

Original Paper

Research on the Development Motivation of Marathon Race

Blowout in China

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Received: October 02, 2024 Accepted: November 07, 2024 Online Published: November 16, 2024
doi:10.22158/wjer.v11n6p58 URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.22158/wjer.v11n6p58>

Abstract

As a national fitness sports event, city marathon is more and more sought after by people. Marathon is not only a competition for professional athletes, but also enters the life of ordinary people and becomes one of the first choices for national fitness. At the same time, the economic and cultural added value brought by the holding of the city marathon is favored by city managers. So far, the city marathon has shown a rapid blowout development trend, which plays an important role in promoting the strategic layout of Chinese healthy development.

Keywords

Development motivation, marathon fever, marathon race blowout

1. Introduction

With the founding of New China, China began to pay attention to competitive sports, and made qualitative progress, not only improved the promotion and development of competitive sports, and even once became a stepping stone to open the door in the early days of the founding of our country. Marathon, as one of the competitive sports, began to join the national sports competition in the 1950s, which compared with the development history of foreign marathons, Chinese marathon in the early days of the founding of the people's fitness movement is relatively backward.

In 2014, it can be described as an important turning point in the development of urban marathon events in China. The country began to attach importance to the development of urban marathon events, and incorporated the concept of national body-building into the strategy of national future development, effectively promoting the life of national fitness, so that the concept of healthy China has been deeply rooted in the hearts of the people. Therefore, in the context of healthy China, urban marathon develops rapidly and shows a blowout trend. At the same time, urban marathon also shows a diversified

development trend, greatly attracting more people's participation, and once became one of the most popular mass sports.

Nowadays, the development of urban marathon has reached 2024, and its blowout development trend is still high, laying a solid foundation for the implementation of the development of the country to the direction of sports power. Looking back on the blowout development trend of urban marathon events in these years, it is not difficult to see that the reason why the blowout trend is inseparable from the strong support of the national policy, the promotion of national fitness awareness, and the favorable impact of urban economic development, which has stimulated the national fitness craze, from the original participation of only professional sports players to the development of public players. The original untouchable sports have developed into popular sports that the whole people participate in and seek after, and the whole show a positive, healthy, stable and vigorous development situation.

2. Marathon Culture

As one of the track and field events, marathon is the most prominent event in which amateurs participate in many sports competitions. Marathon culture not only reflects its sports competition, but also includes equality and fairness for each participant, inclusiveness for non-professional athletes, and recognition of the popularity of mass participation, precisely because of its unique characteristics of marathon culture, making it the sport with the highest international popularity at present. Since the 20th century marathon movement has been recognized by the world, China has also begun to give a high degree of attention to the holding of marathon events, the earliest was held in 1981, since the marathon event has slowly been promoted throughout the country, until now showing a blowout trend.

From the sports characteristics of marathon events, it can summarize the definition of marathon culture. Broadly speaking, marathon culture refers to the people who participate in marathon activities can be materially promoted and obtain the greatest satisfaction in spirit. Material wealth refers to the movement that can promote the public to mobilize the functions of various organs of the body when participating in marathon events, so as to make them productive. At the same time, it will bring benefits to the economic development of the host city, improve the infrastructure of the host city, and promote the construction of the ecological environment of the host city. Spiritual wealth refers to the changes in people's spiritual thoughts, the formation of behavior habits, and the further promotion of harmonious coexistence between people in the process of participating in marathon. In a narrow sense, marathon culture refers to the characteristics of spirit, tradition, competition and norms generated based on a long history of development. It can be seen that marathon culture is not only a representative of competitive sports, but also a spirit of daring to challenge oneself, breaking through oneself, tenacious struggle, and never giving up.

In view of marathon culture, many scholars in our country have also expressed their different views. For example, marathon is a kind of healthy life concept, the city marathon is an important label to promote the spiritual civilization of the city, can highlight the positive and optimistic life attitude of

urban residents, but also can enhance the core value system of the city cohesion; Marathon culture reflects people's pursuit of physical health and entertainment life in the marathon, which can organically combine people's social life with marathon culture, so that people can get the spirit and action synchronization in the marathon. Marathon culture is a carrier of spiritual civilization and a trace of the Greek spirit. It not only reflects the essence of long-distance running, but also inherits the ancient Greek sports spirit. Therefore, it calls on people to respect the heritage of marathon spirit and culture while participating in marathon events.

