Operation Management Mode of Marathon Running Groups—Taking Beijing King Legend Club and Beijing Zuitaoran Running Group as Examples

He-Dan HUANG\textsuperscript{a} and Jing-Min LIU*  
Sport Science and Physical Education Division, Tsinghua University, China  
\textsuperscript{a}17888837289@163.com, *ljm_th@mail.tsinghua.edu.cn

Keywords: Marathon; Running group; Operation management mode.

Abstract. The rapid development of the marathon has promoted the establishment of the marathon running groups. The operation and management mode of the marathon running group is closely related to the actual experience of the runners and affects the long-term development of the marathon running groups. Through in-situ investigations and follow-up research, the author conducted an in-depth investigation of the operational management modes of the two different types of running groups: Beijing King Legend Club and Beijing Zuitaoran Running Group. The author conducted a comparative analysis of management structure, management functions, featured activities, promotion, and profit model, which provided a reference for the operation and management of the marathon running groups.

Introduction

Beijing King Legend Club was established in March 2016 by the former walking Olympic champion Wang Liping and former diving Olympic champion Xiao Hailiang. Since its inception, King Legend Club has been adhering to the scientific and healthy sports concept. By integrating physical fitness training, sports rehabilitation, sports nutrition and sports research monitoring and other resources, it guides runners to pursue achievements on the basis of safety and health, and rationally races.

Beijing Zuitaoran running group is a non-profit running group with Beijing Taoranting Park as its venue. It has been established for nearly 10 years. The Beijing Zuitaoran running group was first brewed in the fall of 2008, and was initiated by Shang Zhiyong (pen name Luchuan) and other six or seven members who did not run. The founding members of Zuitaoran running group are all residents near Taoranting Park. Everyone has been adhering to the concept of “persisting in running, healthy life” and actively mobilizing every running enthusiast to join. For members who do not have a running base, runners who run the group are very enthusiastic to give guidance and help.

What are the commonalities and differences between the two types of running groups with different positioning groups in the operation management mode?

Management Structure and Main Functions of the Running Group

The King Legend Club belongs to the medium-sized running group. There are nearly a few hundred people running the group size. The basic composition pattern of the running group members is as follows:

The club's core membership is about 50 people, and the membership fee system is implemented. The annual membership fee is 6,800 yuan. Club members can give priority to marathon direct quotas within the club, and participate in club competitions, trainings, lectures, etc., and enjoy preferential rights and training sports supplies for some brand sports equipment purchases.

The King Legend Club pays great attention to professionalism and scientificity. Its core team is led by founder Wang Liping and divided into four parts according to internal division: coach team, research team, rehabilitation team and operation team. For the internal members of the running group, the club will set up a corresponding training plan for the member runners on a weekly basis,
list the training cycle, training load and training focus, and refine the training content to each day, and mark the rest day. Normal heart rate intervals and pace intervals are also included in the training plan, which is given to the runners for reference. At the same time, for runners with marathon goals, the team will make timely adjustments according to the runner's specific implementation progress and marathon racing needs, and re-engineer the training plan for the marathon. Coaches often attach cautions on the weather, supplies, training sites, training taboos, etc. at the end of the training program. The warm reminders invisibly allow the members to feel the care of the team.

Beijing Zuitaoran running group as an older generation of running groups also has a relatively stable organizational structure in terms of organizational management. At this stage, the core management personnel are Luchuan and Wang Xinchun. Among the management team, Zhou Jianhao is the secretary, Wang Xinchun is the island master (captain), and Chao Yichuan is the coach. Luchuan is responsible for propaganda. They mainly undertake the corresponding running group work in their personal form.

The secretary and the captain are mainly responsible for organizing the special activities of the running group every year, convening the personnel, and stressing the safety and other precautions to the members before the official start of the event. When new members of the group join, they will also introduce to the old members. The coach's work is mainly at the beginning of the runners who don't know much about running, pointing out how they can warm up before running and stretching after running, how to adjust the rhythm of running, and correct the wrong running posture for them.

In addition to the special events, Zuitaoran running group hold a summing party after the annual Beijing Marathon and organize a group meeting before the Spring Festival. All activities of the running group do not exclude foreigners and members outside the group, and there are fixed places and time. There are special personnel to manage the nursing clothes during daily running, and each old member will patiently counsel the newcomers. When members of the Zuitaoran running group experienced major events such as weddings, funerals, and illnesses, they also had special personnel to help them.

The managers of the Zuitaoran running group mainly notified important matters through the WeChat group. The members of the running group also shared marathon information or daily chats through the WeChat group. The “message notification” and “daily chat” are in the WeChat group of two different functions. The operation management mode of Zuitaoran running group has similarities with the school class. There is no hierarchical relationship among members. A small number of members hold positions in the running group, perform functions, and members are equally coexisting, and the relationship is very harmonious.
Special Events of the Running Group

The daily activities of the King Legend Club are mainly the outdoor night run on Wednesday night, the LSD run on Sunday morning and the indoor physical training on Friday night. Friday's event is only open to internal members, and outdoor activities on Wednesday and Sunday are for all public runners. In addition to the special weather effects such as smog and heavy rain, these three daily activities continued throughout the year.

In terms of the organization of the marathon, the club generally chooses 1-2 relatively high-quality marathon events each year, gathers the members of the running group who intend to participate, and participate in the competition in the name of the club. In 2017, the King Legend Club organized members to participate in the Bayuquan Marathon, which is the first time that the King Legend Club has collectively appeared in marathon events outside Beijing.

