

The harm of excessively idolization competitive sports to the level of sports athletes

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Abstract. In recent years, the social trends brought by idolization to competitive sports athletes have become a hot issue in China. The researchers have given two opposing views, the advantages outweigh the disadvantages and the disadvantages outweigh the advantages. However, there are still research gaps in the summary of the formation process of advantages and disadvantages and solutions to disadvantages. The research theme of this article is the advantages and disadvantages brought by idolization to competitive athletes, as well as solutions to disadvantages. This paper conducts literature review to consult fan economy and celebrity economy. Additionally, the behavior of sports celebrities and its consequences are sorted out and analyzed through real celebrity cases. The study found that the advantages of idolization for competitive athletes can be realized in the short term, but in the long run, it may reduce the ability of personal professional skill. Therefore, in order to ensure that Chinese competitive sports athletes in the future could maintain a good state of competition, it is recommended to designate a more majestic plan in combination with the solutions provided in this study.

Keywords: Idolization; Sports celebrities; Economy.

1. Introduction

Professional sports industry and entertainment has been salient industries in China for the past decades. With the strong development of sports and entertainment, a new field has emerged in China. Sports celebrities have become idolized under the portrayal of the entertainment industry. With diversified media such as the Internet, television and advertising, the exposure of sports celebrities is also increasing day by day. In recent years, we have also seen more and more competitive sports athletes becoming idolized in terms of advertising endorsements, variety shows and commercial tours. Idolization competitive athletes are able to acquire massive fan bases in a short period of time, and their income will increase accordingly. However, long-term idolization behavior is difficult for sports celebrities to retain a better competitive state. Many athletes are unable to concentrate on training because they often participate in recreational activities, resulting in abnormalities in some competitions.

Some people say that the benefits of idolization to competitive athletes outweigh the disadvantages, while others oppose the former. The discussion on the advantages and disadvantages brought by idolization to competitive sports athletes is of great significance to the future trend of competitive sports athletes' competitive performance.

This study is based on the inquiry of fan economy and star economy, the comparison of sports celebrities and ordinary celebrities, and the analysis of real personnel examples. It compares the advantages and disadvantages aspects of idolization to competitive sports athletes from short-term and long-term aspects, and summarizes the advantages and disadvantages to designate a more perfect plan.

2. Background

Traditionally, competitive sports athletes and celebrities were originally two unrelated fields, but under China's unique fan economy, the idolization of competitive sports athletes has become a trend in recent years. This emerged the industry to approach a new field coined sports celebrities.

Celebrities is a profession that will never exceed the demand is enough for China idolization or media companies to expand the companies' scale, obtain more resources, and enter new fields in relevant fields to increase the companies' strength. Only companies with outstanding strength can sign well known celebrities to improve the companies' revenue [1]. TV stations and program groups are competing for more popular celebrities to constantly update their own popularity and apply for excellent planners to write better plans for their TV programs to attract celebrities in order to let these celebrities join their programs.

Celebrities can not only easily rely on their own ability to increase their income, but also bring more idolization to fans. After becoming celebrities, people begin to urge for earning more fans, and more fans represent higher individual income. Celebrities are counted as commodities, and fans, that is, consumers, are attracted in the process of participating in consumption. Therefore, more and more celebrities are hired to sponsor, help promote and market consumer goods, to get more money from fans [2].

Fans can be enthusiasts or supporters. Fans are the consumers who maintain the closest contact with celebrities and their associated brands. When fans find that others have the same favorite celebrities as themselves, they will unconsciously treat them as their friends, even if they have never met or had any communication before. When fans gradually realize that there are more people like the same celebrity as themselves, those people will also naturally form a future group, called a fan group. Fan groups can exist on the Internet or in reality. Whether online or offline, each different fan group has its own ideas and behaviors, and even establishes their own unique custom [3]. But not every fan will invest a lot of money and time on the celebrities they like. A fan group can be divided into temporary fans, local fans, loyal fans and enthusiastic fans. Temporary fans will not spend a lot of money and time on the celebrities that they like, because they only appreciate the celebrities' appearance or a certain music, movie, but this relationship will not last long, and they may even return to the spectators after a period of time. Loyal and enthusiastic fans will follow the pace of celebrities, such as watching world tours, going to places where celebrities record variety shows, and crazy enough to buy products endorsed by celebrities. And it's very simple for celebrities to plan their goals—to make those weak fans, unstable and unwilling to spend money and time on themselves, become their enthusiastic fans, so as to improve their income and popularity.

