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What gets and keeps them  
running?



Wesselien te Raa

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# What gets and keeps them running?

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A literature study about the motivations of  
running

Course: YSS-84312

Student: Wesselien te Raa

Registration number: 900618-677-010

First Academic Advisor: Laura Bouwman

Second Academic Advisor: Lenneke Vaandrager

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## Summary

The purpose of this research is to gain more effective strategies which get and keep people running, in order to promote health. The insight in the motivations of runners to run and how they implement these running motivations in their everyday-life situation can help to construct these strategies. During this study the ecological perspective is taken into account just existing theory about the gap between motivations to exercise on the one side and the actual exercise on the other. Motivations are divided in motivations related to physical health and other motivations. Start running primary determined by motivations based on physical health whereas the continuing of running is determined by other motivations. Restrictive factors to implement running motivations in the runner's daily life-situation are time and the cost of running on social relationships. Three strategies that are found to implement running in daily life are the taking time, buying time and sharing time strategy. A recommendations for further study is looking at the existing implementing strategies runners have to implement running in their daily life.

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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Physical activity and health

Chronic diseases, particularly cardiovascular diseases, type 2 diabetes, cancer, and respiratory diseases, account for more than 50 % of all deaths worldwide. Tobacco use, poor diet, and physical inactivity are among the major risk factors contributing to this disease burden (Yach, Leeder et al. 2005). This is a concern for the contemporary population, and has resulted in multiple actions. Chronic diseases have great impact on the health status and life expectancy of the population. One of the risk factors for the mentioned chronic diseases is physical inactivity. This risk factor is a disturbing new phenomenon. Nowadays, we live in an environment in which a lot of things are automatically controlled. For example, we travel by car, our food is harvested mechanically and we order clothes online instead of going to a shop. We do not need to be physically active in order to get food and find energy to keep ourselves alive. Opposing physical inactivity, there is physical activity. The daily exercise we get is decreasing due to this more and more automatically controlled environment thus the importance of exercise in addition to daily activities increases. In the literature is found that regular physical activity using large muscle groups, such as walking, running, or swimming, produces cardiovascular adaptations that increase exercise capacity, endurance, and skeletal muscle strength (Thompson, Buchner et al. 2003). There is also evidence that exercise reduces the risk of other chronic diseases, including type 2 diabetes, osteoporosis, obesity, depression, and cancer of the breast and colon (Thompson, Buchner et al. 2003). So, by stimulating exercise, risk factors for chronic diseases can be reduced. Besides the physical benefits of exercise, there is also evidence that exercise will reduce risk factors for mental disorders, mainly depression. An increase of fifty minutes exercise per week is associated with a decrease of fifty percent in the chance of becoming depressed (Babyak, Blumenthal et al. 2000) Another study to the effects of running or weight lifting on self-concept in clinically depressed women of Ossip-Klein (1989) says that running and weightlifting produce long-term reductions of the symptoms for depression for clinically depressed woman and the outcome maintains over time (Ossip-Klein, Doyne et al. 1989). In both studies, (Thompson, Buchner et al. 2003) and (Ossip-Klein, Doyne et al. 1989), it is said that physical activity in the form of running has a positive effect on both physical and mental health.

