

Volunteerism and Urban Soft Power: A Case Study of Shenzhen

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Keywords: volunteering, urban soft power, Urban Civilization

Abstract: China's volunteer service is in a stage of institutionalization and specialization, and the level of volunteer service development is also different due to the different development of different regions. Volunteering can have an impact on a city's soft power, such as building a city's image and enhancing its impact. As Shenzhen is one of the birthplaces of Chinese mainland volunteer service, this paper takes Shenzhen City, Guangdong Province as an example to analyze the impact of volunteer service on the city's soft power and the characteristics of Shenzhen volunteer service.

1. Introduction

Volunteer service is an important symbol of social civilization and progress, and an important channel for volunteers to dedicate their love. Volunteer service embodies the ideals and convictions, love, goodwill, and responsibility advocated by the core values of socialism with Chinese characteristics; it is a vivid embodiment of the people's faith, the country's strength, and the nation's hope; it is of great significance to uniting people's hearts, enhancing the masses' spirit of being masters, and cultivating new people of the times and carrying forward the new trends of the times. Volunteering has a long history, and modern volunteering began in the charity industry. The development of volunteer service is based on the exploration and experimentation of Beijing's Dashilar "comprehensive package households," Guangzhou's "hand-in-hand," Tianjin's Chaoyangli community team, and Shenzhen's law-based registration club. The "Youth Volunteer Action" launched in 1993 and the establishment of the "China Youth Volunteer Association" in 1994 opened the curtain on the development of youth volunteer service nationwide. Looking back at the experience of volunteerism in the leading areas, we can find that the influence and role played by basic elements such as social, economic, and cultural factors in various localities are very large and deserve attention. [1] Nowadays, "soft power" is becoming an important indicator and path for the construction of national image and urban strength. Urban soft power can expand the influence and competitiveness of cities, and now all localities are paying more and more attention to the construction of "soft power", and the development of volunteer service marks social progress and also plays an important role in influencing urban soft power. As a result of the implementation of reform and opening up, Shenzhen has taken the lead in embarking on the road of volunteer service by drawing on volunteer service from foreign countries and Hong Kong and Macao in the process of opening up to the outside world. In the process of the development of volunteer service, economic development has an important impact on it, and the faster the economic level develops, the more advanced its volunteer service system and level, and the more experience it can provide as a reference. Foreign-funded enterprises in Guangdong Province have developed rapidly, so volunteer service in Guangdong has more innovative characteristics.

2. The connotation and constituent elements of urban soft power

2.1. The connotation of urban soft power

Harvard professor Joseph Nye pioneered the concept of "soft power", and now "soft power" is widely used. Attention, this concept is further extended to the regional, urban and other levels. With the continuous acceleration of urbanization in China, the competition between cities is becoming

more and more fierce, and the soft power of cities has also received more attention. Ma Qingguo and others gave the most complete definition of urban soft power: Urban soft power refers to continuously enhancing the influence of culture, political attractiveness, citizens' cohesion, and the affinity of the city's image through the construction of non-material elements such as culture, government management, and citizen quality in urban competition, and giving full play to their coordination, expansion, and multiplier effects on the city's social and economic operation system, so as to comprehensively enhance the city's economic, social, and political development level, shape a good city image, and enhance the city's competitiveness. It will provide a powerful "tangible and qualitative" driving force for the harmonious and healthy development of urban economy and society. [2] The enhancement of a city's soft power plays a positive role in a city, which can expand the city's influence, enhance the city's attractiveness, and indicate the public's recognition of the city. In the current rapid development of cities, "soft power" has become an important indicator of urban construction and development, and it can be said that "soft power" is crucial to the development of a city. The driving force that can promote a city's economic development and harmonious social development can actually be identified as urban soft power.

