

The Promotion of Urban Cultural and Tourism Consumption by Sports Events: Taking the "15th National Games Table Tennis Competition (Macau Division)" as an Example

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Abstract. Driven by the dual strategy of building a strong sports nation and deeply integrating culture and tourism, large-scale sports events have surpassed the boundaries of competitive sports themselves and become the core carrier for empowering urban economic transformation and upgrading, activating cultural and tourism consumption potential, and shaping urban brand image. Using methods such as literature review, statistical data analysis, and case study analysis, this paper systematically examines the driving effect of sports events on urban cultural and tourism consumption. As large-scale public events, sports events serve as an important means of promoting regional economic development in cities through multiple channels, including tourist aggregation, media dissemination, and industrial linkage. For example, as large-scale public events, sports events can become an important driving force for promoting regional economic development in cities through multiple channels such as tourist gathering, media dissemination, and industrial linkage. Taking the "15th National Games Table Tennis Tournament (Macau Division)" as an example, this article systematically analyzes the specific role of sports events in promoting the optimization and upgrading of urban consumption structure and the deep integration of cultural tourism industry, focusing on three dimensions: promoting urban economic transformation, cross regional coordinated development, and dual upgrading of industry and consumption.

Keywords: Sports events, Urban cultural and tourism consumption, The 15th Chinese National Games.

1. Introduction

The Proposal of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee on Formulating the Fifteenth Five-Year Plan for National Economic and Social Development states that a strong domestic market is a strategic support for Chinese modernization. Accordingly, China should expand domestic demand, better align livelihood improvement with consumption and investment, promote mutually reinforcing supply and demand, and strengthen the momentum and resilience of the domestic cycle. [1]." The opinions on releasing the potential of sports consumption and further promoting the high-quality development of the sports industry issued by the general office of the State Council clearly emphasizes "stimulating sports consumption demand, and encouraging the creation of sports events into scenic spots, blocks, business circles and other brands."activities " "The total scale of the sports industry will exceed 7 trillion yuan by 2030." [2]. Several measures on releasing the potential of tourism consumption to promote the high-quality development of tourism industry clearly put forward that "promote the integrated planning and development of sports events and tourism activities, cultivate the brand project of 'travel with events' in combination with major and characteristic events, and create a number of influential sports tourism boutique routes, events and bases" [3]." travel with events "is a composite business type that organically integrates cultural experience, leisure tourism and commercial consumption with sports events as the core traction [4]. Hosting sporting events can assist diversify Macau's long-standing gaming-dominated growth strategy, given the city's distinct economic structure. The coordinated growth of the sports sector and tourism consumption is also clearly supported by recent policy texts. Sports events are now a key tool for industrial upgrading and urban economic transformation, which runs counter to the national plan of becoming a sports

powerhouse. The Guangdong–Hong Kong–Macao Greater Bay Area, a major force behind China's regional growth, is taking use of the 15th National Games to further regional coordination and strengthen the integration of sports, culture, and tourism. In order to investigate a "sports + culture + tourism + commerce" strategy, Macao has used the table tennis competition as a crucial starting point. This has contributed to the creation of an empowering chain that connects urban upgrading, industrial coordination, event attraction, and consumption conversion, providing a model for excellent cross-border integration in the Greater Bay Area [5].

Large-scale sporting events can increase culture and tourist consumption through visitor inflows and media attention, according to existing studies, but their long-term impacts depend on post-event support and continued operation [6]. Hua et al. further pointed out that there is significant spatial heterogeneity in the driving effect of events on cultural and tourism consumption, which is prone to the imbalance of income distribution between the core urban area and the surrounding areas and the lack of global driving effect [7]. Through the systematic bibliometric analysis of 1072 SSCI/SCI core literatures, from the current operation status of sports events in China, there are still prominent common shortcomings in the practice of the vast majority of events, which are mainly reflected in the superficial integration of sports culture and tourism industry, and the lack of IP sustainable operation mechanism covering the entire post event cycle. If only the simple bundling model of "event tickets+scenic area packages" is adopted without building a deep level integrated operation system, it will not be able to fully unleash the consumption driving potential and industrial empowerment value of sports events [8]. The above research conclusion directly echoes the core bottleneck found in this case.

