

Digital Transformation of City Brands: Synergistic Mechanism of Cultural Output, Identity, and Brand Co-Construction Taking Harbin Ice and Snow World's Popularity as an Example

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Abstract

Taking the rapid rise of Harbin Ice and Snow World from its official opening on December 18, 2023, to the present day as an example, this article analyzes in depth the interactive relationship between Harbin Ice and Snow World and the construction of the city brand through multiple perspectives such as timeline, social media influence, cultural output, identity, and brand co-construction. The article aims to explore the successful experience of city brand construction in the digital era and puts forward the brand image suggestion of multiple co-construction. City branding faces new opportunities and challenges in the digital era, characterized by "short, flat, and fast" information dissemination. To have a footing in the river of the times, city branding needs to go upstream and take the initiative to carry out digital transformation. The synergistic mechanism of cultural output, identity, and brand building will be the key to the triumphant rise of the city. Taking Harbin Ice and Snow World as an example, we will delve into the rise of Harbin's city brand in the digital era. We will explore the synergistic mechanism of city branding in the digital era through multiple dimensions such as timeline, social media influence, cultural output, identity, and brand co-construction. In this process, the popularity of Harbin Ice and Snow World provides a typical case, which offers essential experience and inspiration for other cities in brand building in the digital era.

Keywords: Harbin Ice and Snow World, social media platform, cultural output, identity, brand co-construction

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INTRODUCTION

The hot event of Harbin Ice and Snow World originated from the fact that the Ice and Snow World, which was scheduled to open on December 18, 2023, opened for business one day earlier because of the enthusiasm of tourists, and as a result, 40,000 tourists poured in on the 17th day, which exceeded the carrying capacity of the park, resulting in many tourists queuing up for several hours in the low temperature of minus 20-30 degrees Celsius and unable to play, and so many tourists lined up in the low temperature of minus 20-30 degrees Celsius and could not play. After a few hours, they did not play, so the tourists shouted for a ticket refund. Harbin Ice and Snow World agreed to the refund request and promptly apologized and rectified the situation, quickly harvesting the solidarity of tourists and

netizens. Before New Year's Day 2024, the Harbin Municipal People's Government issued a "meet ice and snow, meet warm, not to be ashamed of the beauty of the scenery, not to be ashamed of the love - a letter to the people of the city," which sincerely said that it would be the first to be customer-oriented, customer-respectable, customer-friendly, customer-friendly, and called on the city's people to be the city's temperature transmitter, the city's honorary guardian, and the city's image spokesman, City beauty recommended officer, and accordingly made a series of arrangements. For example, to prevent skidding at the entrance to the underground passage by laying non-slip carpet, Ice World ferry traffic ticket-free cabs fast from the strict and heavy punishment for the phenomenon of ripping off customers. In order to enrich the experience of tourists, but also in Harbin City, Central Avenue, a new addition to the artificial moon, Pegasus ice (to the horse to install artificial wings), artificial phoenix (combination of intangible cultural heritage and modern flight chess), ice hot air balloon and other attractions, combined with the dietary differences between north and south of China to adjust the northeastern specialties in the form of food and drink, and even invited Ewenki with reindeer (China's ethnic minorities in the life of the custom), Oroqen with the Roe Deer Horn Hat (China's intangible cultural heritage) from the deep mountains to come to the Central Avenue to introduce the traditional culture of China's ethnic minorities and China's intangible cultural heritage to tourists from all over China and the world. According to the news released by Harbin People's Government, during the three-day holiday on New Year's Day, Harbin City received a total of 3,047,900 tourists and realized a total tourism income of RMB 5,914 million, with the number of tourists received and the total tourism income reaching a historical peak. January 5, 2024, the 40th China - Harbin International Ice Festival and France-China Culture and Tourism Year in Harbin Ice and Snow World opened, vigorously developing the characteristics of cultural tourism, carrying out winter ice and snow tourism "100 days of action", the snow and ice economy to do bigger and stronger, promote the snow and ice-related activities of the seven plates, more than a hundred snow and ice characteristics of the activities, involving tourism, economic and trade, fashion, and tourism and involving tourism, economic and trade, fashion, art, culture, the development of the whole industry chain. From the end of 2023, Harbin City, winter tourism fire out of the circle, more than a month of microblogging, shaking tone, fast hand, micro letter video number, and other new media platforms detonated the "Ice World Ice Slide," "southern small potato" (describing the southern region of China), "Guangxi small sugar cane," "Guangxi small sugar cane," "Guangxi small sugar cane," "Guangxi small sugar cane," "Guangxi small sugar cane" and so on. People are small in stature), "Guangxi small sugar orange" (named after the specialty of Guangxi province to the people of the province), "Oroqen out of the mountain," "Sofia artificial moon," "Frozen Pear Sashimi Plate," and nearly 100 other hot topics [2].

