Operation and Management of Paragliding Clubs in China

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Abstract. This paper takes the development of commercial paragliding clubs in Hubei Province as the research object, and studies some common problems in the operation and management of the clubs, which mainly include: unclear overall positioning and business objectives; weak consumption ability of the club members; paragliding talent shortage; lack of in-depth understanding of the characteristics of the service industry of the club. On the basis of interviews and questionnaires, this paper uses mathematical statistics to analyze the results of the survey, and puts forward suggestions on the future development direction and experience management of paraglider clubs in the process of marketization, which include: defining the overall orientation, clearing the operational objectives, planning future development, improving members’ consumption ability, improving the employment system, and perfecting the service system, etc., so as to enhance the paragliding club to get better development.

Introduction

Paragliding was first included in the formal competition in Jakarta Asian Games in 2018. Outside the arena, paragliding has been chosen by more and more people in leisure sports because of its simplicity and low physical requirement. Paragliding has developed in the form of clubs in cities all over the country [1]. At present, there are 495 domestic aviation sports clubs, of which 235 are specialized in paragliding. These clubs are all economic entities for profit. The management of these clubs is very important for the development of the clubs and the whole paragliding business.

Compared with the developed countries in Europe and the United States, paragliding in China started late, so it is very vital to establish a correct modern management concept of paragliding club management and improve the management quality of the club. Enhancing the core competitiveness through raising the level of operation and management should be highly valued. It is important and necessary to utilize the teaching advantages of colleges and universities to cultivate specialized talents with theoretical knowledge and practical skills, which is also the requirement of the times [2-4].

Based on the investigation and study of the national paragliding clubs, some reasonable suggestions are put forward in view of those common problems. The purpose is to let consumers understand the market value of paragliding, let operators know how to improve and progress, explore ways of market-oriented operation and scientific and standardized management, so as to achieve cost optimization and benefits maximization.

Research Targets and Methods

Research Subjects

Taking Hubei Province as an example, and focusing the problems commonly existed in the clubs, the paper investigates and studies the operation and management of national paragliding clubs.

Research Methods

In this paper, a variety of methods are used to carry out the research [5]. One is interview method. Thirteen commercial paragliding clubs in Hubei Province were investigated, and the
semi-standardized interviews were used to communicate with relevant leaders, so as to further understand the operation and management status of paragliding clubs.

At the same time, through questionnaires, nearly 200 paraglider members in Hubei Province were surveyed. 200 copies were distributed and 198 copies were effectively recovered with a recovery rate of 99%.

The research also uses the method of mathematical statistics to carry out mathematical statistics and analysis on the data obtained from the questionnaire, and obtains the support of relevant arguments.

**Research Results and Analysis**

Clubs are businesses that provide private services for specific consumer groups. Paragliding is a kind of aviation sport, which refers to flying athletes taking off and soaring with air lift by flying airfoil umbrella coat [6]. With the continuous development of aviation in recent years, the number of related aviation sports clubs is also increasing [7,8]. As shown in Table 1, by the end of 2018, there were 495 aviation-related clubs in China, of which 235 were specialized in paragliding. From a handful of paragliding clubs in 2000 to 52 at the end of 2016 and 235 in 2018, the number of paragliding clubs has increased by 183 in the past two years, an increase of about 3.5 times. Although paragliding clubs have developed rapidly in recent years [9], the number of paragliding clubs that have withdrawn from the market due to poor management has also increased dramatically. For example, in Hubei Province, in 2018, four new aviation sports clubs were added but two paragliding sports clubs were withdrawn from the market.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of Paragliding Clubs</th>
<th>Annual growth</th>
<th>Annual growth rate</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>235</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
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</table>

By investigating and studying many paragliding clubs in China, this paper analyses and expounds the management plan of Hubei paragliding clubs.

**Analysis of the Current Situation of Paragliding Clubs in China**

**Policy Analysis.** In recent years, the state has issued a series of policy documents on supporting the healthy development of aviation, supporting sports industrialization and building aviation sports industry circle.

These documents include: Notice of Key Tasks of Document 2363 on Demonstration Development of General Aviation in 2016, Notice of Key Tasks of Promoting the Development of General Aviation in the Near Future, document 2160 of the National Development and Reform Commission, and the 13th Five-Year Plan of Sports Industry Development of the State Administration of Sports [10].

