Analysis of the Influence of Sports Community on Individual Sports Training -Based on the Social Support Theory

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Abstract. With the improvement of the living standard of the population and the impact of the new crown pneumonia epidemic on public health, people's health awareness is gradually increasing, and at the same time, driving the vigorous development of sports communities in the sports industry. With the intense penetration of the fitness movement, sports enthusiasts are increasingly wrapped up in various sports communities, which show different influences. A fitness community is a way of life that focuses on social activities outside of the gym or fitness environment to promote physical activity and emotional communication. This article attempts to explain the mechanisms behind the influence and development of exercise communities on the current state of personal exercise training of the members of the community through social support theory. This study concluded that the sports community could, to a certain extent, improve personal motivation, sports abilities, and skills. At the same time, in order to enable sports fans to choose and play an essential role in the sports community that matches them and to be affected by the overall environment of the sports community, this study proposes a more efficient way to use the sports community.

1. Introduction

According to the relevant data published by the State General Administration of Sports, the average annual total consumption of public fitness in 2021 is 5670 yuan, which is 35% higher compared to 2020 [1]. The willingness to consume sports is further strengthened. With the removal of epidemic control, more people come from their homes to professional stadiums to participate in sports and fitness. Sports is a prevalent lifestyle, and those who participate in sports not only hope to get the corresponding sports rewards, but also the participants of the complementary sport hope to achieve socialization through sports. As a result, the concept of sports communities has gradually entered the public eye. A sports community is a collection of life that needs to balance training and socialization, and its advantage is that group exercise is a way to make the masses of people through the power of the group more motivated to exercise in a social group. The main focus is on social activities or gatherings outside of the gym or fitness environment to promote physical activity and emotional communication as a way of life. In recent years, due to the influence of the objective public health and wellness environment, the mode of operation of communities has gradually shifted from offline communities to online and offline communities together [2]. For specific international sports brands, realizing the closed loop of OTO (Online to Offline) for corporate community operation has become a top priority to convey corporate culture and enhance user stickiness.

The purpose of this study is to analyze the relationship between sports communities and individual sports training and to identify the positive and negative effects of sports communities on individual sports training so as to objectively analyze the advantages and disadvantages of sports communities. At the same time, the study will explore the impact of sports communities on business by studying the introduction of sports communities by some brands and commercial companies. This study will use case studies and literature review methods, focusing on relatively well-established online and offline sports communities. The study will also focus on the impact of sports communities on individual sports training in conjunction with the discussion and analysis of previous research by researchers. In terms of the structural framework of this study, the study will first discuss social support theory and general concepts (terminology) related to sports communities. Next, several representative sports communities or sports organizations will be selected for analysis to explore the benign operational models and methods and to expand and disaggregate the existing data to analyze the operation of sports communities. Finally, the paper will focus on the direction and magnitude of the impact of the use of sports communities on the training level of individual athletes so as to provide compelling advantages and disadvantages analysis for users who are already in sports communities and those who wish to join sports communities in the future.

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2. Literature and Theory Review

2.1 Social Support Theory

Social support refers to the substantial or emotional help that people receive from others when facing stress, dilemmas, or challenges, which can relieve or eliminate individuals' emotional stress and improve their ability and adaptability to cope with difficulties. Social support can come from family, friends, colleagues, community organizations, sports communities, professional counseling, and other sources. It can be divided into three categories: direct substantive support, direct emotional support, and indirect social support [3].

From a social perspective, Song Yangping scholars believe that the object of being socially supported is in a disadvantaged position in social status, and it is selectively using material or spiritual means to provide some unpaid help to the underprivileged groups in society under a certain social network, which has two attributes: selectivity and unfairness [4]. Social support includes the people around the individual who is suffering and who can generate positive energy in him: family, friends, relatives, teachers. As well as there are three types of help: practical help, emotional support, and informational help.

The importance of social support theory for mental health has been widely researched and proven in practice. Positive social support can improve people's ability to cope with challenges, increase psychological resilience and well-being, reduce negative emotions such as anxiety and depression, and relieve stress and tension, thereby improving their quality of life and well-being. Exercise communities can provide people with a wealth of social support that is closely related to social support theory. First, by participating in sports communities, people are able to build social networks with shared interests and goals and establish connections and a sense of belonging with like-minded people, and this emotional support can help people improve their exercise efficiency.

