The Era Value and Practical Pathways of Empowering High-Quality Development in Folk Sports Tourism through Digital Technology

Yuekai Xin, Wenlian Zhang, Qiuyu Hu

School of Marxism, Kashi University, Kashgar 844006, Xinjiang, China

Abstract

Folk sports tourism, centered around traditional folk sports activities and rooted in distinctive local folk cultural resources, aims to provide tourists with the joy of life and fulfill their travel needs through the viewing and hands-on experience of folk sports. It represents a unique form of economic and cultural activity. With the deep application of the internet and the growing maturity of digital technologies, the integration of digitalization within the folk sports tourism industry has exhibited vigorous development momentum. However, China's folk sports tourism industry remains in its early stages, and the empowerment brought by digital technologies in its developmental process faces numerous practical challenges. Therefore, as China embarks on a new journey toward achieving the Second Centenary Goal, it is imperative to further consolidate the core advantages of the integrated development of folk sports activities and the tourism industry.

Online publication: May 26, 2025

1. Introduction

In the *14th Five-Year Plan for Tourism Development*, the Chinese government emphasizes the need to "fully leverage the advantages of ecological, natural, and ethnic folk resources, use sports as a carrier, and vigorously develop cultural and creative tourism products[1]."As an in-depth integration of folk sports and folk tourism, folk sports tourism not only serves as a vital arena for the interaction, communication, and integration among various ethnic groups, but also functions as an effective vehicle for the dissemination of civilization and mutual cultural exchange. It plays a significant role in promoting national economic growth and maintaining social stability. Furthermore, under the national policy of vigorously promoting digital development, the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Culture and Tourism, National Radio and Television Administration, and the General Administration of Sport of China have jointly issued the *Action Plan for the Integration and Development*

of Virtual Reality and Industrial Applications (2022–2026). This plan explicitly identifies ten key application scenarios, including cultural tourism and performance entertainment, thereby providing a clear direction for the integration of digital technologies into the cultural tourism sector[2]. It is thus evident that digital technology, as a representative of emerging productive forces, has become a powerful driving force and a critical pillar for promoting industrial integration and transformation across various sectors of the social and economic landscape. Therefore, thoroughly exploring how digital technology can empower the high-quality development of folk sports tourism is not only an intrinsic requirement for implementing the new development philosophy, but also an urgent task for achieving a coordinated and optimized balance among economic, social, and ecological benefits.

2. The Era Value of Empowering High-Quality Development in Folk Sports Tourism through Digital Technology

"Digital technology refers to a set of techniques that convert images, texts, sounds, and videos into a language recognizable by computers, enabling further expression, computational analysis, processing, storage, and rapid transmission[3]." In recent years, various digital technologies—such as cloud computing, artificial intelligence, big data, virtual reality, digital twins, the metaverse, and automatic identification—have increasingly converged and integrated. This convergence has broken the traditional boundaries of the tourism industry, presenting unprecedented opportunities for the high-quality development of folk sports tourism.

2.1. Facilitating the Structural Transformation and Upgrading of the Folk Sports Tourism Industry

According to the *Digital China Development Report (2022)*, "China's digital economy reached a scale of 50.2 trillion yuan in 2022, maintaining its position as the second largest in the world. Its share of the gross domestic product (GDP) increased to 41.5%[4]." With the continued release of dividends from a new wave of scientific and technological revolution, the role of digital technology in empowering the optimization and upgrading of

industrial structures has become increasingly evident. A wide range of information technologies—including big data and the Internet of Things—are rapidly permeating every stage of the folk sports tourism industry, driving the transition of traditional sightseeing tourism toward an integrated model of "sports + culture + experience." This transformation provides essential structural support for the high-quality development of tourism. In this process, digital technology has not only significantly enhanced the level of intelligence within folk sports tourism projects but also enabled the optimized allocation of tourism resources through advanced data analytics and precision marketing strategies. In addition, the application of digital technology in folk sports tourism is also manifested in various aspects such as intelligent tour guidance, virtual reality experiences, and online booking systems, greatly enriching the tourist experience and improving both service quality and operational efficiency.