In the modern entertainment industry, high-quality film and music works are no longer enough to attract a large fan base, and even harder to make their fans more loyal or enthusiastic. As a result, the word idolization was born among celebrities. idolization is easy to explain. When a competitive athlete becomes like a celebrity, and starts to bring entertainment to fans, it means idolization. The more idolized a celebrity is, the more satisfaction he can bring to his fans. Thus, most celebrities have changed from working for high-quality works to how to improve their own idolization for fans. Participating in variety shows, shooting popular videos on the Internet, and endorsement of various products have become a must for most celebrities. When the celebrities saw a significant increase in the number of fans of their peers, they began to turn their goal to how to entertain their fans.

This phenomenon deeply attracts the competitive athletes. The athletes also want to experience a celebrity-like life, participate in interesting idolization activities, have more fans and get more wage. Therefore, competitive athletes have tried to become sports celebrities one after another, which is not difficult for the athletes who have a certain fan base. In their spare time for training and competition, they began to participate in variety shows, set up live broadcasts, or participate in various endorsement activities. With the help of the athletes' agent and the original fan base, they can easily become a sports celebrity. When these sports celebrities taste the benefits, they start to have the same goal as ordinary celebrities—strengthen their idolization, to achieve an all-round increase in fan volume, popularity and salary.

(2) Short terms benefits of sports idolization

Sports celebrities want to grow fan traffic and revenue as fast as ordinary celebrities. The first thing to do is to find a marketing agent to sign a contract with them. After signing the contract, the record and winning or losing of competitive sports athletes are extremely important, which will lead

to an increase or decrease in the commercial value of sports celebrities. Especially after a competitive sports athlete wins the game, his commercial value will rise to a higher level. During such a peak period, large or small domestic brands and program groups will flock to invite sports celebrities, and the treatment of sports celebrities will also increase accordingly. For instance, different brands of the consent type will raise the amount they can pay in order to compete for the same competitive sports athlete, or additional benefits can be provided so that the sports athletes agree to endorse their own brands. In the face of the competition between the brand and the program team, competitive sports athletes themselves can greatly improve their self-confidence, because no brokers and economic teams are willing to spend a lot of time and money signing a contract with an athlete who has no strengths or poor records. This is a kind of affirmation of the sports athletes, but also the sports athletes of their own strengths and achievements. Improving self-confidence can not only improve the exercise of athletes' sports coping skills, but also promote the healthy development of the body and mind. Joseph advocates that self-confidence is important in the face of difficulties and great setbacks, so that people can still maintain a good attitude, actively face challenges and overcome difficulties. But if a person loses self-confidence, when he encounters a slight setback, he will choose to retreat and no longer be willing to try [4]. For example, when athletes find that they lag behind other competitors or teams, they may lose confidence in themselves, leading to self-abandonedness and giving up the competition. Or even before the competition, because the athletes were in poor condition during training, they felt they could not win the competition before starting. These situations are very negative for competitive athletes.

The reason for increasing self-confidence is that they are sought after, and competitive athletes can naturally experience the same feelings as ordinary celebrities, in which fans show the most credit. Fans of the most competitive sports athletes will also be divided into different degrees of fans like ordinary fans, enthusiastic fans who will spend a lot of time following athletes to where they are going, boosting popularity, controlling comments, scolding and other ways on the Internet to support their sports athletes in public opinion. Fans will also spend money on many athletes' endorsement products to prove the value of their favorite sports celebrities with sales. In addition, fans have a mentality that wants the world to know their favorite celebrities. Then these fans will help athletes publicize and spread the historical highlights of the sports athletes that they like.

Attending various activities is conducive to the all-round development of competitive sports athletes, cultivating a variety of interests and hobbies. The knowledge and strength they have are not only in the sports field, learn new skills, be versatile, and finally achieve a perfect transformation. After that, competitive sports athletes will enter new fields and will experience more difficulties and challenges, but this will help them hone their will, not bow to difficulties, and stick to their goals. In addition, participating in variety shows is also a way to communicate and learn, which is conducive to showing other talents, allowing fans and audiences to see a comprehensive self and play the role of role models [5]. The benefits of these short-term idolization for competitive athletes make them happy and unable to extricate themselves. This kind of idolization in sports is a trend in China, and most competitive athletes begin to take this route.

3. Long terms benefits of sports idolization

Short-term entertainment can bring a lot of benefits to competitive sports athletes, but looking at it in the long term, excessive entertainment is believed to harm sports stars. We all know that professional athletes, in order to maintain better competitive quality, must ensure a lot of basic training, physical training and skill training. Long and intensively participating in these activities will definitely reduce the training time and status of athletes, which will lead to a decrease in the quality of their competition. Many athletes are unfamiliar with professional training because they often participate in recreational activities, resulting in abnormalities in some competitions and failure to get good results.