Secondly, sports communities also provide physical and operational support, such as sharing sports facilities, providing instruction and technical support, and promoting healthy lifestyles, which directly provide a professional fitness environment for many people who love sports. In addition, participation in sports communities offers other forms of social support, such as access to sports-related information and feedback and peer recognition and encouragement, all of which help to increase individuals' motivation, interest, and enthusiasm for sports. Therefore, the relationship between social support theory and sports communities is inextricably linked.

Social support theory reflects that people who associate with people who exercise regularly are more likely to follow their group patterns, resulting in more efficient exercise. Online social networks are similar in many ways to real-world social networks. Social support appears to be an important determinant of successful health habit change. Some weight loss studies have shown that spousal support and involvement in treatment can enhance weight loss, and social support includes family support, spousal support, and friend support, and if this support is in place, so is the quality of goal attainment. Some online fitness communities have several types of online services available to registered members. For example, through nutrition tracking, registered users can create a nutrition log to record the foods they eat and calculate how many calories, fats, or proteins they consume. I think offline fitness communities can also follow up on this so that people in the community can work together to consume healthy, quality light meals, thus gradually promoting healthy eating habits for the entire group.

Fitness communities can also foster a sense of personal and team responsibility and in the process of development, can also increase social media participation, as well as involvement outside of the physical fitness environment. It is easy to see in everyday life: peer influence and social interaction already have an enormous positive impact on health, such as helping people lose weight and fat and shape up as well as participate in indoor or outdoor sports activities, for example the last two years have been hot sports: skiing and Frisbee. Both of these sports are group-based, where a single person can only perform technical exercises, while a group can promote individual enjoyment of the sport.

2.2 Sports Community and Social Economy

A sports community is a group of people who love a particular sport. They come together with shared interests and goals and establish a sense of connection and belonging by communicating with each other, sharing information and experiences, and participating in activities. Sports communities are conducive to promoting healthy lifestyles in a collective form, enhancing physical fitness, and improving mental health, among other things.

In recent years, with the popularization of the concept of national fitness and the upgrading of traditional sports, various types of offline sports communities have developed rapidly. For example, fitness communities cover a variety of stable programs such as strength training, aerobics, yoga and other kinds of sports. By virtue of fitness communities, members communicate with each other to share practical experiences in fat loss and muscle building, recommend suitable dietary nutrition and training plans, and additional information.

Due to the rapid development of the digital economy and the objective influence of public health issues, the development of online sports communities is becoming increasingly hot: 1) the sports brand Andromeda launched UA HOUSE, an online sports community for the Chinese market, through which Andromeda members can get accurate first-hand information about sports equipment and offline activities. At the same time, similar to the KEEP software mentioned above, users can also use UA HOUSE to collect and integrate accurate personal sports information; 2) Puma launched an online sports community, "Running Personal Training Program." Through the official account on the WeChat platform, Puma users can book offline running community activities in real-time and obtain knowledge and activities related to sports training; 3) After the Beijing Winter Olympic Games, Disante seized the dividends of ice and snow sports and
launched the "Precision Training Camp" live broadcast, aiming to improve its own online service channels while exporting sports content. The Nike Run Club (NRC) platform has built a platform for Nike consumers who love running to "find sports partners." The NRC platform provides a platform for Nike consumers who love running to "find exercise partners."

In modern society, with the rise of social media, sports communities have become more diverse in the way people can participate in them. In recent years, with the popularity of health, environmental protection, and leisure, more and more people are joining different types of sports communities. From traditional sports such as urban outdoor running, cycling and hiking to new sports such as yoga, camping, and skiing, various sports communities have emerged.

On the one hand, people can easily join and manage sports communities through social media platforms and mobile apps to share experiences, exchange knowledge and promote sports concepts with like-minded people. For example, many groups in social software such as WeChat and QQ cover basketball, soccer, badminton, tennis, swimming, and other sports enthusiasts, organizing online and offline activities to enrich people's spare time. On the other hand, offline sports communities are also becoming more common in major cities, such as team running, cycling clubs, and outdoor hiking organizations. These organizations not only provide opportunities for people to make new friends but also allow people who enjoy the same sport to gather together, challenge their limits, exchange experiences and skills, and enhance their sense of belonging and teamwork.

