African Journal of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure. ISSN: 2223-814X

Themed Issue: Advances in Geographical Studies on Tourism

'Event-tualising' Physical Leisure Activity: How Gauteng Parkrunners Brought the Parkrun Home during COVID-19

Leani de Vries*
Department of Geography, College of Agricultural and Environmental Science, University of South Africa, Johannesburg, South Africa, Email, dvriel@unisa.ac.za , https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8997-8288

Ashley Gunter
Department of Geography, College of Agricultural and Environmental Science, University of South Africa, Johannesburg, South Africa, Email, gunteaw@unisa.ac.za , https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0993-0955

Corresponding Author

How to cite this article: de Vries, L. & Gunter, A. (2021). 'Event-tualising' physical leisure activity: How Gauteng parkrunners brought the parkrun home during COVID-19. African Journal of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure, 10(5):1562-1575. DOI: **https://doi.org/10.46222/ajhtl.19770720-179**

Abstract

On the 27th of March 2020, South Africa entered hard lockdown (alert level 5) following the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, with the banning of all physical activity outside a place of residence. As a result, official parkrun events were immediately suspended. In June 2020, the country moved to alert level 3, no longer curbing the use of public spaces for leisure, entertainment, and physical activity, albeit with restrictions. However, group sports leisure, such as parkruns remained prohibited. Thus, parkrun, a highly successful global movement where individuals gather on Saturday mornings for a timed 2 or 5km run, jog, or walk, with family and friends, was severely affected by COVID-19 prevention measures. In mitigation, parkrun officials launched, in June 2020, the *(not)parkrun* to enable individuals to log (on the parkrun website) their own 5km activity, irrespective of time, day or route. In this regard, parkrun enabled parkrunners to bring the event 'home', that is, to informally claim public space and time for their physical leisure. By analysing participation figures and feedback posted on the national parkrun blog and social media pages, this research shows how the (not)parkrun enabled Gauteng parkrunners to 'event-tualise' their runs to counter act the de-eventualisation of the parkrun by lockdown regulations.

Keywords: COVID-19 pandemic, parkrun, physical leisure activity, South Africa

Introduction

This study investigates a changed landscape of participation in physical leisure activity brought about by COVID-19 and the associated lockdown which prohibited group leisure activities such as the parkrun. Following the outbreak of COVID-19, countries worldwide enforced strict social distancing and lockdown measures to mitigate the impact of the pandemic (Di Sebastiano, Chulak-Bozzer, Vanderloo & Faulkner, 2020). This included curbing spaces and opportunities for public leisure, entertainment, and physical activity, despite physical activity and exercise being important for health, and wellbeing (Brooks & Magnusson, 2007; Ng, Cooper, McHale, Clifford & Woods, 2020; Tessier, Vuillemin, Bertrais, Boini, Le Bihan, Oppert, Hercberg, Guillemin & Briançon, 2007). South Africa announced a national state of disaster on the 15th of March 2020 (Republic of South Africa, 2020a). Alert level 5 lockdown commenced on the 27th of March 2020 (for supposedly 21 days) in which the operation of only

essential sectors was permitted. All social, entertainment, education and sporting activities and gatherings were strictly prohibited.

South Africa's initial COVID-19 response was draconian, with the banning of cigarette and alcohol sales, closure of most retail stores and restaurants, the deployment of the army into civilian space and extreme limitation of the freedom of movement and gatherings. Beaches, public parks, sports grounds and fields were also closed (Republic of South Africa, 2020b). Apart from essential trips, people were confined to their homes (Friedman, 2021; Staunton, Swanepoel & Labuschaigne, 2020). Alert level 4 commenced 34 days later, on the 1st of May 2020, permitting some physical activity between 6am and 9am within a 5km radius of the home, but public gatherings for this purpose were still prohibited. The country subsequently moved to alert level 3 on the 1st of June 2020, and individuals could, for the first time in 64 days partake in physical and leisure opportunities between 6am and 6pm (Young, 2020).

As a highly successful global and national movement in which individuals gather on Saturday mornings at dedicated parks, stadiums, and other venues to enjoy a 5km (2km for juniors) run, walk, or jog, with family and friends, the parkrun was severely impacted by lockdowns. Official parkrun events were suspended in South Africa in mid-March 2020. However, on the 15th of June 2020, the *(not)parkrun* initiative was launched globally allowing individuals to independently log their own 5km activity at any time and day of the week using any route of their liking. The first (not)parkrun week concluded on the 21st of June 2020 (parkrun South Africa, 2020). These (not)parkruns have become a growing trend for the 'event-tualising' of physical leisure activity amidst a pandemic, where independently done physical activity is recorded or marked as a group event online rather than in person. We use 'event-tualising' firstly, to describe how physical leisure activity in the country was eventually realised with the lifting of the hard restrictions (while social distancing rules still apply) on non-essential activities outside of the home. Secondly, we consider the self-mobilisation of individuals through participation in the (not)parkrun virtual-physical event, as an individual act of 'event-tualising' physical leisure activity. To log a (not)parkrun, an individual must be registered for the parkrun and must submit their time on their profile page. Proof of time is not required however, to achieve critical mass in these online events, participants need to have a level of access to infrastructure. Access to internet networks, data, and tracking technology (such as a smart phone or watch) form critical parts of (not)parkruns and indicates an infrastructural requirement for participation in a virtual event (Madray, 2020).

