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Community Sport Service Provision, Resident Satisfaction, and Participation

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ABSTRACT

Advocating for the “gold medal strategy”, China has made great advancements in elite sports; however, the significant achievement in elite sports has not translated into the development of mass sport participations. To form a stronger foundation of a sport pyramid, more attention should be directed to community sports and promoting healthy lifestyles. The purpose of this study was to examine the impact of community sport service provisions on participants’ satisfaction and in turn on their sport participation behavior. In the current study, the public sport service in community includes sport facilities, sport organizations, sport programs, fitness test, and volunteer services (fitness guide). According to the hierarchy of effects model of Lavidge and Steiner (1961), both hard services and soft services were hypothesized to exert positive influences on consumer satisfaction and participation behavior in community sport (i.e., payment and participation frequency).

Of the 750 copies distributed in Guangdong, China, 576 valid questionnaires were completed and returned, yielding a usable response rate of 76.8%. The first half of the sample was used to conduct exploratory factor analyses (EFA) for the provision items; the second half was used to conduct confirmatory factor analyses (CFA) of these two measures and also conduct a structural equation modeling (SEM) analysis to examine the relationships among public service provision, consumer satisfaction, and consumption behavior in community sports. The results of EFA and CFA indicated that five aspects of community sport service provision could be categorized into hard service and soft services. Specifically, hard refers to sport facility, organization building and organizing activity which can be seen and touched while soft service refers to fitness test, fitness instruction and sport information which sometimes are intangible. The results of SEM suggested that hard service provision positively influenced consumer satisfaction ($\beta = .685, p < .01$), whereas soft service provision did not exert significant influence on consumer satisfaction ($\beta = .210, p > .05$). Satisfaction would positively impact the frequency of participation was supported ($\beta = .212, p < .01$). Consumer satisfaction would positively impact the level of payment for participating in sport organizations was rejected ($\beta = -.298, p < .01$).

In conclusion, the present study provided empirical evidence that hard sport service in community, as measured by the sport facility, grassroots sport organization and sport activity program, is an important element of the public sport service construct in the context of community sports. Furthermore, it highlighted that these programs have had a strong influence on resident satisfaction and participation behavior. The resulting theoretical

framework is therefore applicable in this context. Lastly, the results revealed the important role of satisfaction in the prediction of residents' future behaviors. By understanding the major drivers of residents' behaviors, local sport councils, community managers, grassroots organizations, and residents could work together to establish a nonhierarchical and cooperative mechanism that facilitates sport participation.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Drs. Zhou and Chen received their doctoral degrees at Shanghai University of Sport (China) and currently are professor of sport management and associate professor of sport journalism at Guangzhou Sport University (China). Dr. Beth A. Cianfrone received her doctoral degree at the University of Florida and currently is an associate professor of sport management at Georgia State University. Mr. Jerred Junqi Wang and Nathan David Pifer are doctoral students in the sport management program at the University of Georgia. Dr. James J. Zhang received his doctoral degree at Springfield College and currently is the professor of sport management at the University of Georgia.