In summary, according to the research on marathon culture, it can be seen that people's cognition of marathon is still at the level of participating in competitive events, and they do not really attach importance to the cultural value of marathon, have no real understanding of marathon and the spiritual value to be inherited by marathon, and have lost the deep connotation of marathon. In this regard, in the course of the future city marathon, people need to pay more attention to the marathon culture, follow the marathon's spirit of never give up, and challenge the spirit of self.

3. The Impact of Marathon Events on Host Cities

In long-distance running sports, marathon events break through the space restrictions of venues, mainly based on the city, select a representative line of the city as the marathon route city can show the economic development of the city and the spiritual appearance of urban residents to the whole country and even the world, so many domestic marathon events are usually named "city name "+" marathon". Marathon events and cities are closely related, both promoting and influencing each other.

3.1 Improved the Health Concept of Urban Residents

With the rapid development of marathon events, marathon events have been held all over the country, and more and more people have begun to actively participate in them. Participants in the marathon process are not only for physical exercise, but also for the pursuit of spiritual life. It can be seen that the holding of marathon events has a great impact on the city, which can improve the health concept of urban residents. For example, Yin Jie, a scholar, once suggested the city marathon can make people have the spirit of tenacious struggle and unremitting efforts for a long time during the marathon, and at the same time, they should have the spirit of courage. Through solidarity and mutual help in the process of the race, interpersonal communication and exchange are increased, which promotes the construction of a harmonious urban society and builds a good interpersonal relationship. It is a favorable publicity for carrying forward the fine tradition of the Chinese nation and edifying the thoughts of urban residents. At the same time, the German philosopher Ernst Cassirer also pointed out in his article that the marathon is a concrete symbol of the city people's concept of health; American philosopher Lewis also insisted the marathon event represents a kind of city image, which is the most intuitive visual impact to people, but also an important way to shape the spiritual civilization of urban residents.

3.2 Demonstrates the Cultural Atmosphere of the City

At present, major cities in China are actively holding marathon events to promote the rapid development of marathon events. At the same time, cities also demonstrate their cultural atmosphere to the country and even the world through marathon events, and lay a good foundation for enhancing the status of cities, promoting urban development, and entering the international track in the future. Many scholars also put forward a lot of views on the impact of marathon on the cultural atmosphere of cities. For example, Li et al. (2018) proposed that cities take marathon as the preferred event based on the unique cultural characteristics of marathon, and it was once developed rapidly. In terms of concentrated display, it attracted the majority of urban residents to participate in marathon events and increased the high degree of integration of cities through the same competition. It also opens the image of the city to the outside world and promotes the social and cultural integration between cities. It can be seen that the marathon has a great impact on the city culture. Che (2018) pointed out that a city can display its culture and charm in marathon events, which is of great significance in promoting urban culture. At the same time, due to the certain openness and ornamental features of marathon events, the symbol of a city's architectural property has become the representative symbol of urban culture, which shows the city's culture in a concentrated way.

3.3 Promoted the Prosperity of Urban Economy

Because the city marathon has its own characteristics, which will attract more investors, advertisers and sponsors to the host city, it will bring more economic benefits to the host city, which can promote the development of the city's tourism industry, promote the development of urban transportation, but also promote the development of urban characteristics of the catering culture, and speed up the city construction. The cultural feature of marathon is an important business card of the host city and a business opportunity for both the host city and the city to be hosted. The host city should deeply explore the culture of the city marathon event, promote the spiritual culture advocated by the city marathon event to the local people, so that the people can develop in the direction of a healthy and fashionable lifestyle, and cater to the trend of building the body of the whole people. The relationship between marathon events and cities has been studied by domestic scholars, among which Ji (2019) believes that the reason why Chinese city marathon presents a state of blowout development is mainly because the current city marathon events are not limited to provincial cities, and some second and third-tier cities with local characteristics compete to host city marathon events, which shows that city marathon has social resources. With the ability to integrate sports skills and national fitness, the marathon has become an important festival for the combination of sports skills and national fitness. At present, the density of urban marathon events in China is relatively concentrated, which can expand the brand image of marathon events, usually mainly around the urban market as the operation object; Judging from the current level of urban marathon holding in China, it has basically reached the international top level, but some cities that hold marathon events also have some inexperience in the process of preparing and organizing marathon events. Zhang (2020) has conducted research on the

positioning of urban marathon events, and he proposed that urban marathon events show a rapid development trend. The number of marathon events is constantly expanding, but the positioning of the event is too homogenous and lacks certain inclusiveness, and the community function is not fully explored. The organization and management of urban marathon events are mainly operated in a top-down way, and there is no constructive strategic plan for the sustainable holding of marathon events. They put forward that in order to expand the influence of city marathon, it is necessary to define the service object of marathon in the process of holding marathon events in the future. At the same time, Chen (2019) also put forward her own views on the study of city marathon events. She proposed that city marathon events can shape the city brand, enhance the spiritual civilization construction of city residents, and promote the economic development of the host city and the development of local enterprises. Cities hold marathon events, not only to provide people with a healthy entertainment platform, but also to provide favorable conditions for their own urban economic construction.