In this study, we review Gauteng's 62 home parkrun events to reflect on how registered parkrunners brought the parkrun home and claimed their own space and opportunity for physical leisure activity through participating in the (not)parkrun initiative. By analysing (not)parkrun participation figures and feedback posted on the national parkrun blog and social media pages, insight is gained into the uptake of Gauteng's registered parkrunners in this specific independent opportunity for physical leisure. There is a rise in these types of virtual events, from 'riding' the 'Tour de France'[1]in your living room to 'Walk the Camino'[2]. Locally, the Comrades also hosted the 'Race the Comrades Legends'[3] in June 2020 which was branded as the 'Ultimate Virtual Event'. Any South African or international participant could register at a set fee and log either a 5km, 10km, 21km, 45km or 90km distance. In June 2021, it was the turn of the 'Comrades Marathon Centenary Hope Challenge'.

[1] https://www.zwift.com/virtual-tour-de-france (Accessed 1 August 2021)
[2] https://www.theconqueror.events/camino/ (Accessed 1 August 2021)
[3] https://www.comrades.com/race-the-comrades-legends-entries-rising/ (Accessed 1 August 2021)

The paper starts with a literature review which highlights some of the most recent research and thinking around the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on physical leisure activity with a focus on the parkrun, and then continues with a reflection on the participation of Gauteng-based parkrunners in the (not)parkrun initiative.

Physical leisure activity in a pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic, declared by the World Health Organization in March 2020, presented a turning point in the workings of daily life. It changed the lifestyle choices and everyday behaviour of individuals engaging in activities such as leisure and physical activity outside of the home at, amongst other, playgrounds, parks, and fitness centres (Lesser & Nienhuis, 2020; Yang, Lu, Yang, Gou & Liu, 2021). This is deeply concerning given the known importance of physical activity for physical and mental well-being and the health risks associated with physical inactivity or reduced activity. Even more so with respect to COVID-19. The generally acknowledged lack-of-physical health 'pandemic', fuelled by sedentary behaviour and physical inactivity, may well have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 lockdown (Ghram, Briki, Mansoor, Al-Mohannadi, Lavie & Chamari, 2021; Gibbs, Kline, Huber, Paley & Perera, 2021; Nathan, George, Ng, Wenden, Bai, Phiri & Christian, 2021). While countries have differed slightly in their responses to the pandemic, the consequences of lockdown measures are experienced socially, psychologically, economically and health-wise (Begović, 2020; Füzéki, Groneberg & Banzer, 2020). Social distancing measures and other interventions have directly determined individuals' outdoor mobility and movements beyond the home, disrupting everyday sport, community, and physical activities (Begović, 2020; Bracarense & Oliveira, 2021; Elliott, Drummond, Eime, Drummond & Mason, 2021). Those that do occur often do so without common features such as the social aspect amongst participants or the support of spectators (Grix, Brannagan, Grimes & Neville, 2021; Helsen, Derom, Corthouts, De Bosscher, Willem & Scheerder, 2021). This includes the parkrun, a global and national community initiative which counteracts physical inactivity and sedentary behaviour with physical and mental benefits (Payne, 2020; Warhurst & Black, 2021). While it might seem inevitable that physical activity would be negatively impacted by the pandemic mobility restrictions, some studies indicate physical activity behaviour was affected in complex ways. For example, an increase in autonomous physical activity amongst previously active persons in Canada (Cheval, Sivaramakrishnan, Maltagliati, Fessler, Forestier, Sarrazin, Orsholitz, Chalabaev, Sander, Ntoumanis & Boisgontier, 2021; Lesser & Nienhuis, 2020; Spence, Rhodes, McCurdy, Mangan, Hopkins & Mummery, 2021).

Michie, van Stralen, and West (2011) propose a useful framework for behaviour, the 'COM-B system', which identifies three essential conditions namely: capability, opportunity, and motivation. Using this model, Spence et al. (2021) determine its usefulness in predicting physical activity behaviour change caused by the pandemic lockdown. Their survey across the Anglophone countries of the United Kingdom, United States of America, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand indicates physical opportunity and reflective motivation as the most consistent predictors of maintained or increased physical activity (Spence et al., 2021). Ordinarily, undertaking leisure-time physical activity is driven by a constant negotiation of associated risks and benefits. These risks and benefits are driven by the local context in which the leisure-time physical activity takes place. These are informed by political and socio-economic factors, the built environment, as well as personal psychological factors (Andrade, Junior, Capistrano, Beltrame, Pelegrini, Crawford & Felden, 2019; Lawanson, Foley, Assah, Mogo, Mapa-Tassou, Ogunro, Onifade & Oni, 2020; Lesser & Nienhuis, 2020; McEwan,

McKay & Baker, 2020). Research has mostly explored the correlation of physical activity with demographic factors such as age and income, where fewer studies explore psychological factors such as identity and perception (Ghram et al., 2021; Lawanson et al., 2020; Spence et al., 2021). In this regard, the lack of research on psychological factors is significant with respect to COVID-19. According to Lawanson et al. (2020), the extraordinary COVID-19 pandemic, has radically changed ordinary, everyday interaction between the urban environment and physical activity, leisure-time physical activity behaviour and appropriation of space. The pandemic has presented a new set of trade-offs in undertaking leisure-time physical activity and weighing its benefits with the risks. These include, amongst other, COVID-19 transmission or being arrested or fined due to the arbitrary enforcement of (in some cases bizarre) lockdown regulations, particularly in large and dense cities. Usefully, this can be related to what Breines, Raghuram and Gunter (2019) call 'infrastructures of immobility' in which mobility and immobility, is a choice resulting from the interaction of different power dynamics. Thus, instead of immobility being the absolute lack of mobility, immobility is itself relative, determined by certain factors. The authors move beyond what is traditionally considered 'involuntary immobility', to where people 'elect' not to be mobile. This relates in some respects to Michie et al. (2011) as well as Lesser and Nienhuis (2020) in that physical activity requires, amongst others, motivation.

