

Leisure Facilitators and Recreation Specialization for Female Participants in Running Events

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to identify the relationship between leisure facilitators and recreation specialization for female participants in running events. To achieve the goal of this study, 330 surveys were collected from female participants living in the Seoul area selected through a convenience sampling method. After examining the correlation between leisure facilitators and recreation specialization, the relationship between the two variables was assessed through multiple linear regression analysis.

First, for socio-demographic variables pertaining to females who participated in running events, significant differences were found between frequency of participating in running events, participants' running duration, running exercise participation time, and frequency of running exercise participation as sub-factors of leisure facilitators. Second, for socio-demographic variables pertaining to females who participated in running events, significant differences were revealed between income, frequency of participating in running events, participants' running duration, running exercise participation time, and frequency of running exercise participation as sub-factors of recreation specialization. Last, regarding sub-factors of leisure facilitators for females participating in running events, intrapersonal constraints, interpersonal constraints, and structural constraints had positive effects on past experience as an economic investment in recreation specialization. Intrapersonal constraints and structural constraints had positive effects on centrality-to-lifestyle for recreation specialization factors.

Keywords: female participants, leisure facilitators, recreation specialization, running event

1. Introduction

In the past, companies sold products. Nowadays, modern society sells experiences. When Nike held the "Nike human race" in 2008, the target market was young runners aged between 25 and 35 years. The event gained the attention of young runners immediately, as the host organization provided running background, running equipment, and a shorter running distance of 10 km compared to the original 42.195 km. Given this trend, young runners were quickly immersed into the 10 km running event. Beginning this way, Nike, New Balance, Adidas, Puma, and other brands competitively hosted running events with different themes, and registration sold out quickly in all cases. Specifically, when Nike held the "NIKE WE RUN" event in different cities, starting in Prague, Czech Republic, in August 2013, 26 countries hosted running events, culminating at the event in Jakarta, Indonesia, in December 2013, which attracted 350,000 participants (OSEN 2013.11 17).

In Korea, the event was held every year under the name "WE RUN SEOUL" and "SHE RUN," in which only females could participate. Running events differ from marathons, and host organizations provide training runs to promote these events as running club activities. Following the concept of "sportainment", these training runs serve as experiential sport events.

People participate in events such as running events for various reasons. Running events are a form of participatory sport in which various people can participate without special equipment. Currently, this is considered a type of leisure activity, as runners no longer participate in the event on their own, but as part of a group. Past marathons were events wherein participants could improve their health and where "human victory"

was possible after completing the full marathon. In modern society, running is not just training, but also enjoyment and a venue for developing human networks. This movement created a new paradigm for the running era, shifting from the old version of running—a marathon in this case—to a new one—enjoyment.

Specifically, in today's leisure culture, females attempt to gain confidence and stay at the forefront of trends while paying attention to concepts of internalized beauty and youthfulness alongside health and relaxation during their leisure time. A running event for females is more like a festival, a place to play, and a healthier exercise that presents a greater variety of leisure activities. In addition, running events are a means of self-management through overcoming self-limitations, allowing females to differentiate themselves from other participants through clothing, shoes, and accessories. Running as a leisure activity demonstrates the leisure consumption culture (Kwon & Cheon, 2013). Furthermore, a company hosts the event while focusing on running and not on a marathon, thereby increasing the number of participants, especially young female runners aged between 20 and 30 years who are broadly exposed to the consumer market. This represents an interesting case that allows comparisons between the study of Park (2001), who found that females in their 20s have low fulfillment or do not actively promote their health, and other studies that targeted mostly males aged between 40 and 50 years participating in running events or marathons.

Females also participate in running events, because these events are hosted by well-known companies and differ from mundane running events. Thus, these events display their own characteristics. A company-hosted running event demonstrates one characteristic of our modern commercialized public culture, and extendable leisure time increases the possibility that participants enjoy the leisure experience as a product (Park & Joo, 2006).

