

WHO ARE THE COMRADES OF THE COMRADES MARATHON?

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ABSTRACT

Marathon runners' motives vary, and differ from marathon to marathon depending on the type of race. This study determined the motives of Comrades Marathon runners in order to identify and profile the market segments competing in this ultra-marathon. Intrinsic achievement, exploration and competitiveness, family togetherness and escape, socialisation and commitment were identified as the five main motives, and from these two distinct segments were classified: recreational runners and serious runners. The research showed that the typical (real) comrade of the Comrades Marathon is a person who combines the attributes of the two clusters, serious and recreational athletes, where intrinsic achievement and commitment are key motives. The study, the first of its kind at an ultra-marathon in South Africa, fills a gap in the existing literature and contributes to the literature not only on sport events but also on marathons and ultra-marathon participants in particular. It corroborates the finding that motives for participating differ according to the sporting event, and supports the view that marketers and sports event organisers must understand that participants have different motives and so should not be regarded as a homogeneous group. This type of research is valuable to organisers, as it assists in making informed and cost-effective marketing and product development decisions.

Key words: Ultra-marathon; Comrades Marathon; Typology of motives; Marathon runner; Market segmentation; South Africa.