CO-CONSTRUCTION OF HARBIN'S CITY CARD

Harbin Ice and Snow World fire event for the contemporary urban spiritual civilization, business self-regulation norms, and government innovation services have a substantial reference value; as of January 28, 2024, Harbin's hotness is continuing, this traffic-level phenomenon behind the refraction of the current digital economy era of the ice and snow economy is hot. Northeastern people's bold character is not only in Harbin ice and snow tourism to show the most, but they want to attract tourists and keep tourists meticulous, which also impresses many tourists. Harbin City ice and snow tourism brand by the government, business, media, citizens, and netizens to build from the "media out of the circle" to "value co-creation," from "online out of the circle" to "offline attraction." From "media out of the circle" to "value co-creation," from "online out of the circle" to "offline diversion," leaving not only the travelers for Harbin ice and snow tourism good reputation but the whole city to focus on the city's cohesion of the co-built brand image.

Government

A year in Advance for the City Brand Publicity Layout

Heilongjiang Provincial Department of Culture and Tourism one year in advance with the help of Internet thinking, the use of new media platforms for multi-dimensional publicity in Heilongjiang Province while inviting the head of the cultural and tourism blogger, for the ice and snow tourism in Heilongjiang Province, attracting traffic, planning a lot of high-flow IPS, such as "truant penguins," "singing in Heilongjiang" to promote the city brand image, and the whole city focuses on building a cohesive city brand image. The "Heilongjiang in the song" (Live local theme music at high-speed rail stations and airports) to stimulate the tourism market in Heilongjiang. Think like a tourist. At the same time, pay attention to the comment area of the video released on the Internet platform, and make timely rectifications according to the needs and opinions of tourists, such as building a warm room according to the feedback of tourists on the cold weather, and fancy tasting frozen pears in Northeast China's specialties. They are moving tourists away from the details so they can spontaneously share a comfortable experience on the Internet platform.

Launching Policies to Serve Tourists

1. Harbin City issued the "Initiative to Enhance the Service Quality of the Catering and Accommodation Industry" on December 20, 2023. At the same time, in the symposium held by the Harbin Municipal Government for two consecutive days on January 1 and January 2, 2024, it was pointed out that operating enterprises should not excessively float prices, blindly adjust prices, or falsely mark up prices to safeguard the rights and interests of consumers at a time when the market is heating up.
2. Harbin Railway Bureau Group and other groups to jointly build China's top high-quality tourist train, "Lindu7 No.", covering the bar, Chinese and Western restaurants, tea rooms, meeting rooms, specialty product exhibition halls, children's playrooms, libraries, medical rooms, and other multi-functional compartments, the tourist train from Harbin to the snow town of Yichun, for tourists to bring a variety of ice and snow! Tourism experience.
3. The ice and snow line opening, customized buses, and fixed-point feeder lines, of which the feeder line can be free of charge. At the same time, the last bus time of 7 lines was extended by 1 hour. During the ice and snow season, we will continue to open customized bus lines and chartered bus services according to the public travel routes and the number of people to determine the price, and the Harbin Municipal People's Government website stipulates the base price.
4. Due to many tourists coming to Harbin City to play, Harbin City people's government service center is exceptionally open to the public to receive tourists and keep the original price.
5. Set up significant postcard punching points in Harbin city attractions with a high flow of people to increase the sense of fun and culture.
6. Additional facilities for the convenience and benefit of the people. Harbin Railway Station, by the temperature difference between the establishment of several changing rooms, according to the number of tourists to increase the number of exit gates, according to the needs of tourists traveling in the attractions and more crowded areas set up free luggage storage.
7. The Heilongjiang Department of Commerce and the commerce authorities of 13 cities invited visitors to a banquet with free king crab and other local specialties.