Cheval et al. (2021) attribute the impact of the COVID-19 lockdown on individuals' level of physical and sedentary activity to two main factors. Firstly, the physical restriction on movement, and secondly, the psychological and emotional factors relating to leaving the home. Their study in France and Switzerland indicated that while there was decreased vigorous physical activity and increased sedentary behaviour, moderate physical activity, such as walking, increased during lockdown. Nathan et al.'s (2021) study of Western Australian children indicated a significant increase in the duration and frequency of unstructured physical play. With a specific focus on events, the popularity of informal, unstructured formats has increased over the past few decades, but COVID-19 saw a significant rise in different types of virtual events offered by event organisers with amongst other, the use of applications such as Strava and MyTrace (Helsen et al., 2021). Home-based leisure and physical activity were also encouraged during the lockdown (Son, Nimrod, West, Janke, Liechty & Naar, 2021).

To combat the negative mental and physical health consequences of pandemic restrictions, Füzéki et al. (2020) recommend outdoor activity in green spaces such as cycling and jogging, where accessible. Contact with nature, for example, green and blue space acts as a buffer in certain instances to mitigate negative impacts on physical and mental wellbeing (Pouso, Borja, Fleming, Gómez-Baggethun, White & Uyarra, 2021). Yang et al. (2021) report on the mitigating effects of urban greenery on decreased leisure-time physical activity in Hong-Kong, as a result of the pandemic. Greener neighbourhoods experienced a less significant decrease in leisure-time physical activity as well as increased visits and physical activity in parks. Lawanson et al. (2020), in their study of Lagos, also attribute accessible public space infrastructure as the support-platforms for leisure-time physical activity. They report on the overnight creation of new spaces for leisure-time physical activity through the 'informal appropriation of public space', such as public roads and sport stadiums. Whereas residents of wealthy gated communities could make use of communal areas, low-income residents have been compelled to appropriate, often illegally, the city's formal spaces.

The paper by Payne (2020) considers the potential of the COVID-19 pandemic for the creation of 'active urban spaces', in light of the infection risks presented by indoor facilities. Inequalities in physical activity infrastructure such as a lack of green spaces are made

especially clear through mobility restrictions associated with the pandemic. Thus, scholars call for government innovation in urban planning and the 'reorganising of public space' following the clarity afforded by the pandemic (McDougall, Brown, Thomson, Hanley, Tully, Quilliam, Bartie, Gibson & Oliver, 2020). Kordshakeri and Fazeli (2020) reflect on how the pandemic highlighted the lack of accessible, usable, open spaces in the city of Tehran for physical activity.

Methodology

We employed exploratory research using a case study method. Research into South African parkrun participation is new, particularly (not)parkrun research given the initiative formed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. We review the (not)parkrun participation of parkrunners registered to Gauteng's 62 home events as a case study to explore physical leisure activity in a time where regular parkrun activities were prohibited. This research approach allows the case study to be analysed with a focus on discovering, exploring, and empirically detecting phenomena in the data (Jebb, Parrigon & Woo, 2017). Quantitative participation data for the first (not)parkrun year (week ending 21 June 2020 to week ending 20 June 2021) was sourced from the parkrun websites[4] of each home event with the knowledge and consent of the parkrun Research Board. The data was then compiled and analysed using basic descriptive statistics and interpretation. The research is also supplemented with qualitative data from reflections posted on the national parkrun blog[5] and social media pages.

How Gauteng parkrunners brought the parkrun home during the COVID-19 lockdown

The parkrun: organised, community-driven, and mass-participation event

The parkrun is arguably one of the world's most successful organised community sport initiatives, with its rapid expansion to over 20 countries since it was first founded by Paul Sinton-Hewitt in 2004 in Bushy Park, London (Hindley, 2018). The parkrun itself is a weekly, timed, and free, 5km event in which participants choose to engage by either running, jogging, or walking, and sharing the experience with friends, family, and peers. The parkrun takes place on Saturday mornings at dedicated parks, stadiums, and several other suitable venues. With numerous locations, called 'events' that host the parkrun across various cities around the world, individuals can register for the parkrun and select a home event. South Africa is one of the parkrun's largest participating countries. A unique barcode enables the recording and distribution of an individual's results, such as completion time, however registration is not required and participation is open to all (Grunseit, Richards & Merom, 2018). The parkrun is considered an attractive platform for shared participation in physical exercise, an inclusive leisure space for casual social interaction, as well as a role-player in identity formation (Cleland, Nash, Sharman & Claflin; 2019; Hindley, 2018). Parkrun literature describes its role in improving public health and personal well-being (Grunseit et al., 2018; Morris & Scott, 2019; Sharman, Nash & Cleland, 2019). Research also explores the social potential of this community-based physical activity (Wiltshire & Stevinson, 2018). Following the global outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, all official parkrun events were suspended from March 2020. Slowly, parkruns were able to resume at a later stage in some countries. Interestingly, the parkrun's popularity persisted (Warhurst & Black, 2021). At the time of this research, the last official South African parkrun events, took place on Saturday 14 March 2020. Due to governmental lockdown restrictions most parkrun events remained suspended for most of 2020

[4] https://www.parkrun.co.za/events/#geo=4.48/-28.78/23.38 (Accessed 1 August 2021)
[5] https://blog.parkrun.com/za/category/feedback (Accessed 1 August 2021)

and 2021. In June 2020, the country moved from a hard lockdown (alert level 5) with the curbing of use of spaces and opportunities of public leisure, entertainment, and physical activity, to an alert level 3 lockdown where limited outdoor physical activity and exercise were allowed (Young, 2020). Although some smaller events re-opened in May 2021, they were still hampered with alternating lockdown levels following COVID-19 waves. However, from November 2021, more South African parkruns re-commenced. While South Africa has fluctuated back and forth in terms of lockdown level status, group sports leisure, in its traditional form, has remained largely prohibited.

