

Analysis on Essence, Types and Characteristics of Leisure Sports

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Abstract

Leisure Sports are freeform, voluntary and non-competitive activities, which aim to regulate the mental state of people. Leisure Sports are not a specific sport project but a kind of social existence form of sport. Leisure sports projects are all-inclusive, which are generally divided into four types: sports recreational activities, sports fitness activities, sports adventure activities and sports social activities. They are characterized by the diversity of sports forms, the epochal character of sports contents, the voluntary participation in sports groups and the complexity of sports levels.

Keywords: Leisure sports, Essence, Types, Characteristics, Analysis

Leisure sports are the production of modern society, which change with the change of society and develop with the development of economy. Especially, the advancement of modern scientific technology improves the social productive force significantly, which releases people from heavy work and short the time of people participating in the social necessary work, so people have more idle time. Meanwhile, the ways to spend spare time are more and more with the advancement of society and sports activities have been a choice to spend spare time for people, which is emphasized with the development of society. From the development of leisure sports of modern developed countries and China in these years, participating in the leisure sport activities has become one indispensable life style for the people in these countries.

1. The contents of leisure sports

1.1 The concept of leisure

When leisure sports are discussed, the concept of leisure should be defined clearly firstly. Leisure is from the English word, "leisure", whose concept is: living in a life of ease (<Longman English-Chinese dictionary>) and the meaning of the word leisure in <Dictionary of Modern Chinese> is: having a rest or living a life of vacancy. From the explanations of leisure in English and Chinese, we can find that leisure means living a life of easy, which should also be said that is one life type or one part of life type.

So, what are the understandings about leisure in the West and the East?

1.1.1 The understanding about leisure for Europe and America

In ancient Greece, Plato described leisure as an ideal and believed that the governing class was not annoyed by real life and all the time was spent on thinking deeply about the truth, the good and the beautiful to obtain happy results and make it more perfect. Aristotle held the opinion that leisure was the state of not needing to consider the problem of survival and only people in their leisure time are really happy and fully mature people. From the explanation about leisure of ancient western sages, we can see that in the ancient west leisure is the affaire of wealthy people, who needed not to consider survival and living problems, and the life of ease based on the abundant substances, which was the life style of very few people and dreamed of by the most poor.

In the modern west, an American scholar Jeffery Gobbi thinks that, "leisure is a life which is released from the outer pressure of civilization and substance environment and relatively free." (Jeffery, Gobbi. 2000). An French scholar De Grazia points that, "leisure should be an quality of feeling." (Hu, Xiaoming and Yu, Chonggan. 2004). Pieper points that, "leisure is an attitude of heart and spirit and not an result of outer factor." (Hu, Xiaoming and Yu, Chonggan. 2004) From the explanation about leisure of modern western scholars, it is found that leisure is a constituent part of human life and an important life style when people enter modern society, of course, which is arisen as an life style when the society develops to some extent.

We also can see that leisure is not negative rest, while it is the activity which can accomplish the human's psychological requirement and the psychological feelings of human beings is very important. From this point, we can see that, people have more leisure time, which shows that the country is richer. Leisure is the symbol of developed degree of country to some extent.

1.1.2 The Chinese understanding of leisure

Leisure is called easy in the ancient China. Leisure was an exalted life style promoted in the ancient Chinese culture and the easy life can cultivate human beings' minds. The ancient China canonized leisure very much, emphasized the relation between leisure and health, stressed the physical activities cultivating minds and emphasized quiet mode of exercise like Guiding, Taichi and so on, which having the distinguishing ethnic feature.

In modern times, with the continuous improvement of life quality, human beings have new understandings about leisure. Introducing the concept of leisure from the western civilization, which combines the consciousness of traditional Chinese leisure and the concept of western leisure, makes the modern Chinese have new understandings about leisure. Leisure is not only the pure cultivated mind but the life style and an important constituent part of their lives for one part of affluent demographics. The styles of leisure become more plentiful. Therefore, some scholars in China believe that leisure is "the self-entertainment activity undertaken with the comfortable mood in the freely dominant time." (Hu, Xiaoming and Yu, Chonggan. 2004) Others think that leisure is that "people engage some activity with pleasure in the optional state and mood in the relatively free environment and condition." (Lu, Feng. 2008)

These views are the combination of the consciousness of traditional Chinese leisure and the concept of western leisure, from which it is found that Chinese leisure is the activity engaged at their own will in their time. The above views not only emphasize "inertia" but also associate the activity and inertia and all kinds of sports activities are adopted as the modern Chinese leisure styles at large.