Zhang Guowei, born in Shandong in 1991, used to be one of the excellent competitive sports athletes of the Chinese track and field team. He has a congenital advantage in the track and field team, two meters tall and has strong explosive power. At the age of 20, Zhang Guowei won the national high jump championship. Later, while he won these championships, he broke many domestic records. At the Beijing World Championships, Zhang Guowei's celebration of "White Crane Spread its Wings" after winning the championship became popular. Unfortunately, after 2016, Zhang Guowei's condition gradually declined due to injuries and other reasons. Although the results in the competition were not ideal, he attracted a dedicated fanbase with his own sense of humor and liveliness.

Since 2018, Zhang Guowei has participated in variety shows such as *Running Man* in a row [6]. Variety shows did popularize Zhang Guowei, but also ruined Zhang Guowei's sports dream. In 2019, Zhang Guowei issued a notice because he participated in idolization programs and commercial activities without permission. The general content of the notice was that Zhang Guowei was expelled from the national team because he went out to participate in commercial activities for two fabricated reasons without the approval of the national team, which seriously violated the Regulations on the Administration of the National Track and Field Training Team. This notice only means that Zhang Guowei has been suspended, but he is still training with the team at the Training Bureau of the State General Administration of Sports in Beijing [7]. The results of the training are not ideal. In 2020, Zhang Guowei and the Track and Field Management Centre of the General Administration of Sports reached a settlement and returned to the national team. When Zhang Guowei hit the Tokyo Olympic Games qualification, because bursitis only jumped 2.28 meters, there was still a big gap from the Tokyo Olympic Olympic standard of 2.33 meters, which made Zhang Guo Wei's confidence greatly impacted. On April 5, 2020, he suddenly announced his retirement on his personal microblog. On the surface, it seems that his strength has declined only because of Zhang Guowei's personal illness, but assuming that Zhang Guowei did not become entertaining at the beginning and participated in various variety shows, the results of today's competition should be much higher than 2.28 meters, and may also win many medals for China.

Since Zhang Guowei participated in the variety show without permission. If a person is not completely focussed on training and competition, his actions will be affected: the training time will definitely be reduced, the mentality during training will become negative, and the performance of the competition will naturally be very bad. As expected, after retirement, Zhang Guowei began to contact short video platforms, such as TikTok. He completely released the idolization side of his nature, which transformed him into an Internet celebrity. Shooting various popular videos quickly attracted countless fans and gained a lot of attention and traffic. Zhang Guowei, who has more than 22 million fans, once announced that he wants to return to the field to win glory for the country. Although Zhang Guowei hired an excellent coach and shot training videos, most people still felt that he was just waving to ride.

Competitive athletes mainly rely on their achievements to reflect their value. Only when athletes can prove their strength will a team be willing to sign up with themselves. Compared with the Chinese men's basketball team and the Chinese men's football team, the two national teams were famous for their poor records due to lack of strength and were later selected by variety shows. The head coaches of the two teams laughed at each other's poor record and bad players when participating in a talk show. As soon as the program was broadcast, it received many basketball and football enthusiasts and reporters' dissatisfaction, and some reporters proposed to reflect on yourself while laughing at yourself to the two national teams [8]. When the team fails to achieve the ideal results for a long time, the coach should spend more time and energy leading the players to actively train, instead of spending time on variety shows. This behavior may even mislead the players into becoming idolized.

When sports celebrities often expose in the public eye, fans are no longer only interested in how many points athletes have scored in their games. They are also interested in athletes' fashion style, interpersonal relationships and behavior in handling things, which eventually leads to sports celebrities being expected to become a model standard. Then fans not only require sports celebrities to perform well in the competition, but also hope that the sports celebrities they like will be perfect

at all the aspects of life. Such stringent requirements make it impossible for sports celebrities to devote a lot of energy to their usual training, and the competition results of the sports celebrities deteriorate [9].

Regardless of the decline in sports celebrities' competition results, if their business ability gets worse, they will be eliminated from the sports world. This not only affects their professional career, but also affects their sports clubs and teams. The excessive idolization of a competitive sports athlete alone can lead the whole club to a lot of negative public opinion. This is a downward trend for the future development of the sports industry, in order to prevent such a trend. Relevant personnel should formulate a better plan for these competitive athletes. Only effective policies can prevent more athletes from going astray.

4. Discussion

The amount of fan traffic and income that idolization brings to sports celebrities makes it difficult for athletes themselves to stay focused on training and competing. First, it is difficult for sports celebrities to achieve self-discipline. When competitive sports athletes are highly excited, it is understandable to be eager to sign a marketing agent, brand business and the program team. The longer it's been since the athletes won the game, the fewer and fewer opportunities to be signed. No one is willing to give up the opportunity to become famous overnight, so it is unreliable to change from the direction of sports celebrities themselves.

It is even more nonsense to make changes from the recent brokers and marketing agents in their relationship with sports celebrities. No economic team will control their own celebrities and let their signed celebrities deliberately reduce business and variety shows. The obligation of brokers is to help sports celebrities gain more fans and win more product endorsement, so that they and their celebrities can have a higher income.

