

The Visions, Opportunities and Strategies for Recreational Sport Development in Taiwan

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Keywords: Sport Development, Taiwan

Abstract

Research Questions

More and more people in Taiwan choose sport as part of ones' leisure life. The accessibility, participation, and benefits of recreational sport is worthy of expending to the whole society. But does recreational sport create quality experience for living, or recreational sport is utilized as a means to self-actualization? This study aimed to explore what and how recreational sport has been developed and achieved in Taiwan since 1987? In the future, what and how should be innovated to enhance the contribution of recreational sport to our lives and society by NGOs, government, schools and industry?

Theoretical Background

Some scientific evidences have been shown that regular recreational sport participation has positive impact upon health promotion, quality of life, social learning and social identity (ICSSPE, 2001; SDC, 2005). By the definition of United Nations (2003), sport is all forms of physical activity that contribute to physical fitness, mental well-being and social interaction. Sport could be play, recreation, organized, casual or competitive sport, indigenous and traditional sports or games. Evidences show that serious leisure and professionalization are proved as facilitators for benefits of recreational sport participation (Liang, Y. and Tsaur, S. 2007; Scott, D., Cavin, D. A. and Shafer, C.S., 2007). Therefore, United Nations employs sport as an effective means to achieve the goals of education, health, development and peace. (UN, 2003)

Methodology

Longitudinal and cross-sectional national survey statistic data related to recreational sport in Taiwan were collected and reviewed. Qualitative and quantitative analyses were conducted in terms of recreational sport promotion projects, economic performance, participation population, time usage, and benefits.

Results

A. National projects for recreational sport promotion

Since 1987, government associated with schools and NGOs have initiated some national projects to promote recreational sport as following. For school students (since 1990), such as life-long sport skills, swimming and ocean sport capability, organizing school sport clubs, and school sport championships of basketball, baseball, softball, football, and LOHAS program (since 2008),.

For community residents, some nation-wide projects were implemented such as solar fitness program (1997-2000), sport population double plan (2001-2008), wellness city program (since 2005). There are 161 national sport events , 30 international sport events held in Taiwan in 2005. Sport lottery has been issued since May 02, 2008. In addition, 2009 World Games and 2009 Deaflympic games are being organized and will be held in Taiwan.

B. Sport services industry

In addition to government, NGOs and schools, industry is economically motivated to deliver recreational sport goods and services effectively and efficiently. Therefore, the accessibility of required resources for recreational sport participation is improving around Taiwan, especially in urban areas. There are 52,508 full time employees working for delivering recreational sport services and created US 1,358 millions GDP in 2005. The details of recreational sport services employees and GDP are listed in Table 1.

Table 1 Sport services industry employees and GDP

Segment	Employees (full time)	GDP (US \$ millions)	Productivity GDP/Employees
Professional sport	437	23	52,631
Facility operations	13,296	377	28,412
Retailers	37,092	933	25,153
Rental	1,157	22	19,014
Events organizing and marketing	89	3	29,666
Total	52,508 persons	1,358 millions	25,862

Source: National survey on sport services industry in Taiwan

C. The population, time usage and benefits of recreational sport.

The population, time usage and benefits of recreational sport participation are depicted as following and summarized in Tables 2-5.

According to the national survey of the previous day time usage, sport population increase from 16.1% in 1987 to 36.3 % in 2004. The average time spent for each sport participation decreases from 83.7 minutes in 1987 to 67.7minutes in 2000, and increase to 71.4 minutes in 2004.

Table 2 Recreational sport population and time usage

Year	1987	1990	1994	2000	2004
Sport population (%)	16.1	15.4	17.0	33.4	36.3
Average time used (minutes)	83.7	88.5	87.0	67.7	71.4

National Time use survey. Statistic Bureau, Executive Yuan.

According to national survey of sport participation based on previous 3 months, regular exercisers increase from 12.8% in 2003 to 20.2% in 2007. Occasional exercisers decrease from 67.6% in 2003 to 57.4% in 2007. Non-exercisers decrease from 19.5 % in 2003 to 11.5% in 2005, but increase to 22.4% in 2007.

Table 3 Recreational sport populations

Year	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Regular exercisers	12.8%	13.1%	15.5%	18.8%	20.2%
Occasional	67.6%	72.8%	73.0%	57.4%	57.4%
Non-exerciser %	19.5%	14.0%	11.5%	22.4%	22.4%

Source: Sport participation survey, National Council on Sport Affairs, 2003-2007.

According to the national domestic travel survey, although the percentage of sport and eco tourists remains around 11% since 2001 to 2006, sport tourists increased and eco tourists decreased.

Table 4 Domestic tourists of sport and ecology

Year	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Sport tourist	4.4 %	4.0	7.5	12.1	9.3	7.0
Eco tourist	6.2	5.9	2.9	3.9	2.4	2.9
Total %	10.8	9.9	10.4	16.0	11.7	9.9

Source: Domestic traveler survey, Taiwan Tourist Bureau, 2001-2006.

According to 2004 social development trend survey, the contribution of sport time on perceived health and happiness is not significant in all of age groups of 15 and above.

Table5 Contributions of sport participation time on perceived health and happiness

Contribution of sport time*	Age groups					
	15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	Above 65
Perceived health	-0.01	0.03	-0.04	-0.01	-0.01	0.03
Perceived happiness	0.08	0.04	-0.01	-0.001	0.05	0.09

* Estimated regression coefficient

Source: 2004 Social Development Trends Survey, Statistic Bureau, Executive Yuan.

With the collective efforts of government, schools, NGOs and industry, the achievement of recreational sport in Taiwan are summarized as following.

Recreational sport population increases more than 20% since 1987. Part of irregular exercisers become regular, some of non-exercisers became irregular or regular. But in the years of 2006 and 2007, some irregular become non-exercisers.

The average time people spent for each recreational sport participation decreased from 83 minutes in 1987 to 67 minutes in 2004.

Domestic sport tourists increases and eco tourists decreases, but total of them remains 11% since 2001.

The contribution of sport time on perceived happiness and health are not significant in every age group in the 2004 national survey.

In general, the quantity of recreational sport accessibility and participation increase significantly, but the benefits of recreational sport upon health promotion, quality of life, and wellness did not.

Implications

If recreational sport participation is beyond part of leisure life, and is expected to be a source of quality experiences for living or as a means for self-actualization, sport services providers and participants needs further efforts as following.

Integrated services operations system with which recreational sport participants are more willing to involve and experience with sufficient instructions, information and equipments is needed.

Professional training and qualification is required for workers in recreational sport services planning and delivering.

Knowledge should be developed and applied to professional workers and integrated services operations.

Innovation and investment on knowledge, professional training and operations system is needed to keep continuous improvement.

Government, NGOs, schools and industry need cooperate and integrate, locally and globally, to expand accessibility and realize benefits of recreational sport participation.

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