



CREATIVITY MANIFESTATIONS IN LITHUANIAN RECREATIONAL SPORTS: A CASE OF THE SUBCULTURE OF RUNNERS

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Abstract. The paper analyzes manifestations of creativity in Lithuanian recreational runners' leisure subculture in the latter 21st century's decades. In this research, qualitative research methods: ethnography (observation, participant observation, visual data collection, research diaries), approach of socio-cultural anthropology have been employed. Empirical data, collected since mid-2015 up to the summer of 2023. Results demonstrate that contemporary recreational runners' identities represent aesthetic visual and verbal (self)expression, creative strategies towards running-related practices, values of solitude, and community in parallel.

Keywords: aesthetics, creativity, identity, running, sports, subculture, values.

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1. Introduction

The main object of this paper is to detect and analyze manifestations of creativity in Lithuanian recreational runners' leisure subculture in the period of the latter 21st century's decades. Results demonstrate creativity in the subculture studied manifests via the construction of appearance, visual aesthetics, verbal ingenuity, theatrical elements.

Creativity might appear in many spheres of human life and performance. Speaking of leisure subcultures, manifestations of creativity (and aesthetics) are traced in so called contemporary "taste" subcultures (Laing, 1997; Šatūnienė, 2007, 2011, 2010; Ramanauskaitė, 2002; Muggleton, 2002). Various sports subcultures represent leisure culture as well manifest elements of creativity, too: for example, in athletes' sportswear design, an individual behavior style, or sports events aesthetics.

The creativity in sports culture is actual to study because analysis of creativity manifestations in running enthusiasts subculture allows to understand recently becoming more and more popular sport practices, to gain a deeper look into cultural identity of runners. There is neither systematic research nor a study on creativity manifestations in the Lithuanian running enthusiast subculture up to date.

Subcultural creativity research covers study of subcultural aesthetics and identity, which accumulate and represent specific tastes, values, activity preferences, and values of self-expression. Subcultural values, tastes, and preferences are usually embodied via creative strategies, such as non-ordinary (self)expression, capacity to take unusual decisions, or act in other

non-regular ways. Creativity in human behavior is related to a complex of processes and features, such as an ability to actualize non-conformity, represent an enthusiasm and uniqueness.

2. Features of subculture: peculiarities of the running enthusiasts case

In this paper, recreational runners are being studied as a subculture¹ (see Thornton, 1997a; Gordon, 1997; Muggleton, 2002), because in this study runners represent a (formal or non-formal) group, having a common interest in running activity, possessing common values (such as physical activity, love for training, workouts, running races, *etc.*), and showing distinguishing visual features (runner's equipment, sport garments, gear, accessories). In this article, runners' subculture members are any adult (from 18 to 80) male or female, performing regular (private or formal training with/without a coach) and/or participating in official races, running activities, interested in running, and using running-related garments (*e.g.*, running shoes, specialized clothing) and equipment (*e.g.*, accessories).

Recently, running culture has gained more and more popularity, which has led to many official running events and a wide and diverse audience of participants. It is especially significant to draw a line between elite (professional) runners and the ones to whom this is a hobby, or recreational runners. Elite runners demonstrate different commitment to running if to compare to the casual runners: for the first ones, sports are a primary activity (and a source of income), meanwhile for recreational runners sports are the activity they usually practice after their major (job and family) responsibilities only. Running culture from the perspective of elite athletes might be separated into two categories: a) sport (preparation for competition and competition) and b) recreation (recovery and renewal), meanwhile leisure runners to whom running is not much about winning honorary trophies, usually do not set clear lines between types of running activity depending on participation in races or not, according to Hitchings and Latham (2017). There a particular social group exists to be defined as of "casual" runners, who are not much interested in running technique or collective running activities (Hitchings & Latham, 2017).

By recreational runners we take individuals to whom running is a form of social (leisure) activity. The above mentioned runners' goals usually are not set to become a winners of the race (still not excluded), but to turn into a finisher of any chosen distance in as much fast mode as it is attainable. Some of such runners are running for social reasons, such as a company (running friends) without much of a competitive goals; others are trying to reach their personal best result, or to experience what it is like to run in an official race,² if to compare to the usual (even hard) everyday runs.