## 1.2 Theoretical framework

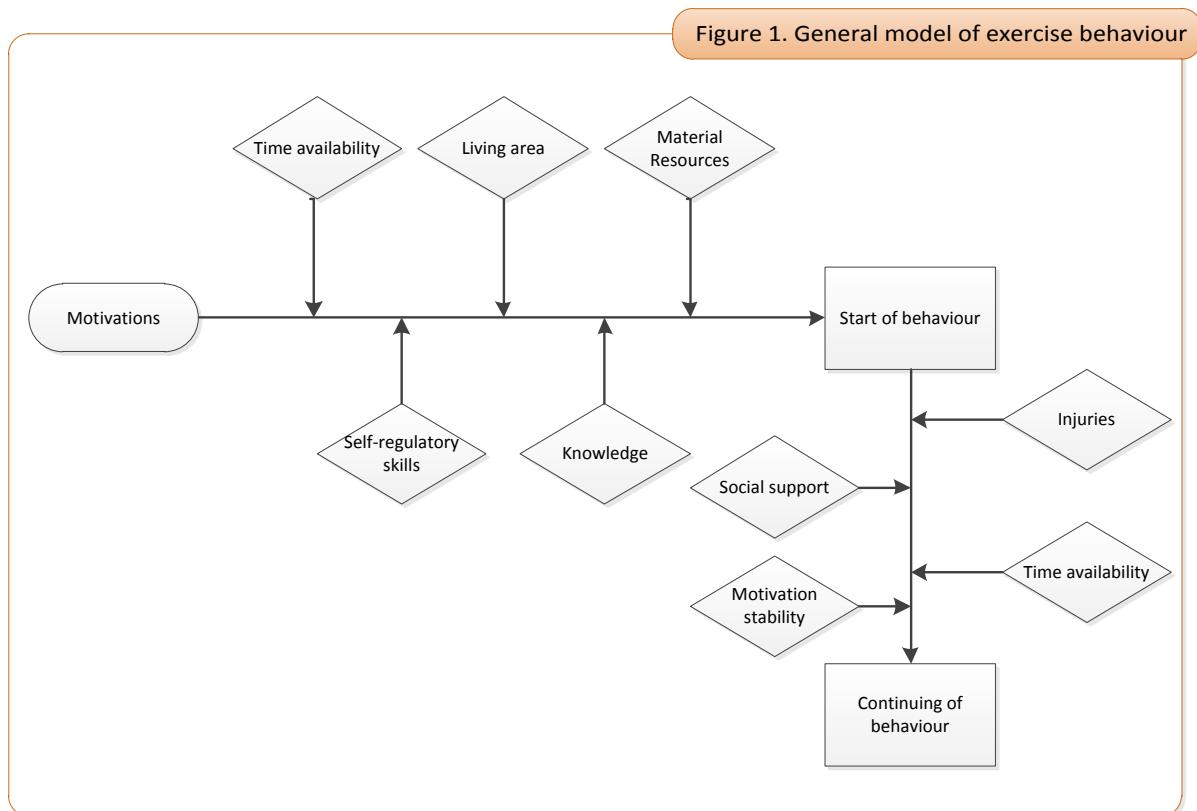
### 1.2.1 Health promotion

The concept of health promotion is an important aspect in this thesis. The WHO, (1986) describes health promotion as a process of enabling people to increase control over the determinants of health and thereby improve their health. Participation is essential to sustain health promotion action (WHO 1998). In another report from the WHO, written following the European Ministerial Conference on Counteracting Obesity, is said that the stimulation of physical exercise is of great importance in order to bring the obesity epidemic under control. Improved diet and physical activity will have a substantial and often rapid impact on public health, beyond the benefits related to reducing overweight and obesity (WHO 2006). Other health organisations like the NSIB also emphasize the importance of exercise to stay physically and mentally healthy. They say that the role of exercise is important in an active lifestyle. It contributes to a reduction of obesity and prevents many health problems. In addition, exercise has a positive effect on wellbeing and it makes people feel satisfied (NISB 2011)<sup>1</sup>. Scientific evidence of the importance of physical activity in order to promote health refers mostly to the biomedical side of health. Biomedical research focuses on how failures on the human body can be eliminated or prevented. Researchers emphasize the relationship between exercise and reduced physical and mental illness. This evidence is stated to motivate people to go outside and be active. Behavioural scientists are trying to change people's behaviour to reduce these risks. For example trying to get people more physically active by emphasizing the health benefits. According to the findings of (Sjöström, Oja et al. 2006), however, the prevalence of sufficient physical activity for health across the member countries of Europe is 29%. This means that a percentage of 70% still has an insufficient physical activity level.

### 1.2.2 Health promotion strategies

To promote health, the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport instructs institutes like the NISB to construct action plans in order to stimulate the physical activity of the population. Examples of these action plans in Dutch are '30minutnbewegen', de 'beweegkuur', 'dubbel 30' and the National Action plan for Sport and Exercise (NISB 2011)<sup>2</sup>. The NASB is an action plan attempting to reduce the lack of exercise, reduce overweight among the Dutch population and target other health problems like diabetes, cardiovascular diseases and depression (Heijkoop 2010). Optimal strategies to create supportive conditions for exercise have already been discussed by Bouwman & van Woerkum (2009) in their theoretical research about the gap between knowledge and good intentions on the one side and bad behaviour on the other. Based on existing knowledge a hypothetical model about the gap between the motivations to exercise and the actual exercise performance is constructed (Figure 1.) The actual exercise performance is divided into 'start of behaviour' and 'continuing of behaviour'. Factors that affect the performance of behaviour, found in the literature, are also included in the model.

According to the barometer 'Health and Food' the lack of time and the living area influence the outcome of desired behaviour (Barometer 2006). The contact, support and encouragement to the activity, also called the 'social base', is mentioned as a factor which affects the desired behaviour (Barrell, Chamberlain et al. 1989). Woodgate et al., (2005) found that the self-regulatory skills influence the performance of the behaviour. Knowledge to perform the behaviour, material resources and weather conditions are part of a range of decisions and actions (Bouwman 2009). These influences are in the hypothetical model described as 'knowledge', 'material resources'. Weather conditions and living area are included in the term 'physical environment'. In the research of Scheerder & Boen (2009) is found that the incurrence of an injury determines the continuing of running. Preference for another sport also described as lack of motivation, social support, time availability and the presence of a trainer and running mates determine the continuing of running as well (Scheerder and Boen 2009). In the hypothetical model these influences are described as 'injuries', 'motivation stability', 'social support' and 'time availability'.



### 1.2.3 Ecological perspective

To get insight in people's motivation to exercise, for instance, solely focus on the individual's intrinsic motivation. But considering that there are multiple influences in the individual's everyday-life situation, which interact with each other, a broader view will be taken in this study. The multiple influences in the individual's everyday-life situation come from the social and physical environment levels. These two levels have influence on the individual's everyday-life situation, but conversely, the individual himself also has influence on his social and physical environment. To get a good insight in the way people themselves view exercise within their everyday-life situation the "ecological perspective" will be used (Glanz, Rimer et al. 2005). This is a multilevel approach and gives an overview of all the environmental levels which have an influence on the individual. The ecological perspective emphasizes the interaction between, and interdependence of, factors within and across all levels of a health problem, such as the implementation of exercise in daily life. It highlights people's interactions with their physical and sociocultural environments (Glanz, Rimer et al. 2005). In this thesis the form of exercise that is being focused on is running. The focus on running will be further recognized in the research objective. This makes that within the ecological perspective I will focus on how individual's themselves view running and how the environmental factors influence the implementation of running in their social lives.

### **1.3 Problem definition**

Bouwman & van Woerkum (2009) say that efforts to promote physical activity target factors within the individual and outside the individual. These efforts are included in the constructed hypothetical model (Figure 1.) for example; physical environment, knowledge, self-regulatory skills and material resources. Then Bouwman & van Woerkum (2009) say that although this 'factor' approach has successfully created awareness and motivation, an additional approach is needed in order to accomplish change. The efforts only, to promote physical activity are not sufficient to embed physical activity in other social practices. Ingledew & Markland (2007) suggest in their study there should come more insight in the role of motives in exercise participation. It is inferred that exercise promotion programmes, without denigrating appearance/weight motives, should encourage other motives more conducive to autonomous motivation (Ingledew and Markland 2008). This illuminates the problem that will be discussed in this theses. Namely, the problem discussed in this thesis is that there is not enough insight in the motivations of people to start and continue exercising and the way people implement exercise motivations in their everyday-life.