2.2. Contributing to the Fulfillment of the People's Aspirations for a Better Life

China's development has entered a new historical stage, in which the principal contradiction in society has shifted to "the contradiction between unbalanced and inadequate development and the people's ever-growing needs for a better life[5]." The high-quality development of folk sports tourism empowered by digital technology represents a proactive response to contemporary demands. On the one hand, the application of digital technology injects new vitality into folk sports tourism, revitalizing this traditional tourism form with renewed dynamism and appeal. By leveraging intelligent service tools, digital technology offers tourists a wider array of travel options, catering to their growing needs for personalized, diversified, and high-quality travel experiences. On the other hand, the extensive adoption of digital technology facilitates the deep integration of folk sports tourism with local culture, enabling tourists to not only enjoy the pleasures of travel but also to gain a more profound understanding and immersive experience of the unique cultural characteristics of their destinations. Therefore, empowering the high-quality development of folk sports tourism through digital technology not only fulfills the public's aspirations for a better life but also injects fresh momentum into the sustainable development of folk

sports tourism. It offers the people more enriching travel choices and life experiences.

2.3. Facilitating the Inheritance and Innovative Development of Folk Sports Tourism Culture

In the process of empowering the high-quality development of folk sports tourism with digital technology, its significance in promoting the inheritance and innovative development of folk sports tourism culture is equally noteworthy. Through digital means, folk sports tourism culture can be presented to tourists in a more vivid and intuitive manner, greatly enhancing its cultural appeal and communicative power. On the one hand, the application of digital technology allows for the detailed documentation and permanent preservation of the essence of folk sports tourism culture, enabling it to transcend temporal and spatial limitations and be better understood and passed down by broader audiences. On the other hand, digital technology also provides new inspiration and impetus for the innovation of folk sports tourism culture. As a result, it gains renewed vibrancy and appeal, attracting greater public interest and participation, and ultimately achieving long-term development and prosperity.

2.4. Conducive to Expanding International Exchange and Mutual Learning in Folk Sports Tourism

In the context of deepening globalization, the empowerment of folk sports tourism through digital technology contributes not only to domestic high-quality development but also plays a significant role in fostering international exchange. By leveraging digital technologies, folk sports tourism resources from around the world can be showcased and promoted on a global stage, thereby capturing the attention of a broad international audience. For instance, short video platforms have emerged as "cultural vanguards" on TikTok, the hashtag "Chinese Folk Sports Challenge" has garnered over 8 billion views. Traditional events such as the Dai Water-Splashing Festival, dragon and lion dances, and other folk activities are being disseminated virally through 15-second short videos, driving a sustained increase in overseas search interest. In addition, digital technology has also driven innovation in folk sports tourism products,

such as the development of locally distinctive folk sports-themed souvenirs and the introduction of customized travel itineraries. Consequently, the empowerment of high-quality development in folk sports tourism through digital technology has undoubtedly made a positive contribution to promoting international exchange, strengthening friendship, and fostering cooperation among people from different countries.

3. Core Dimensions of Empowering High-Quality Development in Folk Sports Tourism through Digital Technology

Digital technology plays an increasingly vital role in advancing folk sports tourism toward high-quality development. As technological advancements continue to accelerate, digital approaches are being widely applied in the field of folk sports tourism, significantly boosting the industry's growth. Specifically, the empowerment brought about by digital technology is reflected in several core dimensions.

3.1. Dimension of Cultural Inheritance and Innovation: Digital Technology Reshaping the Paradigm of Folk Sports Cultural Communication

From the perspective of cultural inheritance and innovation, digital technology serves as a powerful driving force that is profoundly reshaping the communication paradigm of folk sports culture. Through digital means, the unique charm of folk sports can be presented in a more vivid and intuitive manner, overcoming the limitations of time and space and reaching a broader audience. On one hand, with the rapid advancement of digital technology, the processes of documenting, preserving, and disseminating folk sports culture have become more convenient and efficient..On the other hand, digital technology also offers boundless possibilities for the innovation of folk sports culture. This innovation not only enriches the connotations and dimensions of folk sports culture but also injects new vitality and dynamism into it, enabling folk sports to shine with renewed brilliance in contemporary society.