1.2 The concept of leisure sports

The formation of leisure life styles has a very close relationship with sports. The required time, space and money of leisure life styles are also the requirement of sports activities or sports consumption. A large part of leisure life styles are sports activities and different kinds of sports activities are the main contents of modern leisure lives.

The Chinese scholar Lu Feng believes that "leisure sport is the general term of sports activities which are selected and engaged voluntarily by people in the relatively free social environment and condition. It is one existing style of sports and one important style of social leisure activities." (Lu, Feng. 2008)

The French scholar Roger Su thinks "sports leisure is higher stage of physical activity, which needs stronger and longer physical effects, but it cannot be confused with in the true sense of sport. It is an intermediate stage between the simple relax of walk and in the traditional sense of sport and has some sport characteristics distinguished from strict sense, which neither pursues achievement through matches nor requires regular intense trainings, but to pursue physical relax and comfort through informal and voluntary sport activities. (Roger, Su. 1996)"

Japan's leisure sport development association makes presentations for leisure sports as follows: leisure sports don't refer in particular to sports programs but no matter what sports program, as long as it is taken as leisure sport which achieves the aims at delight, exultance, a light heart and fatigue elimination we call it leisure sport." (Liang, Limin. 2007)

According to the presentation above and domestic research of leisure sport, there has not been a very authoritative definition about leisure sport. Leisure sport is not a specific sport program but a kind of social existence state of sport. So I think leisure sports are non-competitive physical recreations which People make use of free time to participate in voluntarily in free form with relaxed feelings in relaxing environment. This kind of physical recreations is mainly to adjust psychology, cultivate temperament, relieves fatigue, restores energy, strengthen physical fitness, improve healthiness and enjoy the pleasure of life.

2. The types of leisure sports

According to my recognition to the connotation of leisure sports above, leisure sports should be coverall and it can be all kinds of different sports. But in order to analyze leisure sports better, we should classify it. Of course there are standards for classification but there have not been uniform standards for the classification of leisure sports until now. There are different types according to different standards. For example someone divided leisure sports into bare-handed, equipped, air, land, overwater, appreciative, static and dynamic sports. Lu Feng et.al scholars classified leisure sports to seven types including the activities of body shaping, recreation, competition, relaxation, social interactive activities, seek the extraordinary and stimulus." (Lu, Feng et al. 2006) I think according to the connotation of leisure sports, they should be classified on basis of motives and purposes people participate in leisure sports so the authors divided numerous leisure sports into physical recreation activities, physical fitness activities, physical exploration activities and social sports.

2.1 Physical recreation activities

There are very colorful recreations in society and physical activities are one of them. The basic composite of physical recreations is game. Game is the reflection of human imagination and creativity and the aim that people engage in games is recreation. Likewise the prime desire people engage in physical activities is also recreation.

Physical recreation activities mainly are the sports which people participate in voluntarily in form of physical activities and obtain pleasure physically and mentally, and the fundamental goal of people is to get psychological and physical relax and happiness from this kind of activities. When the participants take part in physical activities, they will become happy and pleasant. Regardless of the feelings is psychological or physical they will bring happiness and pleasure to people, which make people choose various physical activities such as all kinds of folk non-competitive activities, for example, people organize and participate football game, basketball game, badminton game et. al voluntarily, which stress the process and form of people's participation more than results. Essentially, this kind of competitions is a form of relax and recreation of each participant and a kind of active way with strong attraction which can meet human various physical and psychological needs.

In addition, such programs which are not very competitive and easy to grasp their technology comparatively as bowling, table tennis, billiards et. al are also physical recreation activities people often choose. Their competition is weak relatively, it is easy relatively to study their technology, there is strong comparatively entertainment in the process of sports and they may bring pleasure to people.

2.2 Physical fitness activities

Physical fitness activities is that people have sports in order to shape a well-built body, keep perfect physical function and prompt physical and psychological health. In essence people participate in this kind of sports for pursuing individual physical beauty absolutely and embodying the psychology that people love of beauty. People make use of leisure time by way of participating in physical fitness activities to shape individual body, cultivate personal psychology, improve individual quality so as to become more confident of themselves. Such as running, excising, aerobics, yoga, shaping, sports dancing, Taichi and so on could play such roles.

