



An Analysis of the Participation Motivation of Marathon Runners in Nanchang

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Abstract: The aim of this paper is to investigate the participation motivation of marathon runners in Nanchang City. The study utilizes a literature review method, questionnaire method, and mathematical and statistical analysis to explore the topic in detail among the public in Nanchang City. After analyzing the data on participants' sports motivation and influence, the study finds that the participation in marathons among Nanchang City residents needs to be enhanced, as the participation time is insufficient and public sports values need to be corrected. The study suggests enhancing the participation motivation of marathon runners in Nanchang, improving the awareness of scientific exercise among participants, and developing correct sporting values. Additionally, it is necessary to promote the development of marathons in Nanchang by enhancing participation, self-confidence, theoretical guidance, and analysis of the scientific basis for the promotion of the sport. This study provides active academic references for public participation in physical fitness activities in Nanchang City.

Keywords: marathon; participants; motivation to participate.

1. Introduction

Born in the ancient Greek, marathon is one of the world's oldest and most influential sporting events. The marathon game in the modern history has a history of over 120 years. China did not launch marathon until the reform and opening up in 1980s. As a sport that combines fitness and mindfulness, it is very popular among the public. The first marathon in China was held in Beijing, the capital of China, in 1981; the Nanchang International Marathon, also known as the "Gamma", was held for the first time in November 2016 in Ganado, with 15,000 runners from 41 countries and regions. This game is of great importance to the promotion of mass participation in marathon sports^[1].

2 Research on motivation on marathons

2.1 Motivation to exercise

People's motivation to exercise affects their sporting behavior. Athletes keep training in order to achieve better sports performance for future sports competitions. All these behaviors are motivational needs generated by the human psyche. From a psychological point of view, the theories generated by previous research on the psychological content of human beings can be invested in the study of sport motivation.

2.2 The concept of motivation in sport

"Motivation in sport is an old and innovative topic in the field of sport psychology and is now receiving attention from a wider range of disciplines^[2]. Motivation is an important indicator measuring an individual's psychological well-being in sport, as evidenced by the persistence of an individual's sporting behavior. There is a strong link between motivation and many psychological states of the individual, including the individual's personality, self-esteem and emotions. Due to the specificity of motivation in sport, many scholars have initiated research on motivation in sport. Regarding the conceptual definition of exercise motivation, previous scholars defined it as a need or demand that can be satisfied by physical exercise, and it is the psychological motivation for people to participate in and maintain exercise^[3]. Through a large number of studies on the relationship between individual behavior motivation and individual sports, scholars at home and abroad proposed and defined the term "exercise motivation". For example, Tension Wei and Mao Zhixiong, two famous scholars in the field of sports psychology in China, hold that Kenyon's theoretical model can be used to study the motivation of individuals to exercise, as well as the problem of whether the exercise lasts or not, from the three states of "static", "turning" and "moving"^[4]. By tracing the conceptual history of motivation in sport, it can be learned that motivation research has seen an expansion and convergence, encompassing a multidisciplinary and multi-perspective approach to human motivation in sport across biology, learning dimensions, cognitive understanding dimensions and integrative perspectives. In the context of physical activity, understanding individual motivation allows readers a good understanding of the internal reasons why individuals engage in sustained exercise behavior, as well as

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identifying countermeasures to motivate more to exercise. The importance of the term 'motivation' can be seen in a number of disciplines, including sport psychology. Motivation can be used as a theoretical lens to provide theoretical support for what is being studied, to examine the persistence of exercise behavior, and as a relationship study to its related topics, providing additional insights for subsequent research. In short, exercise motivation helps to deepen the understanding of the correlations between variables so that deeper mechanisms can be explored.

2.3 Current studies on marathon

In Dong Xiaoping's article "Analysis of Marathon Participants' Participation Motivation - Taking the 2018 Shanghai International Marathon as an Example", she found that appearance motivation had a positive influence relationship with runners' running age; health motivation, appearance motivation and social motivation had a positive influence relationship with runners' average monthly running volume. Health motivation, social motivation, ability motivation and psychological motivation were positively related to the number of marathon races participated in^[5].

Xu Pengcheng^[6] found that the structure of participation motivation of marathon runners in Yunnan Province consisted of five main factors, and the intensity of participation motivation of marathon runners varied, with the order of intensity being: health motivation > appearance motivation > fun motivation > ability motivation > social motivation^[7].

There were significant and non-significant differences in the top five participation motivations among participants of different genders, ages, education levels and incomes^[8].

3. Research subjects and methods

3.1 Research subjects

A number of 1800 participants in the Nanchang Marathon were randomly selected for the study.