### **1.4 Research objective**

There are numerous ways to exercise and be physically active. Personally my favourite way to exercise is running. Alone, and especially long distances in a wooded area. Running makes me feel peaceful and free, afterwards I feel content and confident. These feelings motivate me to continue running and to push my boundaries. This is simply my own experience of running, but what about the great herd of runners? As already mentioned in the introduction, running has a positive effect on both physical and mental health (Ossip-Klein, Doyne et al. 1989; Thompson, Buchner et al. 2003) Benefits on physical and mental health due to running can also be found in the research of Koplan et al. (1982). Smokers who begin to run have a great chance of quitting smoking after a while. Similarly, weight loss is also associated with running (Koplan, Powell et al. 1982). Based on the scientific evidence that the benefits of running can play a role in health promotion, the type of exercise that will be looked at in this thesis is running. The scientific objective of this research is to gain more effective strategies which get and keep people running, in order to promote health. The insight in the motivations of runners to run and how they implement these running motivations in their everyday-life situation can help to construct these strategies. According to (Glasser 1976) "anyone running more than fifteen minutes a day is running for reasons other than health. Health is not a primary goal for a vast numbers of runners". This states that nearly every runner must have other motives to run besides the health aspect. So, a distinction between motivations related to health and other motivations will be made.

Everywhere around us there are running initiatives such as "start to run", "runners world" and "runners meeting point" persuading people to go running. Almost every sports brand like Adidas and Nike has its own online coach programme to support people to start running or help put together a training program. All participants have their own reasons to participate in a running program or competition. Are these initiatives really critical for getting people to go running? More importantly, do they help people to continue running? To maintain long-term health benefits it is important to exercise on a regular base. These questions are relevant to get insight in the continuing of running.

## 1.5 Research questions

As explained before the objective of this research is to get more effective strategies to get and keep people running in order to promote health. Insight in the motivations of runners and the implementation of these running motivations can help to construct these strategies. Therefore, the research question discussed in this thesis is: '*Which motivations do runners have that get and keep them running and how do they implement these running motivations in their everyday-life situation?*'

To answer this central question, the following sub questions are formulated:

1. How can runners be characterised?
2. What are the motivations related to physical health for people to start running?
3. What are the other motivations for people to start running?
4. What are the motivations related to physical health for people to keep running?
5. What are the other motivations for people to keep running?
6. Which factors are restricted by the implementation of running in their everyday-life situation?
7. Which strategies do runners use to implement running in their everyday-life situation?

### 1.5.1 Definition of concepts:

Other motivations	-	motivations based on other aspects than physical health.
Runners	-	people who, at least once a week, voluntarily run in their leisure time.

In this thesis the definition of health from the WHO will be used. In the WHO constitution of 1948 Health is defined as:

*'A state of complete physical, social and mental well-being, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.'*

*Within the context of health promotion, health has been considered less as an abstract state and more as a means to an end which can be expressed in functional terms as a resource which permits people to lead an individually, socially and economically productive life.*

*Health is a resource for everyday life, not the object of living. It is a positive concept emphasizing social and personal resources as well as physical capabilities.'* (WHO 1986).

This definitions says that health has several aspects namely physical, social and mental well-being. As mentioned in the introduction, the aspect on which most researchers focus is the physical aspect. There is little research on the social and mental well-being side of health. Thus, this will be the focus of this thesis.

### **1.5.2 Outline of the thesis**

This thesis will offer insight in the world of a runner. First an overview of the research on running will be given and a description of runners will be viewed. Second, an explanation of the concept motivation will be given to understand how motivations are formed and can be influenced. Then the results will be presented concerning the motivations runners have to start and continue running.

There will be examples given of the implementation strategies runners have to implement running in their everyday-life situation. Finally, the findings will be discussed and a conclusion will be given.

## 2. Methods and techniques

### 2.1 Approach

In order to answer the research questions an exploratory desk research was conducted. This means that literature was systematically analysed. The desk research and the writing of the report was done over an eight week period. In order to get useful literature, different sources were consulted. These sources included scientific databases such as Scopus and Google Scholar. Scientific articles and reports were collected from these databases. Terms used when searching for useful literature were: 'addiction', 'commitment', 'context', 'distance running', 'environment', 'exercise', 'implementation', 'influence', 'marathon', 'motivations', 'practice', 'runner', 'running', 'social', 'strategy'. These terms were used by themselves or in combinations.

Online information from institutes like NISB, ministry of health, welfare and sport, and the WHO was also consulted. This information was obtained through their websites. At the start of my thesis my academic advisor also offered some literature about the subject itself and about things related to the subject like food choice strategies, and exercise motivations in general.

