

Research on the Enhancement and Innovation Strategies of Brand Competitiveness of Ski Towns in Shaanxi Province from the Perspective of New Media Marketing

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Abstract: Driven by the deepening national sports industry policies and the rising consumer demand for winter sports, ski towns have emerged as a pivotal spatial model for integrated sports tourism development, serving as key platforms for regional economic transformation and cultural dissemination. This study focuses on Shaanxi ski towns, employing new media marketing frameworks alongside methodologies including literature review, case analysis, questionnaire surveys, and field research. It systematically examines the core drivers of brand competitiveness enhancement, offering actionable insights for identifying brand DNA and sustaining cultural legacy. Key findings reveal that leveraging new media tools and brand architecture strategies can effectively diversify target audiences, amplify brand visibility, optimize communication tactics, and expand dissemination channels—collectively strengthening Shaanxi ski towns' brand influence. Building on these outcomes, the study proposes an innovative “Trinity Strategy Model” (Value Reengineering, Communication Innovation, Ecosystem Cultivation). Centered on the principle of “sportification of lifestyle,” this model fosters a sports-cultural communication ecosystem, enhancing ski towns' dual role as both showcases and conduits for sports culture. The framework provides actionable recommendations for cultivating brand competitiveness in Shaanxi's sports tourism sector, contributing to academic and industrial discourse on destination branding.

Keywords: New Media Marketing; Ski Town; Brand competitiveness; Innovation strategy

1. Introduction

China's 14th Five-Year Plan for Sports Development has explicitly prioritized “high-quality development of the sports industry,” with the ambitious “300 Million Winter Sports Participants” initiative injecting substantial policy impetus into the snow and ice sector. Functioning as pivotal platforms integrating winter sports with regional economies, ski towns' developmental quality bears direct significance on China's sports modernization agenda. Nevertheless, these destinations currently manifest a pronounced quantity-quality dichotomy, where rapid quantitative expansion coexists with underdeveloped qualitative sophistication—a paradoxical scenario that warrants urgent scholarly and practical attention.

The issuance of China's General Administration of Sport's “Guidance on Promoting Sports Leisure Town Development” has catalyzed a transformative convergence of sports with tourism, wellness, and recreation sectors, establishing a new paradigm for sports industry evolution. As quintessential manifestations of this integrated development model, ski towns have experienced remarkable proliferation across China in recent years. Nevertheless, Shaanxi's ski destinations confront persistent branding challenges—including diluted brand differentiation and ineffective communication strategies—that constrain their competitive positioning. This study undertakes a critical examination of current operational realities and systemic constraints facing Shaanxi's ski towns, proposing an innovative framework that leverages new media platforms to enhance brand equity and market penetration.

1.1 Analysis of the Current Situation of Brand Competitiveness of Ski Towns in Shaanxi from the Perspective of New Media

Marketing

port serves as both a vital pathway to enhance public health and an essential means to fulfill people's aspirations for better living while fostering holistic human development. Leveraging premium natural and cultural assets, Shaanxi's ski towns have emerged as innovative "sports+" tourism destinations, attracting visitors through participatory, diverse, and experiential winter sports programming. Yet these resorts currently grapple with multiple operational constraints—limited brand recognition, absence of core competitive elements, insufficient scale of development, and subpar professional standards—that collectively hinder their potential to drive regional sports-tourism integration [1].

(1) Low brand awareness and insufficient market penetration

"Brand awareness", as the primary stage of consumers' memory and recognition of a brand, directly affects consumers' decision-making funnel [2]. At present, the ski towns in Shaanxi Province are facing the problem of low brand recognition. According to the survey data of the Shaanxi Provincial Department of Culture and Tourism in 2023, the accurate recall rate of the names of major ski towns by domestic tourists is only 38.5%, and the passive recognition rate by tourists from outside the province is less than 15%, which is far lower than that of mature ice and snow destinations such as Heilongjiang and Chongli in Hebei. Insufficient awareness leads to a narrow customer source market and rising marketing costs, seriously restricting the expansion of the industry scale. Research shows that the reasons for low brand recognition include: First, the absence of a symbol system and the weak recognisability of visual identifiers. Through various social media platforms (such as Xiaohongshu and Douyin), the investigation and research found that the main contents involved in the ski towns in Shaanxi Province are "natural scenery appreciation + skiing experience" [3]. Among the top ten major ski towns in Shaanxi Province, it is difficult to find a very distinctive graphic as the core element of the Logo, and there is a lack of differentiated design. The regional culture is detached and the visual association of "Shaanxi characteristics" has not been established,