Studies on leisure facilitators and recreation specialization provide the basis for analyses of those who flow into the leisure realm. Therefore, this study seeks to examine the relationship between leisure facilitators and recreation specialization in the context of female participants in running events. The study uncovers what motivates females to participate in running events and related social and emotional factors behind their continued participation. Furthermore, basic data pertaining to participants in running events is generated by asking questions pertaining to continuous participation. The research model for the relationship between leisure facilitators and recreation specialization is depicted in Figure 1.

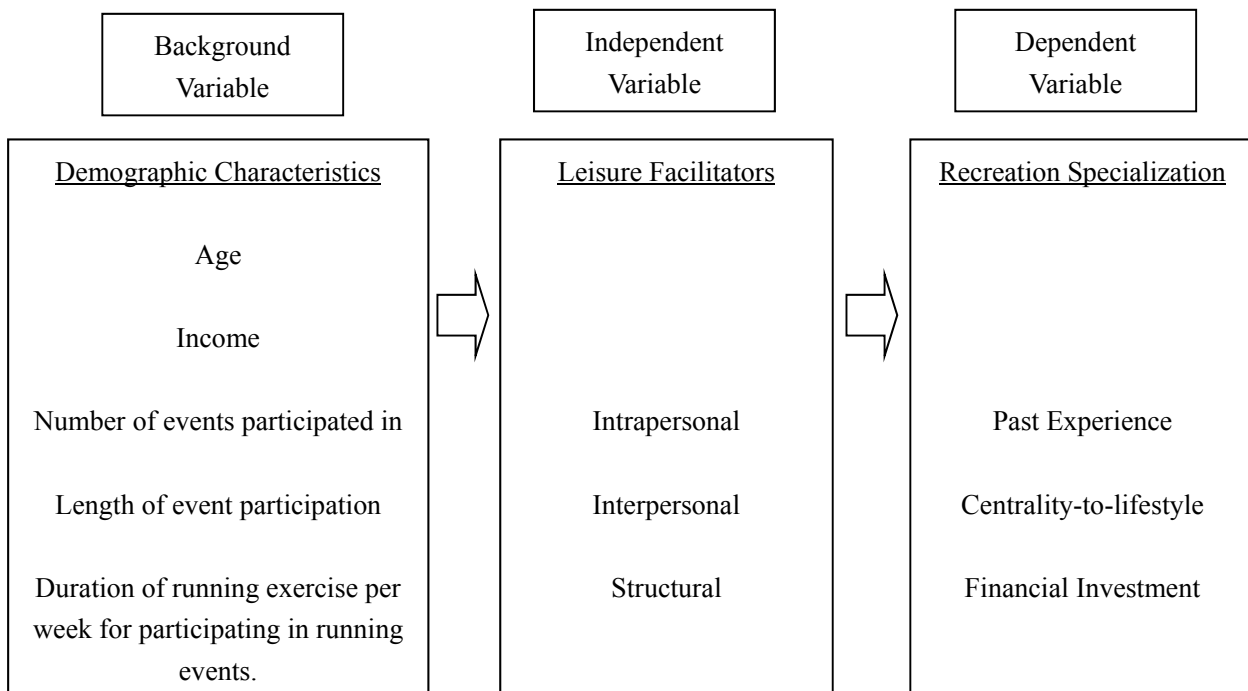


Figure 1. Model of the relationship between leisure facilitators and recreation specialization

2. Literature Review

Leisure facilitators were originally studied under the criticism of leisure constraints, and defined as factors providing leisure preferences that facilitate and encourage a leisure activity, which is conceptualized as

complementary to leisure constraints. Everyone is interested in leisure; thus, the theory of leisure constraints alone cannot fully explain the phenomenon of non-participation in leisure activities, because the theory focuses essentially on constraints. The theory of leisure facilitators criticize the limitations of the theory of leisure constraints, aiming to provide a better understanding through three aspects, namely intrapersonal facilitators, interpersonal facilitators, and structural facilitators. To properly understand leisure participation, Raymore (2002) contends that one must grasp the theory of leisure facilitators and factors pertaining to leisure constraints, and then try to comprehend how they affect participation and produce leisure experiences. While leisure constraints and leisure facilitators mean different things, both theories assume coexistence on the same continuum. The concept of “facilitating factors” extends theoretical continuity from the already established “constraining factors.” In other words, eliminating constraint factors is directly connected to leisure facilitators, and lack of facilitator factors means leisure constraints. Simply, this mutual relationship can be interpreted as different viewpoints on observing one leisure situation. However, Raymore did not conclude his explanation of the relationship between leisure constraints and leisure facilitators as absolute, noting the need for further empirical research to scientifically clarify the relationship between constraining and facilitating factors.