Emergency Response Capabilities in Place for Critical Incidents

In the face of tourists' reaction to the local tours with different charges for uniform services and non-transparent prices for some special activities, the relevant departments of Harbin City required that all travel price guides be made public and in the face of netizens reacted to the high price of reporting tours without enjoying the corresponding level of service and the rapid organization of the relevant staff to carry out investigations after the travel agency's other suspected violations of the law to file an investigation. Moreover, all violations of the illegal operation of the travel agency to revoke the business license of the illegal operation of the travel agency and the closure of the store for rectification, the travel agency did not have problems with the implementation of incentive policies.

Citizens

Creating Topics and Stimulating Heat

Harbin citizens are doing their best to publish on social platforms about Harbin travel tips and food reviews, wear warm guides, write songs to make vlogs to promote Harbin, and the local gymnasium dudes to go to the crowded commercial streets to welcome the arrival of tourists. Harbin people who were not in their hometown also took to the streets to pull banners, dressed in northeastern specialties to invite guests from all over the world to travel to Harbin, and called on Harbin people to publicize their hometown in their own way. Harbin is a fascinating tourist destination and one of the most eye-catching landscapes. Oroqen people living in the northeast with precious elk horn hats, and Ewenki people with reindeer went to the street to popularize minority culture traditions; here, in a short time, successfully created a topic that triggered the secondary dissemination of the nation's netizens and the media, which carries its sustained attention. Various inconveniences are inevitable in traveling, but Harbin citizens fully consider the urgent needs of tourists so that all kinds of good deeds naturally gain the likes, comments, and retweets of all citizens, forming a social resonance.

Volunteerism and Hospitality

Northeastern people have always been known as warm and bold. Since a large number of tourists came to Harbin, many Harbin citizens volunteered to take to the streets to transport foreign tourists free of charge; there are also some enthusiastic citizens for tourists to prepare warm baby stickers, hot water, and other warm items, standing in the tourist's point of view to maximize the solution to the tourists because of the temperature problem, the traffic problem caused by the inconvenience. This warm-hearted behavior not only touched the foreign tourists but also infected more people to join them. A northeastern brother in the Internet platform to share his free transportation of two tourists from other provinces returned home when the local specialties sent, these were responded to and passed on the goodwill has also improved the image and charm of the city of Harbin. Harbin citizens also bring their own 50,000 gold Northeast specialty Wu Chang rice to give to tourists for free in places with high traffic.

Merchants

Give Local Characteristics to Products

The bakery designs desserts based on the Sofia Cathedral in Harbin and frozen pears, a northeastern specialty.

Cultural Marketing and Joint Promotion

Harbin Culture and Tourism and the Hungry Money takeaway platform jointly launched promotional activities; for example, when ordering milk tea takeaway on the Hungry Money platform, the cup sleeve of its package is the city postal postcard of Harbin.

AR Technology to Show Local Charm

The refrigerator stickers designed by the merchants according to the landmark buildings in Harbin are exquisite in appearance, and the production of the refrigerator stickers adopts AR technology, and dynamic images can be seen by scanning with cell phones.

Media

Local Media and High-Traffic IPs Build a Communication Matrix

Local media do not cover up or condone adverse reports and conduct continuous tracking reports, which coincidentally dispel public doubts. They announce the results and solutions for the first time and use in-depth reports as crisis PR for city brand communication and a platform to show local government's working attitude and efficiency.