3.2. Dimension of Industrial Upgrading and Transformation: Digital Technology Driving the Innovation of the Folk Sports Tourism Industry Chain

Digital technology, by deeply integrating into all segments of folk sports tourism, has driven comprehensive innovation across the entire industry chain. Firstly, it facilitates the integration and optimization of folk sports tourism resources. Secondly, digital technology propels the innovation and upgrading of folk sports tourism products. Furthermore, digital technology promotes the extension and expansion of the folk sports tourism industry chain. Driven by digital technology, folk sports tourism is no longer confined to traditional sightseeing; instead, it is expanding into areas such as leisure and vacationing, cultural immersion, wellness, and health preservation. This extension of the industry chain not only brings greater development opportunities to folk sports tourism but also offers vast growth potential for related industries.

3.3. Dimension of Tourist Experience Optimization: Digital Technology Creating Immersive Folk Sports Tourism Scenarios

By applying digital technology, it becomes possible to craft highly immersive and interactive folk sports tourism experiences. For instance, VR technology enables tourists to participate in folk sports activities as if they were physically present. In addition, digital technology enables the realization of personalized and customized services by tailoring unique folk sports tourism itineraries and activities based on tourists' interests and needs. Through big data analytics, it is possible to gain insights into tourists' preferences—whether they favor intense competitive events or prefer tranquil traditional dances, whether they are drawn to outdoor activities amid natural landscapes or indoor cultural experiences. Based on such data, a diverse range of tourism packages can be designed, such as a "Traditional Martial Arts Experience Tour" or an "In-Depth Ethnic Dance Journey," allowing each tourist to find the most suitable option. This not only enhances the enjoyment and social engagement of the tourism experience but also infuses new vitality into the sustainable development of folk sports tourism. In this way, digital technology not only optimizes the overall visitor experience in folk sports tourism but also contributes significantly to its long-term viability and dynamism.

3.4. Ecological Sustainability Dimension: Digital Technology Facilitating the Scientific Conservation and Utilization of Folk Sports Tourism Resources

In the conservation and utilization of folk sports tourism resources, digital technology plays an irreplaceable role. Through advanced remote sensing technologies and Geographic Information Systems (GIS), it is possible to achieve precise positioning and real-time monitoring of folk sports tourism resources, effectively preventing overdevelopment and environmental degradation. Furthermore, digital technology promotes the rational utilization of folk sports tourism resources by enabling intelligent management and scheduling systems, thereby optimizing resource allocation and enhancing usage efficiency. These measures provide strong support for the sustainable development of folk sports tourism. By implementing such strategies, a balance can be achieved between protection and development, ensuring that folk sports tourism resources are not only well preserved but also contribute meaningfully to local economic growth and cultural continuity.

4. Practical Pathways for Empowering High-Quality Development in Folk Sports Tourism through Digital Technology

In the new era, high-quality development has become the central theme of China's socio-economic advancement. The report of the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China explicitly identified the acceleration of building a strong sporting nation as a key objective, stating that "high-quality development is the primary task in building a modern socialist country in all respects[6]."As an indispensable component driving national economic growth, the folk sports tourism industry is likewise subject to the imperative of high-quality development. It demands both a clear conceptual framework for system construction and the support of scientifically grounded and innovative implementation pathways.

4.1. Strengthening Top-Level Design and Fostering a Favorable Digital Environment

To enable the digital empowerment of the folk sports tourism industry, the foremost task lies in meticulous top-level design and strategic planning at the macro level. This requires the formulation of relevant regulations and policies to ensure a smooth and effective digital transformation process. First, government departments should clearly define the development goals and strategies of the digital economy and, from this perspective, provide technological guidance and scientific support for the folk sports tourism industry. Subsequently, in order to strengthen the foundation for the digital development of folk sports tourism, governments should collaborate with local ethnic enterprises to increase investment in the sector and promote its digital transformation. Furthermore, it is essential to establish robust digital infrastructure—such as high-speed internet, big data centers, and cloud computing platforms—to provide a solid material foundation for the digital transition of folk sports tourism. Through these initiatives, digital technology can be effectively integrated into the folk sports tourism industry, laying a solid foundation for its high-quality development.