3.2 Research Methods

3.2.1 Literature Review

The literature review was conducted through the school library and the Internet, search, journal index, newspaper subscriptions to obtain supporting materials. Key words including "marathon", "motivation to participate", "mass", were searched. The author reviewed the full-text database of the Chinese outstanding graduate dissertations, the Chinese journal database in recent years in domestic sports journals. After reading the materials the author did systematic analyzing and note taking. Besides, the author studies the effective and mature previous research results to understand the current dynamics and past focuses of the fields related to this study in a comprehensive way, the current topics and dynamics related to the topic at home and abroad provides theoretical basis for the study.

3.2.2 Questionnaire survey method

This paper adopts a random sampling method to conduct a questionnaire survey among marathon participants in Nanchang. With the help of the participants, the questionnaire was filled out using the "questionnaire star" software, and a total of 1800 questionnaires were distributed, 1775 questionnaires were collected, the response rate was 98.6%. There are 1730 valid questionnaires, with an efficiency rate of 96.1%. The specific distribution and return of the questionnaires are as follows.

Table 3.1 Distribution and return of questionnaires

respondents	No. of the questionnaires	No. Of the collected	No. of the effective ones	response rate (%)	efficiency rate (%)
1800	1800	1775	1730	98.6%	96.1%

3.2.3 Data statistical method

The data from the questionnaire on the motivation to participate in the Nanchang marathon were processed and analyzed by using SPSS24.0 statistical software and Excel tables.

4. Results and Analysis

4.1 Analysis of the Motivation Survey of Nanchang Marathon Participants

4.1.1 Analysis of the Participants' Perception of the Benefits and Value of the Marathon

With the continuous development of socialism with Chinese characteristics in the new era, and the increasingly advanced technology and network, people have more options on sports and entertainment after their busy work. Many people choose to engage in games, TV dramas and online surfing, communicating with others online without seeing people face to face, which is not good for building a good physical body or releasing the negative emotions or pressure. The marathon, on the other hand, is a mass sport that not only promotes emotional communication between people, but also improves physical fitness and relieves stress. People who do not know each other will encourage help each other during the race. They will cheer for others and bring people together. It is a good way to meet new friends and gain positive energy while improving their physical health, so it is why marathons are popular among the public.

Table 4.1 Estimated effects of marathon running (n=1730)

Survey items	Improve self-confidence	Improve social skills	Improve temper	Improve fitness	Improve health	Release pressure
Number of the Participants	150	230	350	284	316	400
percentage %	8.6%	13.2%	20%	16.4%	18.3%	23.1%

From Table 4.1 on the participants of the Nanchang marathon, it can be seen the following results: firstly, 23.1% of the participants believed that the marathon could relieve stress, which was the highest percentage; secondly, 20% of the participants believed that the marathon could improve their temperament; thirdly, 18.3% and 16.4% of the participants believed that the marathon could improve their physical fitness and physique, respectively; finally, 13.2% and 8.6% of the participants thought that the marathon could improve their social skills and increase their self-confidence; the data showed that the participants could feel the benefits brought by the marathon exercise, which came from subjective awareness and self-perception; the other advantages and disadvantages of the marathon game have not yet been recognized and by the public yet.

In terms of the participants' perceptions of the value of marathon fitness, it can be leaned the attitudes towards the importance of marathon exercise from Table 4.2 : 6% of the participants of Nanchang Marathon thought that marathon exercise was least important and 27.7% of the population thought that marathon exercise was very important; participants had a positive attitude and a minority thought that marathon exercise was not very important; proving that perception and exposure to behavioral guidance play a crucial role.

Table 4.2 Participants' attitudes towards the importance of marathon training survey (n=1730)

Importance	Very important	Important	Medium	Not important	Least important
Number of people	480	620	350	180	100
Percentage %	27.7%	36%	20%	10%	6%

From the data in Table 4.3 it was found that 18.6% (323 people) showed medium interest to marathon, 8.4% (147 people) strongly dislike; 10.4% (180 people) dislike; 26.3% (455 people) like and 36.1% (625 people); strongly like the game. It can be concluded that the majority of the participants like marathon very much.

Table 4.3 Questionnaire on participants' interest in the marathon (n=1730)

Evaluation indicators	Medium	Strongly dislike	Dislike	Like	Strongly Like
Number of the Participants	323	147	180	455	625
Percentage %	18.6%	8.4%	10.4%	26.3%	36.1%

4.2 Analysis of the Behavioral Characteristics of Participants in the Nanchang Marathon

4.2.1 Analysis of the number of marathon exercises

The survey in Table 4.4 shows the frequency analysis of the number of times of marathon exercises. From the data analysis, it can be concluding that: in the marathon exercises in Nanchang City, 16.7% of the people participate 5 times or above, 36.4% participate 3-4 times per week, 32% participate 1-2 times per week and 15 % did not participate.