The 15th National Games (Macao Division) table tennis competition serves as an example of how sporting events may increase urban sports tourism. It produced more than RMB 2.5 billion in direct expenditure and more than RMB 8 billion in associated cultural and tourism consumption as part of the first National Games co-hosted by Guangdong, Hong Kong, and Macao [9]. During the event, more than 2million tourists were attracted to Macao to watch the event. Notably, event-driven tourism became a significant source of visitors, accounting for 65% of the total tourist volume for the year [10].

This study takes the "table tennis match of the 15th National Games (Macao Division)" as the research sample, mainly because the event has the attribute of national level events and the characteristics of regional cooperation. Through the systematic analysis, this paper summarizes the logic and experience of driving the consumption of sports tourism, and provides targeted suggestions for other regions to explore the hosting of events to drive the local economy.

2. Theoretical Basis and Mechanism of Sports Events Promoting Urban Cultural and Tourism Consumption

2.1. Definition of Core Concepts

Urban cultural and tourism consumption driven by sports events refers to the sum of all goods and services consumption behaviors generated by sports events as the core attraction, cities as the spatial carrier, and around the needs of watching events, sports experience, cultural leisure, tourism and vacation. This new type of consumption pushes the upgrading of urban consumption, transcends the old ticket economy, and combines sports and cultural tourism [11].

2.2. Core Mechanism

Direct consumption driving mechanism: by attracting out-of-town visitors, sports events directly generate a range of consumption activities, including ticket purchases, accommodation, catering, transportation, shopping, and entertainment, thereby driving revenue growth across the entire urban cultural and tourism industry chain, which constitutes the most direct economic impact of sports events.

City brand communication mechanism: through national and even global media coverage and social platform engagement, large-scale events can rapidly elevate the city's public profile and shape a distinctive urban brand image, attract long-term potential passenger flow for the city, thereby achieving the effect of "hosting one event to generate sustained long-term visitor attraction".

Upgrading mechanism of cultural and tourism supporting facilities: the event organizer will force the city to improve infrastructure such as transportation network, venue facilities, intelligent services, and commercial supporting facilities, comprehensively improve the city's cultural and tourism carrying capacity and service level, and lay the foundation for the long-term development of the cultural and tourism industry.

Innovation mechanism of consumption scene: the event promotes the deep integration of "sports+cultural tourism", spawns diversified consumption scenes such as "watching+tourism", "watching+experience" and "watching+research", enriches the supply of urban cultural tourism products, and cultivates new consumption growth points.

Regional industrial linkage mechanism: with sports events as the core focus, forming a dual dimensional linkage effect. Horizontally, it can promote deep collaboration between the sports industry and related industries such as cultural tourism, commerce, and transportation, elongate the consumption chain, and broaden consumption scenarios; Vertically, it can establish a cultural and tourism linkage channel between the host city and surrounding areas, fully amplify the spillover effect of event consumption, and ultimately achieve integrated and coordinated development of regional cultural and tourism industries.

3. Case Overview of the 15th National Games Table Tennis Tournament (Macau Division)

The 15th National Games, China's top comprehensive sports event in 2025 and the first jointly hosted by Guangdong, Hong Kong, and Macao, has made table tennis in the Macau Division a landmark platform for sports–culture–tourism integration in the Greater Bay Area [12,13]. Macao has created a customized "events + cultural tourism" strategy focused on event quality, Bay Area connectivity, and cultural tourism integration as a major host location for the 15th National Games. It had tremendous cross-regional popularity and internet influence over the event duration, drawing over 80,000 on-site attendees and generating over 3.2 billion live-stream views [14]. In addition to being Macau's first time hosting a major National Games event, the event increased local tourist and culture consumption and improved sports-tourism cooperation in the Greater Bay Area.