So, subculture of runners is identified by the nature of the activity (running) and the goals pursued. Recreational runners are therefore shaped as a subculture because of possessing common physical (body-related) activities (love to run, train; keep discipline) and alike goals

¹ Runners' culture is treated as a subculture by other researchers, too (Hitchings & Latham, 2017; Lassalle et al., 2019; Kazimierczak et al., 2020).

² Running with people around puts a runner in different psychological circumstances which may result, for example, in too fast running (compared to usually practiced individual pace) at the beginning of a race, what leads to harder and slower completion of a chosen distance a runner was training for.

(run, exercise, compete). For instance, some authors (Kazimierczak et al., 2020) study sub-cultural features of runners' community and explore common values, such as sharing experiences, seeking of being a part of the community of such-likes as well as a part of runners social identity.

3. Defining creativity

Terminology and understandings of creativity are not unified and continues to be an area of an open discussion between researchers (Grakauskaitė-Karkockienė, 2002, p. 9), meanwhile the term is widely spread in both everyday culture and in academic contexts. In culture, the term might be often used in a broad (or even superficial) manner (what to some extent might be confusing), when persons tend to mean (or individually interpret) almost any individual, non-usual (self)expression or practice as a "creative one". For example, *creative gardening*, *creative point of view*, or *creative mess* in a room referring to some "unusualness".

Meanwhile academically, creativity has been researched and approached in three general trends: a) a classical one, where creativity was taken as a feature of a creative personality and creative arts, b) holistic way/trend, claiming creativity might manifest in everyone (and so is a subject of training) – creativity is not a possession/feature of "exceptional ones", and c) creativity is treated as a feature of exceptionally talented individuals (Grakauskaitė-Karkockienė, 2002, p. 8). Additionally, creativity has a meaning of serving for positive social usefulness, integrity (Grakauskaitė-Karkockienė, 2002, p. 80), and is associated with freedom – free will, autonomy, spontaneity, absence of confrontation, or other limiting circumstances of social character (Grakauskaitė-Karkockienė, 2002, pp. 33–34, 38–39, 84–86) as well involves personal fantasies, imagination, a need for self-realization (Grakauskaitė-Karkockienė, 2002, pp. 47–49).

Another important characteristic of creativity is self-expression, which includes openness to new experiences, autonomy, identity, broadening one's abilities, sensing ideas of individual life-mission, ability of experiencing *here and now* moment, feelings of enthusiasm, ecstasy, bliss (Grakauskaitė-Karkockienė, 2002, pp. 74–75). A concept of peak experience, characterized as an ability of intense being "at the moment" (Grakauskaitė-Karkockienė, 2002, p. 74) as an experience of creativity, including power, braveness, trust, sense of aesthetics, and integrity (Grakauskaitė-Karkockienė, 2002, pp. 75–79) additionally encompasses the phenomenon of creativity.

Creativity is embedded in ability to creatively combine concepts and information, "play" with forms, ideas and make "unexpected" connections as well be able to experience loneliness, individuality (Grakauskaitė-Karkockienė, 2002, p. 82). Creative play here correlates with a concept of *bricolage*, which relates to a strategy of postmodern identity construction (see Muggleton, 2002, pp. 33–54) or particular everyday *Do It Yourself (DIY)* practices (Aglinskas, 2014, pp. 83–85).

To summarize, in the article, author refers to the term *creativity* understood as an ability to represent new, fresh point of view, original thinking (Grakauskaitė-Karkockienė, 2002, p. 7; Šatūnienė, 2010) or acting, peculiarities of running-related aesthetics, and individual self-expression, representations of autonomy, tendencies of broadening one's abilities, sense of identity, occurring ideas of individual life-mission, competence of experiencing moment of

here and now in forms of enthusiasm, happiness, elation (Grakauskaitė-Karkockienė, 2002, pp. 74–75), humour (McDonald, 2012, p. 8, 16). Recreational sports in humans' everyday culture may act as a temporary pause from routine activities simultaneously possessing the features of creativity *per se* because of its adventurous nature (Kačerauskas, 2017, p. 259).

