



Analysis of the Sports Community in Mainland China and Its Potential Complementary Market in Recent Decades

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Abstract. The concept of a sports community is becoming more popular in recent decades with an increasing disposable income level in mainland China. In addition, individuals become more aware of their health and social images. This change leads to significant growth of the sports community. This paper represents the form of two main types of communities, online and offline sports communities, with successful examples and the logic behind them. Furthermore, there is potential growing market space, so more firms should enter the market. This research will present the benefit that the sports community has brought to the economy, which shows that the sports industry can influence economic development.

Keywords: Sports community · Economic development · Online community · Complementary market · Maslow's hierarchy of needs

1 Introduction

The importance of community spirit is led by Sarason (1977) and Corrigan (1996), who insist that it is an essential task to develop the human community to recover into a healthy society [1].

The sports community in china used to be the group of retired people in the park. They woke up at 5 am and started running and playing Chinese kungfu in the park. Youth-age people were not the majority group that formed the sports community. However, in recent years, more working-age people are willing to joy the sports communities.

There are two types of communities, online and offline. To begin with online sports communities, with the impact of covid-19, the number of viewers for live fitness classes on TikTok has grown dramatically. In addition, the number of users on fitness apps such as KEEP has increased dramatically. There are many offline sports communities, such as good gyms and sports teams in parks. The sports community has become more common in recent years because the disposable income level has increased in China, so more and more individuals have a sense of keeping healthy. Furthermore, the rising interest of the sports community also drives the development of its complementary markets, such as physical therapy and psychological counselling.

This paper analyzes the main factors that caused an increase in the sports market and its complementary markets, The primary purpose of this research is to show the importance of encouraging sports community development.

2 Analysis of the Sports Community in Mainland China and Its Potential Complementary Market in Recent Decades

2.1 Sports Community

Online community is the group that develops social relations and connections by communicating consistently and repeatedly through computer among people who have similar interest and purpose on specific place and boundary of computer communication network [3]. One of the most successful entertainment platforms: TikTok, has become a popular platform for people doing exercise on it. Recently, a personal trainer called Liu Genghong became incredibly famous. Data show that his Douyin account has gained more than 10 million followers in the past month, and the cumulative number of viewers of his live streams has exceeded 74 million [2]. The data show us how big the online sports community could be.

Furthermore, the need for an online sports market is enormous. The reason behind this breathtaking data is as follows. Firstly, under the impact of covid-19, many people are quarantined at home. Especially in Shanghai, most people have to stay at home. They cannot go anywhere but stay indoors for more than a month. Hence, more people have to exercise at home, and TikTok lives fitness class became their best choice. Secondly, Liu Genghong himself is more famous than other personal trainers. He used to be a personal trainer for Jay Chou, a celebrity in China. Therefore, he can be an influencer on TikTok. Adding up these two factors together made his popularity grow so fast. Lastly, the TikTok live fitness class is accessible and affordable to everyone willing to take it apart. Hence, a complete online sports community has formed up people within this community who share the same community spirit; they call themselves “Liu Genghong boys” and “Liu Genghong girls”. Moreover, some people upload videos of their taking the live class, and Liu Genghong will comment on some of their videos. Everyone in the community knows the background music used by Liu Genghong, which is called BenCaoGangMu, which helps individuals have a sense of belonging and are not alone while working out.

Another platform worth mentioning is KEEP, a phone application that helps people exercise. KEEP is dominating China’s fitness market; it is launched in February 2015, and the Chinese fitness app has accelerated the industrial transformation of online fitness. At the beginning of 2020, KEEP raised 80 million dollars in its series E financing, totaling 254 million dollars in its series A, B, C, D, and E financing [4]. The target group of users is mainly white-collar workers or college students. Users can share their workout dairy on the platform with other users. One of the most popular functions is outdoor running, which can show users’ running reports, including the pathway and distance. Lots of people are willing to share their running on social media. Hence, people can compare themselves with others in the community and encourage each other to attend a variety of exercises. There are multiple types of exercises that people can choose. Individuals can choose the exercise strength level based on their own body needs. For instance, there are different abdominals training levels: beginning, advanced, and master level. Additionally, Keep is working on its online platform and offline gym and workout products such as yoga mats. All in all, it is an excellent example of an online sports community.

