gap in the literature on whether gender and income influence environmental attitudes and their concerns towards the environment. Based on the literature, females are more concerned and emotionally connected to the natural environment than males (Jackson, 1993; Davidson & Freuman, 1997). On the other hand, Diamantopoulos et al. (2003) found males were more knowledgeable about environmental issues than females. Moreover, Diamantopoulos et al. (2003) found people from higher social classes are more concerned about the environment.

The following research questions were explored:

RQ1: Do environmental behavioral intentions and attitudes of the runners are above average (the middle point of the scale)?

RQ2: Does income and gender influence runners' environmental behavioral intentions and attitudes?

Data was collected from runners of a marathon event in Southeastern United States through a web-survey, which was sent to 910 participants. From the 910, 171 responded, with 103 surveys being completed. The response rate was (11.32%). Furthermore, for the IVs of the study (i.e. gender, income), a dummy variable was created for gender (0=male, 1=female), and income; (runners with less than \$80,000=0, and more than \$80,000=1). The reason that we split the income equally above and below \$80,000, was that 57 runners from our sample stated that they have income more than \$80,000 while the rest 46 were below \$80,000 providing an income point of almost equal split for the sample. For the measurement of the environmental behavioral intentions and attitudes (dependent variables), the items by Thompson and Barton (1994) were used. Specifically, the dependent variables were: (1) "I am more willing to donate toward the environmentally friendly initiatives", (2) "I find it hard to get too concerned about environmental issues" and (3) "It makes me sad to see natural environments

destroyed". These were three 7 point scales, where 1=Strongly Disagree and 7=Strongly Agree. The Cronbach's alpha of the 3-items, was .527, which was weak to create a new variable. For that reason, we used the three items as separate variables. To explore the RQs of the study one sample t-test was used to examine if the mean of the three environmental items was significantly higher than the mean of the scale. Afterwards, MANCOVA was estimated to examine the influence of gender and income on runners' environmentally friendly attitudes controlling for commitment to running and number of times of exercise per week. The covariate removed any influence in the results from the type of runner we had in the sample Both covariates, commitment and times of exercise, were not significant ( $p>0.05$ ) with our model.

For RQ1 the results showed that all items mean were significantly above the middle point of the scale ( $M1=5.02$ ,  $M2=5.07$ ,  $M3=5.81$ ). For RQ2 the results revealed that only gender created significant differences on the dependent variable (Pillai's trace=.036,  $F=3.015$ ,  $p=.034$ ). Upon examination of the univariate statistics, differences were found between males and females only in the first item of environmental intentions. For that item, the mean score of males was higher than the females ( $Mm=5.43$ ,  $Mf=4.76$ ). For the second and the third items, the mean scores were almost the same across genders. Our results suggest marathon runners have positive environmental behavioral intentions and attitudes. In addition, our data suggested that males were more willing than females to donate toward green initiatives. Our study provides baseline data toward this idea. This is a unique finding in contrast to existing literature which says that females are more concerned than males about the natural environment (Diamantopoulos et al., 2003). The appeal of this market is high for interested companies in green CSR initiatives, and a unique finding for the existed literature (Babiak & Trendafilova, 2006; Diamantopoulos et al., 2003). Lastly, males and females were emotionally involved at the same level towards environmental concerns, issues and the destruction of nature (Diamantopoulos et al., 2006).

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