

Reasons and Strategies for Marathon Race Fever under the National Fitness Strategy

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Abstract: With the explosive growth of marathon events in China, research reveals that the marathon "boom" manifests in continuous expansion and innovation across event quantity, content, participant numbers, and formats. This phenomenon stems from the synergy between national fitness initiatives and the sports industry, the imbalance between public fitness demand and public services, the decentralization of event approval authority, and the low barrier to entry and high participation rate of marathon running. However, these events face challenges including performance-driven governance, low lottery win rates, strong administrative dependency, significant safety risks, and weak cultural development and marketing. To address these issues, the following strategies are proposed: legally refine event management systems; implement government procurement of public services; guide social forces in organizing events; improve support systems; strengthen knowledge dissemination and popularization; promote balanced development across multiple sectors; and build distinctive event brands.

Keywords: Sports Management, Marathon, National Fitness

1. Introduction

In recent years, marathon has developed very rapidly in China, and many cities have organized marathon competitions, forming a social phenomenon of "marathon fever". According to statistics, in 2024, a total of 330 marathon races (including only certified races) were held nationwide, with a total of 4,715,600 participants; in the first half of 2025 alone, more than 300 races were held, with a participation scale of more than 3.2 million, a record high in both the number of races and the scale of participation [1]. At most, three cities held marathon races at the same time, and the intensive marathon races provided an important stage for enthusiastic runners and added a new "wing" to the supply side of public services for national fitness. Marathon organizers are enthusiastic about hosting these events, runners eagerly share their race experiences on social media to keep up with trends, and onlookers focus on the commercial opportunities, becoming scalpers. In no time, the social impact of marathons has become remarkable, evolving into a full-fledged social and cultural phenomenon. In the process of deepening the implementation of national fitness strategy, in the face of marathon races around the "blowout" situation, it is necessary to calmly think about marathon races held, operation, participation and after the race of the various aspects of the problem reflected, in order to better become a marathon race for the national fitness of the new wing of the supply side of the public service to add a sustainable performance.

2. The Specific Characteristics of Marathon Race Fever

2.1 Continuous blowout in the number of races

According to statistics from the Chinese Athletics Association and Wasadata (Table 1), the number of domestic marathon events has experienced rapid growth over the past decade, increasing from 134 events in 2015 to 330 events in 2024—a surge exceeding 146%. Over the decade from 2015 to 2024, the number of marathons held nationwide increased by 196 events. This rapid growth has established marathons as a popular vehicle for promoting nationwide fitness initiatives and as a key platform addressing the public's growing demand for fitness activities. Moreover, the number of provinces and cities hosting marathons has also surged rapidly. By 2024, road running events had expanded to cover all 31 provincial-level administrative regions, 261 prefecture-level cities, and 537 counties and districts nationwide, truly achieving "road races in every county, events every month." The pursuit of marathon events by different cities further highlights their significant status among fitness enthusiasts and participants. The increasing number of countries and regions represented among participants has elevated

the international influence and recognition of domestic marathons, laying a solid foundation for building internationally renowned marathon brands with Chinese characteristics.

Table 1 Statistics of National Marathon Events (Certified Events) 2015-2017

Year	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Total number of matches	134	328	256	317	339	60	55	19	308	330
Number of participants	150	280	420	530	423.909	43.96	63.51	29.95	418.42	471.56