As the passion for participating in leisure activities supports facilitators, one overcomes time and financial constraints and becomes more enthusiastic, which fuels the desire to specialize in an activity. This is known as a “serious leisure participant” (Stebbins, 2001), whose tendency to specialize is defined as “recreation specialization” by Bryan (1977). Bryan later defined recreation specialization more specifically as “a series of behavior changes from general to specific reflected by the equipment and skills used in sports or leisure activities” on “a continuum ranging from being general to becoming professional.” This indicates that people specializing in a recreation activity cannot be satisfied through simple participation, but need a deeper involvement in these activities. Enthusiastic participation in a leisure activity alters behavior patterns according to various factors such as interest, level of flow, skills, and knowledge (Lee Mun Jin & Hwang Sun Hwan, 2013).

Oh and Ditton (2008) defined recreation specialization as a consecutive process of changes in the developmental stages of a leisure activity participant, from beginner to advanced (professional) levels. Broadly, this is an important topic in leisure studies.

Advanced research on the relationship between leisure facilitators and recreation specialization, for example by Song (2010), who analyzed professional interviews on a fishing channel, explains the process of recreation specialization in terms of the concepts of leisure constraints and leisure facilitators. Leisure facilitators explain the process of recreation specialization, and can be important in examining the accelerated recreation specialization process from beginner- to professional-level participants. Kang, Lee, and Kim (2013) identified a relationship between leisure facilitators and recreation specialization in winter sports participants, finding positive effects for both factors. Studies on leisure facilitators and recreation specialization provide the basis for analyses of those who flow into the leisure realm.

3. Materials and Method

3.1 Subject of the Study

To examine the relationship between leisure facilitators and recreation specialization for female participants in running events, female adults who planned to participate in an event in 2014 were delineated as the study population. A convenience, non-random sampling method was used to select participants. In total, 345 questionnaires were distributed, and of these, 15 were eliminated based on a lack of information and low validity. Thus, data in 330 questionnaires were analyzed.

3.2 Research Procedure

The primary research method adopted in this study was the questionnaire method (survey). Table 1 outlines characteristics of the questionnaire. Questionnaire items included 5 questions pertaining to demographic characteristics, 12 focusing on leisure facilitators, and 10 on leisure specialization.

“The leisure facilitator scale” used in this study was modified from Raymore’s (2002) original leisure facilitator scale, which was created and modified by Song Young Min and Lee Hoon (2006) for a leisure facilitator analysis of a five-day school system for youth. Similar to the leisure constraint configuration, 12 leisure facilitator questions were constructed, including intrapersonal, interpersonal, and structural items. The recreation specialization scale used in this study was modified from McFarlane (1994) and Hwang Sun Hwan and Lee Mun Jin (2009), and translated and modified for use in Korea. Specifically, the questions focused on three factors, with ten questions pertaining to intrapersonal, interpersonal, and structural facilitators. Questionnaires were measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from “Strongly disagree” (1) to “Strongly agree” (5).

Table 1. Questionnaire characteristics

Configuration Index	Content	Number of Questions	total
Demographic Characteristics	Age, Income, Number of events participated in, Length of participation, Duration of running exercise per week for participating in running events, Frequency of running exercise per week for participation in running events	6	6
Leisure Facilitators	Intrapersonal Interpersonal Structural	4 3 5	12
Recreation Specialization	Past Experience Centrality-to-lifestyle Financial Investment	5 3 2	10
Total			27

3.3 Validity and Reliability Tests

The validity and reliability of the study were verified through an expert discussion on the questionnaire items. To assess the questionnaire's content validity, 130 questionnaires were distributed. Of these, 8 were eliminated because of a lack of information; thus, 122 were used in the preliminary research. Despite that the test value in this study was verified in earlier work, it was re-verified to ensure a better result.