In addition, we know that good psychology lies hidden in healthy body while well-built body is the material foundation of good psychology and spirits. From social development and progress we can see that the higher people's life is, the higher the need of pursuit for fit body and good spirits is. Therefore, physical fitness activities have become modern people's leisure activities to pursue perfect ego.

Currently people are keen on building up strong and handsome physical body with all kinds of sports, which is the reflection of the improvement of people's life standards and the pursuit for gracious spiritual life. People participate in various physical fitness activities so as to develop people's aesthetic concept and expand the types of leisure sports.

2.3 Physical exploration activities

Exploration is a psychological need of human beings. Technological progress brings great changes to people's life and work in modern society. Life becomes repetitive and dull and work is more formulized. People's life and work become more and more boring. For most of people life and work are activities on a regular routine without any new ideas and interest so the psychological need of exploration is often suppressed. But while the progress of modern society bring such suppression it also brings more leisure time, so people may make use of it to satisfy their psychological need of exploration so as to alleviate the repression that life and work brings to.

Physical exploration activities emerged in order to satisfy people's psychology of exploration. People participate in physical exploration activities in order to release the pressure brought by work and life and satisfy psychological need of seeking for stimulus and exploration. There are many exciting adventure sports in Physical exploration activities so as to meet people's psychological need in the nature, such as mountain climbing, rock climbing, skiing, drifting, outside traversing and so on. The exploration activities are far away from people's working and living environment and can make participants experience the psychology of exploring natural mysterious environment in the nature so as to make them obtain great psychological satisfaction.

2.4 Physical intercourse activities

Intercourse activities are necessary activities in human society. People interact with each other, communicate feelings and prompt social progress by intercourse activities. People's intercourse activities mostly happen in spare time besides working time. In other words, leisure provides best opportunity for people's intercourse activities.

“Leisure sports is not only the carrier of leisure recreation and health, but also lube of expand communication,

prompting affection communicates and making friends. Leisure sports have more changes to take direct part in to step into openness and freedom, satisfy people's needs, communicating people's feelings and strengthen the image, grade and cohesion of a city." (Xu, Jike. 2008) Physical activities are ways which people often choose to communicate with, such as chess, sports dancing, community sporting meeting, household sporting meeting and so on. People participate in these activities in order to make friends and expand social interaction with the help of open and pleasant form, and exchange feelings, dispel loneliness and enrich spiritual life through such free forms, and meanwhile also harmonize atmosphere of a family, increase feelings and prompt social stability.

3. The characteristics of leisure sports

The sports recreational modes are different from others, which is ultimately characterized by their own participation. Selecting the sports recreational mode is through participating in sports activities, which brings the pleasure of bodies by experiencing sports activities. Leisure sports are different from other entertainments and other sports and have their own characteristics. Chinese scholar of leisure sports Lu Feng concludes the characteristics of leisure sports in <Leisure Sports> as: participation, nature, fashion, time-spirits, the diversity of the levels and spontaneity. Reading these characteristics and referring to other references, I think that the characteristics of leisure sports can be analyzed in the two aspects of content and form of leisure sports and the characters of participating crowds: on the one hand, the modes of leisure sports activities are diversity and the contents are time-spirits; on the other hand, the crowds participating in leisure sports are voluntary and the levels of crowds are complexity. It is concluded that leisure sports are characterized by the diversity of sports forms, the epochal character of sports contents, the voluntary participation in sports groups and the complexity of sports levels.

3.1 The diversity of modes

Leisure sports are based on all kinds of sports activities and the modes of leisure sports are diversity. Leisure sports items nearly include all sports activities according to the above classifications. Leisure sports are generally divided into two kinds of sports modes including indoor and outdoor ones according to the sites of participated leisure sports activities. The indoor leisure sports activities, such as aerobics, yoga, Shaping, sports dancing and so on, are all processed in some stadiums. The outdoor leisure sports activities, such as mountain climbing, rock climbing, skiing, drifting and so on, are mainly processed in natural or artificial environments. Some scholars also divided the outdoor sports into the continental, water area, airspace forms in the references. "Continental area: mountaineering, rock climbing, orienteering, wilderness survival, exploration, hunting, riding, skiing, skating, playing balls in the wild of mountain forests; water area: boating, diving, surfing, swimming, diving, fishing, drifting, dragon-boating, boat race, playing in beach and so on; airspace: gliding, parachuting, fire balloon and so on." (Zhou, Bing et al. 2000) In addition, the forms of leisure sports activities may be with instruments or non-instruments in the view of weather making use of instruments. Therefore, from the above analysis we can see that, the types of leisure sports activities are diversity.