2.2. The components of urban soft power

Urban soft power is an organic whole composed of several subsystems. The resource layer of urban soft power is composed of eight subsystems: cultural appeal, educational development, government governance, urban cohesion, social harmony, image communication, regional influence and environmental comfort. [3]

3. Volunteer Service System

3.1. Development of volunteer service in Shenzhen

Volunteer service can reflect the level of civilization of a city, and in a city with complete volunteer service, people can enjoy volunteer service at any time. This will undoubtedly increase the attractiveness of a city, bring more talents, resources, and capital flows to the city, make the city develop more rapidly, and improve volunteer service organizations. Therefore, voluntary service is an indispensable embodiment of cultural soft power for the development of cities.

Shenzhen Volunteering originated in 1989 and is one of the birthplaces of Chinese mainland volunteering. There are 2.7 million registered volunteers and 15,000 volunteer service organizations. Over the past 30 years and more, Shenzhen's volunteer service undertaking has set a number of national firsts, giving birth to the first domestic legal person volunteer organization, the first batch of international volunteers, the first "Volunteer Service Mayor Award" ("volunteers" and volunteers), the first electronic card card, the first volunteer service foundation, and the first batch of local volunteer service regulations, etc., exploring a series of good experiences and good practices for the development of the national volunteer service cause. In September 1989, in order to help the young people who came to Shenzhen, the Shenzhen Youth League Municipal Committee organized 19 young volunteers to open the "Care, Start from Listening" youth service hotline, which was the first volunteer team on the Chinese mainland. In April 1990, the Shenzhen Volunteer Federation, composed of 46 volunteers, was registered with the Shenzhen Civil Affairs Bureau as the first volunteer organization in the Chinese mainland, and in April 1995, the organization was renamed "Shenzhen Volunteer Workers Federation". In February 2005, the 36th meeting of the Standing Committee of the Third Shenzhen Municipal People's Congress deliberated and adopted the Shenzhen Volunteer Service Regulations, which were officially implemented in July of the same year, which is the first local regulation in the field of volunteer service in China. In March 2005, it organized the selection of the first "100 Outstanding Volunteers in Shenzhen", stipulating that winners who are not registered in Shenzhen can be transferred to Shenzhen without examination. Subsequently, Shenzhen implemented the policy of volunteer service points entering the household, and volunteers were fully recognized. The Shenzhen Municipal CPC Committee and Government have always attached great importance to volunteer work. In August 2011, Shenzhen successfully

hosted the 26th Summer Universiade of World University Students, with 1.27 million volunteers participating in the service, and the spirit of volunteerism in Shenzhen was deeply rooted in the hearts of the people. In December of the same year, the Shenzhen Municipal Committee and Municipal Government held a mobilization conference for the construction of a "city of volunteers" in the whole city, and issued the "Opinions of the Shenzhen Municipal Committee and Municipal Government on Building a "City of Volunteers", clearly stating that by 2015, the construction of a "city of volunteers" should be initially completed, and the development of volunteer service should be close to the advanced level of an international city. Shenzhen is the first in China to build a "volunteer city". 5 December marks the 37th International Volunteer Day. In 37 years, Shenzhen volunteers have grown from 19 to more than 3.51 million. According to the latest statistics, Shenzhen's permanent population is 17.682 million. This means that in Shenzhen, there is an average of one volunteer in every five people.

Three hours after the document was issued, all ten volunteer groups attached to the article were "full", all organs, enterprises and institutions in the city actively responded to the call, and the Communist Youth League at all levels took the initiative to ask the party organization for help, and quickly formed 1,302 youth commando teams with a total of 35,603 members, sinking Futian, Nanshan, Bao'an and other key areas, as of March 2022, more than 1.05 million people in the city participated in epidemic prevention volunteer services. More than 4.57 million hours of service. Volunteers are on the front line of epidemic prevention, embodying the spirit of volunteerism in Shenzhen and depicting the city's "love" name slice. Shenzhen has embarked on a road of its own volunteer service, especially in the current epidemic. Volunteer service has become a valuable symbol of a city, and Shenzhen, a city of volunteers, is even more sparkling.