Regarding construct validity and to verify questionnaire reliability, an exploratory factor analysis and reliability analysis were conducted. With principal factor analysis for factor extraction, the varimax rotation method of orthogonal rotation was employed. The standard of the common factor in each factor extraction method was based on an eigenvalue of 1.0 or more, while selected items had factor values of .5 and more. To verify the reliability of the study, Cronbach's α coefficient was used, and to determine if internal consistency was acceptable, Bartlett's Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) standard fit test was employed. Generally, KMO values exceeding 0.5 indicate suitable validity, while in the Bartlett case, significance levels of P values less than .05 signify suitable factor analysis. Tables 2 and 3 provide the results of the analyses.

Table 2. Results of the validity test: leisure facilitators

	Structural	Interpersonal	Intrapersonal
8. A 5-day work system supports my leisure activities.	.901	-.004	.037
9. There are enough running events in which to participate in the community.	.849	.109	.162
11. I have enough time to enjoy running.	.844	.069	.084
10. Companies host enough running events and programs.	.829	.170	.243
5. I have partners with whom to participate in running events.	.092	.927	.092
7. I have family members with whom to participate in leisure activities that involve running exercise or event.	.080	.921	.081
6. I have a person to guide my running.	.098	.912	.077
2. I have the confidence to participate in running events.	.087	.033	.900
1. I decide on my own to participate in running events.	.161	.060	.884
3. I am active in terms of characteristics.	.161	.157	.840
Eigenvalue	3.017	2.613	2.410
% of Variance	30.175	26.132	24.104
Cumulative %	30.175	56.307	80.411
Cronbach's α	.893	.919	.867

Kaiser-Mayer-Olkin Measure = .765; Bartlett's Test = 780.592, df = 45, Sig = .000

Table 3. Results of the validity test: recreation specialization

	Past Experience	Centrality-to-lifestyle	Financial Investment
2. I am high frequency of participating in running events.	.878	.163	.028
3. I am highly interested in running events.	.856	.090	.186
5. I have the ability to run well.	.832	.210	.030
4. I try hard to increase my ability to run.	.799	.150	.288
8. I read many publications on running.	.137	.923	.079
7. I research many materials related to running events.	.247	.890	.182
6. Running is my primary leisure activity.	.144	.865	.241
10. It is valuable to invest in equipment related to running.	.157	.179	.903
9. I invest a lot in buying running equipment.	.146	.199	.899
Eigenvalue	2.981	2.565	1.839
% of Variance	33.121	28.496	20.435
Cumulative %	33.121	61.617	82.052
Cronbach's α	.888	.916	.860

Kaiser-Mayer-Olkin Measure = .803; Bartlett's Test = 695.352, df = 36, Sig = .000

3.4 Data Process

The study was conducted over a period of four months, from November 2013 to March 2014, during the training of runners aiming to participate in a running event in Seoul. Participants were asked to answer questions through a self-administration method. Of 345 questionnaires, 15 were eliminated because of a lack of responses and/or inaccurate information. The remaining 330 questionnaires were used in the statistical analysis, which was conducted using SPSS version 21.0. The analysis method was as follows. First, to assess the validity of the study, an exploratory factor analysis and confirmatory factor analysis were conducted. Second, for the general features of the study, a frequency analysis was carried out. Third, to examine the differences between leisure facilitators and recreation specialization based on demographic characteristics, the t-test, a one-way analysis of variance, and the Scheffé method were employed as post-verification tests. Fourth, a correlation analysis was conducted for factor correlation. Last, the relationship between leisure facilitators and recreation specialization was analyzed through multiple regression analysis.