The (not)parkrun: self-driven, self-timed and self-recorded 'event-tualisation'

In mid-2020, the parkrun organisers introduced the (not)parkrun where individuals could participate by logging a self-timed 5km (2km run for juniors) run, walk, or jog, at any time and any day of a particular week, following any accessible route of their liking. The first (not)parkrun week in South Africa was 21 June 2020. An individual must be registered for the parkrun to log a (not)parkrun and must submit their time on their profile page (proof of time is not required). Unlike the parkrun, for the (not)parkrun, an individual can choose to log more than one activity per week online, uploading their routes, times, and locations. This is known as the number of '(not)parkruns'. A maximum of one activity can be logged per day, and the fastest time of the week is recorded in the weekly results per home event. The weekly (not)parkrun participation figures are subsequently published on each home event's website.

Consequently, participating in the (not)parkrun is now geographically removed from fixed event spaces, times, and automated recording. Conventionally, event spaces were clear geographical locations, specifically associated with mega events such as the Olympics or World Cups, and local events have equally taken on geographically specific locations. The parkrun itself has specific geographical locations, for Johannesburg, 33 such specific geographical locations. However, the launch of the (not)parkrun means participants are no longer bound to these geographical locations. These events also removed the temporal restrictions of a Saturday morning parkrun event by allowing the run, jog or walk to take place at any time, "any day of the week". The virtual (not)parkrun has removed time and space restrictions while keeping the event. The community of participants, one of the original appeals of the parkrun movement (Hindley, 2018), has been moved online with hashtags such as #notparkrun and #loveparkrun. Virtual events add a layer of complexity to event spaces that contributes to the understanding of immobility in events as it moves much of the planning into the hands of the individual taking part. For this paper, we observe the 'event-tualising' of physical leisure activity, in two dimensions. Firstly, on a practical and national level, physical leisure activity in the country was once again realised (while social distancing rules still apply), with the lifting of the hard restrictions on non-essential activities outside of the home during the initial lockdown of alert level 4 and 5. Secondly, the up-take of individuals in the (not)parkrun is considered an individual act of 'event-tualising' physical leisure activity. These individuals mobilise themselves (and possess the necessary infrastructure) by resuming participation in a parkrun event, but as an individual in a type of virtual-physical event. In participating in the (not)parkrun, individual parkrunners must appropriate a suitable space for this purpose, whether it be in a private garden, in an open park, or in and around the neighbourhood or along a street. This 'event-tualising' of physical leisure activity speaks to what Lawanson et al. (2020) postulate as the appropriation and 'creation' of space within the context of how 'extraordinary' the COVID-19 pandemic has been in terms of changing everyday interactions with the environment. Two quotes are presented below, sourced from the

parkrun South Africa feedback blogs, posted roughly two months into the launch of the (not)parkrun. For these parkrunners, participation in the (not)parkrun created a platform for the 'event-tualising' of their physical leisure activity outside of the home, through the recording of their run conducted in self-appropriated space and time.

"When lockdown started, and we were not allowed to leave the house for exercise, I started doing 5km around our property and logging my times. Then I found out about (not)parkrun and started logging my times there." 19 August 2020

"Long before there was ever a parkrun I mapped out a 5 km route from my house and back again. I felt the need to start running and I used this route a certain number of times a week. Then parkrun began and instead of running my route I did parkrun… For (not)parkrun I simply went back to my old route again. I leave my house, pass Delta Park where my parkrun takes place, go past two schools and dwellings where some of my friends live, then back again." 26 August 2020

In this case, ordinary behaviour of physical leisure activity in the form of the weekly, organised, and predictable parkrun, has been transformed into a self-driven, self-timed, and self-recorded, informal (not)parkrun. Time, space, and opportunity has been self-appropriated within the practical limits of an individual's surroundings, infrastructure, and pandemic restrictions. Such runners have weighed the risks and benefits to take part in the (not)parkrun (Nyenhuis, Greiwe, Zeiger, Nanda, & Cooke, 2020). A parkrunner's choice to undertake the (not)parkrun opportunity, is driven by a set of negotiating factors (Breines et al., 2019). Furthermore, as indicated by Grix et al. (2021), since the (not)parkrun essentially takes the shape of a virtual event, participation (and accurate recording) necessitates certain economic and technological components.

After one year of (not)parkruns, some registered Gauteng-based parkrunners have 'event-tualised' physical leisure activity. The (not)parkrun is designed to be social distance friendly, allowing a mobilised individual to bring the parkrun 'home' and openly claim physical leisure activity. Table 1 provides a detailed summary of the participation figures for Gauteng's (not)parkruns logged per home event from 21 June 2020 to 20 June 2021. Several Gauteng home events did not have participation for all 53 weeks of the (not)parkrun's first year of inception. These weeks are not recorded on the website, as only 'active weeks' (the weeks where (not)parkruns have been recorded) are listed. From Gauteng's 62 home events, 39 had (not)parkruns recorded for all 53 weeks. For the historically smaller and newer parkrun events, the participation in the (not)parkrun was lower than for the larger and more established home events with many more registered parkrunners. These larger home events are situated mostly in the more affluent areas of Gauteng. From Table 1, it can also be observed that participation in 2020 was generally higher for most home events than in 2021, indicating a decline in the uptake of the (not)parkrun. For the most part, the largest participating weeks were recorded in 2020, as opposed to 2021 with 49 of 62 Gauteng home events recording their largest (not)parkrun participation in a week in 2020. The fluctuation in weekly (not)parkrun participation throughout each Gauteng home event's inception year could be due to several factors. This includes the periodic national lockdown alert level adjustments, along with the easing or restricting of lockdown alert levels and related factors that influence physical activity such as curfew hours and public space closures. The quote below, sourced from the national

parkrun blog, indicates this negotiation and provides reference to some of the infrastructure used in participating in the (not)parkrun.