## 2.2 Overview of literature use

Subquestion	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Title of literature &amp; terms</b>							
Self-Accomplishment Through Running (Altheide and Pfuhl, 1980) Terms: Running,	X	X	X		X	X	
A Positive Addiction (Glasser, 1970) Terms: exercise, addiction							X
An investigation of the Different Motivations of Marathon Runners with Varying Degrees of Experience (Masters and Ogles, 1995) Terms: Runners, motivations, marathon			X	X	X		
Ideology and commitment in Family life: A Case Study of Runners (Barrell. et al., 1989) Terms: Runners, commitment, practice, strategy	X	X	X		X		X
Conceiving the self (Rosenberg, 1979) Terms: social, self							
(In Dutch) Evenementlopers in beeld (Van Bottenburg, 2009) Terms: runners, context, motivations		X	X				
What keeps them running? The 'cycle of commitment' of long distance runners (Yair, 1992) Terms: commitment, distance running	X						
(In Dutch) Vlaanderen loopt! (Scheerder and Boen, 2009) Terms: implementation, social, running	X		X	X			

## 3. Results

### 3.1 Overview of research on running

When you go outside on a sunny Sunday morning, you are always surrounded by other people who left their warm beds and faced the day such as cyclers, people walking their dogs, birdwatchers and runners. Especially at places where motorists are not allowed to drive, the streets are filled by these people. But who, exactly, are these runners who prefer to go outside for a run instead of having a lazy Sunday morning? Are these runners only single persons without friends or family they can spend time with, or old retired men with extinguished marriages? In this chapter the anonymous distance runner will be further investigated.

There is a lot written about runners in Scientific literature. Most researchers try to specify the homogeneous group of runners by age, gender, education etc. But besides these social-demographic classifications you can also specify on their running characteristics like amateurs, competitors or professionals. When searching on social-demographic information about distance runners there is a great deal of information available on this subject. Research has been done about the behaviour and motivation of joggers, distance runners, marathon runners and all kinds of running activators. Such research includes the commitment of distance runners (Yair 1992), the examination of the motives and self-accomplishments of runners (Altheide and Pfuhl 1980), the degree of involvement and motivation when taking part in full or half marathon events, the impact of participation on runners and their families (Barrell, Chamberlain et al. 1989) and the social science analysis of running in Vlaanderen (Scheerder and Boen 2009). Together these researches provided results about several groups of distance runners as well as different social-demographic data about these groups. It is striking that many researchers try to divide runners based on social-demographic data or on characteristics depending on frequency, duration and intensity of running.

#### 3.1.1 Social-demographic data of runners

Researchers who tried to fit runners in a certain age or profession box are for example Yair (1992), Altheide (1980) and Scheerder and Boen (2009). According to the research done by Yair (1992), the mean age of male runners is 29 years and they have an average educational level of 13 years of schooling. Yair (1992) also identified the commitments of 'professional level', 'semi-professional level' and 'amateur level' runners. By doing so, he correlates commitment with consistent and persistent running behaviour. In the study of Altheide (1980) they found that the mean age of distance runners was 35.7 years. From the male subjects fifty-three percent were employed in professions, another fifteen percent classified themselves as administrators; seven percent were in sales, six percent were students, and five percent were in service work. The average age of the participants in the research about the popularity of running activities in Vlaanderen was 34 years. These participants included highly educated people, students, people with professional activities and couples with children (Scheerder and Boen 2009). They made a classification of runners in order to view important social trends and to draw a sociologic and psychological profile of the runners. All researchers mentioned here came with different outcomes. It seems as though there isn't a single runner profile which represents the entire crowd of running people.

What does the average age and education level of runners given tell us about their motivation? In this literature study the classification of runners by age, sex, education level and so on, is not really important. This information only is certainly not enough to get more insight on the motivations of runners to run and the way they implement running in their daily life-situation.

### **3.1.2 Runner characteristics**

The other division of runners is by classification based on runner characteristics like; frequency, duration, intensity and commitment of running. Scheerder and Boen (2009) classified runners who run less than once a week as incidental runners and runners who go out for a run at least once a week as frequent runners. This distinction between runners is based on the frequency of the running activity. Yair (1992) made a distinction between runners based on commitment to go running. *Amateurs* have low levels of commitment, and are not driven to win in a competition. They are proud of their activity, and they all identify themselves with running. *Semi-professionals* want to win, and are motivated by the desire to feel the joys of victory. *Professional* runners are most committed to running and have high expectations to achieve fast times in running and the feeling that running chances their thrill of winning. They are willing to pay the costs, and to forgo other joys of life. They are even prepared to upset those close to them (Yair 1992). Yair's (1992) classification of distance runners into amateurs, semi-professional and professional runners is not only based on frequency of running but also on underlying factors like commitment and the desire to win in a competition. Barrell (1989) experiences a distinction between "fun" runners and "serious" runners. He says: "most serious runners for example kept diaries in order to record and keep a check on their performances and many could talk at length about food and diet, information which they routinely shared with each other during training or at events". They seemed to have developed a culture of running. Within this culture, being a serious runner meant being 'dedicated' and 'self-disciplined'(Barrell, Chamberlain et al. 1989). This distinction in runners is even more specified on the social context of a runner and, in this case, the concepts of culture have been included.

All three researchers tried to put runners into different categories based on frequency of running, commitment, desire to win or dedication. But can amateur runners not be highly committed to running? At the same time there may be highly motivated runners who run six times a week and low motivated professional runners who run the same number. In this literature study, it isn't interesting to know how much or how fast people run. It is interesting to see what drives people to start and keep running and how they manage this in their everyday-life.

## 3.2. Motivation

According to the research of Yair (1992) runners embrace their activity to different extents. Some like to run on a daily basis, others on weekends only; some like to compete often, others enjoy the loneliness of meditative running; some like to run marathons, while others prefer shorter durations (Yair 1992). There are various motivations to go out for a run. In order to try to get insight in the motivations of people to start and keep running all kinds of different variables have to be taken into account. The runners for example have different ages, a different living, different amounts of free time, have other social lives, other friends, other family structures and so on. It is hard to identify the pure motivation of someone to run, because their motivation is influenced by all sorts of environmental factors and by the person him/ herself. In order to answer the sub-questions of this literature study a distinction will be made in the physical health related motivations and other motivations which start and keep people running. Before answering the sub-questions I will start by describing and explaining the different motivations, the influence of self-concepts and commitment on motivation.