Creativity is researched not as a personality feature solely, but as a phenomenon manifesting in everyday life cultural contexts. Creativity in everyday life is defined as human originality, *i.e.* what and how one is creating, during various activities in everyday leisure or professional activities (Richards, 2010, p. 190). According to Lee (2022), there are no strict borders between artistic, amateur, and everyday creativity (in the context of cultural policy). As socio-cultural anthropologist Aglinskas states (2014, pp. 83–85), creativity manifests in everyday culture as a *DIY* culture, where the principle of bricolage is present. Elements of *DIY* culture are well known and practiced in punk/hardcore subculture and is cultivated, for example, while organizing music festivals, creation of (fan) zines (*i.e.* self-made fan journals), or in other ways incorporated in subcultural life (Šatūnienė, 2011).

The idea of creativity is also present in subcultures studies. For example, Laing (1997) and Garnett (1999) researched aesthetical elements of the punk subculture. Both researchers compared punk cultural expressions with Dada art (Laing, 1997, p. 415; Garnett, 1999). Laing (1997, p. 417) claimed that theatricality, performativity, eccentricity that manifested within subculture were meant to make the audience to stop for a moment and initiate critical thinking. Garnett (1999) focused on creating of irony for the reasons of eradication of clichés in art. Matonis (2003, pp. 300–301) spotlights artistic elements (of bodily – kinesthetic nature) in sports and accentuates the importance of aesthetic, artistic, and cultural education.

From the above mentioned characterizations of creativity types, we may conclude creativity is a set of individual mind, sensory, and social features. Creativity embodies sense of play, intellectual exceptionality, uniqueness, enthusiasm, escape of the conformism, connections with freedom of self-expression. It is important to mention, that creativity is defined as a complex of needed intellectual skills, knowledge, thinking styles, personality features, motivation, and might be influenced by the social environment too, demonstrating that creativity is a set of complex of skills and contexts (Sternberg, 2009, pp. 104–108).

According to so far collected data, it is presumed creativity of running subculture members might manifest in following directions: as a form³ (such as clothing, accessories, equipment, *etc.*) and behavioral content (such as nature of the activity: running intensity, running technique), or a communication, such as verbal or visual expressions (*e.g.*, names of teams, inscriptions on posters, or sharing the runs information on social media), which will be further analyzed in the next chapters.

4. Research methodology and methods

Qualitative research methodology and methods for data collection were used. The inductive approach, which puts the importance of empirical data before theory construction (Žydzūnaitė

³ Probably we all have a certain image of how a professional (elite) athletes looks like, starting from his/her physical body structure, specific sports garments to certain elements of authentic individuality (such as exceptional hair style or extravagant make-up).

& Sabaliauskas, 2017, p. 47) was chosen for reasons runners' subculture as a phenomenon itself was not formerly researched by the author (nor there are numerous studies done in academic field as well). The inductive approach implies that empirical data are not being structured before collecting them, but the themes (actual topics) arise during the empirical research process itself (Žydžiūnaitė & Sabaliauskas, 2017, p. 47). The inductive approach (Ramanauskaitė, 2002, p. 46) is designed to generate new discoveries (themes, insights) and detect data that was not previously researched in the field (Ramanauskaitė, 2002, p. 46, 52). Indeed, after collecting a variety of qualitative data, aesthetical and creative elements in runners' subculture were disclosed to be significant enough features of the culture and therefore needed to be studied in more detail.

Methods of observation, participant observation (engaging in training process or competing in running races), writing reflective research diaries (for keeping a pertinent running-related information and self-monitoring the physical and psychological (or emotional) status of running, and visual data (photographs)) analysis were practiced in order to acquire the most profound possible researcher's understanding of this cultural phenomena (Žydžiūnaitė & Sabaliauskas, 2017, p. 27, 65). Since one of the main features and reliability criteria in qualitative research in the humanities is trust in the researcher's senses, attitudes, and reflexive insights, relying on observed empirical data (Ramanauskaitė, 2002, p. 9, 61, 86–88), a number of years (from mid-2015 up to summer 2023) of researcher's observations, participant observations, and reflections (Etherington, 2004; Denzin, 2014) on a running sphere were employed while preparing the paper.