3.2. Highlights of volunteer service in Shenzhen

As a city of immigrants, Shenzhen has a large migrant population and rapid economic development, and has an inclusiveness that is unmatched by other cities. People who come to Shenzhen to struggle have roughly the same values and the same spirit of struggle. In the process of developing their own careers, they will spontaneously develop the emotional identity of mutual help; at the same time, the joint development with Shenzhen gives the volunteers a sense of belonging to the city; relying on geographical advantages, policy support and the efforts of all Shenzhen people, Shenzhen's rapid development has been obvious to the people of the whole country. When the economy develops to a certain height, the demand for culture and civilization construction from all walks of life becomes more prominent, which also provides a favorable fertile soil for the development of volunteer work. With the improvement of the level of culture and education, the cultural quality of Shenzhen people has also been markedly improved. They have become more aware of the nature and behavior of volunteer work, have strategic foresight in viewing new things, and have begun to actively pursue new things. In addition, the genes rooted in Shenzhen's reform and opening up have also provided favorable conditions and strong support for the vigorous development of volunteer work. [4] Shenzhen volunteer service adheres to professional development, volunteer service has taken root in Shenzhen, and the spirit of volunteerism is deeply rooted in the hearts of the people.

4. The impact of volunteerism on urban soft power

The degree of civilization of a city is related to the degree of civilization of its citizens, and the behavior and attitude of citizens towards others will affect the perception of the city by outsiders. Volunteering can show the civilization of a city very well, and can also build a good city image.

4.1. Highlight the characteristics of the city

In 2005, Shenzhen was selected as one of the first national civilized cities, and has won the title six times, and at the end of 2011, Shenzhen was the first in the country to systematically propose the construction of a "volunteer city". Shenzhen's positioning as a model of urban civilization clearly states that it should "become a leader in raising the banner, gathering the hearts of the people,

educating new people, invigorating culture, and displaying images in the new era." Voluntary public welfare is an important carrier of pluralistic values and moral practice, an important platform for modern citizens to participate in social governance, a distribution force for promoting common prosperity, and an effective means for society to build a culture of trust and cooperation. [5]

Shenzhen's volunteer service adheres to professional development, establishes professional volunteer service organizations in 19 fields such as environmental protection, education, emergency response, and medical treatment, builds brand projects, and effectively serves the personalized needs of home care, legal aid, off-campus education, etc., and institutionalizes the normalization of volunteer services. That embodies the "City of Volunteers" mien.

4.2. Enhance the image of the city

City image refers to the urban form and characteristics that can stimulate people's thoughts and feelings, and is the specific perception, overall impression and comprehensive evaluation of the inner strength, external vitality and development prospects of the city by the public inside and outside the city. [6] It covers all aspects of urban material, spiritual, political and ecological civilization, and is an impression and evaluation obtained by combining the objective appearance of a city and people's subjective cognition of it. [7] With the increasingly fierce competition between cities, shaping a good city image has become an important way for cities to enhance social attention, attract cities and achieve economic development. A city that does not represent its own civilized image to the outside world has no competitive power to speak of.

Volunteer service requires the joint efforts of the government, organizations and individuals. Shenzhen continues to improve the operation of urban villages occupying roads, piling up the phenomenon of indiscriminately, during the epidemic, timely solving the dilemma of breakfast shops, building a heart-warming station for express brothers, and helping each other between neighbors, which has become a warm business card of the city. Today, Shenzhen is sprinting toward a higher level, a higher level, a higher benchmark, and a leading "national model city of civilization," and is building a new peak of civilization with the standard of a leading demonstration area. The report of the 20th CPC National Congress pointed out that it is necessary to raise the level of civilization in the whole society, make overall plans to promote the cultivation, practice, and creation of civilization, promote the integrated development of urban and rural spiritual civilization, and cultivate new trends and new looks of the times. As a civilized city in the country, Shenzhen is actively developing the building of the spiritual civilization of the times and establishing a warm city image.