4.2. Enhancing Digital and Intelligent Literacy and Cultivating Specialized Professional Talent

With the continuous advancement and deepening application of interdisciplinary theories in practical fields, the folk sports tourism industry is increasingly trending toward diversification—a tendency that has become progressively evident. This evolution imposes higher competency demands on practitioners, including managers and service providers. Therefore, it is imperative to leverage the collective strengths of market entities, higher education institutions, and research institutes to continuously enhance the digital and intelligent literacy of the general population and to cultivate and supply high-quality professionals with interdisciplinary application capabilities for the folk sports tourism market. Moreover, to attract more outstanding individuals to engage in the folk sports tourism industry, a sound talent incentive mechanism should be established and continuously improved. Only in this way can a solid talent foundation be established to ensure the sustained

and healthy development of the folk sports tourism industry, enabling it to maintain a competitive edge in an increasingly intense market environment.

4.3. Optimizing Technological Support and Actively Unleashing Digital Momentum

In the development of folk sports tourism, optimizing technological support constitutes a critical component. To effectively unleash the potential of digital momentum, it is essential to intensify the research, development, and application of relevant technologies. First and foremost, research institutions and enterprises should be encouraged and supported to engage in close collaboration, jointly developing intelligent technologies tailored to the unique characteristics of folk sports tourism. Meanwhile, the application of big data makes the management and decision-making processes within folk sports tourism more scientific and efficient. Through extensive data mining and analysis, tourism market trends can be accurately forecasted, enabling timely adjustments to business strategies. Furthermore, in the process of optimizing technological support, particular attention must be paid to the sustainability and security of the technologies employed. These measures ensure that while the folk sports tourism industry enjoys the dividends of digital technology, it simultaneously provides tourists with a safe and reliable travel environment.

4.4. Innovating Digital Thinking and Constructing Business Models

In the contemporary era, innovative digital thinking has become a core driving force behind the advancement of various industries. Particularly in the field of folk sports tourism, the empowerment of digital technology transcends the mere application of tools—it represents a profound transformation in mindset. To achieve high-quality development in folk sports tourism, it is imperative to cultivate forward-looking digital thinking, boldly breaking free from the constraints of traditional models and actively exploring and constructing industry formats centered on digital technology. Such transformation not only enhances the attractiveness and competitiveness of folk sports tourism but also broadens access to international markets and fosters cross-cultural exchange and cooperation on a global scale. In addition,

active participation in international exchanges and cooperation is also essential. The introduction of advanced foreign technologies and concepts will further enhance the international competitiveness of China's folk sports tourism industry. In conclusion, leveraging innovative digital thinking to construct new business models will not only elevate the overall standard of China's folk sports tourism industry but also contribute Chinese wisdom and solutions to the broader development of global tourism.

5. Conclusion

As China embarks on a new journey toward becoming a strong nation and achieving national rejuvenation, empowering the high-quality development of folk sports tourism through digital technology represents a systemic undertaking of strategic and long-term significance. Therefore, it is imperative to seize strategic initiative, keep pace with the times through continuous exploration and innovation, and, based on establishing a correct understanding of digital technology and actively leveraging its latest achievements, promote joint efforts among the government, enterprises, and all sectors of society.

Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

References

[1] CPPCC News Network. The State Council issued the full text of "The 14th Five-Year Plan for Tourism Development" [EB/OL]. (2022-01-21) [2022-07-06]. https://www.rmzxb.cn/c/2022-01-21/3033472.shtml.

[2] Joint release by five ministries. Action Plan for the Integration and Development of Virtual Reality and Industrial Applications (2022–2026) [J]. Information Technology & Standardization, 2022, (11): 5.

[3] Fu Weili, Fu Bo. Harnessing Positive Approaches to Integrate Digital Technology into Educational Practice [N]. Social Sciences in China, 2024-02-07(07).

[4] The State Council of the People's Republic of China. In 2022, China's Digital Economy Reached RMB 50.2 Trillion [EB/OL]. (2023-04-28). https://www.gov.cn/yaowen/2023-04-28/content_5753561.htm.

[5] Xi Jinping. Secure a Decisive Victory in Building a Moderately Prosperous Society in All Respects and Strive for the Great Success of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era — Report at the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China [M]. Beijing: People's Publishing House, 2017.

[6] Xi Jinping. Hold High the Great Banner of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics and Strive in Unity to Build a Modern Socialist Country in All Respects — Report at the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China [M]. Beijing: People's Publishing House, 2022.