In short, sports communities are important in the current development of society, combining sports with socialization and interaction, providing more opportunities for people to achieve both physical and mental health and social needs.

3. Analysis of the Development and Operation Model of Sports Communities

The sports community model refers to a social group gathered in a specific sports field, in which members share their sports experiences and past sports activities to support and encourage each other. This community model usually uses online social media or apps as the main platform, such as Strava, a foreign running social app, and KEEP, a domestic fitness social platform, which helps sports enthusiasts establish good sports habits, enhance sports interaction, and cultivate a positive sports-oriented lifestyle. Reached 300 million, and the average monthly active users of the platform was 34.4 million, of which 3.3 million were average monthly paid members. To date, KEEP is one of the most significant domestic users and most influential software in the field of exercise services in China [5]. Strava, on the other hand, is the world's largest sports community. In 195 countries or regions worldwide, Strava has more than 100 million registered users [6]. It is also a trendy social software, widely used in domestic and international running, orienteering, and cycling. Users can use it to connect with sports people around the world and record their sports tracks.

The advantages and disadvantages of the community are different. The first advantage is that it provides a platform for people to share and exchange information about the community with like-minded people and gradually build up a positive relationship of mutual trust and motivation. Secondly, it provides support and help to people in the community by sharing past experiences and suggestions for the future, solving each other's unresolved problems, improving communication, and enhancing individual and team capabilities, thus providing more opportunities and favorable resources for community members to learn and socialize, helping each of them to explore their own potential and expand their influence. Ultimately improving members' sense of belonging and happiness, being able to join a good community can make people feel a sense of belonging and happiness and reduce loneliness and anxiety.

The disadvantages, on the other hand, are: 1) Backfire effect. Obviously, elementary things, but to make it very complicated, "The Ubiquitous" is the French Gustave Le Bon's research on mass psychology, the core idea of which is that groups always have a lower level of intelligence than isolated individuals. Communities are also more prone to group backlash effects, disturbed by some narrow-minded ideas and blind obedience behaviors, losing their own judgment and values. 2) Exclusion. Some communities may have apparent exclusion, weakening the participation and support of the public. Before entering a community, you should understand whether the central idea of the community is contrary to your own or deviates from it, and if it deviates from it, then do not enter the community.

There are many different directions for community development, such as expanding the size of the community, improving the quality of the community, expanding the functions of the community, and creating a community culture. But for the sports community, we can expand the scale of the community through social media, promotional activities, sports courses, as well as lectures, to attract more people who like sports to join. We can also establish our own website, APP, and social media accounts to provide a new platform for users to exchange information and enhance their activity. Expand community functions: Sports communities can carry out different forms of sports events, training, and training activities to broaden members' knowledge and vision of sports and improve the level of sports and physical fitness of the whole group. It is also necessary to deepen the relationship between community members. Sports communities can organize outdoor activities, competitions, and training to promote communication and exchange among community members and enhance emotional ties and cohesion. The user experience also needs to be improved: sports communities can improve user experience and satisfaction by providing various new information, increasing convenient services, and providing more comprehensive sports knowledge to increase user stickiness.
4. Influencing Factors of Sports Communities For Individual Sports

4.1 Advantages of Sports Communities for Personal Training

Gaining support and encouragement: Joining a sports community provides support and encouragement from the group, which is essential for those who persist and enjoy sports. Other members of the community can share their experiences, motivation, challenges, and positive personal attitudes toward bottlenecks in sports, helping novice athletes in the community to overcome obstacles. Community members who receive support and encouragement can indirectly increase individual motivation to exercise, giving community members more confidence to feel recognized and valued and the courage to take on challenges. Similarly, from the perspective of social support theory, the use of sports communities can increase direct emotional support as well as direct social support for users [3]. Members of sports communities can instead gain more direct emotional value from their peers [7].

