Ice and Snow Cultural Tourism IP Empowering Northeast Economic Transformation: Model Construction and Path Exploration

Yingmei Cao

College of Communication, Liaoning Communication University, Shenyang, Liaoning, China

Abstract. The Northeast region of China is facing severe economic transformation pressures, including sluggish growth in traditional industries and brain drain. Meanwhile, its world-class ice and snow resources are trapped in challenges such as overreliance on ticket-based revenue, seasonal imbalances, and homogenized competition. This paper proposes that the way forward lies in upgrading from traditional "ice and snow tourism" to "IP-driven cultural tourism operations." The study aims to construct a three-tier empowerment model—"IP Content Layer–Experience Layer–Industrial Layer"—and explore its internal mechanisms of driving regional economic transformation through emotional connection, experiential engagement, and industrial integration. Through case analysis and situational review, the paper further proposes an implementation roadmap centered on creating core IP symbols, building year-round experiences, and launching an "IP+Industry" integration initiative. It offers targeted recommendations for governments and enterprises, arguing for the strategic value of ice and snow cultural tourism IP as a new engine for Northeast economic revitalization.

Keywords: Ice and Snow Economy; Cultural Tourism IP; Northeast Revitalization.

1. Introduction

As the cradle of modern Chinese industry, the Northeast region is undergoing a period of structural transition marked by the decline of traditional heavy industries, industrial monoculture, and youth outmigration. Against this backdrop, developing an ice and snow economy based on its unique natural advantages has been seen as a key breakthrough for regional economic transformation and revitalization. However, the current development model of the ice and snow industry is showing signs of stagnation: overdependence on ticket revenue leads to "high traffic but low retention"; pronounced seasonality creates the operational dilemma of "one profitable season supporting three lean ones"; and homogenized projects across regions lack core competitiveness, preventing natural advantages from being fully converted into economic gains [1].

Existing academic research primarily focuses on marketing, infrastructure development, or macro-level industrial planning in ice and snow tourism. While valuable, these studies generally lack systematic exploration of deep cultural value extraction and industrialized operations. Most treat ice and snow as scenic resources rather than intellectual property (IP) capable of continuous creation and value appreciation. This conceptual limitation hinders the Northeast's ice and snow economy from breaking free of traditional frameworks and achieving qualitative leaps.

Therefore, the innovation of this paper lies in transcending conventional "resource-oriented" and "sightseeing-focused" thinking by systematically constructing a model with "ice and snow cultural tourism IP" as the core driver of economic transformation. The central question this study seeks to answer is: How can systematic IP operations transform static ice and snow resources into dynamic, sustainable super cultural symbols with strong industrial spillover effects, thereby providing a novel and sustainable development path for the economic transformation of Northeast China?

2. From Resources to IP: The Empowerment Mechanism of Ice and Snow Cultural Tourism IP

To understand the empowering role of ice and snow cultural tourism IP, it is essential first to clarify its connotation. It is not merely a logo or mascot, but rather a cultural symbol system centered on ice and snow themes, encompassing a unique worldview, narrative arc, and emotional value. Its core lies in establishing deep emotional connections with consumers, thus transcending physical resource constraints and fostering brand loyalty and consumer preference [2].

Based on this understanding, this paper proposes a three-tier empowerment model to explain its internal logic in driving economic transformation.

2.1 Core Layer (IP Contentization): Value Creation and Emotional Anchoring

This layer represents the "soul" of the IP. Its purpose is to transform cold natural landscapes into warm, communicable cultural content. Specific strategies include:

Narrativization: Deeply excavate and reconstruct elements such as Shamanic culture, legends of snowy forests, and the history of Guandong migration to build a grand "ice and snow mythos universe." For example, Longbai Mountain could be reimagined as the "Ancestral Mountain, Sacred Realm of Snow," while Snow Town could be wrapped in a heartwarming fairy-tale narrative.

Personification: Create virtual characters with distinct personalities and regional characteristics—such as the brave "Guardian Spirit of Baishan" or the amiable "Snow Monster A Le"—to serve as emotional ambassadors for the region and build friendly, intimate relationships with visitors.

This layer establishes the long-term value foundation of the IP through emotional resonance, serving as the source for all subsequent commercial development.