### 3.2.1 Orientation and level of motivations

To be motivated means *to be moved* to do something (Ryan and Deci 2000). People who are motivated are activated and energized and people who are unmotivated feel no inspiration to act. Motivation is not an isolated term. Ryan and Deci (2000) say that motivations vary in *level* (i.e., how much) and *orientation* (i.e. what type). Orientation of motivation concerns the underlying attitudes and goals that give rise to action – that is, it concerns the ‘why’ of actions (Ryan and Deci 2000). For example a runner can be highly motivated to run three times a week, because he wants to win a competition.

### 3.2.2 Intrinsic and extrinsic motivations

In the research of Hayamizy (1997) motivations are divided in extrinsic and intrinsic motivations. Intrinsically motivated behaviours have been viewed as those that are engaged in primarily for the pleasure and satisfaction derived from performing them, whereas extrinsically motivated behaviours are those that are engaged in as a means to an end (Hayamizu 1997). Motivations to run can be both intrinsic and extrinsic. The sense of freedom during running or the enjoyment of being outdoors can be intrinsic motivations. Weight loss on the other hand can be an extrinsic motivation.

### 3.2.3 The use of motivations

Barrell (1989) says that motivations may be used to help justify, or provide support for certain activities or behaviours. This will mean that a person not only uses a motivation to stimulate himself to behave in a certain way, but also to justify his behaviour to his social environment. This shows the difficulty to do something what is not really naturally to do, in this case to go out for a run. First you have to motivate yourself to get off your seat and be active, second you have to justify your behaviour to others who do not. This means that you have to be very determined of the activity, otherwise it is likely that the good intention will fail. Not everybody has a firm character, and sometimes you have an off-day. How can it be that all these people still run, despite this? What are their motivations and how do they convince themselves and others why they should go out running? With these struggling factors in mind, the motivation of runners will be further examined.

## 4. Get running

The process of actually getting started with running may be neither simple, sudden, nor socially or psychologically unproblematic (Barrell, Chamberlain et al. 1989). Why would you start doing something what you never did before? Most people do not need to fill up their free time because they have nothing else to do. So, people need strong motivations to start running. The motivation to start running will be divided into physical health related motivations and other motivations.

### 4.1 Physical motivations

#### 4.1.1 Improvement of physical health

Barrell (1989) says that for most runners, a principal concern to start running is the desire to get, or to keep, 'fit'. This motivation, according to the research of Barrell (1989), is only based on the physiological basis. Altheide (1980) found another aspect that determines the motivation to start running, namely the psychological aspect. He says "The decision to run often depends on the desire for a transformation of the self in physical or psychological terms" (Altheide and Pfuhl 1980). So the psychological aspect can also play a role on the motivation to start running. The motivation to start running based on the physical aspect is also found by Van Bottenburg (2009). Improvement of the physical condition and physical health are the most important motivations for runners to start running (Van Bottenburg 2009). Therefore, the personal desire to improve physical or psychological health can be a motivation of someone to start running.

#### 4.1.2 Change of current status in the desired position

The desire to improve something comes from a dissatisfaction of people with their current situation. Altheide (1980) says that a major specific motivation factor to start running is perception of one's physical self, either extant or desired. He means that the difference between the current physical status of a person and his desired physical status influences the motivation of a person to start running. This desire to change the current situation into the desired position is mentioned by an interviewee in the study of Altheide (1980). One man said: "I was totally dissatisfied with my state of health and physical appearance, running was a principle mean to restore my health and achieve a more desirable physical image". Another interviewee saw running as a way of bringing down weight and waist measurement, along with blood pressure and triglyceride and cholesterol levels (Altheide and Pfuhl 1980). Running is, in both examples, seen as a way to change current physical status into a desired physical status.

## 4.2 Other motivations

Next to the physical health related motivations to start running, which are often proposed by the government and other health promotion organisations, people have other motivations to start running.

### 4.2.1 Influence of the social environment

Barrel (1989) argued that “the ‘social base’ is an important condition that is determinant for the beginning of a sport career in running”. In his case study he found that all committed female runners had found their ‘social base’ (the contact, support and encouragement to run) within the family (Barrell, Chamberlain et al. 1989). It seems that people who have friends or family who already run or have a positive attitude towards running are positively influenced by their social environment to take the step to start running . In his research Altheide (1980) also found the relationship between social environment and the impact on motivation of the runner to start running. He says that the contributing support to start running is due to the fact that the majority of the questionnaire subjects has a spouse and/ or children who run and even more have friends who run. They also indicate that family and friends are among the most important influences on their decision to run (Altheide and Pfuhl 1980). In both studies of Barrell (1989) and Altheide (1980) the social environment is seen as a major determining factor in the motivation to start running. By knowing this we still do not know anything specific about the exact motivation of the runner to start running, but it is made clear that the motivation to start running is determined by the social environment and not only based on individual desires.

### 4.2.2 Contact with others

According to the study of Van Bottenburg (2009) relaxation and conviviality are the next most important motivations to start running following improvement of the physical condition and physical health. Conviviality has to do with the contact with others. This is found in other research as well. Scheerder and Boen (2009) state that the establishment of making new social contacts is particularly important in running motivation for women. Especially among the unskilled and runners without a paid job.

### 4.2.3 Belonging

Besides the desire to have contact with others, I found a deeper underlying motivation in the study of Masters and Ogles (1995). According to this study people are motivated to go running so to get a feeling of affiliation. In the study of Master (1995) it is said that runners want to socialize with other runners, meet people, visit with friends and share a group identity. Hence, besides the motivation of meeting new people and making new contacts the motivation to belong can have influence on the motivation to start running.

### 4.2.4 Recognition

The desire to experience a sense of recognition can influence the motivation to go running. The study of Masters (1995) revealed that earning respect of peers, making family or friends proud and making people look up to them by running, makes runners feel recognized. In this case, running is a way to get a certain valuation and feeling of recognition.