Anthropological *emic* research perspective, which represents point of view towards the subcultural phenomenon researched from the insider's perspective (Alasuutari, 1995, pp. 67–68; Ramanauskaitė, 2002, p. 68), was employed. *Emic* perspective enables deep research of cultural phenomena by applying holistic worldviews and creative data analysis towards the culture (Žydžiūnaitė & Sabaliauskas, 2017, p. 275) observed. The author's deep and long-term engagement⁴ in running activities led towards a profound acquisition of the anthropological *emic* perspective, or insider's approach towards to runners' subculture.

5. Research data

Starting from mid 2015 to summer 2023, there were observed above 50 official running events, recorded four research diaries (text files), were taken nearly 50 photographs and (personal) collages of pictures on running, were collected 45 medals, and 32 bibs (runner's numbers). Individual perceptions while being a runner myself were included in the research (especially in the chapter "Discussion: everyday running, individual experiences, and creativity", where experiences and reflections, thoughts and feelings on running were employed). Furthermore, for reasons to achieve most comprehensive and up to date picture of visual manifestations of creativity, there were reviewed around 500 publicly available photos (pub-

⁴ Starting with mid-2015, author has been training in varying intensity (usually running three to four times a week, in combination with general physical training workouts one or two times per week) and has completed around fifty road and trail races, including participation races of different distances (usually five, six, ten, fifteen, half-marathon, and marathon).

lished on *Facebook* by the event organizers), running-related web pages, and social media posts (focusing on most recent years, mostly years 2022–2023), representing the newest public running events.

Collected visual data (personally made and public pictures) were analyzed and structured according to the content. Personally made images were structured as follows: print screens of workouts representing results, achievements; related texts of the posts and selfies (pictures), objects of interest during the running activities, *i.e.* body image in selfies and self-made photos (face, full body, similar), food and drinks before or after the run; expressions of enjoyment of eating after the workout; preparation for the workout or race and significant persons present in photos (family members, coaches, running colleagues).

Public photos were structured as follows: selfies of moods and emotions before or after the run, or during regular workouts or races; face expressions (happy, tired, after intense workout, similar); manifestations of support; representations of body (body strength); event-related equipment (such as medals, certificates, cups, bibs) photos; runners' outfits; participant(s) team names (verbal artistry). Noticeable aesthetic images of thematic runs (*e.g.*, Christmas runs, social support runs (*e.g.*, *Pink Run*)) participants' outfits were spotted.

6. Runners' identity peculiarities

Identity is a broad socio-cultural concept, which usually represents the human exceptionalism or being alike to others, his/her social status, cultural preferences. A concept of identity usually includes definition of *who am I* and an oppositional category of *who I am not* as well the identities might be more complex (Ramanauskaitė, 2004, pp. 35–38; Thornton, 1997b, pp. 200–208). Identity embodies distinctiveness, otherness, and both similarity to other people, it connects a person with a community, group, or nation (Savoniakaitė, 2011, p. 389).

Recreational runners' identity is represented via leisure activities, such as systematic engagement into physical exercise. Gross (2020, p. 442) states that runners bodies represent values of "diligence, control, independence, discipline", identifying oneself through bodily activities represent individual (or personality) features of runners. According to Dadelo (2020, p. 247), practicing physical activity individuals declared being in the sports community contributed to gaining positive, strong personality features, which indicate connections between running activities and personal identity creation (also see Vieira Pereira et al., 2021). Despite of the physical involvement into running as such, Malchrowicz-Moško and Poczta (2018) actualize the role of socio-psychological, mental well-being as well as social and emotional reasons (thrilling experiences), which encourage to engage in running culture.

