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Increasing Interest in Marathon in the Context of Building Modern Leading Sporting Nation: An Analysis of Baidu Index Data

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Abstract

Objective: Public interest in marathons has been rising since the Chinese government issued the Outline for Building a powerful Sports Country. The purpose of this study is to analyze the recent trends of public interest in marathon and related online search behavior in the context of this construction outline, and to make a forecast analysis of the future development of marathon events. **Methods:** Baidu Index, a massive search engine database, was used in this study. By searching the keyword marathon, analyze the data related to marathon. This study also extracted the search trend data of Chinese netizens for terms related to national fitness and sports power from September 2, 2011 to March 31, 2024. Finally, public search interest in marathons was compared with search trends for related terms. **Results:** In recent years, people's attention to marathon shows an increasing trend year by year. The specific performance is that the search index of related keywords continues to grow, and the search volume has increased significantly. The peak value appears in May 2021, the trough value appears around the Spring Festival every year, the search index is relatively high from September to November every year, and the search trend in other periods is stable. **Conclusion:** Increased public interest in marathons is likely to lead to an increase in the number of people preparing to run marathons in all provinces and regions of the country. In the future, under the influence of the "Sports Power Construction Outline" and the National Fitness Action Plan, with the in-depth promotion of the strategy of sports power and the continuous development of marathon events, people's attention to marathon events, health and physical exercise is expected to sustainable growth.

Keywords: Sports power, Marathon, Public attention, Baidu index, Search engine

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1. Introduction

Building a strong sports country is an important strategy for the development of China's sports industry in the

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new era (SGAS, 2021). In September 2019, The General Office of the State Council of China issued the Outline for Building a strong sports Country, which pointed out that by 2035, “national fitness will be more accessible, more convenient and more popular”. It aims to enhance the country’s soft power and international influence by improving the level of sports development (Peng *et al.*, 2019). As an important part of sports, marathon attracts more and more people’s participation and attention with its unique charm. In recent years, the number of marathon events in China has been increasing (Qin *et al.*, 2019), the scale has been expanding, and the participation of the public has continued to increase, becoming an important force to promote the construction of a leading sporting nation (Yang and Peng, 2021).

Baidu Index, as an analysis tool based on big data, can reflect the search frequency and attention of Chinese people on specific keywords. Through the analysis of Baidu index of keywords related to marathon events, we can deeply understand the degree and change trend of people’s attention to marathon events, and provide useful reference for the development of marathon events.

2. Methods

This study uses the Chinese search engine Baidu as the research tool. Baidu is the world’s largest Chinese search engine, Baidu has long been the first search engine in the Chinese market, Baidu search status can basically reflect the Chinese people’s online attention to sexual behavior. Baidu Index is a data sharing platform based on the behavior data of Baidu netizens. Based on massive web search data, it is one of the important statistical analysis platforms of the Internet at present. In this study, Baidu Index is used to explore the interest of Chinese netizens in marathon, with marathon and sports power as keywords, and the search period is from September 2011 to December 2023. The data analyzed mainly covers 31 provinces (municipalities and autonomous regions) in China (excluding relevant data from Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan). It was used to quantify the public interest and online search behavior related to marathons since the promulgating of the Outline for Building a Sports Power.

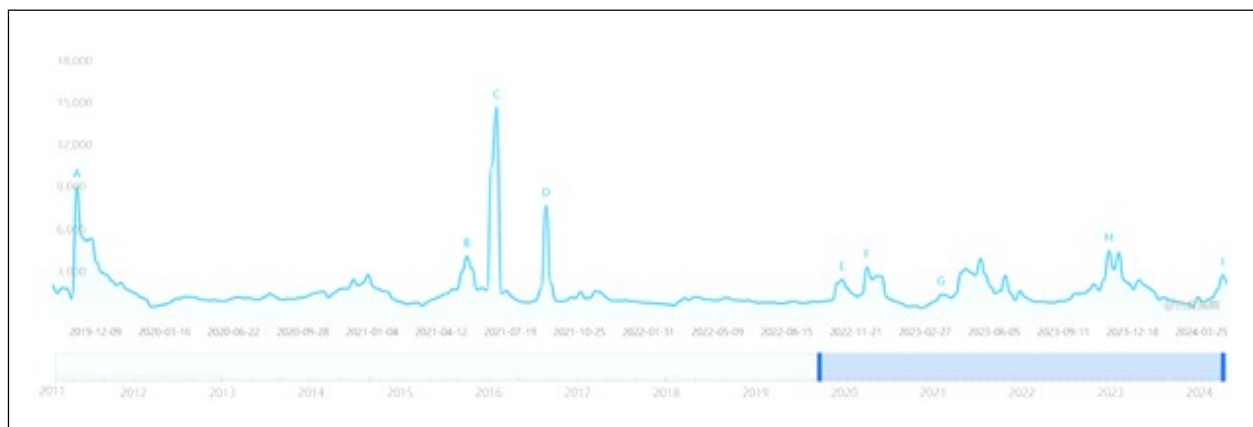


Figure 1A: Baidu Search Volume Index for “Marathon”