4.3. Enhancing the competitiveness of cities

Volunteering can drive economic development and attract talent to settle down. Shenzhen is a typical immigrant city. The cultures of various places collide and blend in Shenzhen, forming an open and inclusive urban atmosphere, which not only inherits the traditional culture of the Chinese nation, but is also full of various new ideas. It has enabled people from all over the world to have a sense of belonging and interpreted the Shenzhen volunteer slogan of "Shenzhen people who come and volunteer when they come."

In the process of building a livable city in Shenzhen, people-oriented and always serving people's needs is an invisible clue that runs throughout, and "living in peace" and "happy living" have always been the core of Shenzhen's livable connotation. "Serving people's needs" does not simply respond to the agglomeration and growth of urban population, but continuously tracks the needs of citizens with the times, and structurally meets the changes and orientations of the needs of different groups of people, especially paying attention to the attraction of talents. Livable cities always attract more talents to live in, thereby condensing human wisdom and wealth, which is the new logic of urban development. [8] Shenzhen is also constantly using its own actions to retain talents and retain people's hearts with the warmth of the city.

Shenzhen's achievements in volunteering across the country have attracted charity workers and volunteer service groups in various cities. Organizing and others to study, actively participating in various volunteer activities and conferences held in Shenzhen, and promoting the development of

catering, transportation, and hotel industries are the invisible driving force for Shenzhen's economic development.

5. Analysis and enlightenment

Shenzhen's volunteer service level is in a leading position in the country, and Shenzhen shows the development of urban culture from multiple dimensions. Through analysis, it can be found that Shenzhen's building of a "volunteer city" is an important part of its specialization, institutionalization and internationalization.

5.1. Specialization of volunteer service

Professional service refers to the specialization of volunteer service, which is to continuously expand the field of professional service, launch professional service projects and improve the level of professional service, and better serve the social population, and its corresponding ability is manifested in the ability to understand volunteer service, volunteer service skills, organize activities, and connect resources. [9] With the continuous progress of society and the development of volunteer service, some volunteer service projects have put forward professional requirements for volunteers. Professionally qualified people should be encouraged to join the volunteer workforce, such as doctors, teachers, lawyers and other professions. Various industries have introduced policies and measures to support the participation of professional talents in volunteer services, and increase the proportion of professional volunteers in the volunteer team. In 2021, Shenzhen will build the "U Love" brand of volunteer service, unite all parties in society to participate, and promote the professional development of volunteer service.

5.2. Institutionalization of volunteer service

For volunteer service, the significance of institutionalization is that a unified volunteer management system can be established. This can increase the efficiency of volunteering. Therefore, we should improve the management system of volunteer organizations and standardize organizational management. It is also necessary to improve the volunteer training system, strengthen knowledge and skills in medical care, education, law and other fields, and build a multi-level training system on the basis of improving basic training. Shenzhen has established a WeChat public account "Volunteer Shenzhen" to realize the intelligent management of the release, recruitment, registration, sign-in, and attendance of volunteer service projects, and covers multiple service areas. Institutionalize the normalization of volunteer services.

5.3. Internationalization of volunteer service

The birth of Shenzhen volunteers is based on learning from Hong Kong and developed international regions, is the result of international exchanges, and is itself a process of combining internationalization and localization. Shenzhen has given full play to its own advantages and strengthened international exchanges, but it is undeniable that although Shenzhen's level of volunteer service is in the leading position in the country, there is still a certain gap between Shenzhen and the developed countries in the world. They can actively build a contingent of international volunteers, serve in international competitions, and participate in international exchanges. In addition, we must not only insist on "going out", but also allow volunteers to participate in international volunteer services projects. We should also "bring in" and actively guide overseas volunteers to participate in the Shenzhen volunteer service project. Leading the reform and innovation of volunteer service in Shenzhen in the new era. This has strengthened the international promotion of volunteerism.

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