Collective or subcultural identity embody a set of values, beliefs, philosophies, and common activities shared among formal or non-formal groups. Subcultural identity is constructed through shared cultural values among the community with which an individual is interacting or connected via social and cultural engagement. Subcultural identity represents constructs of (sub)cultural self (identity) via visual aesthetics, verbal expressions, and ideas: appearance, subcultural production (*e.g.*, T-shirts, posters), language (or slang), life philosophy, individual tastes/preferences (Gelder & Thornton, 1997; Muggleton, 2002), and cultivated activities, like running, training, competing, and recovering in our case.

The subculture of runners is identified by the nature of the activity and the goals pursued, which in turn determine runners' appearance. For example, trail run may require specific equipment, such as running poles, hydration vests, specific shoes. Road running usually requires running shoes, and sport garments, maybe – sun glasses. Aesthetical features are also embedded in other details of a runner's outfits: *e.g.*, head-bands, gloves, compress socks, gloves, *etc.*, gadgets, *e.g.*, smart watches, heart rate monitor bands.

Aesthetical identity features in sports manifest via practicing special types of running activities or equipment used during sports activities (*e.g.*, running ultra's, trails); garments, manifesting sports activity type (*e.g.*, casual training or race) and individual taste or runners' outfits, which usually distinguish them from the rest of a mass society while running activity (and wearing special sport outfit and/or equipment).

7. Analysis of elements of creativity in recreational runners (sub) culture

Collected research data were reviewed, structured, and analyzed. During the study, the following themes of visual images related to running activity were identified: selfies of moods and emotions (face expressions) before, after the run, during regular workouts or races; print screens of workouts representing physical activity results, achievements; texts of the social media posts and selfies (pictures); objects of interest during the running activities, *i.e.* face expressions (happy, tired after intense workout, similar), body (body image/strength); body image in selfies and self-made photos (face, full body, similar); food and drinks before/after the run; expressions of enjoyment of eating after the workout or completing race; preparation for the workout or race; other persons present in photos, *i.e.* family members, coaches, training colleagues; event-related equipment, such as medals, certificates, cups, bibs, runners' outfits. Aesthetic elements of the analyzed images, such as visual representations of colors, lines and visual objects, were identified.

Content (verbal expressions) and visual data analysis of the images led to the detection of the main features of social and emotional contexts shaping running activities. The socio-emotional part of the aesthetics of the pictures demonstrates happiness, sense of satisfaction after the achievement (*e.g.*, completion of the running race), overcoming challenges or even fears; representing the strength, preparedness of the race participants. The pictures shot right after completing the running distance usually represent people smiling, holding their medals in the hands, with happy facial expressions, signifying they have conquered obstacles throughout the race distance, overcame challenges, put in big efforts, and successfully completed the race. The demonstration of positive emotions and visual sport aesthetics was spotted as one of the frequent ones.

Medals and bibs were studied and analyzed according to their visual content (Figure 1). Creativity features, detected during analysis, manifested in national (creatively modified) ornaments, thematic events (Santa Claus) images, a figure of a one hour runner in the stadium' (made for the one hour running event), and images related to the contemporary running environment (or equipment), such as a sneaker(s) (a medal on the form of a running shoe), a smart watch, a figure of a running man, a water bottle and rout charts, elevation diagrams.



Figure 1. Some examples of medals' visual content (source: created by author)

Other photos demonstrate positive emotions, a sense of belonging (to the community and/or friendships), and support: pictures with friends, running colleagues, or a group of individuals (team members or supporters, co-workers, friends, family members, etc.) taken before, during, or after the event. In this section of the images, friendship, being part of a group, and belonging to a social structure dominate. Photos of hugs, smiles, enjoyment, running while holding hands, making high five, thumbs-up, hand heart, or kissing, making funny poses or mimics, manifest.