resulting in the ambiguity of brand memory points. Second, there is low efficiency in information reach and structural imbalance in the dissemination channels. Online exposure is insufficient. The content related to "Shaanxi Skiing" on platforms such as Douyin and Xiaohongshu is mostly user experience guides, and most of the content is self-initiated by users. The operation activity of official accounts is low. The coverage rate of skiing advertisements in offline scenarios such as airports and high-speed railway stations at transportation hubs is low, and the advertisement content focuses on price promotions, failing to convey the core value of the brand. Thirdly, the cognitive anchor points are weak and the service functions are single. 83% of the ski towns only offer basic skiing teaching and equipment rental, lacking complex experiences such as "rime ice drift + skiing" in Jilin and "snow sheep-grabbing performance" in Xinjiang. This leads consumers' perception to remain at the level of "skiing tools", making it difficult to form brand associations. The seasonal restrictions are significant. During the non-snow season, the number of tourism products offered is small and their appeal is low. Even some ski tourism areas are closed during the non-snow season, failing to provide effective tourism products and activities or do a good job in marketing during this period. This has led to the poor performance of domestic ski tourism areas in the three seasons of spring, summer and autumn. It seriously hinders and restricts their sustainable operation and development in the future [4], and the lack of all-season products such as indoor ski resorts and dry snow training further weakens the brand's continuous exposure opportunities.

(2) The cultural dissemination power is insufficient and the brand connotation is monotonous

Shaanxi's ski towns demonstrate significant shortcomings in cultural dissemination, failing to leverage the province's rich historical and cultural resources effectively. As a region with profound historical heritage, Shaanxi possesses deep Qin cultural roots, distinctive Guanzhong folk traditions, and abundant red tourism assets—yet these cultural elements remain poorly integrated into ski resorts' branding strategies. In visual design, event planning, and service experiences,

high-recognition cultural symbols such as the Terracotta Warriors and Han-Tang dynasty motifs are conspicuously absent, leaving visitors with little sense of regional cultural immersion. Brand communications excessively focus on functional aspects like skiing techniques and facility descriptions, lacking emotionally resonant storytelling that blends “winter sports + history” or “winter sports + folklore.” Additionally, ski towns show weak collaboration with nearby cultural landmarks like Mount Hua and Famen Temple, missing opportunities to develop integrated “winter tourism + cultural experience” offerings. These collective failures result in diluted brand distinctiveness, preventing Shaanxi’s ski resorts from standing out in the competitive market through unique cultural appeal.

Through data collection and analysis of the top ten ski resorts (Aoshan, Cuihuashan, Zhaojin, etc.) on Douyin, the following operational and cultural communication patterns emerge: Aoshan Ski Resort (30,000 followers) employs diverse and creative short videos covering facilities, events, promotions, and user interviews. Cuihuashan (76,000 followers) leverages its scenic spot account for seasonal ski content. Zhaojin (21,000 followers, 500+ videos) maintains consistent, optimized formats. Yuhuagong (12,000 followers) focuses on scenic promotions with winter ski activities. Zhulinpan (2,101 followers, 30+ videos) primarily features user experiences. Bailuyuan (22,000 followers) showcases user-generated skiing clips. Fuxishan operates through its scenic account without a dedicated ski presence. Hancheng Jingongshan (1,670 followers) emphasizes visitor testimonials. Yan’an International (3,334 followers, 69 posts) blends scenic and experiential content. Huashan International (4,730 followers) highlights resort features and guest experiences. Yuanjiacun (10,000 followers) mixes facility tours, creative clips, and promotional offers. Key observations reveal bifurcated follower bases, with some resorts maintaining independent accounts while others rely on parent scenic accounts - undermining brand autonomy. Most content lacks innovation, exhibiting formulaic approaches. Higher-follower accounts enjoy greater brand influence, whereas smaller accounts suffer from limited visibility due to

sparse, unoriginal posts. Strategic recommendations include: establishing dedicated Douyin accounts to strengthen brand identity; diversifying content through creative, trend-responsive formats; enhancing user interaction through engagement activities; employing data analytics to refine operational strategies; and fostering word-of-mouth promotion to deepen brand affinity. These measures aim to boost attractiveness, dissemination effectiveness, user retention, and market competitiveness [5].