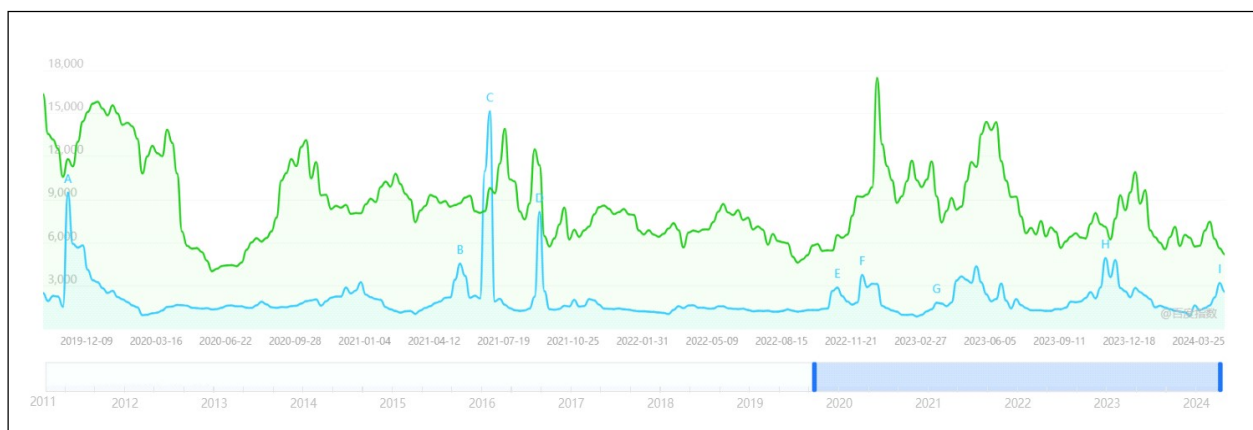


Figure 1B: Baidu Search Volume Index for “Marathon” (Blue) and “Leading Sporting Nation” (Green)

3. Discussion

According to the data, the monthly differences of the online attention of marathon events vary greatly, and the analysis of the monthly change trend can reflect the seasonal preference of the public for the online attention of marathon events. As can be seen from Figure A, since the promulgation of the Outline for Building a Powerful Sports Country, Internet users have steadily increased their attention to marathon events. The peak of attention appears in May 2021, the trough value appears around the Spring Festival every year, the search index is relatively high from September to November every year, and the search trend is stable in other periods. Therefore, the figure shows that people's online attention to marathon events has a seasonal effect, mainly in spring and autumn, and autumn has the highest online attention. Good weather conditions are an important guarantee for marathon events. China's spring and autumn weather conditions are relatively good, many marathon events are held during this period, the Spring Festival is a traditional Chinese festival, is an important moment for Chinese family reunion, generally there is no race arrangement, so the search volume also decreases.

With the improvement of living standards and the enhancement of health awareness, more and more people begin to pay attention to physical health and physical exercise. As a kind of activity that can exercise the body and enjoy the fun of sports, marathon has naturally become the focus of public attention (Yang, 2022). The popularity and promotion of marathons also played an important role. The investment and support of the government and all sectors of society for marathon events has been increasing, and the level of event organization and service has been continuously improved, providing better conditions and experience for the public to participate in marathon events (Li, 2017). In addition, the media publicity and social influence of the marathon are also important factors for the increase of public attention. Through the extensive coverage and communication of TV, Internet and other media, the popularity and influence of the marathon have been expanding, attracting more people's attention and participation. The promulgation of both the "Outline of Building a powerful Sports Country" and the "Outline of Healthy China 2030 Plan" has provided policy guarantee for the development of marathon in China and increased the public's attention to marathon events (Ji et al., 2020). This study analyzes marathon and its related terms sports power, which is conducive to analyzing the public's search behavior and psychology, and can effectively promote the development of marathon in China.

4. Conclusion

Through the analysis of Baidu index, it can be seen that people's attention to marathon events is increasing, which is not only the embodiment of the construction of sports power, but also the pursuit of healthy lifestyle. In the future, with the in-depth promotion of the strategy of sports power and the continuous development of marathon events, people's attention to marathon events is expected to continue to grow. At the same time, we also need to pay attention to the differences and imbalances in the development of marathon events in different cities, strengthen the organization and promotion of marathon events in second – and third-tier cities, so that more people can enjoy the fun and benefits of marathon events.

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