Theatrical elements of the running events during the research were detected, which are as follows: space arrangement – main stage, food/beverage place(s), mobile/temporary shops (offering sport garments, supplements, sport equipment, etc.), massage point(s), medical point(s); runner tracks (movement arrangement) – volunteer's points, photographers' places; event's sound – speeches of hosts and guests of the events, honoring the best racers, awarding with medals, etc. In the *Vilnius Marathon* (of 2022) (Facebook photos) the variety of participants was detected. Whether conscious or not, in the photos, manifestations of diversity were evident: running while pushing a wheelchair, elder ones on the track, foreign runners; children's appearance in photos, or running with a dog. Creativity manifested in participating runner's identity's creation such as wearing a costume of popular culture heroes (e.g., Spider-Man), holding philosophical poster with the slogan *I run, I live* or humorous one *If you are still married, you didn't train enough*. The runners visually seem to present themselves via performance, charisma, glamour, intense, positive emotions which create an energetic, festive atmosphere of the event.

Written and verbal artistry in the runners' subculture is embodied in running culture. For instance, some of the names of the running clubs (see *begimotaure.lt*, 2024; Lietuvos BMA, 2024) reflect creative attitudes: *Origami Runners*, *Wild Souls*, *Volvere Run*, *Focus Running*, *OCR Baltic Warriors*, *The Wonderer* (Lithuanian: *Klajūnas*), *Million Steps*, *Storm* (Lithuanian: *Vėtra*), *Speed* (Lithuanian: *Greitis*), *Green Team*, *So, Catch Me* (Lithuanian: *Na, pagauk*). Trail or obstacle course racing (OCR) runs named *Smithy of a Trail* (Lithuanian: *Trailo kalvė*) and *Way of a Beaver* (Lithuanian: *Bebro kelias*) should be mentioned here too as a representatives of creativity. The names reflect the admiration of the spirit of energy (*wild*), strength (*warriors*), fun attitudes (with references towards nature or local historical past, *storm*, *beaver*, *smithy*).

At the public *Facebook* post by OCR organizer *Way of a Beaver*, a set of entertaining runners team names were published. The names manifest creative self-expression in running subculture through creation of humorous, unexpected, or exclusively individualistic participant(s) team names. Some of them to mention: *Batmen* (Lithuanian: *Betmenai*), *UFOs* (Lithuanian: *Ufonautai*), *Indestructibles* (Lithuania: *Nesunaikinami*), *Seals of Utena* (Lithuanian: *Utenos ruoniai*), *Tar Masters* (Lithuanian: *Smalos meistrai*), *Dam Breakers* (Lithuanian: *Užtvankų griovėjai*), *Have Some Common Sense?* (Lithuanian: *Sveiko proto turi?*), *Adventurers* (Lithuanian: *Avantiūristai*), *Dirt* (Lithuanian: *Purvai*), *Not Normal* (Lithuanian: *Nenormalus*), *Splashing Lanterns* (Lithuanian: *Teliūškuojantys žibintai*) (facebook.com, 2023). Meaning or semantics of the names suggest ideas of sense of humor (e.g., *UFOs*), enthusiasm (e.g., *Indestructibles*), simultaneously manifesting sense of community and identity.

Special attention attracts thematic running events, such as festive Christmas runs or social support runs, such as *Pink Run* to pay attention to and support women's breast cancer issue (*Pink Ribbon* support run). The aesthetic image of thematic runs attendees' outfits and behaviors manifests theatrical and performative elements. Costumes reflect the mood of a feast: Santa Claus(es), Santa's gnomes, Snowmen, Spider-Man, and Supermen. In *Pink Ribbon* races, a pink color on the attendees' outfits, as well as surroundings of an event, dominate. Runners wearing costumes tend to play a freestyle role, to create positive emotional atmosphere, to make fun of the event or situation, and celebrate in response with the race theme. The discussed compartment represents a combination of creativity and expression of values of support, unity, simultaneously demonstrates enthusiasm by running event participants. Above discussed manifestations of miscellaneous artistic attitudes towards leisure running activities represent free-style, creative element(s) of runners' identity.