(3) The application of new media technology is limited and the efficiency of digital operation is low

Shaanxi’s ski resorts demonstrate significant lag in adopting new media technologies and implementing digital operations. Technologically, their online platforms exhibit considerable room for improvement in functional development, while social media channels lack robust interactive mechanisms. The absence of bidirectional communication channels has resulted in ineffective feedback loops between businesses and users. Notably, advanced technologies like Virtual Reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR) remain entirely unutilized, failing to create immersive consumption experiences that meet growing consumer demands for enhanced engagement. From a data-driven operational perspective, user data collection is constrained by limited dimensions, with no systematic integration of critical metrics such as visitor demographics, consumption patterns, and skiing preferences. Regarding digital marketing, content production systems suffer from insufficient innovation—existing materials predominantly rely on conventional formats like static images and generic videos. Particularly problematic is the shallow incorporation of Shaanxi’s cultural elements (e.g.: Qinqiang opera or shadow puppetry) into short-form videos, leading to homogenized content with weak regional cultural distinctiveness. Furthermore, the absence of user-profile-based precision targeting mechanisms prevents marketing messages from effectively reaching intended audience segments.

2. The Elements that Constitute the Brand Personality and Brand Influence of a Ski Town

2.1 The Composition of Influence Elements and the Connotation of Brand Competitiveness

The construction of brand personality and influence for Shaanxi's ski towns should be grounded in their current developmental status, systematically built across five dimensional elements: foundational, core, extended, communicative, and distinctive. This requires comprehensive analysis and integration of both brand personality composition and influence factors, with thorough examination of practical conditions regarding resources, market positioning, image perception, and

operational management. The elemental framework is illustrated in Figure 1.

By applying new media marketing strategies and analyzing operational data from top-ten Shaanxi ski resorts across various digital platforms, this study establishes the core brand competitiveness framework based on existing cultural influence and dissemination capabilities. The model systematically integrates four foundational dimensions: development archetypes, cultural resources, geographical advantages, and sports culture ecosystem, as visually presented in Figure 2.

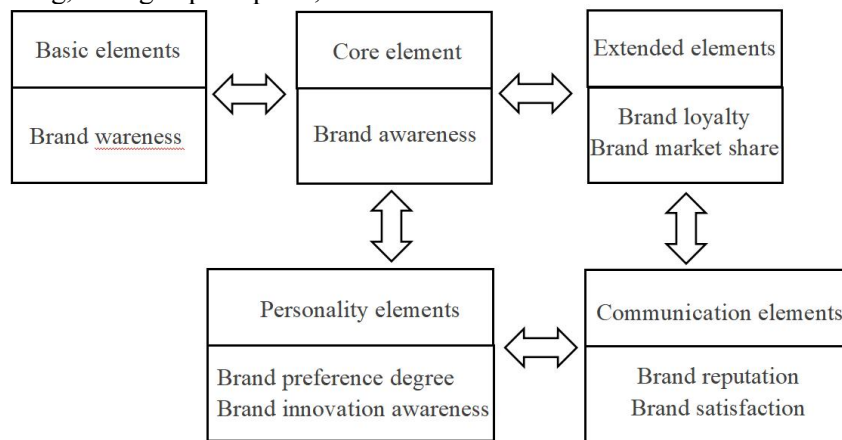


Figure 1. Research Approaches on the Brand Composition Elements of Ski Towns in Shaanxi