4. Analysis of the Motivation behind the City Marathon Craze

As a popular project of comprehensive fitness, urban marathon has ushered in the "2.0 era" and played an important role in promoting national fitness. Although the concept of comprehensive fitness has not been launched for a long time, the trend led by it is surging. The State General Administration of Sports and local municipal sports bureaus frequently advocate the policy of "national marathon", while attracting more enterprises to actively participate in the co-organized marathon alliance. In the cheers, urban marathon presents a blowout development trend. Through analyzing the motivation law behind the explosive boom of urban marathon: the policy promotion of the national government, the injection of urban commercial capital, and the development of urban marathon, which drive urban economy and the physiological needs of the people themselves.

In recent years, domestic marathon events have developed rapidly like shoots after a spring rain, and the scale and quantity of these events are developing in the direction of blowout. According to the data on the official website of Chinese Athletics Association, as shown in Figure 1, the development trend of domestic marathon events from 2015 to 2023 can be seen. There are 134 marathon events in China in 2015. From 2015 to 2024, the development of domestic marathon events was relatively quick, and the total number of marathon events exceeded in 2020, reaching 2031. It is not until the beginning of 2021 that the national outline of the concept of healthy China is launched that the sports industry has received rapid development opportunities. In 2021, the number of domestic marathon events reaches 2409, and the number of marathon events reaches 3102 in 2023.

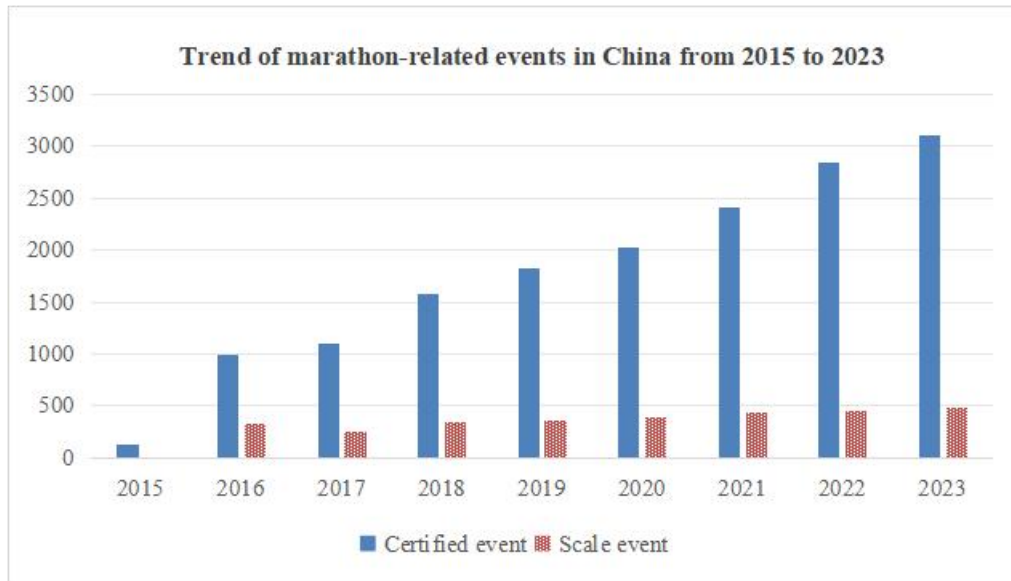


Figure 1. Trend of marathon-related events in China from 2015 to 2023

As shown in Figure 1, from the perspective of the number of certified events, there is still a gap between the holding standards of marathon events in China and those in developed countries. As shown in Figure 2, starting from 2018 the number of B-class marathon events held in China has begun to grow from 10 to 27, and the number of B-level marathon events increases. And the number of A1 marathon events still greatly increased, until the total number of marathon events will reach 403 in 2023. From the perspective of the scale of events, domestic marathon events have gradually made up for the gap in people's sports demand.