2.2 The increasing richness of race content

Marathon as a long history of track and field long-distance running events, its full distance of 42.195 kilometers, divided into full marathon, half marathon and four marathon three. The content of the event is set to fully reflect the event's humanistic and pro-people nature, closely combined with the reality of different groups of people, set up a full, half, 10 kilometers, 7 kilometers, mini-marathon (5 kilometers), couples run (4.5 kilometers), parent-child run (2 kilometers), family run (1.2 kilometers), public welfare run, team run, fitness run, 100 groups, 100 enterprises, countryside marathon, nearly 20 kinds of run. The diversification of race programs further enriches the marathon, emphasizes the scientific concept of national fitness, and is more in line with the athletic needs and physical reality of the general fitness population ^[2]. According to the tracking survey, the marathon is held in May and October every year, and in order to improve the social influence of the marathon, more and more organizers have increased the publicity and incentive funds in recent years, and attracted many famous foreign runners to participate in the marathon, which improves the level of professional competitions and the ornamental nature of the races. The increase in the number of projects for the general public has made the marathon more balanced between professional competition and two-way interaction between the public and fitness, especially some local specialties have not only enhanced the promotion of local history, culture, humanities, tourism and other social publicity, but also attracted more fitness-loving and sports-minded people to compete with professional athletes in the same field and on the same platform, which conveys a sports, healthy and happy fitness concept and a sense of social influence to the people. It also attracts more ordinary people who love fitness and are enthusiastic about sports to compete with professional athletes, and conveys to people a fitness concept and awareness of sports, health and happiness.

2.3 Rapid increase in the number of participants

The absolute participation scale of China's marathon has ranked in the forefront of the world, and in 2024, a total of 749 road running events will be held in the country, with about 7,048,600 participants. In comparison, in 2024, the United States will hold about 1,100 marathon races with about 610,000 participants; Japan will hold about 260 races with about 340,000 participants. From the population ratio, China is about 0.50%, which is higher than the United States (about 0.18%) and Japan (about 0.27%); however, the difference between the male and female ratios is still obvious ^[3] -- the domestic male and female ratio is about 4:1, while the United States is close to 1:1, Japan is about 3:1. In addition, the event "one visa is hard to find" has become the norm. Taking the Beijing Marathon as an example, the 2024 event had a capacity of 30,000 participants but received over 160,000 valid registrations, resulting in an overall acceptance rate of less than 19%. The Wuxi Marathon, with a capacity of 33,000 participants that same year, attracted 266,000 registrations, yielding an acceptance rate of just 12%. In 2011, the Beijing Marathon's 30,000 spots took six days to fill. Now, they sell out within hours, making lottery-based registration a standard practice for premier events.

2.4 Continuous Innovation of Participation Methods

With the rapid increase in the number of registrations and participants, the operational pressure faced by race organizers has become more and more prominent. In order to break through the capacity and geographical limitations of offline races, the online marathon mode relies on technological innovation to realize in-depth development. Participants can complete the designated mileage and synchronize the sports data within the specified period of the event through the authorized entrances of the platforms such as Gaode Map and Yue Running Circle, and obtain the official electronic finish certificate and physical or virtual medals after verification by the anti-cheating system. For example, the 2025 Wuhan Marathon online race adopts this mode, and participants can light up the exclusive medals after completing the corresponding events with the Yuet Run Circle APP. The scale of such races has significantly surpassed the early stage, and technological evolution has also promoted the upgrading of the experience. For

example, AutoNavi Maps is the only designated platform for the 2024 Xiamen Marathon Global Online Race, integrating digital course navigation and paperless services, while Joy Running Circle strengthens the anti-cheating algorithms and social functions to further enhance the credibility and interactivity of the race. Facing the scarcity of offline races, online marathon gradually opens a door for national runners to complete their marathon participation wish, which is respected by running enthusiasts, and the great temptation and social personalization features brought by medal design and APP function expansion gradually boost the online marathon fever.