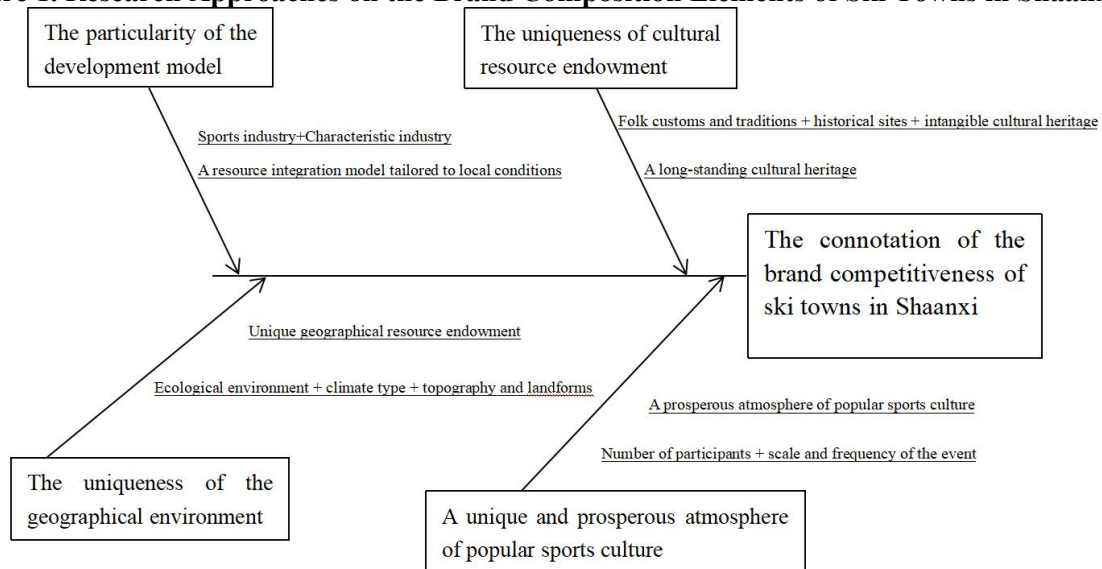


Figure 2. Research Approaches on the Connotation of Brand Competitiveness of Ski Towns in Shaanxi Province

Shaanxi's ski towns derive their brand competitiveness from a distinctive development model and unique resource endowment system, demonstrating multidimensional synergistic advantages. By innovatively implementing the "sports industry + specialty industries" integration

approach, they transcend conventional single-dimensional winter sports economies, creating an industrial ecosystem centered on skiing while synergistically developing diverse business formats. Geographically, these resorts intelligently leverage local conditions [6]—the Qinling Mountains

provide superior snow quality and diverse slope configurations, while the temperate climate facilitates year-round operations. Their Guanzhong Plain location offers strategic market access. Crucially, they integrate Shaanxi's profound cultural assets—Qinqiang opera, Han-Tang folk traditions, ancient historical sites, and intangible cultural heritage—into ski resort experiences, creating differentiated “winter sports + history/folklore” thematic offerings. Simultaneously, they capitalize on the region's robust sports culture—extensive public participation, frequent winter sports events, and mature community sports networks—to build a comprehensive sports culture continuum from competitive to recreational skiing. This organic fusion of geographical advantages, ecological resources, historical

legacy, and grassroots sports enthusiasm forms an inimitable competitive edge, positioning Shaanxi's ski towns uniquely within regional winter sports economies.

2.2 Elements for Building Brand Promotion Channels

From a new media marketing perspective, this study proposes brand competitiveness enhancement strategies focusing on consumption upgrading, innovative thinking, and word-of-mouth marketing, as detailed in Figure 3. The approach emphasizes strengthening brand innovation awareness, optimizing market segmentation strategies, and improving both market share and sustainable development capabilities for Shaanxi's ski destinations.