"As (not)parkrun launched, we were allowed to run within a 5km radius from our houses. With the aid of modern sports watches, the variety of "routes" one could discover in the neighbourhood became an adventure in itself… Now we all patiently wait for the pandemic to move on so that parkrunners can return to parkrun, where half the fun is in the group dynamics." 1 October 2020

Season is another potential factor which might motivate or deter potential (not)parkruns. With the investigation of only one year of participation figures, however, this is difficult to confirm. Furthermore, participation in the (not)parkrun could also be directly related to the geographic characteristics of the home event's area, that is, the (not)parkrunner is not logging runs within their vicinity of their home event. The 'infrastructure of immobility' is another factor (Breines et al., 2019; Michie et al., 2011; Spence et al., 2021). As observed in the two quotes below, sourced from the national parkrun Facebook page, some parkrunners might prefer the traditional parkrun format where the aspect of safety is a key motivation for participation.

"Please please we need parkrun to open. It is too dangerous to walk in the streets and alone." 23 April 2021 ; *"Please please please bring our parkrun back? For some of us parkrun provides the only safe space to run … I miss my parkrun family!"* 11 April 2021

As seen from Table 1, although the Botanical Garden (Pretoria) and the Delta parkruns (Johannesburg) have the greatest participation figures, these events were not physically held in these spaces. The Botanical Garden parkrun had the largest number of recorded (not)parkruns in a single week at 226 during the week ending 28 June 2020, while the Delta parkrun had the largest weekly average number of (not)parkruns in the inception year at 115.47. These home venues also recorded the largest number of (not)parkruns and (not)parkrunners at the very first inception week at 113 and 107, and 77 and 70, respectively. In addition, the Botanical Garden and Delta parkruns showed the greatest weekly average number of parkrunners participating in the (not)parkrun throughout the first year with 64.23 and 57.77 respectively. It seems parkrunners have embraced the idea of the (not)parkrun with numerous runs and times logged. While (not)parkruns are spread around the province, significantly, most events are logged in wealthy residential areas and parks in wealthy suburbs in the cities of Johannesburg and Pretoria. This points to the infrastructure required to participate in virtual events - networks, data, and equipment (such as smart watches to track times and routes). While (not)parkruns do not require proof of time and might seem inclusive and more accessible during the pandemic, the dominance of wealthy residential areas demonstrates that virtual events appeal and cater to the already advantaged. Most Gauteng parkrun events show much lower participation figures, for example, the least attended 13 home events, recorded a weekly average participation of only one (not)parkrunner. These venues are in marginal suburban parks or less affluent areas.

Table 1: (not) parkrun participation figures for Gauteng (21 June 2020 to 20 June 2021). (Source: https://www.parkrun.co.za)

Event	Number of (not)parkrunners participating in the first (not)parkrun week	Number of (not)parkruns recorded in the first (not)parkrun week	Average number of (not)parkrunners per week	Average number of (not)parkruns recorded per week	Largest number of (not)parkrunners participating in a single week	Largest number of (not)parkruns recorded in a single week	End date of the week with the largest number of (not)parkruns recorded	Number of active weeks
Alberts Farm parkrun	16	24	18.77	33	40	65	26-Jul-20	53
Atholl parkrun	9	10	7.85	11.94	17	30	19-Jul-20	53
Atlasville parkrun	19	32	10.85	19.23	28	43	26-Jul-20	53
Bells Inn parkrun	2	2	1.85	2.55	4	5	20-Dec-20; 27-Dec-20	20
Bezuidenhout parkrun	4	14	8.94	15.72	13	22	27-Sep-20; 01-Nov-20	53
Boksburg parkrun	22	53	32.68	59.28	52	90	10-Jan-21	53
Bosmont Stadium parkrun	2	3	5.25	10.08	10	20	21-Feb-21	53
Botanical Garden parkrun	77	113	64.23	111.83	152	226	28-Jun-20	53
Brakpan parkrun	1	1	1.72	2.75	5	8	06-Sep-20	36
Bronberrik parkrun	30	43	23.23	37.92	45	76	19-Jul-20	53
Bronkhorstspruit parkrun	2	2	2.8	3.58	7	8	26-Jul-20	50
Bryanston parkrun	31	48	40	76.26	94	152	26-Jul-20	53
Bulithando parkrun	1	1	1.44	1.6	4	4	14-Feb-21	18
Delta parkrun	70	107	57.77	115.47	112	187	16-Aug-20	53
Doornkop Military Base parkrun	1	1	1.83	1.89	11	11	18-Oct-20	18
Drumblade parkrun	3	6	2.13	2.74	6	9	28-Jun-20	47
Ebotse parkrun	27	51	29.38	52.98	67	101	05-Jul-20	53
Edenvale parkrun	6	11	5.79	9.51	13	18	25-Apr-21	53
Ernest Ulmann parkrun	5	12	7.51	15.87	13	27	13-Sep-20	53
Ferryvale parkrun	2	2	1.66	1.66	3	3	11-Apr-21; 17-Jan-21	29
Gilloolys parkrun	36	63	29.13	48.92	62	101	05-Jul-20	53
Golden Harvest parkrun	35	52	28.45	57.32	63	104	02-Aug-20	53
Gracepoint parkrun	1	1	3	3	21	21	27-Sep-20	10
Greenstone Hill parkrun	1	1	1.38	1.73	3	4	19-Jul-20; 26-Jul-20; 02-Aug-20	26
Hazeldean Farm parkrun	12	14	7	10.02	75	95	21-Feb-21	44
Hillside parkrun	7	11	15.17	26.19	24	40	10-Jan-21; 17-Jan-21	53
Homestead Lake parkrun	4	4	6.09	8.15	11	18	17-Jan-21	53
Kraalkop parkrun	3	3	2.71	5.40	8	11	27-Dec-20	52
Kwanele parkrun	3	3	1.88	2	11	11	11-Oct-20	17

