The Bottleneck of the Development of Community Sport in Shanghai

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Abstract: This study was aimed to explore the governmental functions in meeting citizen’s demand in community sport services in Shanghai. Features, characteristics and major causes of community sport were studied by employing methods including literature review, questionnaire survey and expert interview. Shanghai community sport is characterized by spontaneity and participation; the major problems were involved in all sport population, poorly-received sport consumption, and uneven structure of sport consumption; the laggard laws and single funds input were also observed. To break-through the bottleneck of community sport, the following modalities should be employed: 1) Improving organizations for mass exercise training; 2) Taking advantage of current sport facilities to solve sport venues shortage; 3) Governing Sport with laws, promoting exercise training industrialization.4) Developing citizens’ sport awareness, improving citizens’ training abilities.5) The government should increase supportive policies, investment and provide legal basis for community Sport.

Introduction

Community Sport is the main form of and the key to achieving lifetime sports, which is also an important measure to promote national fitness. By organizing mass recreational sport activities, community Sport advocate modern training spirit, improve public health, promote positive interactions and communications among the community, and encourage the citizens to develop healthy lifestyles and good senses of morality[1].

According to some literature related to community Sport of various districts in Shanghai, much work in community Sport is still insufficient and fails to achieve the expected purposes due to different reasons. At present, public community Sport services are not able to meet the demands of all ranges of citizens. For example, considerable problems exist in the forms and contents of public sport services for groups such as teenagers, white-collar workers, and senior citizens.

This research aims to explore how the government can play a new role and perform new functions to meet the new public demands put forward by citizens in future community Sport services, which can thus serve as a source of reference for Shanghai City to improve the public exercise service system.

Research Subjects and Methods

Research Subjects

The research subjects of this study are the community Sport in various districts of Shanghai, such as Huangpu, Luwan, Changning, Jing’an, Putuo, Hongkou, Yangpu, Pudong, and Minhang.

Literature Review

76 academic materials relevant to the current situation of community Sport in Shanghai or China’s national fitness are found on chinaqking.com and the Internet. The literature was classified and analyzed to throw light on the current situation and the latest research findings in this area, providing academic support for this research.
**Questionnaire Survey**

1020 questionnaires were distributed to 600 male and 420 female citizens from 17 districts of Shanghai, who were asked to fill in the questionnaires on the spot. 1003 questionnaires (98.3%) were returned, with 1000 (98%) being valid, which were sufficient for the analysis and research.

**Expert Interviews**

We sought opinions from experts by interviews, questionnaires, and emails in order to increase the reliability of the conclusion.

**Statistics**

The statistics collected were processed and analyzed with the aid of SPSS 13.0 for Windows version.

**Logical Analysis**

The statistics collected was analyzed and processed with logical analysis methods including summary, analogy, deduction and synthesis.

**Results and Analysis**

**Features of the Development of Community Sport in Shanghai**

The development of community Sport in Shanghai results from the city’s economic and social developments, along with the growing awareness of public health. Currently, the communities Sport in Shanghai have broken away from the old management system for mass Sport and have formed a new management institution featured with double directions from both superior department and local government, with the local government dominating.

At present, community Sport of Shanghai has six major features. First, grassroots-level organizations are the main organizational form of community Sport; second, the majority of sport participants are senior citizens; third, spontaneous management and administrative management are combined to govern community Sport; fourth, the workout times are generally mornings and evenings; fifth, the sport activities are usually merged with cultural activities; last but not least, sport venues are usually unprofessional and located in the neighborhood.

**Characteristics of the development of community Sport in Shanghai**

With the support of Shanghai Municipal Committee of the CPC and Shanghai Municipal Government, community Sport in Shanghai has interacted positively with the governmental administration, seeing vigorous developments.

Firstly, the government has emphasized the role of sport services in community construction, regarding sport services as the prerequisite of community construction. Therefore, community construction has been giving priority to sport services, taking them as a breakthrough point, and generating its leading and demonstration effect.

Secondly, the government has recognized community sport services as an important part of modern social security system and the starting point for the exploration of China’s new road to the development of social welfare cause in the period of social transition.

Thirdly, the government has performed the unique functions of community Sport to provide fitness services for community members and meet their demands for health, recreation and social life by organizing sport matches, providing sport venues and events, and offering exercise instructions, physical assessments and evaluations.

Fourthly, the government has made laws and policies regarding the development of community services and non-profit organizations, providing legal basis for the development of community Sport [5-8].
Major Problems in the Development of Community Sport in Shanghai

Training populations determines the Training Quality

Relative training population

Relative training population refers to the proportion of training population in the total population. In 2013, 35% of the urban and rural Shanghai citizens over 18 participated in sport activities for once or more, an increase of 0.65% over the 2012 figure. At the same time another 35% citizens scarcely participated in sport activities throughout the year.