8. Discussion: everyday running, individual experiences, and creativity

Creativity might be represented via a creative approach (attitude) towards everyday practices (e.g., improvisation, see Lemons, 2005), individual arrangements of sports garments and equipment, or practical organization, such as, for example, a creative way to carry a water bottle while running in the most economical (and most comfortable) manner. This type of creative behavior usually referred both to everyday workouts and running races and was usually related to practical issues, such as running in the most convenient (and so probably more effective) manner: the runner in this case becomes creative (and practical) to solve the issues during everyday runs. For instance, to reasons of keeping runner's eyes (physically) safe from snowflakes painfully hitting the eyes while running against the wind in snowy winter day, or placing a water bottle behind the T-shirt instead of carrying it in the hand. A possible solution was to the first issue to wear a summer cap⁵ which helps perfectly to prevent eyes from direct snowflakes' hitting. In above mentioned cases, creativity served as a tool for coping with practical everyday workouts challenges. Creativity manifested for reasons of practical everyday solutions, simultaneously representing that is personality's features: ability to invent, to create (*DIY*), to use imagination.

⁵ Which is usually is designed for summer, to protect a face from the sun.

During the routine runs, the spectrum of feelings is experienced and various thoughts might ponder in the head of the runner. In quite a number of cases, those thoughts and emotions correlated with runner's everyday life experiences, such as undergoing work or family issues. In author's case, during the runs, intellectual "discoveries" while routine runnings usually manifested in the form of a comparison (or analogy), for example, if one starts working too hard at the beginning of the new job, that one risks to "burned out" too soon, as this similarly happens while running: if to overdo with too quick tempo at the beginning of the distance, it becomes much harder to continue and finish the distance at the desired pace because of too mighty efforts exploited at the very beginning of the competition. Those comparisons served as insights, kind of "micro-revelations" on the actualities of runner's personal and formal life. By evoking new ideas and insights, running practice served as a creative catalyst, penetrating and enriching other spheres of racer's life, not the ones directly connected with physical activity.

Working out individually manifested as breaking out an everyday routine (or boredom): a solitary run in the park or the forest, with one's personal thoughts and feelings usually ends with a status "empty head" (a feeling of relaxation, when routine worries a forgotten) in some stage of the run. According to some authors, everyday leisure running might be expressed in choices of non-boring running route compositions, where geographical and historical features act as elements of attractiveness (Stodółka et al., 2017, p. 282). Craving for novelty, *i.e.* appealing, non-usual trail choices for running demonstrates a purposeful manifestations of creative actions.

Grounded in running practice, creativity exposes itself in the form of an escape from the routine "system", as it serves as a temporary ejection from conformist, "numbing routine". Through meeting people (greeting other runners), praising regular park attendees for fitness activity, implementing training plans (*e.g.*, completing hard intervals or weekend log-runs), recreational running practices contribute to the urban lifestyle socially, and culturally via breaking the regular routine, transforming it into a positively distracting practice(s), filling the runners with affirmative emotions and energy (see also Malchrowicz-Moško & Poczta, 2018).

Running is rooted in an individualistic performance: regular training generally is implemented in a solitude. Individual experiences of solitude may differ: one loves to run with music in the earphones, others enjoy silence; some enjoy city parks or pavements, while others enjoy nature trails. Solitary runs in nature and public spaces reflect the ambivalent runner's tendencies to operate in "visible" and/or "invisible" status(es). Meanwhile solitude seems to be exalted, there is still appears a disposition for being socially detectable: putting training software screenshots, creatively composed photos, and workout results in social media remains one of the most employed forms of social sharing among the ("lonely") runners – information (*e.g.*, social media (*Facebook*) stories, posts) on performed running activities are shared in personal accounts or related groups. Solitude in such a way is presented, shared, and simultaneously blended with a larger community. Table 1 below sums up the discussed forms of creativity manifestations in a recreational runners' subculture and individual running experiences.

Table 1. Creativity manifestations: a generalizing table (source: created by author)

Creativity expressed via...	More detailed description
...visual aesthetics and verbal ingenuity	Appears on medals, bibs, outfits, accessories exterior; include verbal inscriptions (e.g., on posters, names of teams).
... <i>Do It Yourself</i> , bricolage	Is reflected in organisation of running-related equipment and processes; personal choices related to everyday running routine.
...mind, emotions, inner reflections	Manifests via thoughts, ideas, impressions, emotions (e.g., enthusiasm) sensations (e.g., enjoyment of nature), personal thoughts (e.g., insights, reflections) during the runs.