4. Practical Effects of the 15th National Games Table Tennis Event on Macau's Cultural and Tourism Consumption

With nearly 2 million people from Hong Kong and mainland China, the event increased Macau's culture and tourism consumption. Hotel occupancy in key regions increased to 92.7%, up 28.1 percentage points from the previous year. The business volume of catering and retail merchants around the venues increased by an average of 41.3% year-on-year, contributing to meaningful income growth for local small and medium-sized businesses [15].

Innovating the integration of "events+cultural tourism" consumption scenarios: The Macao competition area broke away from the traditional event organization model and constructed a full-chain integration model of "event viewing + experiential engagement + consumption". Relying on the core resources of the integration of Chinese and Western cultures in Macao, it launches a multi theme "watching+cultural tourism" characteristic route, links with local normalized cultural tourism festivals, realizes the two-way transformation of event traffic and cultural tourism consumption, and effectively extends the length of tourist stay and consumption chain [16].

Optimizing the city's cultural and tourism brand and unleashing long-term drainage effects: As a national top-level traffic IP, the event has built a national brand communication platform for Macau,

breaking the public's single perception of Macau's cultural and tourism, enhancing Macau's urban brand image as a sports tourism destination, and strengthening the diversified brand image of "sports+cultural and tourism" integration [17]. The cumulative exposure of related content on the entire network of the event exceeded 4.5 billion times, and the number of inbound leisure tourists from mainland China to Macao increased by 24.8% year-on-year in the first month following the event. The long-term drainage effect of the event is significant.

Through integrated ticketing, thematic routes, and simpler customs processing, Guangdong, Hong Kong, and Macao's collaborative staging of significant events at the Bay Area level has encouraged cross-regional market integration and the pooling of cultural and tourism resources. In order to improve its capacity to provide cultural and tourism services, Macao has trained more than 8,000 workers and upgraded venues, transportation, and smart service platforms at the local level.

5. Operational Bottlenecks of the 15th National Games Table Tennis Event (Macao Division)

5.1. Lack of Sustained Brand Operation and Venue Reuse

The operational focus was heavily concentrated on the hosting of the competition itself, with no systematic implementation plan established for the long-term operation of post-competition IP or the transformation of the event's legacy. Specifically, there is no reliance on the IP and venue resources of the 15th National Games to create an annual independent brand table tennis event. After the event, the venue continued to rely on traditional lease-based operations as its core model, with no development of regularized programming such as table tennis-themed education, sports training camps, or cultural tourism experiences; Co branded cultural and creative products, as well as themed cultural and tourism products, will only be launched for a short period of time during the competition, and there is no ongoing operational plan after the competition; No long-term cooperation mechanism has been established with mainland sports regulatory authorities and industry associations, and relevant cooperation will be terminated synchronously after the end of the event, highlighting the prominent feature of "one-time hosting" [14,16].

5.2. Superficial Sports–Cultural Tourism Integration

The competition and Macao's cultural and tourism resources have not yet formed a deep linkage, and are still in the shallow cooperation stage of "ticket packaging". The specific manifestation is that the launched "spectator+cultural tourism" route is only a simple bundle of event tickets and general scenic spot tickets, without developing exclusive immersive products that combine the attributes of table tennis events with the integration of Chinese and Western cultures in Macau, resulting in serious homogenization with cultural and tourism products in other regions of the National Games; The event scene has not been extended to core cultural and tourism nodes such as the Historic Center of Macao and Guanye Street, with only a supplementary experience zone established within the main venue, failing to achieve the goal of "comprehensive event hosting driving comprehensive visitor attraction across the city"; The secondary consumer products are only commemorative peripherals for basic events, and have not developed joint products with local souvenir and non heritage cultural and creative brands in Macau. There is almost no exclusive product for table tennis enthusiasts and family customers, and the consumption potential has not been fully explored.

