

Analysis of the Current Situation of Chinese Sports Consumption Market and Research on Its Development Countermeasures

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Abstract. The sports consumption market in China has undergone remarkable expansion, driven by the increasing disposable incomes of its population and a growing emphasis on health and fitness. This article delves deeper into the multifaceted evolution of this industry, tracing its journey from its inception to its present state, which is characterized by a dynamic and multifarious landscape. Importantly, this transformation signifies a noteworthy shift in consumer priorities, with a stronger focus on personal well-being and active sports engagement. While the potential for growth within this market is substantial, it is not without its share of challenges. Among these challenges are issues related to inadequate sports infrastructure and less-than-optimal marketing strategies. This study adopts a comprehensive research approach, combining qualitative interviews and quantitative data analysis, to thoroughly investigate these hurdles and propose viable solutions that can facilitate sustainable growth. By contextualizing the historical development of the sports consumption market in China and analyzing the ongoing shifts, this study equips industry stakeholders with invaluable insights. These insights empower stakeholders to make informed decisions regarding the future trajectory of the market. As the sports consumption landscape continues to evolve in response to changing consumer behaviors and market dynamics, this research serves as a vital resource for navigating this complex terrain, ultimately fostering the continued development and expansion of the industry. In essence, it offers a roadmap for realizing the full potential of the Chinese sports consumption market while addressing its inherent challenges.

Keywords: China's sports industry; Sports consumption market; sports Infrastructure; Brand Development.

1. Introduction

China's sports industry has seen significant growth in recent years, driven by rising incomes, urbanization, and a growing emphasis on healthy lifestyles. Since the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games, China's sports industry has developed rapidly. In addition, China's sports industry has also shown a trend towards digitalization, intelligence, and green development, injecting new impetus into economic and social development. However, despite the huge potential, the industry still faces several challenges, including inadequate sports infrastructure, underdeveloped supply chains, and inadequate promotion and marketing strategies. Understanding and addressing these barriers is critical to promoting the sustainable development of China's sports consumer market. The transformation of China's sports industry can be understood through different stages of evolution: from initial exploration to entrepreneurship and finally to rapid development. These stages saw a shift in social priorities, with greater emphasis on individual well-being and sports participation. This paper deeply studies the multi-directional course of China's sports industry and analyzes the transformation of China's sports industry from the formation period to the current dynamic pattern. Understanding the historical context and the changes that are taking place is essential to understanding the existing challenges and opportunities in the sports consumer market. In order to comprehensively explore the complex challenges and potential solutions facing the Chinese sports consumption market, this study adopts a mixed research methodology. This approach combines qualitative methods such as

interviews and focus groups with quantitative data analysis from government reports, market research and sports-related organizations. The purpose of this study is to comprehensively understand the obstacles faced by China's sports consumption market from these two perspectives and provide valuable suggestions for the sustainable development of China's sports consumption market. This article aims to guide readers to analyze the current challenges facing the Chinese sports consumption market, then explore potential solutions and make feasible suggestions. By adopting a data-driven approach, combining qualitative and quantitative research methods, this study aims to reveal key insights surrounding the issues surrounding the Chinese sports industry, ultimately providing an informed decision-making process for stakeholders investing in its future development.

2. Analysis of the Development and Path of China's Sports Consumption Market

The development and path of China's sports consumption market can be divided into three stages: the exploration phase, the start-up phase, and the high-speed development phase. This phase also witnessed the integration of the sports industry with capital markets, technology, tourism, and other sectors, providing a more diverse and specialized range of sports consumption products and services. In the future, there is vast potential for the growth of China's sports consumption market. With the diversification of consumer demands, technological advancements, and policy support, the sports industry will continue to innovate and develop, offering richer and higher-quality sports products and services to consumers.