African Journal of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure, Volume 10 (5) - (2021) ISSN: 2223-814X

African Journal of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure, Volume 10 (5) - (2021) ISSN: 2223-814X

Event	Number of (not)parkrunners participating in the first (not)parkrun week	Number of (not)parkruns recorded in the first (not)parkrun week	Average number of (not)parkrunners per week	Average number of (not)parkruns recorded per week	Largest number of (not)parkrunners participating in a single week	Largest number of (not)parkruns recorded in a single week	End date of the week with the largest number of (not)parkruns recorded	Number of active weeks
Lanseria parkrun	1	2	2.59	3.1	5	7	28-Jun-20; 05-Jul-20	51
Laudium parkrun	9	14	6.34	11.81	14	26	30-Aug-20	53
Leeupan parkrun	1	1	1.44	1.52	7	8	01-Nov-20	25
Lonehill parkrun	38	60	36.83	76.09	80	150	05-Jul-20	53
Mapetla parkrun	1	1	1.57	1.57	3	3	13-Sep-20; 27-Sep-20; 22-Nov-20;	30
Meyers Farm parkrun	4	4	10.49	22.49	19	42	27-Sep-20	53
Meyerton parkrun	3	6	8.92	16.98	15	30	16-Aug-20	53
Midstream parkrun	53	87	33.55	64.15	67	122	26-Jul-20	53
Modderfontein Reserve parkrun	48	74	38.38	82.74	78	145	26-Jul-20	53
Mofolo parkrun	1	4	2.67	3.3	7	8	02-Aug-20	46
Phoenix Park parkrun	1	3	5.53	10.23	12	16	20-Dec-20	53
Randfontein parkrun	2	2	2.68	3.18	8	10	16-Aug-20	50
Rietvlei parkrun, JHB South	29	47	46.91	79.98	89	136	26-Jul-20	53
Riverfields parkrun	10	14	3.25	8.1	10	18	26-Jul-20	52
Riviera on Vaal parkrun	2	3	4.09	7.17	8	16	20-Dec-20	53
Rondebult parkrun	1	1	2.27	2.49	6	7	24-Jan-21	33
Roodepoort parkrun	45	77	49.3	102.45	92	155	02-Aug-20; 13-Sep-20	53
Rose parkrun, Lenasia	2	3	2.67	4.04	8	10	30-Aug-20	46
Roses parkrun	13	22	11.25	24.25	22	44	05-Jul-20	53
Ruimsig parkrun	11	16	11.72	22.02	27	42	20-Sep-20	53
Silveroaks parkrun	2	2	4.66	9.89	10	16	11-Oct-20; 03-Jan-21	53
Springs parkrun	12	19	10.02	20.55	20	35	13-Sep-20	53
Sterkfontein parkrun	7	9	5.94	12.19	13	23	20-Sep-20	53
Tsakane Wetlands parkrun	1	1	1.61	1.67	4	4	17-Jan-21; 07-Feb-21	18
Vaal Marina parkrun	1	1	1.55	1.8	7	7	06-Dec-20	20
Valhalla parkrun	21	31	19.23	35.25	39	66	05-Jul-20	53
Victoria Lake parkrun	14	18	20.45	38.13	31	58	13-Sep-20	53
Voortrekker Monument parkrun, Pretoria	20	28	19.62	28.4	50	76	05-Jul-20	53
Waterfall parkrun	18	27	11.66	16.66	31	43	19-Jul-20	53
Westbury parkrun	1	1	1.55	3.08	4	7	31-Jan-21; 28-Mar-21	53
Westonaria parkrun	1	1	1.5	1.5	4	4	31-Jan-21	12
Wits parkrun	1	1	4.87	6.21	13	20	05-Jul-20	53
Woodlands parkrun	29	42	21.4	43.3	51	89	28-Jun-20	53

Discussion

This study indicates that a new type of infrastructural inequality exists in terms of virtual sports and physical leisure activity events. For an individual to participate (or at least accurately record their participation) in such events, adequate networks, data, and equipment are required, all of which, in South Africa at least, are costly. This includes smart watches to track times and routes as well as other devices such as smart phones, laptops and data to log onto host websites. Seemingly, participation in virtual events removes certain barriers, but not necessarily for less affluent individuals or individuals less technologically savvy such as the old and the young (Sox, Kline & Crews 2014; Westmattelmann, Grotenhermen, Sprenger & Schewe, 2021). While research by Helsen et al. (2021), in Belgium, indicate no clear correlation between socio-demographic factors and participation in virtual events, the unique South African context may have created this clear picture of infrastructural inequality. Additionally, the South Africa experience appears to be in line with the work of Grix et al. (2021) and Widdop, King, Parnell, Cutts & Millward (2018) who also found people from lower socio-economic backgrounds are less likely to have access to, and participate in, these activities. Missing out on virtual events also points to the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on marginalised individuals and lower socio-economic groups (Bracarense & Oliveira, 2021; Thorpe, Brice & Clark, 2021).