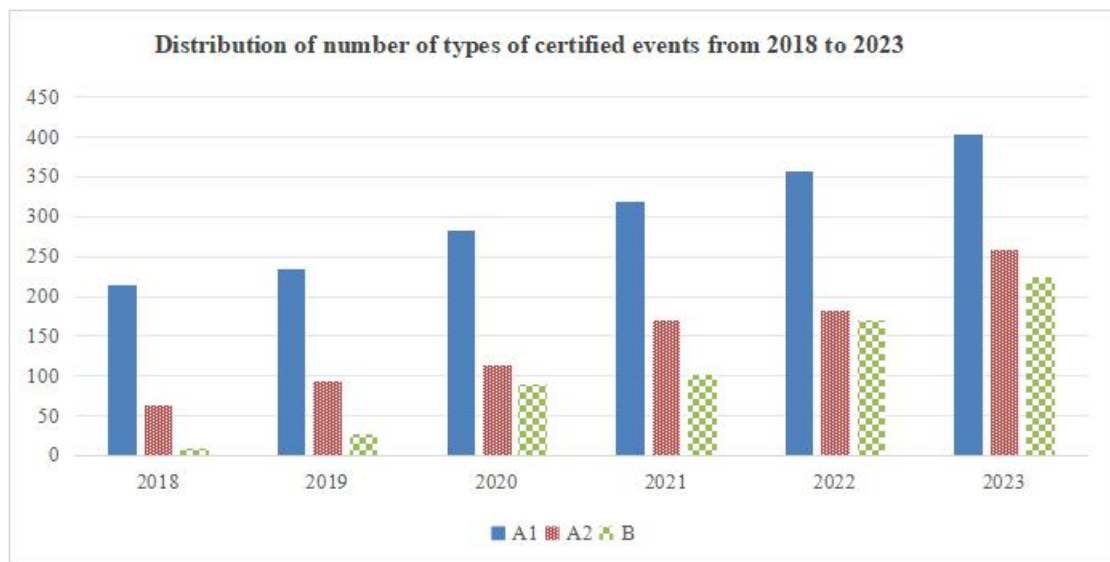


Figure 2. Distribution of Number of Types of Certified Events from 2018 to 2023

5. The Development Motivation of Urban Marathon Blowout

At present, from the perspective of the development trend of domestic urban marathon events, the number and scale of its development are increasing year by year, attracting more and more marathon participants to sign up for the competition, and the number of host cities is also increasing sharply. It can be seen that under the background of healthy China, Chinese urban marathon events have presented a blowout scene, and the motivation for its blowout development can be carried out from four levels. According to the analysis, the national policy support and guidance, the needs of urban development, the needs of economic improvement and the needs of personal development have all become the main factors to promote the development of domestic urban marathon events. The specific analysis is as follows.

5.1 National Policy Support and Guidance

The main reason for the blowout development of urban marathon events in China is the support and guidance of national policies. On the one hand, from the characteristics of various sports events held in our country, government-led is the most distinctive feature. However, with the change of the times and the continuous change of the social environment, this top-down mode can not meet the long-term development of urban marathon events. The market operation mode has been applied to various large-scale sports events, especially the city marathon. The holding of urban marathon events has developed from "government-led" to "government-led, market-oriented operation mode". The second mode is government-led management and operation companies, which undertake urban marathon events as agents. Although the current operating companies in the market have played a great role in promoting the market-oriented development of urban marathon events to a certain extent, they lack experience in operating urban marathon events, lack of professionalism, and face sponsorship at the same time. Due to the shortage of funds, it is easy to cause different degrees of risk problems in the process of holding marathon events, which leads to the fact that the holding of city marathon events does not bring about actual economic effects; The third operating model is the professional operation management company, that is, the operating company of the third party. This type of management company has certain brand advantages and has a great influence on the holding of urban marathon events, which is shown as Table 1.