An overview of Shanghai’s training population over 18

According to China’s “Standards of Training Population” introduced in 1997, it is formulated that a Sport person refers to one who “participates in Sport no fewer than three times each week and no less than 30 minutes each time, at medium or above load intensity that corresponds with his or her physical conditions”.

By this definition, in 2013, training population over 18 in Shanghai accounted for 34.3% among the total population, a 4.8% increase over the 2012 figure (29.5%). However, it has to be noted that the statistics was collected when Shanghai’s total population saw rapid increase.

A. Gender structure

In 2013, Shanghai’s male and female training population each accounted for 20.2% and 15.8% among the city’s total population, up 0.3% and 0.2% on the previous year, respectively.

B. Age structure

As Table 1 presents, among the total population of the same age range, Sport people aged under 18 accounted for 50%; those aged 18~44 accounted for 31.6%; those aged 45~59 accounted for 18.8%; those aged 60~74 accounted for 27.8%; those over 75 accounted for 22.2%. The age structure of Shanghai’s training population is U-shaped, with higher figures on both ends and lower figures in the middle.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>18&lt;</th>
<th>18-44</th>
<th>45-59</th>
<th>60-74</th>
<th>75&lt;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>31.6%</td>
<td>18.8%</td>
<td>27.8%</td>
<td>34.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>30.47%</td>
<td>17.38%</td>
<td>22.67%</td>
<td>32.48%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

C. Education structure

Training population is in direct proportion to educational levels. The proportions of training population in groups of different educational level are as follows: 26.3% for postgraduates, 35.9% for undergraduates, 27.4% for high school, 16.6% for middle school, and 9.0% for primary school. Except the proportion of training population at high school and primary school educational levels which declined, the rest all saw increase in 2009.

D. Occupation characteristics

Training population accounted for 28.1% among the employed and 17.9% among the unemployed. The sequencing of the proportion of training population among different occupations was (1) educational, scientific and cultural workers; (2) management workers; (3) manual workers; (4) service workers. The workout frequency, time and intensity of management workers were all significantly higher than those of the other three groups.
Table 2. the Proportion of Training Population among Different Occupations, n=1000.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Manual workers</th>
<th>Management workers</th>
<th>Scientific, educational and cultural workers</th>
<th>Service workers</th>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Others</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>19.3%</td>
<td>24.4%</td>
<td>34.3%</td>
<td>14.6%</td>
<td>60.2%</td>
<td>19.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>22.4%</td>
<td>18.2%</td>
<td>28.59%</td>
<td>19.21%</td>
<td>57.6%</td>
<td>17.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

E. Family structure

The proportion of training population among the unmarried, married, and others were 14.5%, 18.7% and 3.8%, respectively. Typical families of three or four people had the most training population. Sport population was related to family income instead of personal income. Basically, higher family income would mean larger training populations.

To summarize, it is obvious that the training population of Shanghai City is small, which has limited the development of community Sport in Shanghai.

Puzzles in Sport consumption

An overview of sport consumption of Shanghai citizens:

The majority of Shanghai citizens do sports in nonoperational gymnasiums. In 2009, 37.3% of the citizens doing sports consumed in operational gymnasiums, higher than the average figure in other Chinese cities (18.8%).

Table 3. Numbers and proportions of male and female citizens visiting operational sport venues, n=1000.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Visiting charged sport venues</td>
<td>27.5%</td>
<td>23.75%</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not visiting charged sport venues</td>
<td>72.5%</td>
<td>76.25%</td>
<td>435</td>
<td>305</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sport consumption only makes up a small proportion in the family consumption of Shanghai citizens. Among the eleven non-daily consumption items, children’s educational consumption ranked first with a considerable 15.9%. By comparison, the cost of match tickets and Sport equipment only accounted for 7.4% and 4.4%, ranking the fifth and ninth, respectively.

Table 4. Average sport consumption of Shanghai Citizens in 2009 (Yuan) n=1000.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Match Tickets</th>
<th>Sport wear</th>
<th>Sport Equipment</th>
<th>Gymnasiums</th>
<th>Books on Sport</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>317.85</td>
<td>704.37</td>
<td>392.09</td>
<td>356.78</td>
<td>226.28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1 reveals that 72.7% of the respondents considered price as the major factor to affect their sport activities and their sensitivity to the price would weaken with the increase of income. 54.88% of the respondents without income indicated that price affected their sport activities. Therefore, the government should give consideration to providing public sport services for them with economic or free sport venues, so that their demands for sports can be met [9].
Public sport infrastructure is an important criterion for a civilized city. A glance over the international metropolises worldwide reveals that all of them are equipped with complete, advanced, and efficient infrastructure for public sport services, which has been playing a critical role in attracting investment, talents and tourists. In contrast, the current infrastructure of public sport in Shanghai fails to meet the requirements of the city’s fast growing economy. Therefore, to gradually improve the conditions for mass sport activities, meet the citizens’ demands for sport equipment, and provide supportive sport service facilities for the public will be a major task for Shanghai City in the construction of community public service system.