In addition, the club regards the first Sunday of each month as the "King Legend Cultural Exchange Day". After the fixed running training, the club organizes a group dinner (AA), let everyone exchange and share the recent training experience, participation experience, etc. At the beginning of the event, it was only for internal members. Now, all club runners can sign up.

The club will also organize members to participate in some charity activities from time to time. For example, in 2017, the club organized everyone to participate in the 2017 24-hour city relay race in Beijing, 2017 CBD green walking, “Welcome Winter Olympics, Walk with Love” activity and so on.

Zuitaoran is a running group that is active in 365 days. Everyone inside the group is slogan "There are three hundred and sixty-five days a year, and there are Zuitaoran every day." Every day, someone runs in Taoranting Park, usually from 2:30 to 7:00 pm. Retired members are mainly before 5 o'clock, and young members are mainly after 5 o'clock. How far you run each day is relatively free and controlled by the members themselves. However, if a member wants to participate in the marathon, two months before the game will basically maintain a running volume of more than 10 kilometers per day, running a long distance or 30 kilometers per week, and members remind each other and supervise.

In addition, Zuitaoran has 2 traditional running activities each year, namely “5·12 Memorial Wenchuan Earthquake” and “9·9 Commemorating the Death of Chairman Mao”. Since 2009, it has been going on for 9 years. And gradually attracted Li Ning running group, Duowei club and other running group runners to participate. The theme of the running event is in Taoranting Park, Beijing. Participants run around the park and determine their running mileage within a specified time. The event was proposed by the founding team members on the first anniversary of the Wenchuan earthquake. This way of commemorating ordinary people and great people through running has gradually gained recognition from everyone, and it has gradually spread down to the next year.

Publicity and Promotion of the Running Group

In terms of external promotion, the King Legend Club is mainly promoted by the WeChat public account “King Legends Sports” and Weibo “King Legend Club”. The frequency of Weibo is relatively low. As of the end of 2018, there were only more than 200 Weibo posts, which mainly played a role in supporting publicity and had little influence. The WeChat public account released the first article on March 12, 2016. As of April 24, 2018, a total of 313 pushes were issued. The specific news release status can refer to the following figure:

The King Legend Club will periodically issue a notice via the WeChat public account, which will be used as a back-end for the registration of the event, as well as an emergency platform (such as when the weather-affected activities are temporarily cancelled, or when the venue, time changes, etc.). The news about fixed activities and featured activities is the main part of the promotion content, and the proportion of content of popular science knowledge and news delivery is also very large. Beginning in 2018, the WeChat public account began to regularly push the module content of "Runners Biography" to share the story of the core members and their growth in the club.
As the type of celebrity star running group, Wang Liping’s influence on propaganda is not to be underestimated. In the early stage of the promotion, the WeChat public account has released 6 pushes related to Wang Liping as a gimmick, attracting runners to participate in the event. In the Brazilian Olympic Games and major festivals, the King Legend Club combined the walking project with Wang Liping’s personal entrepreneurial story as a promotional theme. [Dialogue Master] [Master's Teaching] and other promotional modules further shortened the distance between founder Wang Liping and members.

![King Legend Club WeChat public account article content statistics](image)

Figure 2. King Legends Club WeChat Public Number Article Content Statistics.

Beijing Zuitaoran running group has no other publicity platform in addition to Lu Chuan's private blog. Zuitaoran running group has been active for ten years, and Lu Chuan has set up a section on his personal blog called “Tired and Happy”, which is updated regularly, including daily activities, participants, stories, and so on. The cultural atmosphere of Zuitaoran running group is very strong. There are also many “writers” who create some essays and poems about running group activities and running group members from time to time, sharing in the WeChat group. Lu Chuan will select some content and put it on the blog. In Luchuan's blog "Luchuan 999", there are more than 400 articles about Zuitaoran running group.

**Profit Model of the Running Group**

Beijing King Legend Club is a profitable running group. The main source of profit is not from core members. On the contrary, its management team adopts a “Buddha” attitude in absorbing internal members, and does not actively attract and sell. They advocate that interested members take the initiative to join. Its profitable projects are mainly focused on planning and organizing running events (mostly as organizers) and working with university business schools (sending coaches to teach regularly). Beijing Zuitaoran running group, as a non-profit running group, does not have profitable behavior.

**Summary**

By comparing the operation and management models of Beijing King Legend Club and Beijing Zuitaoran running group, it can be found that at this stage, the management of the marathon running
group has many shortcomings, and the professionalization degree is still not high. The profitable running group’s management structure represented by Beijing King Legend Club is relatively simple. It does not take full advantage of the core strengths of the membership management model. The frequency of running groups to participate in the high-quality marathon in the field is low. The public welfare operation group represented by Beijing Zuitaoran Running Group is relatively loose, and the free management mode and organizational atmosphere are more in line with the positioning of the running group. However, the running team manager failed to work with the sports public sector to provide effective social public resources for runners and further enhance the participation of runners. At the same time, it can be seen that the government and the sports department have not given policy bias or effective guidance to the management of the Marathon running groups.

The operation and management of the Marathon running group requires internal management personnel to continuously improve the organizational structure, strengthen the functions of running group, enrich the form of activities, increase publicity, and better enhance the participation of the members of the running group. At the same time, it also requires external environment to provide financial subsidies or other strong support. Only with internal and external cooperation, the operation and management of the marathon running groups can be improved and achieved the desired results.

References