After a continuous journey of four decades marked by exploration and growth, China's sports industry has emerged as a significant contributor to the national economy. This evolution has seen the industry progress from its nascent stages and initial explorations to a phase characterized by rapid development. The steady improvement in people's living standards and the surging market demand have propelled sports consumption into a central driving force behind the advancement of China's sports sector. As of 2021, the total valuation of the national sports industry has exceeded an impressive 3 trillion yuan, with the sports service sector constituting more than 60% of this valuation. Concurrently, China has established itself as one of the world's largest sports consumption markets. In 2021 alone, the country's sports consumption market surpassed the 1.8 trillion-yuan mark, with per capita sports consumption expenditure reaching nearly 2,500 RMB [1]. Simultaneously, the dynamics of sports consumption have shifted from mere product purchases to personalized engagement in sporting events. Consumer preferences are no longer primarily influenced by brand appeal but are instead driven by social media interactions and experiential desires. Furthermore, the trajectory of consumption trends has shifted from manual processes to those harnessing the power of AI-driven approaches [2]. AI is reshaping businesses, and the entire value chain leans more towards "customer needs—organizing products—product delivery," enhancing retail operational efficiency, and emphasizing human efficiency, product efficiency, and space efficiency. In promoting the development of the sports industry, it is crucial to analyze the sports industry and sports consumption market from different perspectives. On the one hand, from the viewpoint of the integration of the sports industry with related industries, visual network analysis is used to explore industrial collaboration. On the other hand, from a social stratification perspective, research on different classes' phenomena in sports consumption and the differences among various social strata in different types of sports consumption (spectatorial and participatory) is conducted. It examines the upper, middle, and lower segments, identifies development patterns, and offers targeted recommendations to promote future sports consumption effectively.

2.1. 1979~2012: Exploration Period of China's Sports Industry

Since the initiation of China's reform and opening-up policies, the country's sports industry has undergone a series of transformative reforms and explorations. As China transitioned from a planned economy to a market-driven one, the sports industry progressively incorporated market principles,

leading to the emergence of a multifaceted sports model with diverse operational dimensions. An essential milestone occurred in 1999 when the "Opinions on Accelerating the Development and Management of Sports Clubs" were issued. These opinions not only enhanced the regulatory framework governing sports but also facilitated the professionalization and healthy growth of the industry.

Furthermore, the amalgamation of sports events and commercial ventures drove social progress within the sports sector. Subsequent significant developments came in 2010 and 2011 with the issuance of the "Guiding Opinions on Accelerating the Development of the Sports Industry" and the "Twelfth Five-Year Plan of the Sports Industry," respectively. These documents underscored the significance of capital market financing, encouraged private and foreign investment in the sports industry, and advocated for its diversified development [3].

Another crucial legislative milestone was reached in 1995 with the introduction of the "Sports Law of the People's Republic of China," which effectively filled the regulatory gap in China's sports landscape. This legislation provided a solid legal foundation for the burgeoning sports industry.

In summary, spanning the period from 1979 to 2012, China embarked on a continuous journey of introducing pivotal sports laws and regulations. These legislative initiatives played a pivotal role in advancing the socialization, professionalization, and legitimization of the sports industry in China.

2.2. 2013~2017: Start-up Phase of China's Sports Industry

In September 2014, China designated the sports industry as a "special" sector to stimulate domestic demand and facilitate economic transformation. This strategic move was followed by the issuance of the "Opinions of the State Council on Accelerating the Development of the Sports Industry and Promoting Sports Consumption" in October of the same year. These opinions explicitly acknowledged the significant role of the sports industry in both economic and social development and established development objectives for the ensuing decade. This policy support ushered in market-oriented reforms within the sports industry, streamlined government oversight, and expanded the industry's overall market size [4].

In 2016, the "Thirteenth Five-Year Plan for the Development of the Sports Industry" was introduced, outlining specific development targets for the subsequent five years [5]. Simultaneously, the sports industry began to integrate more closely with the tourism sector, further facilitating its expansion and upgrading [6].

In summary, between 2013 and 2017, a combination of policy support and market-oriented measures played a pivotal role in propelling the rapid growth of China's sports industry.

