

Analysis of the Advantages and Disadvantages of Squash Promotion in the Chinese Market

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Keywords: Sports Empowerment, Market Analysis, Sports Careers, SWOT Analysis, Sport Education.

Abstract: Squash was officially included in the 2028 Summer Olympics in 2023, marking a significant milestone for the sport. However, its popularity and promotion in China remain limited, largely confined to a small circle of high-income individuals in major cities. This article examines the feasibility of promoting squash in the Chinese sports market by analyzing both its advantages and challenges. Squash has unique characteristics, such as low facility construction costs, high exercise efficiency, and suitability for various demographics, which make it appealing to urban populations. It also aligns well with modern lifestyles by offering stress relief, fitness benefits, and adaptability to indoor settings. Despite these advantages, the sport faces significant obstacles in China, including a lack of public awareness, limited access to facilities, a shortage of professional coaches, and misconceptions about squash as an elitist activity. Addressing these issues strategically can help squash grow into a mainstream sport in China.

1 INTRODUCTION

It is said that in the 19th century, there was a "fleet prison" in the old city center of London, which was dedicated to imprisoning nobles who violated criminal laws and religious rules (Abercrombie, 1931). In order to pass the boring time of imprisonment, a big cigar merchant used a racket-like instrument to hit a small ball against the wall for his own entertainment. This was the earliest prototype of squash. Squash in the true sense was invented by students from the famous aristocratic school, Harrow School, around 1830 AD. Although the students were children of the nobility, they lived a boring life like prisoners in boarding schools (Zug, 2007). Therefore, an indoor sport of hitting the ball against the wall was invented and became popular. The ball made a sound similar to the word "squash" when it hit the wall, which is what people now call squash (Eime et al., 2004). Squash was once selected by Forbes magazine as "one of the ten most suitable sports for white-collar workers", and most of the current squash enthusiasts are indeed urban white-collar workers. Today's urban white-collar workers are under great work pressure, and most of them are in a "sub-healthy" state. However, due to their busy work, they cannot spare much time for exercise. Playing squash not only consumes a lot of calories in a short period of time

and has a good effect of reducing stress and weight, but it is also an indoor sport, so there is no need to worry about being affected by the natural weather. Squash is very popular among white-collar workers, especially women, because of these unique characteristics. With the popularization of computers, modern people spend more and more time sitting in front of computers and playing squash can maximize the activity and relaxation of the shoulder and eye muscles (Murray and Hughes, 2016). At the same time, squash courts generally occupy a small area, which is very convenient to carry out, and can also meet the daily work and social needs of modern people. Squash is not only a form of sport for modern white-collar workers, but also a noble way of life and leisure. It is gradually being recognized and loved by urban white-collar workers. In addition, squash has been included in the official competition events of the 2028 Summer Olympics. In order to achieve good results in this sport, China will also vigorously promote this sport. In summary, the number of sports populations that squash can form in the future is unlimited.

This article first discusses the current status of squash in China, and then analyzes the advantages and challenges of its promotion, aiming to provide insights into its potential for sustainable development.

2 ANALYSIS OF THE CURRENT STATUS OF SQUASH IN CHINA

The development of squash in China is still in its early stages, and its popularity is relatively low, mainly concentrated among high-income people and foreigners in first-tier cities. Due to insufficient publicity, the social awareness of squash is limited. In the stereotype of the public, it is a high-end aristocratic sport, and some people are even unfamiliar with this sport. At present, there are few professional squash players in China, and most of them participate in training and competitions as amateurs or semi-professionals; although some youth squash training courses are gradually being promoted, the overall foundation is weak, and the competitive level in international competitions is also much lower than that of most countries. Squash courts are mainly distributed in first-tier cities such as Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, and Shenzhen. They are usually located in high-end fitness clubs, international schools, or high-end hotels. The limited number and high maintenance costs make their utilization rate low. There are almost no professional squash courts in third- and fourth-tier cities. In terms of competitions, there are national squash championships and regional leagues in China, which are mostly amateur competitions; the most well-known international competition is the "China Squash Open", but the overall frequency of holding is not high, the coverage is limited, and a strong squash culture or competitive atmosphere has not yet been formed. These factors have jointly restricted the development and popularity of squash in China.

3 ADVANTAGES OF SQUASH PROMOTION

3.1 Low Construction Cost of Facilities

Constructing squash courts is the key to promoting squash. The cost of a regular squash court is about 100,000 yuan, which is only 1/2 or even 1/3 of a bowling lane, and the area is smaller than 1/6 of a tennis court. In addition, the squash court can be disassembled and assembled, which is convenient for movement. It is a very cost-effective public fitness facility.

3.2 Effective Physical Exercise

Squash is a high-intensity leisure sport with the characteristics of high-intensity and full-body exercise. In one hour of squash, athletes can consume 700 to 1,000 calories, which is an advantage that most other sports cannot match. Under the same conditions and between squash players of the same level, the amount of exercise and exercise effect is 3 to 4 times that of tennis (Eime et al., 2004). Squash has an excellent exercise effect on the human circulatory system and other related organs. At the same time, in squash, running and swinging the racket provides a very comprehensive exercise for the flexibility and flexibility of the upper and lower limbs. The fast-paced footwork, hitting frequency and unpredictable ball path, combined with flexible techniques and tactics, can fully exercise the participants' cardiopulmonary function, muscles, joints and ligaments in a relatively short period of time, and their flexibility, coordination and flexibility can be greatly improved. The participants' judgment, adaptability and courage can also be improved accordingly (Robertson et al., 1988).