## 5. Keep running

What determines whether a person continues running? Why would a runner go running again next week? The next step after beginning a running career is continuing. Online running initiatives like micoach initiated by Adidas and myasics by Asics are mainly focused on the physical performance of runners. They ask runners to register the frequency, duration, distance and speed of training in order to calculate the energy expenditure or weight loss. This way the encouragement for runners to continue running is physically orientated. There is less attention given to the social and mental well-being part of running.

Although little research has been done on the motivation and implementation of running in the everyday-life of runners, a few researchers wrote some things about the development of a running career. Altheide (1980) distinguishes three stages in his research. He says "the first major step in developing a running career is to make running part of daily routine, the second step is keeping the body in prime condition in order to run long distances and the third step is to organize the running around all the obligations of daily life (Altheide and Pfuhl 1980). Barrell (1989) gives other criteria which are determinant for the continuation of running. He says "an individual's progress along the running path has to be located within an understanding of the person's occupational circumstances, the household structure in which he or she is located, and the ideologies and relationships which together have an influence in the working and domestic environments" (Barrell, Chamberlain et al. 1989). Both researchers agree on the social environment as an important factor that affects the motivation of the runner to continue running.

### 5.1 Physical motivations

#### 5.1.1 Keeping the body healthy

Scheerder and Boen (2009) found in their research that for older runners the importance of a good condition and better health was a strong motivation to run. Also Masters and Ogles (1995) found corresponding motives. They write "becoming physically fit, prolonging life, reducing the chance of having a heart attack and staying in physical condition are samples items of the physical health motives which are mentioned by the respondents".

#### 5.1.2 Keeping the body in good shape

According to the study of Scheerder and Boen (2009) female runners are motivated to run due to the idea of keeping a beautiful body. This is related to the concern about weight. Masters and Ogles (1995) say the following about weight concern in their study. The interviewees see running as a manner that can help you look leaner, help control weight and help reduce weight (Masters and Ogles 1995). The literature shows that physical benefits of body image is, for some people, a strong motivation to run. These people see running as a way to get their desired physical appearance.

## 5.2 Other motivations

People do not do things for nothing, so it should give people something to go running and exhaust themselves. Barrell (1989) says that “It is equally clear that having started jogging, and then ‘running’ each runner begins to derive an enormous amount of satisfaction from this activity”. But what is this satisfaction? Can a more specific classification be made of the motivations of runners to continue running?

### 5.2.1 Running for a reward

Running can give people some kind of reward or can be an offset for something bad. Examples of runner’s experiences from the research of Barrell are feeling the sense of freedom or relaxation which they experienced while running (Barrell, Chamberlain et al. 1989). Thus, runners are motivated to continue running due to these rewarding .

### 5.2.2 Running to compensate

Barrell (1989) found in his study that running offered some compensation for, or escape from, routine, sedentary, or demanding work; even escape from other people – Running can give runners a sense of privacy, solitude – their ‘own’ time (Barrell, Chamberlain et al. 1989). So he says that running can act as an offset to bad consequences of an inactive lifestyle or as an escape from all this. In this case the motivation to keep running has nothing to do with the experience of running or the physical consequences. It is more a replacement of unwanted everyday concerns.

### 5.2.3 Running to continue experiencing a positive effect

Another motivation mentioned in the study of Barrell (1989) to continue running is that in the process of becoming a running, a complex dynamic between a person’s subjective experiences of running is involved. He says that these experiences are often expressed as ‘achievement’ and ‘success’. This shows that positive experiences with running make people want to do it again. The experiences of ‘achievement’ and ‘success’ which Barrell (1989) mentions can motivate people to keep running in order to keep experiencing this. It seems to be a kind of upward spiral which stimulates the runner to keep running. Altheide (1980) found something similar in his research. He writes that the accomplishments and physical changes of the body, along with encouragement from fellow runners, contribute to an appetite for more of the same; there are always more goals, more challenges and, in turn, more opportunities for self-enrichment and confidence (Altheide and Pfuhl 1980). It is clear that the feeling of self-enrichment and confidence and the setting of goals and challenges are motivations for runners to continue running . By running, they experience a sense of what they want to preserve. Now, it seems quite obvious why runners who once started running always continue running. However, Barrell writes “The early stages of getting started are felt as hard and demanding” (Barrell, Chamberlain et al. 1989). Altheide (1980) says the following about the implementation of running in the everyday-life: “The physical payoffs of routine exercise, especially long-distance running, are considered as part of a larger change in oneself, aspirations, and self-control” (Altheide and Pfuhl 1980). Hence, what he found was that the physical payoffs of running to get a change in oneself, achieve personal aspirations and achieve self-control goes at a cost. The feeling of a change in oneself, the personal achievement of aspirations and self-control can be a motivation to keep running due to positive experience, but the costs could also fall under the motivation “running for a reward” as previously discussed.

#### **5.2.4 Competing with others**

Altheide (1980) found in his study that for most runners racing and entering contests were not the main goals, but most runners see racing more as an integral part of the running experience. Competitors measure their own performance in relation to that of others. Altheide also says that other runners are not usually perceived as opponents, but provide the standard in terms of which a runner may assess his or her own performance (Altheide and Pfuhl 1980). According to Masters (1995) competing with others, getting a faster time than friends and beating someone who's never been beaten before the competition are motivations for people to run. So the competition with other runners as a motivation to keep running is found in both the research of Altheide(1980) and Masters (1995).