2.3. 2018 to Present: High-Speed Development Phase of China's Sports Industry

In 2018, the release of the "Guiding Opinions of the General Office of the State Council on Accelerating the Development of the Sports Competition and Performance Industry" played a pivotal role in elucidating the essential contribution made by the sports competition and performance sector to both economic growth and the enhancement of people's quality of life. This document also delineated strategic developmental pathways. Subsequently, in January 2019, the General Administration of Sport, in conjunction with the National Development and Reform Commission, jointly unveiled the "Action Plan to Further Promote Sports Consumption (2019-2020)" [5]. This plan established specific benchmarks for the overall scale of sports consumption and per capita sports expenditure.

By the year 2020, the "Opinions of the General Office of the State Council on Promoting National Fitness and Sports Consumption and Promoting the High-Quality Development of the Sports Industry" became effective. These opinions outlined a comprehensive set of measures designed to stimulate sports consumption. These measures encompassed the deepening of reforms related to decentralization, management, and service, the optimization of industry-related policies, the augmentation of factor supply, the enhancement of the industry's structural framework, and the execution of the "sports+" initiatives [6-8]. Empowered by these policy interventions, China's sports

industry underwent a transformative journey characterized by socialization, marketization, and professionalization. Substantial changes also transpired in the industry's organizational structure and operational mechanisms.

In summary, spanning the period from 2018 to the present, China's sports industry has witnessed substantial expansion, evolving into a critical catalyst for economic development [9].

3. Analysis of the Current Status and Development Issues of the Sports Consumption Market under the New Situation

3.1. Insufficient Sports Facilities and Poor Consumer Experience

There are several problems in the field of sports consumption, one of which is the lack of sports facilities leading to a subpar consumer experience. Currently, while the sports industry in China is developing rapidly, the construction of sports facilities is relatively lagging, leading to an incomplete infrastructure [10]. This results in consumers facing issues like confined spaces and outdated equipment during their participation in sports activities, affecting their consumer experience. For instance, some sports venues may be limited in their offerings due to facility constraints, hindering consumer satisfaction. To enhance the sports consumption experience, it's vital to increase investment and construction of sports facilities, providing more advanced and varied facilities to meet the diverse and high-quality demands of consumers.

3.2. Dilemma of Sports Brand Development and Management

The construction and management of sports brands face certain challenges. Firstly, some enterprises lack adequate brand awareness, focusing too much on short-term profits and neglecting the long-term accumulation of brand value. Additionally, a lack of managerial expertise can result in insufficient formulation and execution of brand strategies, making it difficult to establish a unique brand image. The intense market competition and severe homogenization further blur brand differentiation, affecting brand recognition and loyalty. To address these challenges, companies should focus on building brand culture, strengthening market research, increasing R&D investment, innovating products, differentiating in competition, and enhancing brand promotion to elevate consumer brand awareness and identification [11].

3.3. Blind Trend Following and Proliferation of Low-Quality Products in the Sports Consumption Market

The sports consumption market has been heating up in recent years. However, accompanying its growth are detrimental trends: blind trend following and the proliferation of low-quality products. Take the "smart running shoes" as an example. In 2019, the market size for smart running shoes grew by over 50% [11]. But as per consumer feedback, many found the "smart" functions impractical and were merely drawn by marketing gimmicks. Recently, numerous counterfeit and substandard yoga mats have appeared on the market. They're inexpensive but tend to slip during use and might contain harmful materials [12].

3.4. Issues of Subculture and Social Identification in the Sports Consumption Market

The problems encountered by the sports consumption market in terms of subculture and social identification mainly concern brand image shaping, consumer identity, and conflicts with mainstream culture. Sports brands and events are often associated with specific communities or subcultures, such as skateboard culture or street basketball culture. This association might lead to misunderstandings or prejudices from outsiders, resulting in stereotypes. Sports brands and events sometimes reinforce gender stereotypes; certain sports might be perceived as "men's sports" or "women's sports," potentially causing some individuals to feel excluded or unaccepted. Some young people might buy

a high-end basketball shoe brand, like Air Jordan, simply because they believe it can elevate their social status or acceptance within their circles [13].