3. The inducing reasons of marathon fever

3.1 Two-way linkage between national fitness and sports industry

After the Beijing Olympic Games, China's sports development strategy began to change from the previous Olympic strategy, which was mainly based on competitive sports, to a national strategy, with the establishment of the National Fitness Day on August 8 every year and the promulgation and implementation of the Regulations on National Fitness, which further protects the legitimate rights and interests of citizens in national fitness in the legal system^[4]. 2019, the General Office of the State Council issued the "Opinions on the Promotion of National Fitness and Sports Consumption to Promote the High-Quality Development of the Sports Industry", and 20 Opinions on Promoting the High-Quality Development of the Sports Industry", and in 2021, it issued the "National Fitness Program (2021-2025)", which explicitly proposes to promote the integrated development of sports and related industries. As a part of the development of sports industry, national fitness itself is closely related to the sports industry, and boosting national sports consumption is one of the effective means to promote the development of sports industry. Running as a large number of participants, simple to start, less difficult, easy to carry out by the majority of the people's favorite fitness sports, is the majority of fitness enthusiasts to choose the main form of exercise. Marathon fever is to cater to the public fitness program features, at the same time, but also behind its huge economic interests space is not unrelated^[5]. According to the State General Administration of Sports and the China Association of Athletics Association jointly released the "2023 China Road Running Event Blue Book" shows that during the period of 2019-2023 China's marathon and related road running event operating income from 49.83 billion yuan to 108.24 billion yuan, with a compound annual growth rate of about 21.4%. According to the current growth rate and policy planning projections, the industry scale in 2025 is expected to reach 150 billion yuan. The main income of the marathon for the registration fee and sponsorship fees, when many runners have joined the marathon this highly sought-after fitness boom^[6], people for sports and fitness consumption activities of the consumer structure and consumer psychology also changed, thus more to promote the rising marathon. In addition, because of the large number of participants in the marathon, covering a wide range of areas and strong radiation effect, the commercial value behind it is becoming more and more prominent, and it is widely favored by many social capitals, which promotes the rapid development of the marathon industry chain, and further stimulates the blossoming of the marathon project.

3.2 Imbalance between the rising demand for mass fitness and the supply of public sports services

After the Beijing Olympic Games, China's sports development strategy and development mode has been transformed, fitness for all has risen as a national strategy, the national fitness demand has risen rapidly, and people's expression of the right to self-sports, healthy life and quality of life has become more prominent, and fitness for all has been integrated into the daily life of the general public, and it has gradually become an important part of the process of constructing a healthy China to realize the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation's Chinese dream. Since the 18th CPC National Congress, the state has made a new initiative to build a service-oriented government with the construction of a public service system, and vigorously promoting the construction of a public service system is precisely the imperative and realistic requirements for the development of the sports industry in the new period. However, because for a long time, China's sports development focus on the gold medal-based Olympic strategy, the backwardness of the development level of mass sports in a short period of time is difficult to adapt to the rapidly growing fitness needs of the general public. China's public sports services in the total reserves of sports resources is seriously inadequate, whether it is sports material or sports service products are difficult to meet the people's basic fitness reality, followed by a limited number of public sports facilities, grass-roots fitness service organization is not sound, the grass-roots mass sports activities are limited as well as the masses of scientific fitness guidance is missing and other links are in urgent need of improvement and improvement, these realities and the masses of growing fitness needs of the strong

contrast between These realities form a strong contrast with the growing demand for fitness among the masses, resulting in a serious imbalance between the supply and demand for national fitness. Because of this, the 13th Five-Year Plan for sports in China has incorporated the construction of a public service sports system as an important task, with the starting and ending points of continuously meeting the growing demand for sports and fitness among the masses, adhering to the main responsibility of the government and multi-party cooperation, and constructing a diversified range of participating bodies, supply channels, content and modes of supply, to strengthen the basic public sports program. Marathon, as a running program with low entry requirements and a large number of participants, caters to the fitness needs of the majority of runners, and also finds an opportunity and provides an important platform to alleviate the contradiction of people's participation in fitness at a uniform time and in a common area.