#### **5.2.5 Improving yourself**

Winning doesn't necessarily mean being the fastest in a competition, it can also mean improving yourself. Not every runner obviously participates in competitions so the subject of winning can mean beating others or beating yourself. Altheide (1980) found in his study that running is important to runners as a means of determining one's developing progress. Making progress affects one's self and the feeling of self-control. The winning element influences the running experience in a positive way. Beside these physical orientated goals that are dependent on others like; having a better condition than others, beating someone and measuring the performance in relation to that of others, there are also more physical goals orientated on the individual. According to Masters (1995) runners indicate that they are motivated to run so they can attempt to achieve personal goals. They want to improve their running speed or compete with themselves. They want to beat a certain time or want to push themselves (Masters and Ogles 1995). These findings show that people are motivated to keep running due to their own improvement. Not only improvement compared with the performance of others, in case of competition runners, but also compared to their personal performance.

#### **5.2.6 Running as an positive addiction**

The research of Altheide indicates that people report feelings of restlessness and depression if they do not run at least every other day. Thus when people start running, they want to continue this activity by a sort of positive addiction. One of the interviewees who mentioned this positive addiction says: "running is as necessary to my life as eating: I can go without both for a day or two" (Altheide and Pfuhl 1980). Altheide (1980) also says that the support for the notion that running has salience and influences self-image in fundamental ways may also be noted by the fact that people often feel their self-image is threatened or impaired when they do not or cannot run. This shows that runners keep running in order to maintain their self-image.

## 6. The implementation of running in social life

Barrell (1989) describes running as follows "Running is physically flexible and controllable: a pace can be developed to suit one's own particular needs and capacity". This sentence of Barrell states that running is a sport that can be done by everybody. It can be controlled in a way that fits the physical capacity of the body and in everybody's daily life. It seems easy to fit running in daily life, next to all the other ambitions we have. But Barrell also says that; "finding time to travel and train to achieve the required standard of running, or experience, becomes a problematic feature in the lives of most of the runners". The implementation of running is not obvious to everybody. The interesting question is; "how about the runners who manage to implement running in their everyday-life, how do they do that"?

### 6.1 Limiting factors

According to Altheide (1980) as running becomes part of one's identity it blends with prior roles, statuses and relationships. The consequences of this, however, are problematic. The time and energy spent in running must be deducted from the time and energy spent with others (Altheide and Pfuhl 1980). This states that time is a determining factor in the implementation of running in the runner's everyday-life. It is not purely the lack of time, but also the social consequence of spending time on running. Altheide (1980) effectively sums up the problem in one sentence: "Running takes time away from the family". Running goes at the expense of social relationships.

### 6.2 Strategies

Barrell (1989) found in his research that for most runners, a significant proportion of the training is undertaken during lunchtime, early mornings, or late evenings, when ( and this is particularly the case for women with children) household work or family responsibilities have been fulfilled. This shows that the running activity is something they do in their own free time. Many of the interviewed runners from the case study of Barrell (1989) indicate that they have jobs which offer 'flexible hours', a condition which allows them the freedom to find space for training around/between the demands/requirements of their occupations. The opportunity to create time to share is an important condition to fit running in daily life. Finding free time between all obligations is very difficult and it takes a lot of organizational skills. Personal leisure time can be seen as something what depends on the individual but in reality it is very interwoven with the social environment of the runner's everyday-life. This leads to the fact that with the implementation of running in the runner's everyday-life the social environment has to be taken in account.

Less research has been done on the ways runners implement their motivations to run in their everyday-life situation. The only research I have found is a case study of runners done by Barrell (1989). He investigated the implementation strategies of running in households consisting of two partners with one or more children. According to Barrell (1989) the time required to train cannot be used to work. This 'non-work time' is for granted seen as 'family time'. So the existence of family members and the time they take of the runner are determinants for the available time for training. Barrell (1989) found that, the possibility of running depends much upon the sex of the runner, the complexity of the household social structure (number of children and their ages) and the nature of relationships within the family. So the available free time to run is the time left after the responsibilities of the family are completed. Dividing the time between the runner as an individual, the family and partner in an equivalent way is a very important condition to keep the whole family happy. If this balance is uneven, displeasure will arise on either side. Glassers (1976) says that this displeasure, commitment to long-distance running and immersion in the running subculture may lead people to dissociate from their non-running lives, ignore work, family spouses, and other social obligations. How runners manage to avoid these negative consequences of running is investigated by Barrell (1989). He identified three strategies to enter running into households. These strategies are based on the experiences of interviewed runners. The tree strategies he identified are the taking time, the buying time and the sharing time strategy (Barrell, Chamberlain et al. 1989).

### **6.2.1 Taking time**

Results of the interviews in the study of Barrell (1989) show in several cases that it seemed to be assumed by the runner and his/her family members that the wishes of the runner could and should take precedence over all other family needs, demands, wishes, or events. The family members take on relatively passive roles. These roles include, for example, the servicing of the runner's need such as the timing of meals to fit in with training schedules, the washing of kit, the giving of moral support by attending events, and supporting the runner via the club's committee or social events. It seemed that the control of how the family's time was managed was in the runners' hand (Barrell, Chamberlain et al. 1989). The balance between runner on one hand and the spouse and children on the other is very uneven. It seems to be the ideal situation for a runner to live in, but the chance that the whole family is given as much care as is given to the wishes of the runner is very low. The involvement with the running ambition of the spouse and the other family members must be very high which requires a lot of adjustment.

### **6.2.2 Buying time**

Barrel (1989) describes the buying strategy as follows. He says that in other instances the relationships between runner and spouse seem to be characterized by a degree of bargaining, negotiation, and accommodation to the demands and interests of the others. Individuals went to some length to accommodate their running demands around other family activities (Barrell, Chamberlain et al. 1989). In this case, not the whole family is adapting to the needs of the runner. Barrell (1989) also found that it is equally clear that the runners themselves, generally speaking, worked hard to sustain the balance between family commitments and running demands, and to dissipate any emerging sources of tension or friction which could be contingent upon such demands (Barrell, Chamberlain et al. 1989). This strategy is more harmonious than the strategy of taking time. Support from the spouse and children is also needed but it is more based on negotiation than the taking time strategy.