Except for sports celebrities themselves and brokerage teams, only fans and policy planners can prevent competitive athletes from immersing themselves in commercial and idolization activities. It is also unrealistic from the fan level. If fans are forced to stop going to the front court to support their favorite sports celebrities, or they are forced to stop buying a large number of products they endorse, it will have unimaginable consequences. Although there is indeed a negative side in adoring a celebrity, people are keen on adoring celebrities because adoring celebrities itself is of great significance in meeting people's emotional needs and self-growth. Especially for teenagers, it has an important and positive impact. Some fans will even claim on Microblog that they have come out of depression because of the celebrities they like. Although it is not completely sure whether it is true or false, we should actively recognise the benefits of adoring celebrities for people [10]. If a fan meets a group of people who have the same favorite celebrities, it will form a fan base through communications and activities. Many people in the fan base lack a sense of belonging, which leads to the lack of belonging because changes within families in recent years have allowed fewer and fewer children to grow up in two-parent families. This can affect human social relations and connections, which will affect health and other wellbeing [11]. Through such a small place as a fan base, many people have found a sense of social belonging.

Another approach that can change the trend is through policy planning, such as strengthening the league policy. In China, competitive athletes can't fully be like athletes from European and American countries. European and American competitive sports athletes have high enough self-control to participate in too many commercial and recreational activities, and their endorsement products are also related to sports. They will only accept invitations from program groups and brands when they are sure that they can maintain the training status and the results of the competition. Because they understand that if their position in the idolization industry rises, but the strength of competitive sports declines, then their status in sports will also decline. In the end, the chain reaction will affect the status of the idolization industry, which outweighs the losses.

For China, people can only rely on strict policies to force competitive athletes to maintain their training status, to improve their competition. As a lesson from the past, Zhang Guowei was punished for secretly participating in variety shows due to his fluke psychology, which is obviously that the punishment was not strong enough. It is suggested that if athletes participate in variety shows and do not report with the relevant personnel of the team, they should change the observation of staying in the team to a direct ban and let athletes withdraw from the national team. In addition to this plan, the policy should also strictly stipulate that the commercial and recreational activities that competitive sports athletes can participate in within a certain period of time should be controlled within twice a week. If the training state is or competition results are not ideal, the contract with other activities need to be terminated immediately.

Products endorsed by sports celebrities must also be sports-related, rather than accepting contracts for all products. The more goods endorsed by sports celebrities, the greater the risks. There is a risk that fans will be dissatisfied with each product. The shortcomings of a product will lead to consumers' distrust of the product and even disappointment with the spokesperson [12].

China's sports policy planning should also be like the NFL's policy learning. Some NFL teams can punish players for their off-court behavior. Once the management of these teams finds that players do unsuggested things off the field, they will force the athletes to plan and use their free time reasonably by deducting money [13]. Strengthening the preparation of policies from this perspective can improve the trend of idolization of sports celebrities.

This method can realistically only improve the trend, but it treats the symptoms rather than the root causes. No matter how strict the policy is, it cannot guarantee that no athletes will risk being fired to sign contracts with program groups and brands. Therefore, after the policy is put forward, relevant personnel should do a good job in psychological work for competitive sports athletes, so that they can realize the seriousness of the violation of the policy by teaching lessons, instead of simply issuing new policies and expecting that athletes can abide by the policy. Only by using the correct education method for competitive sports athletes can fundamentally change their minds about excessive idolization. People don't need to worry that the publicity of sports in China after restricting sports celebrities from attending the event will be affected. Ordinary celebrities should participate more actively in sports programs and activities and lead fans to learn more about different kinds of sports together.

5. Conclusion

This study contends that the impact of idolization on competitive athletes will change due to many factors. But in order to ensure that athletes can continue to maintain their strength in the future and compete for more awards for their country. The idolization of sports athletes should indeed be stopped. The specific reasons can be explained as follows. First, idolization can bring huge fans and traffic to competitive athletes in the short term. With the pursuit of fans and the invitation of program teams and brands, the income and self-confidence of sports celebrities can increase rapidly in a short period of time, and also make competitive sports athletes feel the same treatment as ordinary celebrities. These phenomena not only bring many benefits to sports celebrities themselves, but also do good publicity work for Chinese sports. However, in the long run, this over-idolization has immersed many competitive athletes in recreational and commercial activities. Compared with daily high-intensity training, these activities that do not require too much effort to earn income and traffic makes athletes forget their real jobs. As a result, sports celebrities are unable to participate in training in a normal mentality, which eventually leads to a decline in competition results, and it is difficult to return to an ideal training state.

First of all, this study objectively summarizes the advantages and disadvantages brought by idolization to competitive sports athletes and gives solutions for the excessive idolization of sports celebrities. This is conducive to China's trend of winning the championship in competitive sports competitions in the future.

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