Table 4.4 Questionnaire on number of marathon training sessions (n=1730)

Evaluation indicators	Over 5 times	3-4 times	1-2 times	0 time
Number of the Participants	290	630	550	260
Percentage %	16.7%	36.4%	32%	15%

Table 4.5 Survey table of marathon exercise time (n=170)

Evaluation indicators	Over 2 hours	1-2hours	0.5-1hour
Number of the Participants	392	549	789
Percentage %	22.6%	32%	45.6%

4.2.2 Analysis of marathon time

From the data in Table 4.5, it can be seen that the number of people who participated in marathon exercise for more than 2 hours in Nanchang Marathon accounted for 22.6%, 1-2 hours accounted for 32%, and 0.5-1 hour accounted for about 45.6%, which is the largest percentage. This indicates that the exercise time of Nanchang Marathon participants is still small.

4.3 Factors Related to Motivating Public Participation in the Nanchang Marathon

4.3.1 External environmental factors

External environmental factors have a certain influence on the motivation of public participation in marathons. As people's living standards improves, they pay more attention to their health. Under the current context, the technology is advanced and food is diversified, but many people suffer from disorder diet and and rest, which lead to an unhealthy living hobbit. There is a large amount of greasy and high-fat food and junk food, and many people prefer to fast food or convenience cooking, which will bring negative effects to people's physical health. As a result, the number of the sub-health people is increasing, not to mention the increasing work pressure. Marathon, on the other hand, can help people solve the above problems by developing a good health and strong body, and it can relax people's mind and mood.

4.3.2 Self factors

First of all, the motivation of the public to participate is the positive factor to actively participate in marathon sports. The contemporary public knowledge is constantly developing, and people began to develop the awareness to keep fit. A perfect body shape and proportionate physique presented by the outer beauty is what people are looking for, and it is exactly what marathon sports brings. This in some way promotes the continuous development of marathon sports.

4.3.3 Perception factors

With the improvement of people's health awareness and the in-depth development of marathon sports among the public, people show much interest to marathon sports. However, each sports have its professionalism requirements, and the ordinary public sometimes are not aware of the correct ways to do it due to the lack of professional training and professional knowledge or skills. Some of them might get injured, which is another factor hindering the development of marathon game.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

5.1.1 The public participation

The participation motivation of Nanchang Marathon is revealed by their interest in the marathon, its role and other aspects. By exploring the participation motivation of marathon participants in Nanchang City, the study puts forward the remedy for a series of problems. By solving the problems of Marathon in Nanchang City, the author hopes that the public can make marathon a lifelong sport.

5.1.2 Exercise time for marathon activities

The results of the study showed that there are problems such as low participation and insufficient exercise time for marathon participants in Nanchang. Therefore, it is needed to improve the way people participate in the marathon. Through cultivating the motivation of marathon participants in Nanchang, a diversify the participants' love for the marathon is to be established.

5.1.3 Sorting values

Participants' sporting values are to be improved. Many of the participants' sports methods are inappropriate, and they need to be corrected. The use of 5G, multimedia, new media, should be encouraged for multi-angle, all-round publicity. In terms of the government coordination, Marathon needs financial and political support from the government for the steady growth.

5.2 Recommendations

5.2.1 Motivation to participate in marathon running

Many people do not have a comprehensive understanding of marathon sports, and their understanding of marathon sports is limited to the game results. They wrongly assume that the benefits brought by the process of marathon sports are often less great than the results. First, marathon is a group sport with a large number of participants, which can not

only help and encourage each other, but also stimulate people's competitive spirit to try one's best; second, according to the psychological characteristics of different people, the boring and tedious characteristics of marathon can be actively improved to meet people's diverse needs, so that people's enjoyment of participating in marathon public is enhanced and their love for marathon sports is strengthened. During marathon sports, people can communicate with each other so that people learn from others, which leads to the development in the game itself.

5.2.2 Awareness of scientific exercise

Marathon is popular among the public because of its simple technical movements and less environmental restrictions, but the public lack professional knowledge and training skills for the sport, which leads to many sports injury during the game. There is a need to train the public to participate in the marathon by increasing the publicity of healthy and correct scientific exercise methods; to start training professional coaches to meet the scientific needs of marathon enthusiasts, to improve exercise skills and safeguard the needs of the sport; and to improve the safety of the community and roads to ensure the pleasant running.

5.2.3 Sporting values

With the rapid development of technology and cultural communication, people's perception of world is influenced by cultural communication to derive different values. The marathon market and industrial development will change in the future with social and cultural communication, and the government should play the role of market supervision while intervene and regulate the sports in the right path. In addition, the media and national publicity channels must guide the public to establish correct sporting values, promote sportsmanship, and build a bridge to the dream of a strong sporting nation with the realization of the Chinese dream. The correct concept of marathon and scientific methods of marathon sports should be encouraged to prevent potential risks and injury for the public for the health growth of the sports.

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