3.3 Decentralization of the approval authority of sports events has increased the autonomy of local running competitions

The "approval system" that has been binding the sports industry and mass sports events has become a "stumbling block" to the healthy development of China's sports industry and national fitness, and the management system of one organization and two brands has brought about the monopoly of the resources for sports events, which breeds corruption and space for rent-seeking. Soil and power rent-seeking space, from the local sports bureau to the State General Administration of Sports and other relevant departments of the approval process, the threshold is high, long time, so that the power rent-seeking spreads^[7]. March 16, 2020, the State General Administration of Sports officially announced Decree No. 25, "Sports Events Activity Management Measures," which will come into force on May 1, 2020, in addition to the international sports events, fitness qigong, aviation sports, mountaineering and other special sports, the State General Administration of Sports, the State General Administration of Sports and the State General Administration of Sports. In addition to international sports events, fitness qigong, aviation sports, mountaineering and other special sports, the State General Administration of Sports does not do any approval of sports events, institutions, enterprises and public institutions, social organizations and individuals can organize and hold sports events in accordance with the law. The state's request to simplify government and decentralize power and realize the combination of administration and management is to play the role of government guidance and cultivate demand, so that stakeholders can give up monopoly and gray income. It is in this context, the marathon event as a popular among the general public, the number of participants, the social radiation effect of the fitness program has been favored by governments around the world, so the governments around the world have joined the ranks of organizing marathons, not only because of the state to decentralize the approval of sports events, accelerating the process of organizing the event, so that in recent years the number of domestic marathons has increased dramatically, the number of marathons. At the same time, it is also reflected from the side of the local government in the field of public sports service supply, to meet the general public fitness demand for the growing expansion of increased autonomy and service content^[8].

3.4 The low starting point and high participation of marathon sports program

Due to the domestic marathon in recent years in the content setting more focus on close to the people's fitness reality, to maximize to meet the majority of the people to fitness and leisure for the purpose of the reality of the needs of the majority of the people, the addition of a half marathon, 5 km, mini-marathon, family marathon, couples marathon and other characteristics of the project, which is even closer to the distance between the marathon and the people, and enhance the marathon's affinity and attractiveness, so as to let the participants' body condition, basic ability and mental strength are easier than other programs. Secondly, the opening of the marathon venue for the participants, not only can have the opportunity to be able to compete with professional athletes on the same field, so that all participants together in the same track, but also every step, every section can enjoy the city roads, new rural construction scenery^[9]. City marathon are chosen as the runway of the city's busy and famous road, can let the participants together in the process of the race to appreciate the city's cultural charm and humanistic feelings, and rich characteristics of the countryside marathon allows participants to get close to nature as well as the way to experience rural tourism with sports.

4. Cold Reflection on Marathon Race Fever

4.1 Utilitarianization of political performance of the purpose of the event

As a long history of endurance testing long-distance running sports, marathon is increasingly welcomed by the majority of running enthusiasts [10]. Following the Beijing Marathon, Shanghai Marathon, Guangzhou Marathon and Xiamen Marathon, marathons have blossomed in Chinese cities in just a few years, and have even become a social trend phenomenon. City marathon races to compete for the local government to see the opportunity [11], have entered the countryside to create a marathon this cup of "rare goods" in the team to travel through the landscape to enjoy the spring intoxication of Zhejiang's first countryside marathon running in Lanxi, around the Qin Zhi Ancient Trail, Loess Plateau countryside to create the Qin Zhi Ancient Trail China Countryside Marathon, 500 Station countryside marathon run through the 100 most beautiful countryside and so on. From the city marathon hot to the countryside marathon gradually popular, marathon has become a new favorite fitness, become the local governments at all levels competing to chase the city's publicity card [12]. However, when the marathon has become a fashion, government officials at all levels focus on the "running economy" scramble to organize marathon events, behind the purpose of organizing a deep thought.