4. Results

4.1 Profiles of Respondents

Among 345 respondents, 83.6% were in their 20s. Seventy-three percent of respondents earn less than 2,000,000 won (US\$ 2,000) of income. More than half (59.4%) of respondents had more than two times of participation experience in running events. A great part of respondents (94.8%) had less than 3 years of event participation. About duration of running exercise per week for participating in running events, 84.8% of participants responded less than 3 hours. Nearly two-thirds (65.8%) of people exercise one time per week for participating in running events. Table 4 summarizes the general characteristics of the study subjects.

Table 4. General characteristics of the subjects of the study

Characteristics	Classification	Frequency (participants)	Component Ratio (%)
Age	20s	276	83.6
	More than 30 years	54	16.4
	Less than 1,000,000 won	104	31.5
Income (\$1= 1000 won)	Less than 2,000,000 won	140	42.4
	Under 3,000,000 won	69	20.9
	More than 3,000,000 won	17	5.2
Number of events participated in	1	134	40.6
	2	75	22.7

	3	56	17.0
	4 times and more	65	19.7
Length of event participation	1 year	192	58.2
	2 years	77	23.3
	3 years	44	13.3
	4 years and more	17	5.2
	1 hour and less	141	42.7
Duration of running exercise per week for participating in running events	2 hours and less	95	28.8
	Less than 3 hours	44	13.3
	3 hours and more	50	15.2
	1	21.7	65.8
Frequency of running exercise per week for participating in running events	2	63	19.1
	3	35	10.6
	More than 4	15	4.5

4.2 Relationship between Leisure Facilitators and Recreation Specialization of Female Participants in Running Events

To examine the relationship between leisure facilitators and recreation specialization of female participants in running events, Pearson's product-moment correlation was employed. It was found that most correlation coefficients for factors were .05, indicating significance. The correlation analysis results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Results of correlation analysis

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Intrapersonal	1					
2. Interpersonal	.216***	1				
3. Structural	.411***	.432***	1			
4. Past Experience	.571***	.343***	.547***	1		
5. Centrality-to-lifestyle	.439***	.252***	.518***	.701***	1	
6. Financial Investment	.385***	.313***	.467***	.620***	.682***	1

*p<.05 **p<.01 ***p<.001

4.3 Effect of Leisure Facilitators on Recreation Specialization of Female Participants in Running Events

To determine the relationship between leisure facilitators and recreation specialization of female participants in running events, a correlation analysis was conducted, which revealed the positive effect of leisure facilitators of female participants in running events on recreation specialization. The results of leisure facilitators' mean value was 3.57 and recreation specialization's mean value was 3.00. The value of coefficient of correlation was .622(p<.001), which indicates significant relationship between leisure facilitators and recreation specialization. The value of R² was .385, which means it explains 38.5% of total variation. The value of F was 207.259, which appeared to be statistically significant (p<.001). These results are presented in Table 6.

Table 6. Results of the effect of leisure facilitators on recreation specialization of female participants in running events

Independent variables	Dependent variables	β	SE	Beta	t-value	R ²	F-value
(Invariable factor)	Recreation	.095	.205		.465		
Leisure Facilitators	Specialization	.814	.057	.622	14.396***	.385	207.259***

***p<.001

4.4 Effect of Leisure Facilitators on Past Experience of Recreation Specialization

The result of analysis on effect of leisure facilitators on past experience of recreation specialization is as follow. The value of R^2 was .448, which means it explains 44.8% of total variation. The value of F was 89.975, which appeared to be statistically significant. All the sub-factors of leisure facilitator revealed a significant and positive effect on intrapersonal constraints ($\beta=.411$), interpersonal constraints ($\beta=.112$), and structural constraints ($\beta=.330$) of past experience ($p<.001$, $p<.05$). Table 7 summarizes results of effect of leisure facilitators on past experience of recreation specialization.