Table 1. Three Basic Modes of Marathon Operation in China

Operation mode	Company	Nature
Leading by government	Sports Group	State-owned enterprises
Leading by company	Sports Management Inc.	Private enterprise
Professional third-party operation	Smart Beauty Sports	Private enterprise
Traditional operation	Sports Bureau	Government

The reason why the domestic city marathon events can show a blowout development is mainly because under the government leadership and market operation, the marathon events have attracted attention, obtained certain financial support from local sponsors, and also promoted the continuous improvement of the number of city marathon events held. According to relevant data statistics, under the background of the outline of the 2021 Healthy China strategic concept, the number of marathon events held in China has increased significantly, among which there are more than 1,320 sponsors of marathon events. It is enough to see that marathon events led by the government have a very great influence, and certain brand effect and economic effect brought by marathon events. It has attracted more sponsors to join in the holding of urban marathon events. However, it can be seen from the comparison of domestic and foreign marathon sponsors, as shown in Table 2. In China, except for Beijing, Shanghai and Xiamen, which have strong economic strength, other first-tier, second-tier and third-tier cities mainly use government grants as the funds for holding marathon events, followed by commercial sponsorship, and registration fees account for a relatively small proportion. However, in foreign developed countries, most of the funds for the sponsorship of marathon events come from commercial sponsorship and registration fees, and local governments do not participate in the responsibility of hosting city marathons. It can be seen that if the government's leadership is too obvious, there will also be insufficient sponsorship of marathon events. It can be seen that the government's support is essential for the holding of domestic marathon events.

Table 2. Comparison of Revenue of Chinese and Foreign Marathon Events

Form of income	German	America	Beijing, Xiamen	Shanghai,	First-tier cities	Second- and third-tier cities
Finance/Lottery	—	—	—		0~50%	30%~90%
Commercial sponsorship	30%	0~10%	80%		40%~65%	10%~50%
Registration fee	50%	>90%	20%		6~40%	3%~20%

5.2 The need for Urban Development

(1) History and culture

A city's history and culture is the crystallization of human wisdom, but also reflects people's food, clothing, housing, transportation and spiritual civilization, which is a concentrated display of the city's spiritual outlook. Through the holding of marathon events, the external publicity of urban culture will be strengthened, so that more people can understand the city and attract more people to travel to the city. Many cities use marathon events as a channel to show their local characteristic culture. The marathon and the culture of the city are mutually influenced and integrated. On the one hand, the city marathon effectively promotes the history and culture of the city and makes more people pay attention to the

inheritance of the city culture. On the other hand, the history and culture of the city have also given some enlightenment for the marathon to set a distinctive theme. In order to better reflect the spiritual civilization of the city, the theme of the city marathon can be combined with the spiritual culture of the city. For example, the Forbidden City, the ancient city wall in Xi 'an, and the tomb of Ming Xiaoling in Nanjing are set as marathon routes. Yangzhou International Half Marathon highlights innovation, integrates the spirit of Jianzhen into the sports connotation of the marathon, showing the courage of difficulties and great love. The spirit of authenticity and the marathon spirit of daring to challenge and not giving up profoundly reflects the civilization and culture of the country, but also highlights the spiritual civilization of the host city, which greatly improves the inheritance of the national civilization and the spiritual civilization of the city.

(2) Urban construction

At present, although the city marathon events in China are dominated by the government, with the progress of marathon events toward marketization, the holding of city marathon has also begun to develop in the direction of diversity. From the perspective of their own economic interests, local enterprises can also effectively enhance their own image, improve the popularity of their products, strengthen communication and contact with the local government, so as to promote the development of the city's capital market and truly achieve the strategic goal of poverty alleviation by sponsoring marathon events. The holding of urban marathon has accelerated the process of urban infrastructure construction, which is also an important part of the marathon preparation to expand city visibility.

5.3 The Need for Economic Improvement

Under the background of healthy China, sports is an important indicator to measure the development level of a country, an important product of national economic development to a certain extent, and a lucrative industry for the whole city. In this regard, the governments of various cities have successively competed for the right to hold large-scale sports events, which reflects the economic strength and social style of the city. It can be seen that, as one of the most popular sports, the city marathon also meets the needs of economic development, and can provide a lot of business opportunities for the tertiary industry of the city, such as catering, hotels and so on. For greater economic benefits, all businesses in the host city must constantly improve themselves, which is also a virtuous cycle for the economic development of the city. Even in the off-season, the quality of life of urban residents will be improved.

6. Rational Thinking on the Blowout Development of City Marathon

Since 1981, the first marathon event in China -- Beijing International Marathon event was successfully held, marathon events began to spread all over the country's large, small and medium-sized cities, which has become one of the sports events with the highest participation of the masses. The marathon truly shows the good spiritual outlook of the Chinese people. Under the background of the gradual improvement of material level, people begin to pursue a higher level of quality life. The sports culture of urban marathon has played an important social value in building urban civilization and improving

people's living standards and spiritual civilization. However, behind the blowout development of urban marathon events in China, we also should calm down and think. The rapid development of marathon brings us unprecedented opportunities, but also great challenges.

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