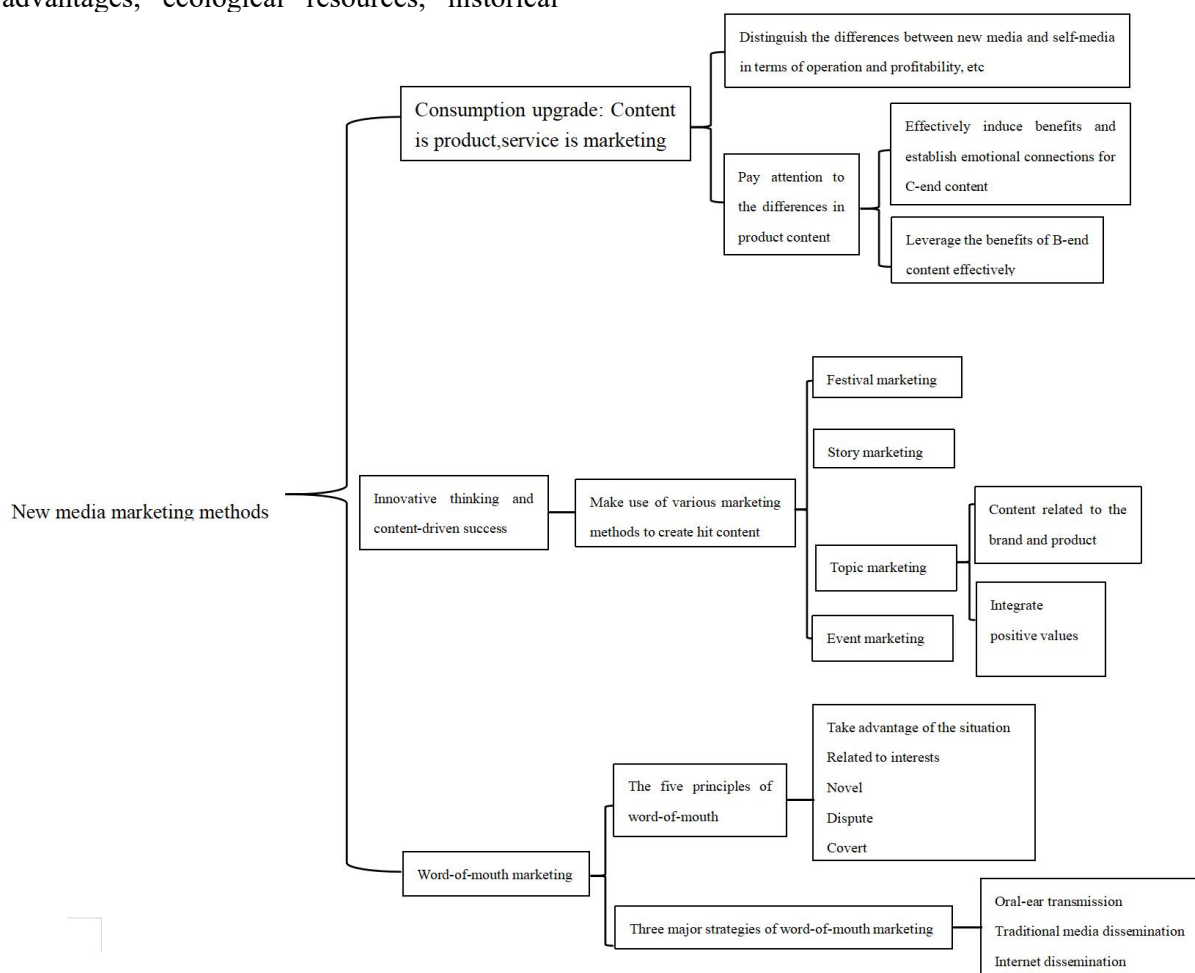


Figure 3. Design of Brand Promotion Approaches for Ski Towns Integrating New Media Marketing Ideas

The elemental composition of brand promotion pathways for Shaanxi's ski towns can be systematically constructed across multiple dimensions including core

positioning, communication channels, cultural empowerment, and market operations. The brand identity centers on winter sports as its foundational element, integrated with

Shaanxi's unique historical and cultural resources such as Qin culture and Han-Tang folk traditions, while maintaining ecological leisure characteristics. Functionally, it emphasizes hard competencies like slope quality and facility safety; emotionally, it focuses on resonant themes like therapeutic winter experiences and family bonding; culturally, it highlights intangible heritage experiences and historical scene recreations; innovatively, it incorporates technological applications including VR skiing and smart equipment - these four dimensions collectively shape a differentiated brand image.

3. An Innovation Strategy Model of “Value Reconstruction, Communication Innovation, and Ecosystem Construction”

3.1 Construction of Value Reconstruction Strategy

This model establishes a three-tier transformation framework (“historical layer - symbolic layer - experiential layer”) to systematically facilitate the innovative development of Qin culture. In the historical dimension, it involves creating a comprehensive database of Qin cultural elements through interdisciplinary expert collaboration, with focused development of five core cultural IP categories [7]: military heritage (Terracotta Warriors), imperial legacy (Epang Palace), folk traditions (Shehuo rituals), poetic arts (Tang poetry), and commercial history (Silk Road).

3.2 Communication Innovation Path Matrix

The strategic framework establishes a synergistic new media communication matrix encompassing platform, content, and technology layers to achieve multidimensional brand innovation. Platform-level initiatives include Douyin's “Ice-Snow Qin Style” challenge campaign featuring AI-powered costume filters that digitally integrate historical Qin-Han attire with skiing scenarios, complemented by KOL network development. Xiaohongshu operations involve establishing the official “Shaanxi Snow Adventures” account, executing “Slope Exploration” activities, and cultivating “Ski Sisters” community networks. The WeChat ecosystem implements mini-programs enabling seamless booking-instruction-social interaction loops,