As Dadelo (2020, p. 253) observes, participation in running events serves as a form of leisure-based socialization. Research results of this paper endorsed Dadelo's (2020) study by manifesting the communicative nature of a recreational runner. First, when sharing running-related information or images on social media, individual running experience(s) becomes included in social (virtual) communication. Second, running practice may catalyse intense thinking, triggering "paths" of communication between the "inner" and "outer" runner worlds via emergence of a comparisons and reflective thinking during the routine runs.

9. Conclusions

Nowadays, running enthusiasts demonstrate that leisure time is practiced in creative ways. In running subculture, the following creativity forms were distinguished: a) classical understanding of creativity (in sense of artistic/creative personality), b) as an individual and *DIY*/bricolage-based creativity (in the sense that creativity might manifest in anyone, not only in exceptionally talented ones).

Classical creativity has reflected as an aesthetic and artistic elements in runners' clothes via creation of personal, individual outfits (e.g., of popular personages, especially, but not limited to the thematic runs); bibs and medals representing images related to the theme of the race organized (e.g., image of Santa Claus or a terrain elevation diagram); creative images (a figure of a one hour runner) or contemporary running equipment (smart watch, water bottle); running-related paraphernalia, runners verbal ingenuity (making creative unexpected connections), or humor (fun team names, posters' inscriptions).

Individual, *DIY*/bricolage-based creativity manifested as the unexpected, creative individual use of running-related necessities or arrangement of running equipment: e.g., placing a water bottle in non-traditional way or using a summer cap in winter. Because of the bricolage-like placement of the objects, such as the arrangement of running-related things/equipment for the purposes of comfortability during the runs, creativity manifests in the shape of "freedom" of (self)expression, use of imagination, and ingenuity.

Creativity elements in recreational runners' public events surroundings emerged in theatrical forms: a special space arrangements (at the time of the public runs), including the main stage, food/beverage place(s), mobile/temporary shops (offering sport garments, supplements, sport equipment, etc.); massage point(s), medical point(s), volunteer's points (especially the one supporting the runners; may appear holding posters, playing loud music); photographers'; event's verbal and sound performance (speeches of hosts, guests of the events; music), and honouring the best runners, giving medals after the event.

Creativity from a personal perspective manifested through the inner experiences of a runner meanwhile the running process itself: thoughts, reflections, or practically creative solutions while running routine or thinking in analogies (comparisons) during the run.

Contemporary recreational runners' identities represent ambivalent values of solitude and simultaneous belonging to a group, represented as a need for possessing both opposing statuses of feeling solitude and both belonging to the community – lonely running practices might be shared via social media and thus become "socialized". Creative forms of social sharing (photos, social media posts) serve as a communicational feature, harmonizing a person's needs and choices by allowing to combine contradictory (ambivalent) forms of the same leisure (running) activities practiced both in solitude and in the community. Representations of belonging to the community, positive emotions reflected in the photographs representing participant's experiences of overcoming (running-related) challenges, finishing the running distance.

Analyzed data opened a window to runners' thoughts and ways of thinking, which unlocked sensations of "flow", immersion, delight, and productivity that are features of the creativity phenomenon (Grakauskaitė-Karkockienė, 2006, p. 10). Creativity emerged as an individual characteristic of a personality, a pursuit of freedom and autonomy: running alone, feeling independent in sense of free running schedule (no need to adjust personal time with others, facilitates spontaneous workouts), possibility of running with or without colleagues, running on or off road (trail) at any time of day (or night). Creativeness of a personality manifested as willing to escape routine workouts trails, striving for novelty.

Research revealed creativity manifestations in recreational running subculture through visual image, verbal artistry, theatrical elements. Study revealed runners' identity synchronizing a pursuit for individual self-expression, freedom, possible escape of the boredom, and maintaining one's solitude and autonomy along with the parallel aspirations for belonging to a social group.

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