3.2 The time-spirit of contents

The contents of sports activities are enriched with the development of history and culture. Different sports activity items arise in different historical backgrounds and the contents accord to the development of sports activities. Looking back into history, sports activity is one type of the participated leisure activities whether in any times. Of course, leisure sports activities are also the manifestation of social civilization at that time and relate to the developing level of social sciences closely. That is to say, different contents of leisure sport activities arise in different historical times and different social civilizations and the contents evolve and develop with the development of history and the advancement of times.

Today, we can clearly see that, the contents of leisure sports activities in this beginning century have changed much compared with the last beginning century. Let us take outdoor activities as an example, the outdoor activities in the last beginning century mainly refer to athletics, however, now the outdoor activities mainly refer to wide extreme sports, from which it is found that the substances of activities having the same names change much. The contents of leisure sports activities reflect the psychological requirements of participated people at different times, which are the reflections of psychologies of people affected by the advantages of science and technology and social civilizations. Therefore, the contents of leisure sports activities often reflect the social civilization at that time and have the evidence time-spirits.

3.3 The voluntary of participation

From the analysis of the concept of leisure sports, they are the sports activities participated voluntarily and the social existing configuration of sports activities. Its basic feature is participatory, which is initiative and

voluntary but not passive. Without this initiative participatory, people can not get the expected psychological requirement when they participate in the leisure sports activities and the aims to eliminate tiredness, heal physical bodies, strength physique, promote health and enjoy the fun of lives can not been achieved.

Moreover, leisure sports are the sports activities processed by people in their leisure times, which are the spontaneity and voluntary appeals from any individual or group and do not contain any mandatory or passive components. People participate in the activities voluntarily and their own physical and psychological requirements are satisfied directly, and moreover, these good psychological experiences will promote the enthusiasm and durability of participating in the activities, which forms the virtuous circle of participating in the activities voluntarily. The virtuous circle brings the leisure sports activities into the lives of people in the modern society, which is a symbol of society progress.

3.4 The complexity of levels

The complexity of levels refers to the complexity of levels of groups participating in the leisure sports activities, which is reflected mainly in two aspects: one is the complexity of consumption levels; the other is the complexity of age levels.

Firstly, the consumption levels are complexity. We know that leisure is the life style of some rich and richer groups in the society and leisure sports are one of the important contents of leisure life styles. The groups who can participate in the leisure sports activities are rich and free and the stratum composing these groups are very complexity, whose income differs much and the consumption levels participating in leisure sports activities are also not same. In this group, there are people who play golf, go to the gym, or orienteering. Their consumption is different absolutely when they participate in different activities, which forms a huge and complex consumer group of leisure sports in modern society.

Then from the development of modern society we can see that, the consumption form of many leisure sports is a gradual process from luxury to popularization. A lot of leisure sports programs are activities which few people participate in at the beginning, but with social progress and its popularization, the consumer price which is used for take part in the program declines sharply so that the sport becomes popular gradually. For example, the development of the sport golf in China is a process of gradual popularization so that the consumption levels of the group who participate in leisure sports become more complex.

Secondly, the levels of age also have complexity. We know that leisure sports are non-competitive and voluntary activities. From this sense, people of different ages can participate. But people of different ages have different needs and they influence people's choices for different ways of sports leisure. The crowd of different ages will have their predilections while choosing leisure sports. Teenagers choose the activities which are their favorite and with challenges mainly such as football, basketball, skateboarding, roller skating, skiing and rock climbing et. al. The middle and old aged people choose activities which reflect status with taste, a certain grade and strong communications, such as golf, tennis, fishing, sports dancing and Taichi, et. al. Of course, in the reality that people participate in leisure sports, the levels of ages are very careful, which are up to participants' hobbies and income and also the result of leisure sports market option. Therefore, the levels of ages of the crowd who participate in leisure sports are multiple and complex relatively.

From the two aspects above it is not difficult for us to see that the levels of the crowd who participate in leisure sports are complex relatively.

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