The organization of large-scale sporting events to promote the economic and social development of cities has become a social consensus and has gradually become an important business card for enhancing the image of cities. It is because of the positive role of large-scale sports events in improving urban public facilities, shaping the city's social image, governance of the city's integrated environment, and promote urban socio-economic development and other areas, precisely by the local government officials to implement the "image project" "performance engineering" and "face-saving project" is an important means to gain political capital and seek opportunities for job advancement. "face project", to make political capital, seeking job promotion opportunities important means. From the first-tier city marathon to the local small and medium-sized city marathon held one after another, from the city marathon to the countryside marathon, marathon races are popular in the country, on the one hand, is the public's enthusiasm for fitness soaring, on the other hand, it is the local government aiming at the marathon this political business card of the motivation to make it happen. When the universal benefits of the marathon event has become the shelter of local government officials' political performance, the comprehensive benefits of the marathon event can only be greatly reduced, and the marathon event organized for the purpose of political performance and profit is also against the original intention of the spread of marathon culture.

4.2 Strong administrative dependence of the race operation

Although marathon has become one of the first projects to be decentralized by the State General Administration of Sports and China Athletics Association, the administrative dependence in the operation of marathon events remains unchanged. Domestic hosting a marathon, to deal with as many as 40 government agencies, leaving the support of these government agencies, the event will encounter obstacles, the best proof is in the marathon organizers, contractors and co-organizers, often see a long list of government agencies included in the list. For example, a city marathon, the organizer is the Provincial Sports Bureau, co-organizers of up to 28 government agencies at all levels, such as the Ministry of Propaganda, Education Bureau, Public Security Bureau, Bureau of Statistics, District Government, Radio Management Committee, Health Bureau complicated beyond imagination. Marathon is a systematic project, leaving the security, medical, health and other related areas of support is difficult, to rely entirely on professional social organizations and event companies to fully undertake such events is not an easy task. In recent years, some marathon events have begun by some professional event company to undertake, practicing the management of the event management separation of management regulations, but counting these companies behind the "boss", still can not be separated from the administrative dependency. Responsible for hosting the Beijing Marathon in the Olympic Road Running Sports Management Co., Ltd. is funded by the China Athletics Association and the Olympic Sports Industry Co., Ltd. respectively, the Olympic Sports is subordinate to the China Sports Industry Group, is the State General Administration of Sports Holdings of the listed companies, behind the administrative support in the industry has reached the highest, and thus the company also went to other cities to help run the race is not surprising.

4.3 Increased difficulty in preventing safety hazards and emergencies

Behind the rapid explosion of marathon races in China, there are a variety of safety hazards such as injuries, sudden deaths, chaos, etc. At the same time, cheating, fighting, roadside toilets and other embarrassing incidents also occur from time to time ^[13]. In order to further control the number of participants and reduce the safety risk of the event, the 2016 Beijing Marathon had raised the threshold to "6 hours for a full marathon or 3 hours for a half marathon in the past two years", but from 2024 onwards the North Marathon has relaxed the conditions to "6.5 hours for a full marathon or 3 hours for a half marathon", and in 2025 it will continue to be "6.5 hours for a full marathon or 3 hours for a half marathon"., 2025 continue to follow this caliber, and new public welfare, sponsors through multiple channels, but the number of registrants is still as high as 183,000, the winning rate of only 16%. In contrast, the China Association of Athletics Federations registered races from 13 in 2010 soared to 134 in 2015 after 2013-2014 stabilized at about 330, the scale of the North Horse is locked for three consecutive sessions of 30,000 people, no longer blindly expand. But the safety pressure is not synchronized narrowing: 2013-2014 domestic track occurred a total of 3 cases of sudden death (public reports), although far lower than the 2011-2015 15 cases, but with the help of social media quickly amplified; 2014 Beima on-site AED enabled 7 times, successful resuscitation of 6 cases, while the same year a third-tier city half-marathon because of the 12,000 runners with only 80 mobile toilets, once again staged "local solution" embarrassment, bringing a series of environmental health and urban uncivilized phenomenon ^[14]. In addition, the sharp increase in the number of locally sponsored marathon races in recent years has rapidly stimulated the enthusiasm of the majority of runners to participate in the race, expanding the scale of the race participants, but also increasing the risk of various emergencies during the race, bringing great pressure on the race organizing committee to prevent problems ^[15].