Conclusion

Lockdowns have significantly re-shaped leisure-time physical activity. Virtual events have removed temporal and spatial restrictions on when and where events could take place (Pouso et al., 2021). Official parkrun events were held in multiple locations in both affluent and marginal communities. With the onset of the lockdowns in early 2020 and subsequent ban on gatherings, parkruns were no longer accessible. However, along with the growing trend of virtual events, parkrun launched the (not)parkrun; a way of bringing the parkrun 'home', by participating in any place and time and then uploading times to a particular home event. This study focused on how responses to the pandemic shaped the rise of 'event-tualisation' of physical leisure activity in South Africa. Participation in virtual (not)parkruns necessitates an individuals' appropriation of accessible space, whether public or private. These virtual events add a layer of complexity to our understanding of the 'event space' and contributes to the understanding of immobility in events. The 'event space' becomes unbound from a geographical location and is found in the virtual environment as participants do not need to go to a parkrun and can run in their local neighbourhood, street or garden. While participation in a parkrun would require the ability to attend a local event, the ability to participate in a (not)parkrun is influenced by access to technology (Madray, 2020). The ability to use and understand technology, manage and upload data and own 'smart' equipment like watches and cellphones potentially limits participation as well as the associated health and well-being benefits. So, while some barriers for participation in a virtual event are removed (time and space), other barriers are raised (networks and equipment). Seemingly the parkrun, as a global initiative to counteract physical inactivity and sedentary behaviour, has managed to adapt and appears to be surviving (Warhurst & Black, 2021). Virtual events such as the (not)parkruns point to the changing nature of leisure and community sport, how communities seek connection virtually when restricted from gathering and using public space, and how infrastructure and access to technology creates barriers to participation in the virtual environment. But given social distancing policies and other restrictions, the pandemic continues to pose a great challenge to organised community sports' and demands adaptation for survival (Elliott et al., 2021; McDougall et al., 2020; Payne, 2020).

References

Andrade, R.D., Junior, G.J.F., Capistrano, R., Beltrame, T.S., Pelegrini, A., Crawford, D.W. & Felden, E.P.G. (2019). Constraints to leisure-time physical activity among Brazilian workers. *Annals of Leisure Research, 22*(2), 202-214.

Begović, M. (2020). Effects of COVID-19 on society and sport a national response. *Managing Sport and Leisure*, DOI: 10.1080/23750472.2020.1779115.

Bracarense, L.S.F.P. & Oliveira, R.L.M. (2021). Access to urban activities during the COVID-19 pandemic and impacts on urban mobility: The Brazilian context. *Transport Policy, 110*, 98-111.

Breines, M.R., Raghuram, P. & Gunter, A. (2019). Infrastructures of immobility: enabling international distance education students in Africa to *not* move. *Mobilities, 14*(4), 484-499.

Brooks, F. & Magnusson, J. (2007). Physical activity as leisure: the meaning of physical activity for the health and well-being of adolescent women. *Health Care For Women International*, *28*(1), 69-87.

Cheval, B., Sivaramakrishnan, H., Maltagliati, S., Fessler, L., Forestier, C., Sarrazin, P., Orsholitz, D., Chalabaev, A., Sander, D., Ntoumanis, N. & Boisgontier, M.P. (2021). Relationships between changes in self-reported physical activity, sedentary behaviour and health during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic in France and Switzerland. *Journal of Sports Sciences*, *39*(6), 699-704.

Cleland, V., Nash, M., Sharman, M. J. & Claflin, S. (2019). Exploring the Health-Promoting Potential of the "parkrun" Phenomenon: What Factors are Associated with Higher Levels of Participation? American Journal of Health Promotion, *33*(1), 13-23.

Di Sebastiano, K.M., Chulak-Bozzer, T., Vanderloo, L.M. & Faulkner, G. (2020). Don't walk so close to me: physical distancing and adult physical activity in Canada. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *11*, 19-26.

Elliott, S., Drummond, M.J., Eime, P.R., Drummond, C. & Mason, R. (2021). Understanding the impact of COVID-19 on youth sport in Australia and consequences for future participation and retention. *BMC Public Health*, *21*(448).

Friedman, S. (2021). In, but not of, Africa: a divided South Africa faces COVID-19. *The Round Table*, *110*(1), 16-30.

Füzéki, E., Groneberg, D.A. & Banzer, W. (2020). Physical activity during COVID-19 induced lockdown: recommendations. *Journal of Occupational Medicine and Toxicology*, *15*(25).

Ghram, A., Briki, W., Mansoor, H., Al-Mohannadi, A.S., Lavie, C.J. & Chamari, K. (2021). Home-based exercise can be beneficial for counteracting sedentary behavior and physical inactivity during the COVID-19 pandemic in older adults. *Postgraduate Medicine*, *133*(5), 469-480.

Gibbs, B.B., Kline, C.E., Huber, K.A., Paley, J.L. & Perera, S. (2021). COVID-19 shelter-at-home and work, lifestyle and well-being in desk workers. *Occupational Medicine, 71*, 86-94.

Grix, J., Brannagan, P.M., Grimes, H. & Neville, R. (2021). The impact of COVID-19 on sport. *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics*, *13*(1), 1-12.

Grunseit, A., Richards, J. & Merom, D. (2018). Running on a high: Parkrun and personal well-being. *BMC Public Health*, *18*(1), 1–11.

Helsen, K., Derom, I., Corthouts, J., De Bosscher, V., Willem, A. & Scheerder, J. (2021). Participatory sport events in times of COVID-19: analysing the (virtual) sport

behaviour of event participants. *European Sport Management Quarterly*, DOI: 10.1080/16184742.2021.1956560.

Hindley, D. (2018). "More Than Just a Run in the Park": An Exploration of Parkrun as a Shared Leisure Space. *Leisure Sciences*, *42*(3), 1-21.

Jebb, A.T., Parrington, S. & Woo, S.E. (2017). Exploratory data analysis as a foundation of inductive research. *Human Resource Management Review*, *27*(2), 265-276.

Kordshakeri, P. & Fazeli, E. (2020). How the COVID-19 pandemic highlights the lack of accessible public spaces in Tehran. *Cities & Health*, DOI: 10.1080/23748834.2020.1817690.

Lawanson, T., Foley, L., Assah, F., Mogo, E., Mapa-Tassou, C., Ogunro, T., Onifade, V. & Oni, T. (2020). The urban environment and leisure physical activity during the COVID-19 pandemic: a view from Lagos. *Cities & Health*, DOI: 10.1080/23748834.2020.1806459.