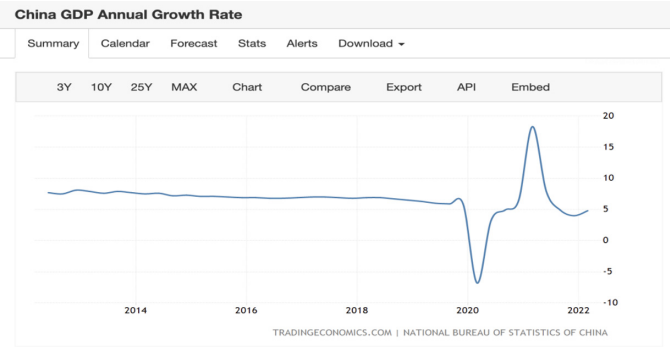


Fig. 1. China GDP Annual Growth Rate [5]

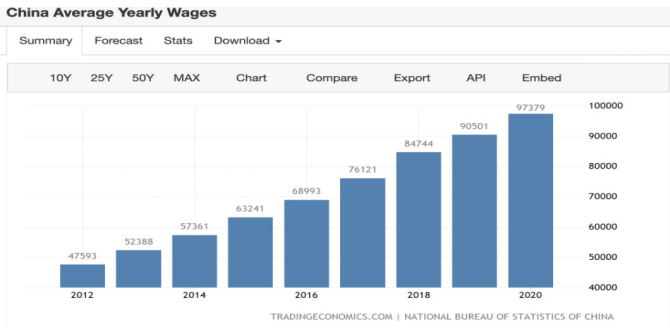


Fig. 2. China average yearly wages [6]

Besides the online sports community, there are many offline trending sports communities. A gym called Supermonkey becoming a trend in recent years. It is a gym that offers group fitness classes for 8–15 people. Unlike the classic gym, members of Superonkey do not need to buy a membership card; they only need to pay for each lesson through WeChat programs; it displays available group classes in a range from 69 RMB to159 RMB. Users can choose the class that fits their time and location to attend, maximizing convenience for users. Trainers who work in Supermonkey are infectious; they are outgoing and friendly to all the students, which is also the key that many members being willing to re-attend the class. A trainer is like the leader of each small sports community; his or her community spirit influences everyone in the group.

The most crucial factor that caused the increase in the sports community in China in recent decades is the income level.

As we can see from the Fig. 1, China is maintaining a positive GDP growth rate in recent years except for the 2020 covid-19 pandemic. This means that the whole economic system is growing, so the labor price must have increased through the decades. Hence, the income level must maintain a similar trend to the GDP growth rate as shown on the Fig. 2.

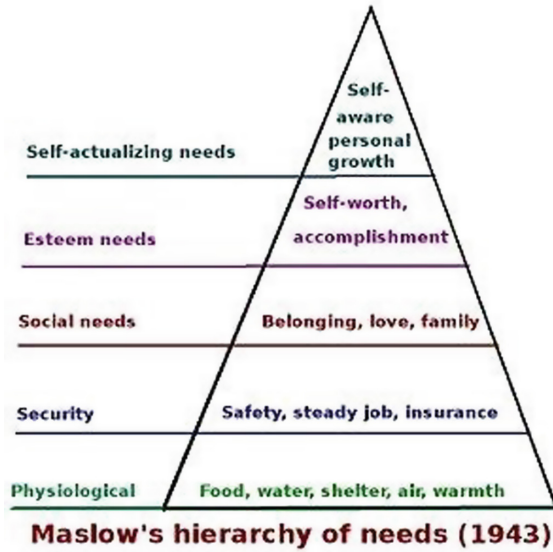


Fig. 3. Maslow's hierarchy of needs [7]

With a higher level of income, individuals will be able to buy more goods than they need. According to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, after we have satisfied our physiological needs and security. Then, as humans, we would desire social needs, esteem needs, and self-actualizing needs, as shown on the Fig. 3. To put this into reality, after we can afford our essential living costs and have a steady job, we would desire social belongings and self-achievement. Hence, with a higher level of income level, more and more people are willing to join sports communities that can provide them a sense of belonging and help them increase their sports expression.

2.2 The Potential Complementary Market of the Sports Community

A considerable increase in the sports community brought profit for its complementary markets. The sales of mainland sports clothing brands have experienced an increase in recent years. For example, Li Ning Co. Ltd, The company reported revenues of (Renminbi) CNY14,457 million for the fiscal year ended December 2020 (FY2020), an increase of 4.2% over FY2019 [8]. As more and more people are willing to participate in sports communities, more sports wearing will be needed for the consumers. This brought an excellent opportunity for the domestic brand to expand its productions. Furthermore, with higher revenue, Li Ning company can sell clothes with different designs by professional designers, which means the quality of its products has been improved dramatically. Li Ning has presented its Spring/Summer 2020 collection at Paris Fashion Week Men's alongside the debut of a sneaker collaboration with Stefano Pilati and his Random Identities label [9]. All in all, the increased participation in the sports community has brought an incredible improvement for its complementary market.

3 Conclusion

To conclude, there are two types of sports communities which are online and offline. The main reason of increase in sports community is due to increased level of income in China and it has led to growth of its complementary market such as sports clothing. Moreover, the essay has pointed out the importance of developing sports communities. It can not only improve the economic system by providing a higher level of GDP but also encourage a healthy lifestyle. However, there are still some drawbacks to the research, and it lacks first-hand research data that can provide the most accurate information needed for the research. Hence, more attention will be put to data collection to provide a reliable conclusion in future research.

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