Table. 7. Result of the effect of leisure facilitators on past experience of recreation specialization

Independent variables	Dependent variables	β	SE	Beta	t-value	R^2	F-value
(Invariable factor)		-.249	.219		-1.136		
Intrapersonal	Past Experience	.489	.054	.411	9.137***	.448	89.973***
Interpersonal		.101	.041	.112	2.452*		
Structural		.357	.053	.330	6.766***		

* $p<.05$, *** $p<.001$

4.5 Effect of Leisure Facilitators on Centrality-To-Lifestyle of Recreation Specialization

The result of analysis on effect of leisure facilitators on centrality-to-lifestyle of recreation specialization is as follow. The value of R^2 was .323, which means it explains 32.3% of total variation. The value of F was 53.39, which appeared to be statistically significant. One of the sub-factors of leisure facilitator revealed a significant and positive effect on intrapersonal constraints ($\beta=.271$) and structural constraints ($\beta=.397$) of centrality-to-lifestyle ($p<.001$). However, interpersonal constraints were not statistically significant. Table 8 summarizes results of effect of leisure facilitators on centrality-to-lifestyle of recreation specialization.

Table. 8 Result of the effect of leisure facilitators on centrality-to-lifestyle of recreation specialization

Independent variables	Dependent variables	β	SE	Beta	t-value	R^2	F-value
(Invariable factor)		-.055	.246		-.223		
Intrapersonal	Centrality-to-lifestyle	.327	.060	.271	5.436***	.323	53.39**
Interpersonal		.021	.046	.022	.443		
Structural		.436	.059	.397	7.357***		

*** $p<.001$

4.6 Effect of Leisure Facilitators on Financial Investment of Recreation Specialization

The result of analysis on effect of leisure facilitators on investment of recreation specialization is as follow. The value of R^2 was .269, which means it explains 26.9% of total variation. The value of F was 41.403, which appeared to be statistically significant. All the sub-factors of leisure facilitator revealed a significant and positive effect on intrapersonal constraints ($\beta=.226$), interpersonal constraints ($\beta=.126$), and structural constraints ($\beta=.320$) of past experience ($p<.001$, $p<.05$). Table 9 summarizes results of effect of leisure facilitators on financial investment of recreation specialization.

Table.9 Result of the Effect of Leisure Facilitators on Financial Investment of Recreation Specialization.

Independent variables	Dependent variables	β	SE	Beta	t-value	R^2	F-value
(Invariable factor)		-.185	.303		-.609		
Intrapersonal	Financial Investment	.323	.074	.226	4.373***	.269	41.403***
Interpersonal		.137	.057	.126	2.406*		
Structural		.416	.073	.320	5.705***		

* $p<.05$, *** $p<.001$

5. Discussion

The purpose of this study was to define the relationship between leisure facilitators and recreation specialization among female participants in a running event. It has become commonplace for leisure participants to participate in commercialized events in consuming areas or spaces. The young generation living in modern society grew up in a play-based culture, which can be defined from a socio-cultural perspective as a social reaction towards culture and desire. Play-based culture is closely related to social traditions and systems at the particular time the type of playing occurs, and it transforms according to variable social statuses, which is why it is part of culture (Yang & Lee, 2008).

The analysis of the relationship between leisure facilitators and recreation specialization among female participants in running events revealed significant results.

First, leisure facilitators positively affect past experience of recreation specialization. This indicates that the process of recreation specialization can be developed uniquely through the distinct characteristics of society and culture, which is how social/cultural factors such as running events can facilitate the process of recreation specialization. Specifically, all sub-factors of leisure facilitators and past experiences of participating in running events can cause flow experience. This outcome is considered as continuous participation in running events and becoming specialization in the activity. Wu, Scott, and Yang (2013)'s study partially supported this result. They examined the effect of recreation specialization to flow experiences along with online game addiction. The study's results showed that specialized players of these online games were more likely to experience flow and exhibit game addiction than inexperienced players. In addition, Stebbins (1992) maintained that increasing participation frequency is an important causative factor in raising specialization level.