while introducing membership point systems redeemable for cultural experiences and weekly live commerce sessions. Content innovation manifests through AR-streamed “Qin Cup” competitive events, intangible cultural heritage projects like “Snow Shehuo” performances, and maintaining 45% authentic user-generated content ratio. Technological applications emphasize deep AR/VR integration to construct immersive consumption environments, including 3D virtual experience matrices that allow mobile users to simulate various slope gradients, snow conditions, and equipment combinations with real-time environmental rendering - facilitating comprehensive pre-visit preparation. The operational system incorporates AR slope navigation, VR historical immersion experiences for secondary consumption, and AI-powered outfit recommendation systems. This multidimensional approach significantly enhances user engagement and communication effectiveness, establishing a replicable paradigm for winter tourism destination marketing through systematic integration of digital media technologies and cultural elements [8].

Complementing digital initiatives, physical interactive pods should be strategically installed along key visitor flow points, equipped with head-mounted displays and motion-sensing controls. This spatial innovation effectively converts waiting time into experiential value while employing gamification mechanics—such as point-based challenges and virtual achievement badges—to stimulate organic social sharing and viral dissemination.

3.3 Ecological Construction Plan

The proposed “dual-cycle” operational model systematically enables all-season functionality for ski towns. During winter operations, it establishes a comprehensive value chain comprising: a “three-tier nine-level” instructional system; dual-track amateur/professional competition circuits featuring innovative programs like “snow cuju” (ancient football); and regular cultural performances such as “Snowscapes of Qin.” The off-season program focuses on alternative offerings including geological field studies with AR rock identification tools, mountain

sports (through all-terrain vehicle parks), along with infrastructure adaptations like sightseeing gondola conversions, slope-to-grassland transformations, and wellness-themed packages. While innovating “skiing+” sports-tourism formats, the model realistically addresses seasonal constraints through diversified activity development that deepens sports-tourism integration [9].

To establish a good “sports culture ecosystem” in an influential brand culture, it is necessary to rely on new media technology to achieve all-round dissemination. Online, use platforms such as Douyin and Xiaohongshu to plan hot events, combine the Winter Olympics and the IP of Nezha to create short videos with the theme of the Terracotta Army and the snowman, and collaborate with Kols to promote the “skiing + culture” theme route. Offline, immersive advertisements are placed at transportation hubs, and through the UGC ecosystem, tourists are encouraged to share their experiences to form social chain reactions. At the same time, the surrounding cultural and tourism resources are deeply integrated to develop combined ticket products such as “ice and snow + historical relics” and “skiing + hot spring health care”. A Qin cultural theme street and a Han and Tang folk performance stage are created within the town. Through story-telling, the skiing experience is deeply bound with the thousand-year-old civilization of Shaanxi, forming a unique cultural experience scene. In addition, during the market operation stage, the young and trendy group and the parent-child family market will be segmented. Theme packages such as electronic music parties and intangible cultural heritage handicrafts will be launched. Relying on new media data, product design will be optimized and a membership system will be established to enhance stickiness. By adopting a full-season operation model to break through seasonal limitations, and combining low-carbon operation with community participation to achieve ecological protection and rural revitalization, a closed-loop ecosystem is ultimately formed where cultural empowerment, personalized communication amplifies influence, and market feedback is optimized. This builds a sustainable brand competitiveness with distinct niche characteristics, profound cultural heritage, and high market stickiness

[10].

4. Conclusion

This study focuses on the development predicament of ski towns in Shaanxi Province and conducts breakthrough exploration from the dual dimensions of theoretical construction and practical innovation. At the theoretical level, break through the three major problems of “low brand awareness, insufficient cultural dissemination power, and limited application of new media technology”. At the practical level, in response to the special predicament of ski towns in non-optimal resource areas, an innovative three-dimensional path of “value reconstruction, communication innovation, and ecological construction” is proposed.

With the continuous development of new media technology and the constant changes in consumer demands, the brand building and competitiveness improvement of ski towns are facing more opportunities and challenges. Future research can be expanded in the following aspects: First, vertical deepening, continuously tracking the changes in consumer behavior in the post-Olympic Winter Games era, and establishing a dynamic update mechanism; The second is horizontal expansion, conducting comparative studies on the model adaptability of traditional ice and snow tourism areas such as Northeast China and Xinjiang. The third is the technological frontier, with a focus on the impact mechanism of virtual skiing experiences on brand equity in the metaverse scenario. Through continuous exploration and innovation, provide more scientific and effective theoretical support and practical guidance for the brand building and competitiveness enhancement of the ski town.

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