Table 2 reveals that citizens aged under 18, 18~44, 45~59 and 60~74 all have considered the lack of sport venues as the major cause to affect their sport activities. At the seminar, many citizens responded that the sports venues were crowded and poorly-conditioned with aging equipment.

Vague definition of the property rights of public Sport

The public are the consumers and beneficiaries of sport industry. However, the Chinese sport management system has always attached importance to providing services for competitive sports, without strictly separating competitive sports from mass exercise training.

The yearbooks published by the General Administration of Sport of China have always failed to clearly present the investment and profits of mass exercise training. With the responsibilities, property rights, and profits of mass Sport being vague, it becomes impossible for mass Sport to form an independent industry, not to mention further management and researches.

In “Final Accounts of Sport Undertaking Expenditures in Various Provinces, Municipalities and Autonomous Regions”, undertaking expenditures were divided into competition expenditures, professional team expenditures, amateur training expenditures and sport venue subsidies [10]. However, even sport venue subsidies cannot be counted as expenditures for public fitness or recreational exercise training. With the division between competitive Sport and mass Sport becoming increasingly significant and the value of fitness service sector becoming more prominent, the unfavorable situation of mass Sport has to be changed.
Causes of the Current Problems in the Community Sport in Shanghai

Subjective Reasons for a Relatively Small Training Population

According to the respondents, the subjective reasons for not doing Sport are as follows. First, 30.2% citizens show no interest in exercise training. Second, 6.8% consider Sport unnecessary. Third, 6.4% believe their bodies are weak and unsuitable for exercise training. Fourth, 6.0% have disliked Sport since they were in school. Fifth, 1.9% thinks Sport does not conform to their code of conduct. Last but not least, 2.3% worry about being mocked at.

The survey reveals that most people stop doing sport activities in their adolescence, especially after leaving school. Among those who stop doing exercise training, people under 20 accounted for 68.7% and people fewer than 30 accounted for 90.5%, with respective increases of 18.0% and 11.7% over the figures in previous researches. It was also found that 38.7% of the people not doing Sport indicated that they would resume doing Sport at certain points, and 37.9% said that they would not do Sport in the future, and the rest 23.4% were still hesitating.

Objective Reasons for the Relatively Small Training Population

According to the respondents, the objective reasons for not doing Sport are as follows. The lack of time ranked first, accounting for 34.9%; the lack of sport venues ranked second, accounting for 34.9%; the lack of personal energy came the third, making up 29.8%; the lack of funds ranked fourth, accounting for 16.8%; ignorance of exercising methods and long distance from the sport venues both accounted for 12.9%, ranking the fifth; the lack of fitness instructors ranked sixth, accounting for 14.9%.

Low Level of the Industrialization of Mass Sport

Currently, nongovernmental organizations in Shanghai are allowed to organize community exercise training, but their activities are restricted by the related regulations and policies to a large extent. The lagging-behind laws and regulations and the low level of the industrialization of fitness services have both directly affected the development of community Sport. Therefore, it is necessary to modify the related laws and policies to ensure the sustainable, stable, and healthy development of community Sport [12].

Conclusions and Suggestions

Conclusions

Community Sport of Shanghai are spontaneously organized by Shanghai citizens out of common aims and interests, based in certain sport venues within the community, and feature frequent sport activities, with spontaneity and participation of the mass being its characteristics.

The major problems of community Sport in Shanghai include: mall Sport population, poorly-received Sport consumption, uneven structure of sport consumption, large age gap, and the lack of lifetime sport awareness.

The related laws and regulations are lagging behind, and the level of the industrialization of mass Sport is still low. The development of sport training market and information service market is still insufficient, and the operation of sport venues lacks flexibility, which have all limited the development of community Sport in Shanghai.

The source of the funds for community Sport is single, which almost totally relies on governmental supports. Community Sport is not able to rely on their own and rarely organize activities to create income.

Suggestions

1. Motivating and relying on the strength of the public, enhancing and improving organizations for mass exercise training, enlarging training population, and training more mass sport elites.
2. Taking full advantage of current sport facilities and striving to solve the lack of sport venues.
3. Governing Sport with laws, revising and completing the related laws, regulations and institutions regarding Sport and promoting the industrialization of exercise training.

4. Directing the organization of mass Sport positively and correctly, developing the citizens’ sport awareness, and constantly improving the citizens’ training abilities.

5. The related departments of the government should put forward supportive policies, increase the investment to community sport, strengthen venue constructions, enhance the supervision institution of funds, and provide legal basis for community sport.

References