4.4 Weakness of marathon culture construction and event marketing

Lu Yuanzhen, a famous sports sociologist in China, believes that "marathon is a product of economic development and a sign of economic and social transformation". The continuous heating of domestic marathon is the result of China's social and economic development and the growth of national fitness demand, however, the marathon has long formed its own unique culture in its historical development, and the marathon is only one of the important components of its cultural content. Marathon culture not only includes the mobilization of publicity before the race, the event held, should also be reflected in the process of the race service, the comprehensive quality of the participants and the sustainable driving effect after the event and other aspects. Throughout the domestic hot marathon in recent years, the media focus and the traditional audience often only care about winning the race and tired people on the ground, sudden death of the participants will become the focus of media attention. But for an ordinary participant's experience, happy feeling and running results are not asked, in the marathon publicity broadcast system, ordinary participants are just tens of thousands of numbers. Marathon participants is an important constituent of marathon culture, the spread of marathon culture requires the active participation of a large number of marathon participants, but also to nurture the popular basis of marathon culture, the lack of attention to the countless ordinary participants maps the current marathon culture construction of the weak. In addition, the domestic spurt of marathon marketing administrative dependence is strong, the professional level of social groups of the event operation is not high, marathon marketing in the cycle of wave stimulation characteristics make marathon marketing in a complete marathon marketing is difficult to win the ideal value of return ^[16].

5. Deepening the implementation of the national fitness strategy to deal with the marathon strategy

5.1 Rule sports according to law and improve the management system of sports events

Marathon events have blossomed all over the country and become the favorite of the local competition. While the state has decentralized the power of approving sports events and enhanced the autonomy of local sports events, it is also necessary to further strengthen and improve the management system of sports events, and establish a sound sports event governance system. As far as the marathon event management system is concerned, in the race to organize marathon events with different themes in different places, the pre-event, in-event and post-event diversified system systems such as the marathon event bid evaluation system, the event emergency plan system, the event coordination system, the emergency safety handling system, the event monitoring system, the participants' health evaluation system, the event marketing system, the event social effect evaluation system, and so on, should be

perfected as soon as possible. The establishment of the management system of marathon races should fully draw on advanced foreign experience, combined with the actual bidding and holding of sports events in China, and bring together the government, professional organizations, third-party agencies and other diversified groups and personnel to build an authoritative and professional drafting team for sports event systems, so as to improve the degree of public participation and universality of the sports event system^[17].

5.2 Implementing the government's purchase of sports public services and guiding social forces to organize sports events

From 2025 onwards, except for comprehensive games and international events involving overseas points or qualifications as specified by the State Council or the General Administration of Sport, the General Administration of Sport will no longer approve all commercial and mass marathon events. Institutions, enterprises and public institutions, social organizations and individuals can hold their own in accordance with the law, and only need to apply for the necessary permits to the public security, health, transportation and other departments in accordance with the principle of territoriality, and to the local sports administrative departments for the record. Reviewing the operation mechanism of the hot marathon races across the country in recent years, we found that the vast majority of local marathon races are fully organized by the local government, taking the combination of sponsorship and marketing mode of operation. Comprehensive implementation of the government to purchase sports public services, the realization of social forces to run the marathon, Changzhou Wujin West Taihu Lake International Half Marathon and Kunming Marathon have set a successful example of government-led, social forces to run the race new model. Localities hosting marathon races should, on the basis of an all-round and accurate grasp of the basic needs of the region's population for fitness, scientifically formulate the type, nature and content of marathon races, combine the regional characteristics and the needs of the population, adhere to the principles of openness, fairness and impartiality, and purchase public services for sports in a variety of ways, such as commissioning, contracting and procurement, as well as to strengthen the procedures for supervision, evaluation, auditing and publicity, and to strengthen the rigorous management of specialized funds, and to introduce a mechanism for popular participation. Introducing a mechanism for people's participation, implementing a dynamic adjustment mechanism for the undertaking main body, and implementing the elimination of the fittest, so that the general public can enjoy the most needed, high-quality and efficient sports public services.