In December 2018, in accordance with the requirements of Decree No. 24 of the State Administration of Sports, the China Aviation Sports Association issued the Announcement on Revising the Regulations, Normative Documents and Institutional Documents of the Aviation Sports Departments.

As can be seen in this announcement, the deletion of the fourth, eleventh, twelfth, thirteenth and fourteenth items of Article 10 in the Regulations on the Administration of Paragliding Sports (No. 69, 2000) is the regulation of Paragliding Clubs in Chapter III of the Regulations on the Administration of Paragliding Sports (No. 69, 2000). The deletion of these regulations is is beneficial to the development of paragliding clubs.

**Paraglider Club Gathering and Dispersing Scale Analysis.** According to the GDP data
published by the National Bureau of Statistics in recent ten years, Guangdong, Jiangsu, Zhejiang and Hubei are the representatives of the southern region, and the economy has always maintained a relatively high growth rate. By contrast, the total economic volume of Shandong and Henan in the north is calculated on a per capita basis, which is still far from that of the southern provinces. Shandong, once the second largest province in economy, is still widening its gap with Jiangsu and Guangdong.

According to the report issued by the Center for Urban and Competitiveness Studies of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, the top ten cities in the comprehensive economic competitiveness index are Shenzhen, Hong Kong, Shanghai, Taipei, Guangzhou, Beijing, Tianjin, Wuhan, Suzhou and Nanjing. Among them, there are only two cities in the north, Beijing and Tianjin. Reflected in economic data, in the first half of 2018, the proportion of the southern economy in the national economy has risen to 62%, and accordingly, the proportion of the northern economy has dropped to 38%. Funds and population are gradually gathering in the South and east [11].

With the increasing of aviation population, the unbalanced development of aviation between developed and underdeveloped areas can be clearly seen on the number distribution chart of paraglider clubs in the whole country in Fig. 1. The areas where the number of paraglider clubs is concentrated are East China, Southwest China and Central China. Compared with Northwest China and Northeast China, these areas have higher urbanization level and more developed economy.

Figure 1. Distribution Number of Paragliding Clubs in China.

Social Population Analysis. China's territory is 9,634,057 square kilometers, with a total population of 1,390.8 billion in 2018. China's population density is 150 people per square kilometer [12]. There are 235 paragliding clubs in China, averaging 4.25 million people in 41,000 square kilometers to share a paragliding club. Compared with the countries with earlier and faster development of paragliding, the gap is significant.

Socio-economic Analysis. In the past five years, GDP per capita has been growing steadily. In 2015, GDP per capita was about 50,000 yuan, reaching 64,644 yuan in 2018 and nearly 9,600 dollars. Details are shown in Fig. 2. According to the international level, when the per capita GDP reaches 5,000 US dollars, the sports industry will be blowout [13]. In 2015, the per capita GDP has been far higher than this level, but so far the per capita sports consumption is only about one tenth of the global average level.
Problems in the Operation and Management of Paraglider Clubs

With the progress of science and technology, many new technologies have emerged in the development of sports industry, such as big data, high definition live broadcasting, intelligent equipment, etc. How to effectively apply these new technologies to the paragliding business is also a significant step in the development of paragliding [14].

Domestic paraglider clubs are basically similar in their business models. The main business contents are: double paraglider flight, paraglider equipment sales and pilot training. As far as the development of paragliding clubs in Wuhan is concerned, membership system is the main means of operation and advertising is used to promote consumption.

The common problems in the operation and management of paragliding clubs are as follows:

**The Overall Positioning and Business Objectives are not Clear.** At present, there are close links among the three basic items of paragliding clubs, namely, double paragliding flight, paragliding equipment sales and pilot training. Dual paragliding flight is the basic step to contact paragliding. Among the people who contact paragliding, it can realize the transition from the experiencer of paragliding to the learner of this sport. Paraglider equipment sales cannot be separated from pilot training. In the process of training, the equipment used by the trainees is possibly worn and torn little by little. With the continuous improvement of the technical of pilots, paraglider equipment also needs continuous follow-up in order to make more efficient progress.

From the point of view of Hubei Province, as far as the scale of the current paragliding clubs is concerned, the actual benefits of the operation of the three major projects in a single Paragliding Club alone are far less than those of the division of labor and cooperation among three or more paragliding clubs [15].