### 6.2.3 Sharing time

The last strategy Barrell (1998) describes is the sharing time strategy. In the two previous strategies the relationship between spouses seemed broadly asymmetrical. The sharing time strategy is based on a more balanced relationship which results in a total involvement and full support of the running ambition of each. According to Barrell (1998) the support of each spouse in the others' running takes a moral and practical form, involving a blur of the division of labour within the family by sharing household chores like cleaning, cooking, and looking after children, even if this was not, especially at first, an easy relationship for the male to enter into and accept (Barrell, Chamberlain et al. 1989). So in short, both partners agree with the ambition to run, but this means that the other obligations have to be shared.

## 7. Discussion

In order to answer the central question of this thesis, seven sub questions were formulated. The first question about how runners can be characterised, seems to remain unanswered. During this literature study it turned out that the runner cannot be placed in a box. Researchers like Yair (1992), Altheide (1980) and Boen (2009) already tried to do this but this adds nothing to what motivations runners have. This information only, is not sufficient in order to cover the aspects of the ecological perspective which is taken into account in this thesis. The age of a runner, the frequency of training or the level of commitment to running does not say anything about how runners exactly implement running in their daily life. So the first sub question has no simple answer.

A second problem that occurred during this literature study was the fact that the results are based on experiences of a heterogeneous group of runners. In the few literary articles that were available, diverse groups of runners were examined. Therefore, the motivations that are found are motivations of a variety of runners with different characteristics and living conditions. The motivations that are found are not applicable to all runners.

It also turned out that the motivations that runners show are on the one hand individual, but on the other socially influenced. This makes it only possible to make general statements about the motivation runners have to get and keep running. This is because the social environment is different for every runner and so every runner is influenced in various ways.

Another weakness of this literature study is the fact that much of the literature that was used was very out-dated. This may mean that some results are no longer valid, because of the fact that the general family structure may be changed, or that people have more spare time nowadays etc. A lot of the data used are under theorized and the descriptions remain rather generalized. This is a disadvantage of a literature study and the problems with the generalization are already mentioned above.

A few sub questions are divided into questions about the motivation related to physical health and questions about other motivations. This division is not always obvious. This is because of the fact that many ideas about the physical aspect are socially influenced. For example, the motivations to keep running in order to prevent yourself of heart failure may occur because a spouse is afraid of the consequences of a poor lifestyle.

Little literature was available about the implementations of running in daily life. The only research that was available was applied to runners who live in a family household, consisting of a spouse and one or more children. This research offered strategies but was based on only a few interviews. So these strategies are very general and are not applicable to all runners. The use of these strategies in order to offer support to people who are less physically active is insufficient. This is because the relationship between the runner's motivation and his social environment is complex. Other things like organisation skills, money, support from family, working conditions also affect this. These things cannot be offered by health promoters.

The sharing time strategy is in my own opinion the best way to manage running in daily life. In this strategy the relationship between the spouses is the most balanced. In this way it is most likely that both partners have time to run. Therefore it seems to me that in this way the chances of good health is greatest.

Much of the existing research on the need to exercise is focussed on health. In the future there should be more focus on other motivations to exercise besides the importance for health. This is because it seems that, for example, the continuing of running in particular depends on other motivations than health. The research can be done in the form of interviews with people who already exercise, or through questionnaires to people who use online forums in order to track their performance. In this way, more insight can be gained in the motivations that people have to exercise. This research would be more an account of the social context of the individual. This social context has great influence on the performance of the behaviour. This influence should not be underestimated.

Another recommendation for further study is looking at the existing implementing strategies runners have to implement running in their daily life. Motivations alone are not enough to actually perform the desired behaviour. Experiences of runners who already run could help others to perform their running motivations.

Finally, the trend of participating in running should be explored. If the outcomes of such research are correctly responded to, there can be significant health gains.

## 8. Conclusion

The aim of this literature study was to answer the central question “which motivations do runners have that get and keep them running and how do they implement these running motivations in their everyday-life situation”? The motivation is divided into two stages, the getting stage and the keeping stage. Both stages are in turn divided into two groups, the motivations related to the physical aspect and other motivations. The figure below gives a clear overview of the findings.

	<b>Get running</b>	<b>Keep running</b>	<b>References</b>
<b>Physical motivations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Improvement of physical health.</li><li>• Change of current status in desired position.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Keep the body healthy</li><li>• Keep the body in good shape</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Boen (2009)</li><li>• Masters &amp; Ogles (1995)</li></ul>
<b>Other motivations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Influence of the social environment.</li><li>• Contact with others</li><li>• Belonging</li><li>• recognition</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Running for a reward</li><li>• Running to compensate</li><li>• Running to continue experiencing a positive effect</li><li>• Competing with others</li><li>• Improving yourself</li><li>• Running as a positive addiction</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Barrell (1989)</li><li>• Altheide (1980)</li><li>• Masters &amp; Ogles (1995)</li><li>• Bottenburg (2009)</li></ul>

Based on these findings, it seems to be that the motivation to keep running is especially based on other motives. The importance of the physical health, in many cases, determines the start of running.

The implementation of running in the everyday-life situation of runners is dependent on many social factors. Impediments that make it difficult to implement running are lack of time and the distribution of socializing time. Based on the results of this literature study, three strategies were found. These were the taking time, buying time and sharing time strategy. These strategies show how runners implement running in their everyday-life situation and how they deal with the time shortage.

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