Official Media: Harbin's New Image of Tourism Attracted Attention and Support

Xinhua News Agency launched a "live view of Harbin," and the People's Daily released a series of

short videos to publicize the stereotypical impression of Harbin City. CCTV News also reported a long time of Harbin snow and ice tourism. Harbin tourism fire is not a flash in the pan but a thick and thin hair. Harbin city tourism bursts on fire, with everyone's warmth and support, to wake up the economic development of the northeast region.

Strong Combination of Different Media to Make Happiness Meaningful

Happiness is short-lived, but official media, local media in Harbin City, and self-media bloggers have joined together to publicize the Seventy-third Japanese Invasion Army Crime Evidence Exhibition Hall in Harbin City so that more Chinese tourists and tourists from all over the world can learn about the history. This touching power will deepen the memories of the tourists.

Netizens

A netizen shared his incident of eating 13 slices of pot-boiled pork for 68 RMB on an internet platform, which was then followed by local netizens, who came forward to accuse the business people of overpriced food and to jointly defend the characteristics of Northeastern cuisine that is large in quantity and affordable. Many netizens have said that Harbin Travel is pleased and does not want to leave. Harbin City's ice and snow tourism explosion is disguised as an illustration of everyone in the hearts and minds of society, in the heart of the desire for sincere, true feelings and expectations of their hometown's beautiful development.

As China's CCTV news said, the explosion of Harbin's ice and snow tourism is not a flash in the pan but a momentum. Cities that want to develop with tourism, in addition to the infrastructure to do so under the premise, also need to take advantage of the digital age platform and convenience, standing in the audience's point of view to do long-term planning. When the hotspot is formed, it is necessary to grasp the hotspot, follow the trend, deploy all the forces for the quality of the city's brand, stand on the stage, the attitude of the local official departments as the tone of the whole city brand communication, but also the most critical link. In the era of information redundancy, how to keep the heat for city brand communication is worth studying in depth.

MULTI-DIMENSIONAL DESIGN OF CITY BRANDING MODEL

For non-traditional tourist cities with low visibility and lacking traditional tourist attractions, it is easy for the media to "get out of the loop" but challenging to form a sustained and stable destination brand image (Sun et al.; D. G., 2024) [1]. According to Quest Mobile data, in 2023 sustained recovery, China's mobile Internet monthly active user scale has exceeded 1.224 billion, and the whole network monthly per capita use time is close to 160 hours. In the era of the digital economy, the Internet platform is known as an essential platform for the construction and promotion of a city's brand image. Both officials and individuals can participate in city brand building and carry out all-round, multi-angle, and high-exposure brand communication based on their advantages. When the longest planks in each barrel are assembled to form a new barrel, the communication value and influence of the city brand will be further expanded. The government's macro layout, netizens' proposed hotspots, business people's improved services, and citizens' enthusiastic participation have continuously triggered a new round of netizens' hotspots, thus formed a virtuous cycle and bringing more positive effects to the image and development of the city (Fan et al., 2023).

Multi-Subjects to Build a Communication Matrix

Harbin ice and snow tourism fire is no accident; the local authorities a year in advance to publicize the layout, with the help of Internet thinking, standing in the audience's point of view to do long-term planning in a multi-dimensional way to publicize the city's image. At the same time, the plan layout also involves a city's industry and commerce, culture and tourism, transportation, and other sectors.

Netizens, businesses, and local citizens participate in creating Harbin's city brand. Netizens share travel tips and travel strategies; businesses give local characteristics to their products and unique cultural

elements to the city's image; and local citizens participate in the city's publicity on their initiative, with a strong sense of identity and social responsibility that contributes to the city's branding with a greater sense of community and warmth.

Multi-party participation in the construction of the city brand injected vital humanistic factors, with the publicity and promotion of the city brand, the city's reputation, and visibility, not only to attract tourists, the development of tourism but also to attract investors to promote economic development to create suitable conditions.