Provide motivation and goals: community members can increase the intensity and frequency of exercise by interacting with other members. Also, communities can provide challenges and competitions to increase the fun and motivation of their members. Goals are important for exercise, as they help people plan and execute exercise programs better. Setting clear exercise goals can motivate people to be more active in exercise to achieve desired results. Goals and motivation can enhance the sense of challenge for community members in sports: a reasonable sports goal can motivate people to exercise, meet challenges with determination, and experience a sense of accomplishment in overcoming difficulties. For online sports communities and social apps, visualized sports data and sports goals are one of the core competencies of the software. Compared to aimless training, intelligent systems, and training platforms can show users the actual amount of training and the final training results in a very intuitive presentation. Provide professional guidance: Many sports communities have professionals to provide guidance and support. Members have access to a full range of guidance from exercise planning to dietary advice and even psychological counseling, which helps to establish the right exercise style and lifestyle habits to improve personal skills. The NIKE NTC APP allows users to find professional sports coaches and scientific and reasonable training methods. In this app, the coach's qualifications are officially certified by Nike, and their scientific nature and effectiveness can be guaranteed. The professional guidance of the sports community can help its members to better plan, implement and adjust their personal exercise plans, and ensure the safety and effectiveness of exercise.

Increased social interaction: Joining a sports community can increase social interaction and life enrichment, allowing people to make more like-minded friends, break the isolation and broaden their social circle. Social interaction tends to make exercisers more motivated to try new sports that they never thought of before. Under the influence of the group effect, exercisers' personal concerns or fears about the unknown are relatively significantly reduced [8].

4.2 Potential Barriers to Personal Training in Sports Communities

Social stress: the presence of social anxiety within a community is a common phenomenon. Within an exercise community, some members may often compare their own exercise performance and achievements with those of others, resulting in anxiety and stress [9]. Or members may feel shame and pressure when they miss an event or do not achieve a predetermined exercise goal, which may affect their mood and motivation. There is a vicious competition, such as a small exercise and weight loss community where everyone has to accomplish a weight loss goal of 10 pounds in 1 month, but the individual differences are significant. In the same exercise efficiency, the results are not the same. But weight loss pills, over-exercising and other methods, all come into play to achieve the goal. Social pressure, if severe, can affect members' motivation to exercise and their health, which in turn affects their sense of belonging in the community.

Following blind trends: In sports communities, people with particular influence and expertise can become KOLs in the sports field, such as athletes with a fan base, media people from sports programs, and more general enthusiasts of the sport, who can also gradually become KOLs in the sports community by actively participating in community activities and sharing their training and competition experiences, for example, Pamela Caroline Girvan, Heather Robertson, etc. There are some sports communities that focus on popular workouts or fitness styles, which may lead to some people blindly following the trend instead of exercising according to their actual needs, thus affecting their health status; at the same time, sports communities can lead to blind and excessive consumption of “internet sports.” Take Frisbee, for example. Excessive online influencer and sports trends will lead to the reduction of the properties of the sport itself. Most people participate in sports for the purpose of taking pictures, socializing, or for purposes other than the sport itself [10]. In addition, the net popularity of sports can lead to an increase in the price of regular sports venues and sports equipment.

Excessive social dependence: Socialization is a double-edged sword, such as making connections in sports and getting information about scientific training methods related to sports, but some members may be overly dependent on sports communities and therefore lack autonomy and initiative. These members may suffer significantly if the community no longer exists or is not as active as it once was. The community itself does not affect the individual exerciser, but it can also hinder the development of the trainer due to individual differences and different purposes of entry. In short, before joining a sports community, you should consider your own needs and personality and choose a community that suits you to avoid disadvantages.
5. Conclusion

This study, supported by social support theory, argues that in the process of exercise when individual exercisers face stress, difficulties, and frustration in exercise, they can get emotional, informational, and material help from other members of the exercise community to reduce the negative emotions of the exercisers and alleviate the stress and anxiety of the exercisers. The emergence of exercise communities contrasts with traditional individual fitness and helps individuals feel a sense of belonging in the group, usually in the form of identity; individuals receive emotional and other support provided by the group; collaboration and mutual promotion between individuals in the group; and resources can be shared within the group, allowing individuals to receive more exercise-related information. However, beyond the final findings of this study, there are inevitable limitations to this study. As a typical review study, this study used textual analysis and case studies to analyze the actual phenomenon objectively. Therefore, the limitations of this study are the lack of data analysis and the failure to take into account individual differences in exercisers. Therefore, the findings of this study may not be absolutely generalizable to specific trainers or users of sports communities. For future research directions, this study suggests adding a quantitative analysis component to future research. To take advantage of sports communities, it is necessary also to consider the variability of different individuals and take appropriate measures, such as selecting a certain number of participants, and recording and analyzing the development of their training levels and at the same time, increasing the choice and participation of individuals thus going to increase the diversity in the community.

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