5.3. Temporary Linkage and Driving Limitations

The Greater Bay Area's regional synergy remains underused, with cooperation still limited to temporary measures such as customs facilitation and joint ticketing rather than deeper cross-regional route development.. As a result, the interconnection of cross regional tourist resources and the co construction and sharing of cultural and tourism resources were not achieved, and the spillover effect of the coordinated development of transportation in the Greater Bay Area driven by the event was not

formed; In terms of customer source market structure, local and surrounding areas in the Pearl River Delta account for over 72% of the total inbound spectators during the event cycle, while the proportion of domestic core high-value customer sources such as the Yangtze River Delta and Beijing Tianjin Hebei is less than 18%. There are obvious shortcomings in the radiation range and drainage effect of the customer source market. The national brand attraction effect of the competition has not been fully released; The cross-border facilitation measures only take effect during the competition period and have not promoted the formation of a normalized mechanism for cross-border travel and consumption of sports, culture, and tourism after the competition.

5.4. Uneven Service Coverage and Limited Refinement

Event-related service resources were predominantly concentrated in the core urban area, resulting in insufficient distribution of the visitor flow benefits to peripheral cultural and tourism resources. The overall driving effect is insufficient, and there are multiple shortcomings in the implementation of refined services. Specifically, the traffic diversion routes and supporting services for the event are concentrated in the core areas of the Macau Peninsula and Taipa, while areas with rich cultural and tourism resources such as Coloane and outlying islands are not included in the event diversion system. During the event, the hotel occupancy rate and merchant turnover growth rate in this area are only 28% of those in the core areas, resulting in a serious imbalance in the overall driving effect; The connecting lines between venues and ports, as well as suburban scenic spots, only operate during peak hours of the competition, with a significant gap in schedules during non peak hours; The coverage rate of mobile payments for small and medium-sized merchants in mainland China is less than 60%, their Mandarin service capabilities are uneven, and the convenience of consumption for mainland tourists is insufficient; The barrier free facilities only cover the main venue, and the barrier free connections between surrounding connecting points and scenic spots are not in place, resulting in poor experience for special groups [14,15].

5.5. Insufficient Host–Guest Shared Ownership and Local Participation

The operational focus of the event was heavily oriented toward out-of-town spectators, leaving local residents with comparatively limited opportunities to participate in event-related activities. The concept of "national sports" has not been fully implemented, and the channels for local residents to participate are limited. Specifically, in the allocation of event tickets, over 82% of the tickets are sold through commercial channels. The high proportion of commercial ticket sales makes it difficult for some local residents to access viewing opportunities, thereby affecting the public cultural attributes of the event. The proportion of low-priced tickets and free tickets for public welfare aimed at local residents is less than 13%, and the threshold for ordinary local residents to watch the competition is relatively high; The supporting activities are only designed for foreign tourists, and there is a serious shortage of activities such as table tennis championship training camps, sports study tours, and fitness programs for local youth; The competition cultural and tourism products have not taken into account the daily leisure needs of local residents, failed to cultivate a local sports consumption atmosphere through competitions, and failed to form a two-way consumption drive of "local residents driving foreign tourists".

6. Conclusion

The 15th National Games Table Tennis Tournament (Macau Division) is a landmark practice of joint hosting by Guangdong, Hong Kong, and Macau. It not only successfully fulfilled the mandate of hosting a national-level sports event, but also directly stimulated growth in inbound visitor flows and tourism consumption in Macau, effectively breaking the public's single understanding of Macau's culture and tourism, deepening the coordinated linkage of culture and tourism in the Guangdong Hong Kong Macau Greater Bay Area, and providing important support for Macau's construction as a world tourism and leisure center.

However, the event still has a number of operational hurdles because of the lack of industrial base and competition expertise. These include the absence of a long-term intellectual property system, restricted host-guest interaction scenarios, transient regional coordination, weak integration of culture and tourism, and inadequate supporting services. According to research, persistent IP operation, better resource integration, and consistent regional coordination are necessary for the long-term cultural and tourism impact of sporting events.

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