2.2 Intermediate Layer (Experiential Scenarization): Value Amplification and Consumption Conversion

This layer constitutes the "body" of the IP. It transforms the cultural content from the core layer into tangible and virtual experiences that are perceptible, interactive, and shareable—key to aggregating traffic and converting it into consumption.

Immersive Physical Environments: Upgrade Harbin's Ice and Snow World from a seasonal festival park into a "fantasy ice and snow theme park," incorporating large-scale ice sculptures, themed performances, and interactive projects based on the IP narrative. Develop immersive experiences such as a "Snow Town Fairy Tale Night" murder mystery game, allowing visitors to become characters within the story.

Digital Technology-Enhanced Experiences: Utilize AR (Augmented Reality) to enable visitors to "summon" virtual IP characters via a mobile app for photos or treasure hunts within the Scenic area. Establish VR (Virtual Reality) experience centers offering year-round access to a "digital ice and snow world."

This layer significantly increases per-capita spending by creating unique experiences and leverages social media sharing to exponentially amplify IP influence.

2.3 Outer Layer (Industrial Ecosystem Development): Value Spillover and Economic Restructuring

This layer represents the "extension" of the IP. Once the IP accumulates sufficient influence, its value naturally spills over beyond tourism into broader industrial sectors, forming new clusters and directly empowering economic transformation.

Cultural and Creative Derivatives: Develop high-design IP merchandise such as figurines, collectible toys, apparel, and cosmetics, promoting the transformation of local light industry toward higher value-added production.

Digital Content Industry: Use the IP as a nucleus to produce animated series, web films, and mobile games, attracting digital creative talent and nurturing new economic sectors in the Northeast.

Specialty Manufacturing and Agriculture: Launch co-branded products such as Northeast rice, blueberries, and ginseng under the IP, achieving brand elevation and value enhancement for primary industries.

By enabling industrial convergence, this layer breaks the seasonal and geographical constraints of the ice and snow economy, building a sustainable, IP-driven industrial ecosystem.

3. Current Situation Analysis and Case Insights

The Northeast has made initial attempts in ice and snow cultural tourism IP development, but overall remains in its infancy. For example, Harbin's Ice and Snow World sets different themes annually, showing early signs of IP awareness; Snow Town has gained strong "internet celebrity" status due to its unique landscape [3]. Nevertheless, deep-seated bottlenecks persist:

First, weak IP awareness: Management thinking remains focused on "site construction" and "festival organization," lacking long-term strategic planning and investment for systematic IP cultivation. Second, a severely underdeveloped industrial chain: Revenue remains heavily reliant on ticket sales, while peripheral products are mostly low-design, generic-branded items, failing to form a complete IP merchandise ecosystem. Third, traditional operational models: A shortage of professional teams skilled in both cultural content and market operations limits the IP's communication and commercialization capabilities.

In contrast, international success stories offer valuable lessons. Furano in Hokkaido, Japan, exemplifies best practices through its "Ningle Terrace"—a cluster of handcrafted wooden cabins hidden in the forest, inspired by author So Kuramoto's fictional "elves." Rather than relying on grand snowscapes, it builds a dreamworld of fairy tales, craftsmanship, and warmth [4]. Its success stems from:

Emotional Storytelling: A gentle IP narrative gives soul to the space, evoking deep emotional resonance.

Year-Round Operations: The forest scenery is attractive in all seasons, complemented by artisan workshops that mitigate seasonality.

Industrial Chain Extension: Each cabin functions as a craft workshop, directly converting the IP experience into unique product sales.

This case illustrates that successful ice and snow cultural tourism IP is not about the quantity of resources, but the depth of storytelling, precision of experience, and breadth of industrial integration.

4. Implementation Paths for Ice and Snow Cultural Tourism IP Development in Northeast China

4.1 Path One: Develop a Unified Core IP Symbol System for Brand Consolidation

It is recommended that provincial cultural tourism departments lead a collaborative effort involving cultural scholars, writers, and design teams to launch a "Northeast Ice and Snow IP Universe" initiative. Moving beyond fragmented, decentralized local efforts, consolidate resources to create 1–2 flagship IPs with national influence. For example, develop the "Kingdom of Snow" series for Changbai Mountain and the "Frozen City Romance" series for Harbin. Establish a unified narrative framework, visual standards, and licensing system to lay the foundation for region-wide IP development.