Second, intrapersonal and structural factor of leisure facilitators have a positive effect on centrality-to-lifestyle of recreation specialization. Song (2010) emphasized contemplating the importance of storytelling in the recreation specialization process, maintaining that people's recreation specialization process is not uniform but comprises various processes for individuals with their own stories. Therefore, a facilitator such as a running event with a creative story is capable of affecting the recreation specialization process. Running activities are sport events that require individuals to constantly overcome physical and mental limitations. This characteristic leads the participants to participate in daily physical activity events based on different individual's motivation for their goals (Hwang & Lee, 2009). This is also in accordance with research that showed the necessity of sports activities by demonstrating how participation and being motivated to engage in sports activities play a major role in improving quality of life. Furthermore, in a study on participation in sports activities, participation in leisure activities, and activity satisfaction, Riddick (1985) revealed that sports participation as a leisure activity provides humans with various types of satisfaction. For example, participants in running events gain health maintenance benefits and self-realization through self-development, confidence, fulfillment, and mental strength, which ultimately contribute to improving quality of life. In modern society, the social status and rights of women are increasing, and female participation in sports activities plays an important role in character-building activities through self-realization, sense of accomplishment, and increased confidence. Specifically, voluntary and active activities such as participation in running events present an opportunity to relieve stress and engage in recreation for a better quality of life. However, there is no direct effect between interpersonal constraints of leisure facilitator and centrality-to-lifestyle of recreation specialization because running mainly requires endlessly conquering oneself and it can be done by oneself at any moment. In other words, although young runners enjoy running together, each individual participate in running for their own goals and satisfaction. This result and interpretation is supported by Czikszentmihalyi (1995)'s research result; people who participate in daily sports life are individually participating in it with the motivation to achieve their own goals.

Third, all factors of leisure facilitators have an influence on financial investment of recreation specialization. Scott and Shafer (2001)'s study mentioned that the will to concentrate on gaining knowledge and skills pertaining to leisure, regardless of the time or cost invested, could improve the level of the leisure activity and emphasize the positive functions of leisure. In addition, Raymore (2002) noted that a person's leisure participation is a result of interaction between leisure facilitators and intrapersonal, interpersonal, and structural constraints. Leisure facilitators of female participants in running events appeared to be formed through internal enjoyment/satisfaction factors, being conscious of other people around them, and structural factors given by enjoyment of events. As mentioned earlier, recreation specialization requires a certain time investment in participating in a leisure activity. In female participants, leisure facilitators triggered by continued participation in running events provide experience in various interests, flow levels, skills, and knowledge. In addition, participation facilitators transform recreation specialization into an economic investment with various sources. Particularly, considering that they are female participants, the motivation behind their participation in such

events allows an exhibition in leisure, where they can stand out through outfits and in the SNS (Social Network Service) world. This factor caused a higher level of investment by female participants.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations for Further Research

The results of this study are now summarized to examine the relationship between leisure facilitators and recreation specialization based on 330 female participants in a running event.

First, in the relationship between leisure facilitators and recreation specialization, the sub-factors of leisure facilitators—intrapersonal, interpersonal, and structural facilitators—demonstrated positive effects on past experience in recreation specialization. Second, intrapersonal and structural facilitators as sub-factors of leisure facilitators showed positive effects on centrality-to-lifestyle of recreation specialization, while interpersonal facilitators showed a negative effect. Third, intrapersonal, interpersonal, and structural facilitators all had positive effects on financial investment in recreation specialization. This shows that leisure facilitators have become a reason for specialization, increasing fun, satisfaction, and flow. However, the academic world needs more specific studies in order to make leisure event activities more specialize and more sustainable.

Recommendations for future studies are as follows. First, the leisure facilitators factor of this study was premised on a negative view for the effect of leisure constraints, which could be concluded as complementary concepts of leisure constraints. Therefore, if future study co-analyzes both leisure facilitators and leisure constraints, the results would be meaningful. Second, qualitative inquiries into the process of leisure facilitators and an analytic explanation are possible. Third, if future study provided theories on the relationship between leisure facilitators and recreation specialization by using the concept of ‘serious leisure’ and related correlation analysis with a diverse range of leisure activity participants, the results will help with the academic development of the leisure and recreation areas.

Ethical Consideration

The authors addressed ethical issues including plagiarism, informed consent, misconduct, data fabrication and/or falsification, double publication and/or submission, and redundancy.

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