Lesser, I.A. & Nienhuis, C.P. (2020). The Impact of COVID-19 on Physical Activity Behavior and Well-Being of Canadians. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, *17*(3899).

Madray, J.S. (2020). The Impact of COVID-19 on Event Management Industry. *International Journal of Engineering Applied Sciences and Technology*, *5*(3), 2455-2143.

McDougall, C.W., Brown, C., Thomson, C., Hanley, N., Tully, M.A., Quilliam, R.S., Bartie, P.J., Gibson, L. & Oliver, D.M. (2020). From one pandemic to another: emerging lessons from COVID-19 for tackling physical inactivity in cities. *Cities & Health*, DOI: 10.1080/23748834.2020.1785165.

McEwan, L., McKay, T. & Baker. M. (2020). Trail running: exploring South Africa's serious leisure economy. *African Journal of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure, 9*(6), 1027-1043.

Michie, S., van Stralen, M.M. & West, R. (2011). The behaviour change wheel: A new method for characterising and designing behaviour change interventions. *Implementation Science*, *6*(42).

Morris, P. & Scott, H. (2019). Not just a run in the park: a qualitative exploration of parkrun and mental health. *Advances in Mental Health*, *17*(2), 110–123.

Nathan, A., George, P., Ng, M., Wenden, E., Bai, P., Phiri, Z. & Christian, H. (2021). Impact of COVID-19 Restrictions on Western Australian Children's Physical Activity and Screen Time. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, *18*(253).

Ng, K., Cooper, J., McHale, F., Clifford, J. & Woods, C. (2020). Barriers and facilitators to changes in adolescent physical activity during COVID-19. *BMJ Open Sport & Exercise Medicine*, DOI: 10.1136/bmjsem-2020-000919.

Nyenhuis, S.M., Greiwe, J., Zeiger, J.S., Nanda, A. & Cooke, A. (2020). Exercise and fitness in the age of social distancing during the COVID-19 pandemic. *The Journal of Allergy and Clinical Immunology: In Practice*, *8*(7), 159-171.

parkrun South Africa. (2020). *The (not)parkrun tourists*. Available from: https://blog.parkrun.com/za/2020/09/24/the-notparkrun-tourists/. [Retrieved 1 August 2020]

Payne, R. (2020). Will the COVID-19 outbreak propel the demand for active spaces or scare the public away? *Cities & Health*, DOI: 10.1080/23748834.2020.1790259.

Pouso, S., Borja, Á., Fleming, L.E., Gómez-Baggethun, E., White, M.P. & Uyarra, M.C. (2021). Contact with blue-green spaces during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown beneficial for mental health. *Science of the Total Environment*, *756*(143984).

Republic of South Africa. Department of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs. (2020a). Disaster Management Act, 2002: Declaration of a National State of Disaster. *Government Gazette*, *313*(43096), 15 March.

Republic of South Africa. Department of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs. (2020b). Disaster Management Act, 2002: Regulations Issues in terms of Section 27(2) of the Disaster Management Act, 2002. *Government Gazette*, *480*(43258), 29 April.

Sharman, M. J., Nash, M., & Cleland, V. (2019). Health and broader community benefit of parkrun—An exploratory qualitative study. *Health Promotion Journal of Australia*, *30*(2), 163-171.

Son, J.S., Nimrod, G., West, S.T., Janke, M.C., Liechty, T. & Naar, J.J. (2021). Promoting Older Adults' Physical Activity and Social Well-Being during COVID-19. *Leisure Sciences*, *41*(1-2), 287-294.

Sox, C.B., Kline, S.F. & Crews, T.B. (2014). Identifying best practices, opportunities and barriers in meeting planning for Generation Y. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, *36*, 244-254.

Spence, J.C., Rhodes, R.E., McCurdy, A., Mangan, A., Hopkins, D. & Mummery, W.K. (2021). Determinants of physical activity among adults in the United Kingdom during the COVID-19 pandemic: The DUK-COVID study. *British Journal of Health Psychology*, *26*, 588-605.

Staunton, C., Swanepoel, C. & Labuschaigne, M. (2020). Between a rock and a hard place: COVID-19 and South Africa's response. *Journal of Law and the Biosciences*, *7*(1), lsaa052.

Tessier, S., Vuillemin, A., Bertrais, S., Boini , S., Le Bihan, E., Oppert, J., Hercberg, S., Guillemin, F. & Briançon, S. (2007). Association between leisure-time physical activity and health-related quality of life changes over time. Preventative Medicine, *44*, 202-208.

Thorpe, H., Brice, J. & Clark, M. (2021). Physical activity and bodily boundaries in times of pandemic. *In The COVID-19 Crisis*. London: Routledge.

Warhurst, R. & Black, K. (2021). Lost and found: parkrun, work and identity. *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health*, DOI: 10.1080/2159676X.2021.1924244.

Westmattelmann, D., Grotenhermen, J.G., Sprenger, M. & Schewe, G. (2021). The show must go on-virtualisation of sport events during the COVID-19 pandemic. *European Journal of Information Systems*, *30*(2), 119-136.

Widdop, P., King, N., Parnell, D., Cutts, D. & Millward, P. (2018). Austerity, policy and sport participation in England. *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics*, *10*(1), 7-24.

Wiltshire, G. & Stevinson, C. (2018). Exploring the role of social capital in community-based physical activity: qualitative insights from parkrun. Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health, *10*(1), 47-62.

Yang, Y., Lu, Y., Yang, L., Gou, Z. & Liu, Y. (2021). Urban greenery cushions the decrease in leisure-time physical activity during the COVID-19 pandemic: A natural experimental study. *Urban Forestry & Urban Greening*, *62*(127136).

Young, M.E.M. (2020). Leisure pursuits in South Africa as observed during the COVID-19 pandemic. World Leisure Journal, *62*(4), 331-335.