Government-Wise Publicity: Planning Agenda Setting with Audience Preferences

The local government systematically prepares communication programs one year in advance, plans different hot events, and systematically introduces specific topics to the public. At the same time, it releases information about ice and snow tourism on many channels of new media platforms to arouse the audience's attention to related issues and preemptively grasp the initiative of topic discourse. At the same time, head bloggers as opinion leaders are invited to act as critical intermediaries in communicating the city brand, utilizing their reputation, credibility, and influence to influence the audience's attitudes and perceptions more directly and efficiently.

Integration of Commodities and Local Culture to Establish Emotional Links

Cultural consumption is a sustainable consumption that effectively promotes brands (Walmsley et al., 2021) [3]. The core driving element of cultural consumption willingness is cultural identity (Zhang et al., 2020) [4]. Cultural identity can directly contribute to consumer purchasing behavior decisions (Peng Yuxin, 2018), influencing consumers' brand preference and purchase intention (Khan et al. M., 2022) [6] and repurchase intention (Liu F. & Ju Changzhi (2022) [4].

As one of the essential participants in the construction of city brands, merchants are the key promoters of consumer experience. By profoundly integrating local cultural elements, merchants are the providers of products and the creators of brand stories. At the same time, they have successfully created unique local imprints for their brands and improved brand recognition and cognition in consumers' minds. Combined with AR VR technology to improve the aesthetics, novelty, and usage of goods, local characteristics can not only give uniqueness to the goods but also establish emotional links in the minds of consumers, making it easier to strengthen the goodwill of the city brand, thus forming a positive purchasing experience and touching the emotional resonance of consumers [5].

Social Experience in the Digital Economy: Identity and Emotional Resonance

By posting UGC content on Internet platforms, providing practical and reliable travel advice for other tourists, and sharing their travel experiences, resonance and interaction are formed, influencing a wider audience. Under the relevant topics, the sharing and interaction between netizens is not just a simple information transfer but a unique social experience in the digital economy, generating identity and recognition of the city brand and, at the same time, prompting more people to join in the topic discussion, forming a continuous social interaction.

WOM is considered a fundamental human behavior and a tool to disseminate information that may impact business (Berger et al. M, 2011) [8]. The honest feedback from ordinary citizens on the Internet platform is strongly personalized and emotional, and this kind of word-of-mouth communication tends to gain the trust of others more efficiently, thus its audience's interest and curiosity in Harbin's ice and snow tourism, as well as playing an essential role in consumer decision-making. The dissemination of video content related to local citizens wearing northeastern specialty clothing and the introduction of local ethnic minorities to cultural history on the Internet platform demonstrates a strong sense of regional identity while reinforcing the citizens' identity and forming cultural resonance on the social platform. By jointly tracing and passing on the city's cultural elements, citizens build a deep-seated cultural connection on the social platform, providing strong support for city branding [10].

Media Gatekeeping: A Key Link in City Brand Communication

By tracking the negative feedback, the media is conducive to dissolving the public's misgivings about ice and snow tourism in the first instance and releasing solutions and results promptly. In this process, the media assumes the role of filtering and guiding, ensuring that positive information is more likely to be disseminated and forming a positive image of the city brand. Emphasize the upbeat, positive aspects. This helps to break down negative impressions and guide the public to form a more positive perception of the city brand. By cooperating with high-traffic IPs and building a communication matrix, it maintains the diversity of communication content, expands the audience range, and accelerates the construction of the city's brand image.