3.3 Suitable for a Wide Range of Groups

Squash does not distinguish between participants of all ages, that is, people of all ages can participate and play squash, including children and the elderly. At the same time, squash is relatively simple and easy to learn: squash rackets are lighter and easier to swing, and the ball is smaller and lighter, making it easier to control (Tapie et al., 2020). Compared with the general population, whether it is children, young people, the elderly, or male or female participants, they can quickly master the sports skills and basic rules of some simple movements of squash and practice them.

3.4 An All-Weather Sport

Since squash is an indoor sport, it is not affected by climate, weather, etc. Whether it is a cold winter, a hot summer, or a rainy day, as long as people stay indoors, they will not be affected by natural weather and climate.

3.5 Interesting and Entertaining

Compared with other indoor sports, squash has a very obvious advantage: squash can be played not only in doubles but also in singles. It is not easy to find a

partner of the same level as yourself in any sport, but playing squash can eliminate this concern, and it is fun even if you practice alone. Every time a player hits the ball, he can use the wall of the court to bounce, making the line and tactical combination of squash ever-changing, using "three-dimensional thinking" to make accurate judgments and make the next move, which greatly increases the complexity of squash. Therefore, every shot will not make people feel bored, but make people enjoy it.

3.6 Highly Enjoyable

First, squash games are fast-paced and exciting. The squash court is small, the ball speed is extremely fast, and the offensive and defensive transitions between players are very fast. The audience can see many wonderful shots, defenses and counterattacks in a short period of time. This fast pace easily stimulates the audience's excitement and involvement. Secondly, it is because of its transparent court design with an all-round perspective (Munich, 2011). Squash courts usually use transparent glass walls to facilitate the audience to watch the game from all angles. Every move of the players, the trajectory of the ball and the overall progress of the game are visible, which enhances the immersiveness of the viewing experience.

4 DISADVANTAGES OF SQUASH PROMOTION

4.1 Few Squash Courts and Low Utilization Rate

Most of China's squash courts are concentrated in comprehensive fitness venues and five-star hotels, which are only open to members and guests. Squash courts in schools and some institutions are also only open to internal personnel. There are very few squash courts open to the public. Some venues were eventually closed due to the small number of participants, which affected economic benefits, and there are very few squash courts that can host larger competitions (Sun and Hu, 2022). Therefore, the current situation of squash courts in China has greatly restricted the development of squash.

4.2 Insufficient Professional Squash Coaches

Most squash stadiums do not have professional squash coaches and sparring partners, and only a very small number of squash enthusiasts with high skills serve as part-time coaches. This has created a great obstacle to the popularization and promotion of the project among the masses, making it impossible for squash beginners to receive formal and systematic learning. They often cause physical injuries to themselves or their companions due to strong swings and hitting movements, and even cause serious damage to the stadium and increase the maintenance rate. If there are coaches to guide, the injuries will be greatly reduced and avoided.

4.3 Biased Cognition of Squash

Most people have a big prejudice against squash, thinking that it is a sport that only high-income people such as white-collar workers and upper-class people can afford (Du et al., 2018). The source of this prejudice is that the threshold of the place where squash started - five-star hotels is too high. As a general income earner, it is impossible to often go to star-rated hotels for consumption, and squash naturally seems out of reach. But with the gradual popularization and development of squash, a considerable number of low-income people are now also having fun, rather than a high-end aristocratic sport.

4.4 The Lack of Squash Competitions

The participation of the public in the existing competitions is also low. Most squash competitions are high-level competitive events, with a relatively fixed participating group and insufficient diffusion. The mass development and promotion of squash in China is slow, so after more than 10 years of development, the construction of the reserve talent team for squash competitive sports in China is also slow, and there is a break in the talent delivery and training system and mechanism, which is not conducive to the long-term development of squash in China (Zillmer and Dardarian, 2021). Therefore, people should actively carry out and promote mass squash and hold corresponding mass squash events, continuously consolidate the reserve talent and mass base of squash, and promote the sustainable development of squash.

5 CONCLUSION

The promotion of squash in the Chinese market presents both opportunities and challenges. First, squash has distinct advantages, such as low construction costs for venues, high exercise efficiency, wide participation, and no impact from natural weather, which makes it a great sport to watch. These factors meet the needs of modern urban populations, especially in addressing the health issues faced by white-collar workers. In addition, the inclusion of squash in the 2028 Summer Olympics provides a strategic opportunity for its development and popularization in China. At the same time, the limited number of public squash courts, the shortage of professional coaches, the misunderstanding of squash as an elite sport, and the underdeveloped competition system have hindered the promotion of squash. Addressing these challenges requires a multifaceted approach: increasing the use of squash facilities, training professional coaches, breaking social stereotypes, and promoting grassroots participation through mass activities and youth development programs. With proper planning, squash has the potential to develop in China, transforming from a niche sport to one with broader social and competitive appeal. By leveraging the uniqueness of squash and developing promotion strategies based on the needs of the Chinese sports market, squash can achieve sustainable development and contribute to the diversity of China's sports culture.

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