5.3 Sound body check and identity verification, volunteer services and social insurance system

With the further deepening of the marathon in China, it is recommended that the introduction of social forces, so that more qualified social medical institutions to participate in the marathon participants in the health screening services, strengthen the participants of the cardiac exercise functional medical examination, not only for the participants to save the cost of self-checking, but also further improve the quality of participation in the service. Secondly, as an important content of public service, volunteer service should be improved in the marathon, make full use of social public welfare organizations and school volunteer associations, and constantly strengthen the volunteer service in all aspects of the marathon pre-match preparations, race operation and post-match summary, improve the level of volunteer service, and provide important guarantee for the healthy and safe operation of the event^[18]. Once again, the marathon race process is high in insecurity factors, emergencies are difficult to predict, so it is necessary to all-round, multi-perspective, full-time to do a good job in the course of the event sports injury, life safety, social security, terrorist attacks and other emergencies of the rescue protection and emergency treatment.

5.4 Increase the publicity and popularization of marathon knowledge, improve the public's knowledge and self-examination of marathon

In order to further regulate the healthy and sustainable development of marathon, we should increase the scientific popularization and publicity of the basic knowledge of marathon, basic necessary conditions, training requirements and psychological adjustment, etc., and effectively disseminate marathon related knowledge with the help of new media, schools, communities, public welfare organizations, professional groups^[19], etc., so as to improve the self-knowledge and athletic literacy of marathon participants, and provide guarantee for the quality of marathon events. In addition, the quality of marathon events should be guaranteed by marathon professionals. In addition, through the marathon professionals, professional teams to enter the community, grass-roots, into the school in a variety of ways

to teach the public the scientific knowledge of the marathon and general knowledge of sports, combined with a number of associations and organizations of complementary activities to vigorously promote and publicize the necessary knowledge of the marathon, in order to increase the attention of the marathon at the same time to the public dissemination of the basic knowledge of science and fitness, methods, skills and precautions, in order to further expand the mass base and standardize the development of marathon play an important role. In addition, it is necessary to increase the study, exchange and cooperation between domestic and foreign famous marathon events, strengthen the friendly relationship between each other through the conclusion of friendly cities, the mutual sending of runners to participate in the race, title sponsorship and other forms^[20], and fully absorb and learn from the advanced experience of foreign races and popularization and publicity practices, and also build up a kind of mutual assistance platform for the mutual exchange of information and the sharing of race resources among different marathons in the country, so that the marathon will be truly implanted into people's lives. The marathon will be truly implanted into people's lives, so that more people who are enthusiastic about marathon can learn, communicate, participate and share on the platform, and lay a solid foundation for improving the quality of the participating teams and promoting the good and fast development of marathon.

6. Conclusions

This study examined the marathon race phenomenon in China under the national fitness strategy, identifying its causes and proposing development strategies. The research demonstrates that the marathon boom results from the convergence of national fitness policies, public demand-supply gaps, deregulated approval processes, and low participation barriers. However, significant challenges persist, including performance-driven governance, inadequate event capacity, administrative dependency, safety risks, and weak cultural development. These issues threaten the sustainable growth of marathon events. To address these challenges, this study recommends a comprehensive approach: refining legal frameworks for event management, implementing government procurement of public services, encouraging social sector participation, strengthening support systems, promoting knowledge dissemination, and developing distinctive event brands. These strategies can facilitate the transition from quantitative expansion to quality improvement in China's marathon industry, ensuring alignment with national fitness objectives while meeting public demand sustainably. Future research should explore the long-term impacts of these proposed strategies and examine regional variations in marathon development patterns. Additionally, comparative studies with international best practices could provide valuable insights for further optimization of China's marathon governance model.

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