4. Countermeasures and Solutions

4.1. Increase Funding

Dedicate increased resources to the enhancement of sports infrastructure, with a particular emphasis on underprivileged rural regions. The government and various relevant entities should prioritize the establishment of sports facilities and ensure the equitable distribution of sporting resources by allocating additional funding to address existing gaps.

At the same time, public-private partnerships should be established to encourage private sector involvement in the development of sports facilities in remote areas through incentives and partnerships. By reducing taxes, increasing incentives and other mechanisms, the government encourages private enterprises to take care of the development of sports facilities in remote areas, so that they can see the market in remote areas, and help remote areas get more resources [14]. Secondly, by establishing multi-purpose facilities, promote the construction of multi-purpose sports centers, meet a variety of sports and entertainment activities, and optimize land use. Maximize the use of available land and allocate sports facilities reasonably.

4.2. Sports Education

On the issue of limited product awareness and education, a significant barrier to consumer behaviour for sports products is a lack of awareness and education about the diversity of products available. Due to familiarity, consumers are often attracted to well-known brands or products, which can lead to neglect of innovation or niche products. For brands, the differences are not obvious and can be solved by the following methods. Regulatory reform: Streamlining and updating existing regulations to create a cohesive framework for the sports industry. Industry associations: Establish industry associations to facilitate collaboration and information exchange among stakeholders and promote standardization efforts. Consumer education: Increase consumer awareness of industry standards and the importance of purchasing genuine goods and services [15].

4.3. School sports

Integrate sports into the curriculum and encourage schools to carry out extracurricular sports activities. So that students can have more opportunities to learn about sports activities.

1) Work-life balance: Promote work-life balance so that individuals can allocate time for physical activity. Set aside time for physical activity every day.

2) Sports role models: Highlight and honor sports personalities from diverse backgrounds to inspire a wide variety of people to participate in sports.

3) Gender equality: Advocating for gender equality in sport, challenging stereotypes and promoting opportunities for women to participate in sport [16]. To take many of the gender-stereotyped sports off the shackles and make them accessible to a wider group of people.

5. Case study: Successful Practice of Problem Solving

From the 1990 Beijing Asian Games, the Asian mighty wind set off the wave of national sports, to the lighting of the flame in the Bird's Nest Stadium in the 2008 Olympic Games, and then to the rise of Chinese brands in recent years, this is the rise of China's sports economy and sports consumption 30 years, Li Ning accompanied and witnessed the development of the sports industry for 30 years, sports fitness has become a new fashion. The public has more sports and more consumption choices. Li Ning is undoubtedly caught up with this wave of rise, each breakthrough has been deeply integrated into the development of China, and in many moments to find a new way to become the sports industry. Looking back on the development of "Li Ning", there are three keys:

seize the opportunity of China's development, create new value, and the support of strong athlete genes. Influenced by the positive repercussions of the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games, Li Ning achieved unprecedented success in 2010, with record-breaking sales revenue of 9.479 billion yuan and a net profit of 1.108 billion yuan. During this period, the "Li Ning" brand reached the pinnacle of its influence. However, as the Olympic dividend from 2008 gradually waned and the stimulating effects of the Olympic economy diminished, the sports industry as a whole encountered a surplus situation, facing a bottleneck in its growth trajectory. In response, Li Ning found itself on a dual mission: addressing excess capacity supply while simultaneously seeking new avenues for value creation. In 2010, marking the 20th anniversary of Li Ning's founding, the company embarked on a significant rebranding initiative aimed at shedding its image as a mere follower of "China Nike." As part of this transformation, Li Ning abandoned its decade-long "anything is possible" advertising campaign and adopted a new slogan, "Make the change" - emphasizing the proactive role of instigating change. This brand slogan is also seen as another sublimation of Li Ning's brand spirit - Li Ning fully embraces the "post-90". However, this comprehensive brand update was not welcomed by the market but was questioned. "Li Ning" this transformation, re-lock the target consumer - after 90, and strive to build "after 90 Li Ning", and try to establish a high-end brand image, greatly increase product prices. As a result, when the price is comparable to foreign brands, it not only fails to obtain more young consumers, but also causes a large loss of old customers who are slightly older and value cost-effective, so as to turn to other low-price domestic brands. A transformation to try to update the brand image and raise prices made Li Ning suffer a Waterloo. In 2012, Li Ning's sales fell to 6.739 billion yuan, the loss reached a record 1.979 billion yuan, the crisis broke out in an all-round way: the failure of brand remodeling, product positioning error, excessive expansion of channels, high inventory, senior executives' earthquake, comprehensive layoffs, Li Ning has been smoothly encountered a huge crisis. Brand return to the road to rejuvenation in 2015, under the huge losses, Li Ning chose to "comeback again", the last stand. At the same time, on the 25th anniversary of the founding of Li Ning, the re-use of "everything is possible" advertising slogan, which represents the return of the Li Ning brand, marking the strategic change of Li Ning company from a sports equipment provider to an "Internet + sports life experience" provider. In addition, under the leadership of Li Ning, the company fully opened the "Internet +" strategy, Li Ning more than 50 years old opened Weibo, selling Meng, write chicken soup... The comeback Li Ning is no longer a cold gymnastics prince is no longer a serious entrepreneur, has become a lovely little old man, constantly integrate into young people and interact with young people in a variety of activities, just over a year time fans accumulated nearly 300w [8]. These strategies may appear straightforward, yet they prove highly effective. As evidenced by Li Ning Company's financial statements, the 2016 annual performance report reveals that Li Ning Group achieved an annual revenue of 8.15 billion yuan and a net profit of 643 million yuan. This marked an impressive surge of 4395.5% in net profit, indicating that Li Ning's net profit in 2016 increased nearly 44-fold. During the first half of 2017, Li Ning Company recorded an operating income of 3.996 billion yuan, showcasing an 11% increase. The gross profit margin also saw growth, reaching 47.7%, while the net profit for the same period amounted to 189 million yuan, reflecting a substantial increase of 67% [9].

6. Challenges and Future development trends

The challenges and future development trends of Chinese sports consumption market with the rapid development and transformation of China's sports industry, some challenges have emerged that need to be seriously considered to ensure its sustainable development. These challenges are not only inextricably linked to the current state of the sports consumer market but are also critical to shaping its future trajectory. This section delves into some of these challenges and explores the relevant trends in each [17, 18].

Further promoting sports facilities to enhance consumer experience despite impressive progress in China's sports industry, significant challenges remain in ensuring adequate sports infrastructure and

providing a better consumer experience. As more and more people realize the benefits of an active lifestyle, the demand for high-quality sports facilities is also increasing. However, the availability and accessibility of fully equipped stadiums remains uneven across regions. This challenge hinders the industry's ability to meet the diverse needs of consumers and limits the potential for widespread participation in sports.

The sustainable development and protection of sports brands the development of distinctive and recognized sports brands is the key to fostering a dynamic sports consumer market. However, many local Chinese sports brands face challenges in building a strong brand image and gaining international recognition. In addition, the issue of intellectual property protection poses a risk to the development of domestic sports brands, as imitation and counterfeiting can undermine brand integrity.

Consumer Education and promoting social impact While awareness of sport and its benefits has increased, there is still a need for comprehensive consumer education. People must be made aware of the meaning of sport beyond recreation, including its role in promoting physical and mental health as well as social cohesion. In addition, the sports industry faces the challenge of positively impacting society by ensuring that sports consumption contributes to broader social goals [19].