**Members' Consumption Ability Cannot be Improved.** Paraglider Club members generally have several aspects of consumption: site fees, equipment purchase fees, teaching fees and so on, in addition to these items, the activities that can continue to stimulate the consumption of members are less. In order to improve the consumption ability of members, the club can make some innovations in its operation.

Members usually pursue differentiated services. Club operators should formulate their own service system according to the individual needs of members, and then all the members feel value for money or even value exceed money, so as to enhance members' experience value and loyalty.

After investigating some members of paragliding clubs in Hubei Province, it is found that paragliding has a positive impact on them, including overcoming fear, enhancing self-confidence and closing to nature. Details are shown in Fig. 3. In the process of club development, more
attention should be paid to consumers' feelings and changes, the dynamics and needs of consumers need to be timely understood, and personalized services must be provided according to the needs of the club members [16,17].

Figure 3. Survey on the Positive Impact of Paragliding on Members.

**Shortage of Paragliding Sports Talents.** Like other professional sports, paragliding requires the participation and guidance of professionals [18,19]. By the end of 2018, there were about 102 licensed double parachute pilots in China and about 62 coaches registered with China Aviation Sports Association, shown in Table 2. This is not enough for the development needs of 235 clubs in the whole country.

Table 2. Changes of Paraglider Practitioners and Clubs in China in 2018.

<table>
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<th>Number of Dual Parachute Pilot</th>
<th>Number of Coach</th>
<th>Number of Club</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amount</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>235</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Professional training is indispensable [20]. It takes at least one and a half years for a qualified double parachute pilot to be trained. It takes six months for a class A pilot to be a class B pilot and six months for a class B pilot to be a class C pilot. Class C pilots are the basic requirements for obtaining paraglider-related licences.

Class A and B pilots require a national coach visa for licensing assessment, and Class C and above are certified by the China Aviation Sports Association. The assessment classes for C class pilots and double parachute pilots carried out by the China Aeronautical Sports Association are irregular, and the number of assessments is limited.
As shown in Fig. 4, in the past four years, the Chinese Aeronautical Sports Association has held an annual assessment class for C-class pilots and double-paraglider pilots. There are separate forty double-umbrella pilots and forty C-class pilots in each assessment class. The passing rate of the assessment class is not 100% every year. There are always a group of applicants who will be eliminated for failing the assessment.

It can be seen in Fig. 5 that the double parachute assessment class was not held in 2018, and there were no new licensed double parachute pilots in that year. In recent three years, the growth trend of paragliding clubs is much higher than that of double paraglider pilots and C-class pilots, which leads to the contradiction between the demand for paragliding clubs and the shortage of social paragliding talents.

**Lack of In-Depth Understanding of the Characteristics of Service Industries of Clubs.** Paraglider clubs belong to service business. When facing members or tourists, they should not only provide good experience, but also offer comfortable environment and thoughtful service. As far as Hubei Province is concerned, most of the Paragliding Club practitioners have not contacted the service industry before becoming club staff, and the overall service consciousness is lacking. Dual parachute pilots need to simulate running with tourists before flying. When communicating with tourists in specific situations, pilots' emotional control has a certain impact on passengers' experience values. The communication between coaches and members also has a certain impact on members' experience values. High-quality service team has a long-term and far-reaching significance for the development of the club.
Conclusion

With the development of paragliding sport, paraglider clubs are getting more attraction by people and becoming more and more popular. The market of paragliding is expanding with the renewal of people's consumption concept, but at the same time, the development of paragliding clubs is also facing more issues and more problems.

In terms of overall positioning and operational objectives, comprehensive consideration should be taken, which not only deals with the club’s own development, but also consider the long-term development of the entire industry, and the division of labor and cooperation, to achieve a win-win situation.

When communicating with members and tourists, the more attention should be paid to each other's individual needs. Strengthening the communication between the club and its members, enhancing the feelings among the members and their loyalty to the club are the meaningful ways. According to the actual situation of members, organizing appropriate activities to enhance their desire for consumption and promote consumption is also recognized to be useful and effective.

In terms of talent demand for paragliding clubs, while properly improving the employment system, the society should speed up the training of paragliding professionals and strengthen the improvement of club rules and regulations, as well as the service system.

References