SUGGESTIONS FOR CITY BRAND COMMUNICATION

Ice and snow tourism has seasonal limitations while constructing and maintaining the city brand is a continuous and long-lasting process. Before the heat of the hotspot fades, it is necessary to seize the opportunity to transform the high-traffic IP into city branding and city brand assets at this juncture. As the most recognizable and iconic factor of ice and snow tourism in Harbin, how to combine culture, history, and art in city branding in the era of digital economy and create urban hot topics through social media to make it a key pillar of city branding. This paper puts forward the following suggestions:

Improve the Ability of Public Opinion Perception and Leverage the Strengths of the City

People in the Web 3.0 era have limited attention spans and are prone to visual fatigue in the face of overloaded information content. The hotspots on the Internet platform are generated and disseminated every moment; compared with the planning of the local departments of Harbin City one year in advance, improving the ability to perceive public opinion and capture the ability is imperative. As the main body to grasp the hotspot, the government needs a news literacy team, whether crisis public relations or hotspot dissemination. Leveraging the power to play can help the city brand building.

Enriching City Brand Experience Through Digital Technology

City brand equity in the digital era emphasizes more on the multiple interactions between brands and consumers and between consumers and consumers (Wang et al.,2020) [9]. Digital technology also provides new experiences for the elderly, young children, and people with disabilities who have difficulty traveling [7].

In the digital economy, city branding will enhance the traveler's experience through several innovative initiatives. First, through Virtual Reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR) technologies, travelers can immerse themselves in the city's history, culture, and landscapes without being physically present through virtual reality glasses or mobile apps, thus increasing anticipation before traveling. Second, artificial intelligence (AI) technology will be introduced to develop intelligent tour guide services, including voice assistants, intelligent Q&A systems, and personalized suggestions, to tailor travel routes and activities according to tourists' interests and preferences. Provide virtual experience activities, such as city cultural exhibitions, art performances, and food festivals, through online platforms so that tourists can participate via the Internet and experience the city's unique cultural atmosphere while enhancing their identity with the city's brand. Use digital technology to improve the urban transportation experience by providing real-time traffic information and navigation services and ensuring that accessibility to public transportation and tourist attractions is effectively managed and promoted digitally. In addition, by enhancing the interactive experience on social media platforms, including real-time live streaming, interactive polling, and virtual challenges, tourists will be inspired to participate actively participate actively, thereby expanding the reach of the city brand. This series of initiatives will enable more forward-looking city branding and create a richer, more personalized travel experience for the modern traveler.

Digitization of City Brand Assets

In the digital age, Ice and Snow World can deepen its key supporting role in ice and snow tourism in Harbin City by constructing an online ice and snow experience through holographic projection, virtual

reality (VR), and augmented reality (AR). Digitalize and promote its culture and activities to maintain a continuous presence by organizing virtual ice and snow festivals, online interactions, and other online activities through social media and leveraging digital communities and user-generated content (UGC) to expand its reach and integrate online and offline branding, making it a core component of the digital promotion of ice and snow tourism in Harbin City. This integrated digital strategy will help Ice and Snow World give full play to its role as a critical pillar of city branding in the digital economy.

Digital Narrative to Increase City Brand Connotation

Digital storytelling is also a key component. A digital storytelling series can be launched through the online platform to tell the historical legends, cultural symbols, and artistic elements behind the Great Ice and Snow World. These digital stories can better convey the city's unique charm and trigger tourists' interest and identification with the city's culture. Satisfying consumers' cultural and national self-confidence enhances social value, thus enhancing the city brand equity from cognitive, emotional, and behavioral levels and promoting consumer behavior (Shang Guanghui,2023)

In the era of digital economy, digital artworks can also be developed to integrate the Great Ice World into the overall construction of the city brand through artistic expression. This includes digital art exhibitions, virtual art performances, etc., providing visitors with a unique digital cultural experience while expanding its visibility in the digital space through sharing on social media platforms.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this case study of Harbin Ice and Snow World illustrates the powerful synergy between cultural output, identity, and brand co-construction in the digital transformation of city brands. By leveraging its unique cultural heritage of ice and snow, Harbin has successfully positioned itself as a global destination through innovative digital strategies. We will investigate the cooperative process of city branding in the digital age by examining several factors, including social media influence, cultural production, identity, and co-construction of brands.

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