Infrastructure Investment and Innovation Recognizing the importance of sports facilities, the Chinese government and private sector are expected to increase efforts to build and upgrade stadiums. This trend is consistent with greater efforts to create healthier societies by providing citizens with opportunities for regular physical activity. In addition, advances in technology are expected to play a key role in enhancing the consumer experience. Smart interactive sports facilities equipped with digital solutions and personalized training programs are likely to become more common. This development trend aims to bridge the gap between consumer demand and quality sports facilities. To overcome these challenges, the Chinese sports industry is expected to prioritize brand development and protection. Strategic marketing efforts and collaboration with international partners help increase brand awareness and credibility. Building a strong brand image is also closely related to promoting innovation and producing high-quality products. By investing in research and development, domestic sports brands can create unique and competitive products that resonate with consumers at home and abroad.

A holistic approach to consumer education and social impact Trends in this area include a holistic approach to consumer education. Efforts to promote sports consumption should emphasize not only immediate benefits, but also long-term positive effects on individual well-being and community building. Schools, community centers, and digital platforms can serve as avenues for disseminating educational content about the value of sport. In addition, highlighting the social impact of sports consumption, such as supporting local economies and promoting inclusion, can create a sense of purpose and motivation among consumers.

The Digital revolution has dramatically changed consumer behavior and expectations across various industries, including sports consumption. The convergence of technology and the digitization of sports-related experiences will reshape the landscape of China's sports industry. Online platforms, social media and mobile apps are becoming central to consumers' access to sports content, products, and services.

In the digital age, the sports industry is expected to harness the power of technology to provide consumers with personalized, immersive experiences. Virtual reality, augmented reality and live streaming platforms will allow fans to engage with sporting events and content in innovative ways. E-commerce and mobile applications will facilitate the purchase of sports products and the booking of sports events. In addition, data analytics will enable businesses to gain insight into consumer preferences and behaviors, optimize marketing strategies, and improve customer satisfaction [20].

In summary, China's sports consumer market has made impressive progress, driven by rising incomes, urbanization, and a growing emphasis on health and fitness. However, challenges remain in areas such as sports infrastructure, brand development, consumer education and technology integration. To ensure sustainable growth, the industry is expected to invest in infrastructure, nurture strong brands, educate consumers across the board, and leverage technology to enable personalized

experiences. By addressing these challenges and capitalizing on these trends, China's sports consumer market will continue to expand and have a positive social impact in the future.

7. Conclusion

To sum up, this article delves into the challenges and potential solutions facing the Chinese sports consumer market. The research highlights the dynamic pattern of the sports industry, which has entered a period of rapid development from the initial stage of exploration. With rising incomes, urbanization, and a growing focus on healthy lifestyles, sports consumption has become an important part of the Chinese consumer market. The study takes a closer look at issues related to the lack of sports infrastructure, underdeveloped supply chains, and inadequate promotion and marketing strategies that hinder the sustainable development of the industry.

However, there are still some limitations in this study. One limitation lies in the inherent subjectivity of qualitative research, where biases from respondents or researchers may affect the results. In addition, the scope of this study may not include all possible factors affecting the sports consumer market and may miss other important dynamics that may affect the development of the industry. Looking ahead, the future direction of this research can be focused on several aspects. Further exploration of the role of technological advances such as artificial intelligence in reshaping the sports consumption landscape could provide even deeper insights. Investigating the potential impact of international sporting events, policy changes and social changes on sports consumption patterns will help to gain a more complete understanding of the evolution of the market. In addition, longitudinal studies that track the implementation and effectiveness of proposed countermeasures over time can provide a clearer picture of their impact.

In conclusion, this study reveals the challenges and potential solutions facing the Chinese sports consumer market. Despite the numerous obstacles facing the industry, the insights gained from this study provide stakeholders, including government departments, sports businesses, investors and consumers, with the knowledge needed to formulate policies, strategies and decisions that will facilitate the growth and development of the sports consumer market in China. As our country continues to move toward a healthier and more active society, the results of this study can serve as a basis for informed and effective action.

Authors Contribution

All the authors contributed equally and their names were listed in alphabetical order.

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