4.2 Path Two: Build "Year-Round" IP Experience Scenarios to Smooth Seasonal Fluctuations

To address seasonality, non-winter IP experiences must be developed:

Indoor Immersive Venues: Construct permanently open "Ice and Snow IP Experience Centers" in major cities, using digital technology and climate control to recreate winter magic year-round.

IP-Themed Travel Routes: Launch summer programs like the "Search for the Snow Monster" hiking trail in Changbai Mountain, or autumn "Forest Harvest Festival" IP carnivals.

IP-Based Performances: Produce high-quality live shows or stage plays centered on the ice and snow IP, becoming nightly cultural consumption highlights.

4.3 Path Three: Launch an "IP + Industry" Integration Program to Cultivate New Growth Sectors

Actively empower other industries through IP licensing and collaboration:

IP + Creative Lifestyle Brands: Partner with leading domestic collectible toy companies to release limited-edition IP figurines and blind boxes, tapping into youth markets.

IP + Digital Entertainment: Collaborate with game developers to create mobile or indie games based on Northeast ice and snow IPs, enabling online traffic generation and value monetization.

IP + Specialty Consumer Goods: Carefully select high-quality local agricultural products and food items for co-branded packaging and design, enhancing brand premium and supporting rural revitalization.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

This study demonstrates that elevating ice and snow cultural tourism IP operations to a regional strategic level offers an efficient pathway for innovative economic transformation in Northeast China. The proposed three-tier model—"content–experience–industry"—systematically reveals how IP drives new momentum through emotional anchoring, experiential conversion, and industrial spillover. This approach not only addresses current challenges in the ice and snow sector but also stimulates emerging industries such as cultural creativity and digital content, optimizing the Northeast's industrial structure, attracting young talent back, and repositioning the region as a "creative highland of ice and snow culture."

To advance this strategy, the following recommendations are proposed:

For Government: Shift from a "dominant" role to that of a "service provider and platform builder." Key tasks include top-level IP design, intellectual property protection, establishing a special IP development fund, and improving the business environment to attract social capital and professional institutions.

For Enterprises: Break free from traditional mindsets and embrace innovation. Actively bring in professional IP content and operations teams, and proactively seek cross-industry collaborations with internet, film, and gaming sectors to play an active role in IP commercialization.

The limitation of this study lies in its focus on theoretical modeling and qualitative analysis. Future research could build upon this foundation with quantitative methods such as surveys and economic modeling to empirically verify the effectiveness of IP empowerment.

Looking ahead, a new ice and snow cultural tourism ecosystem centered on powerful IPs has the potential to become a powerful engine driving the comprehensive revitalization of Northeast China.

Acknowledgments

We would like to sincerely thank our colleagues at the School of Communication, Liaoning Communication University, for their support and valuable suggestions, which greatly facilitated the progress of this research. Their insightful perspectives and rigorous academic attitude have provided significant support for the theoretical framework and practical pathway exploration of this paper.

We also extend our gratitude to the cultural and tourism departments and related scenic spots in Northeast China for providing practical case studies and public information, as well as to international successful examples that have offered inspiration. We sincerely appreciate all colleagues who are dedicated to the development of the ice-snow economy and regional revitalization.

References

[1] Wang Meng. A Study on the Path of Digital Economy Empowerment for the Transformation and Upgrading of the Tourism Industry. [J]. China Collective Economy ,2025-10-15: 13-16.

[2] Zhang Juncheng."IP + Cultural Tourism" Creates a New Model for the Industry to Go Global. [N]. China News Publishing & Broadcasting Daily ,2025-10-14.

[3] Zhao Jingyuan. A Study on the Driving Effect of the Integrated Development of Ice and Snow Culture and Tourism on Local Economy. [J]. Tourism Overview ,2025-05-15: 179-181.

[4] Fu Qin. A Study on the Path of Integrated Development of Ice and Snow Tourism and Cultural and Creative Products. [J]. New Beauty Area 2025-09-25: 77-79.