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### The Basic Dimension and Innovative Path of Chinese-Style Modernization Leading the High-Quality Development of the Sports Tourism Industry

Zhicheng Zhang, Ling Zhang\*, Yang Yang

Guangdong University of Foreign Studies, Guangzhou 510440, Guangdong, China

\*Author to whom correspondence should be addressed.

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Abstract: Sports is an important carrier of modernization, tourism is a "bridge" for world communication, and it is "the right thing to do" to lead the high-quality development of the sports and tourism industry with Chinese-style modernization in an all-round way. This paper analyzes the high-quality development of the sports tourism industry from five dimensions: practical foundation, development goal, value orientation, development concept, and development direction. The paper reveals that modernization oriented toward a large population is the basic feature, common prosperity is the fundamental goal, the coordination of material and spiritual civilization is the intrinsic pursuit, harmonious coexistence with nature is the guiding principle, and peaceful development is the defining value of this era. Despite these advantages, China's sports tourism industry still faces challenges such as mismatched supply and demand, obstacles to achieving common prosperity, insufficient coordination of material and spiritual development, limited ecological benefits, and a lack of international influence. To address these issues, this paper proposes building a people-oriented modernization system, fostering innovation and coordinated development, emphasizing cultural heritage, promoting green development, and constructing platforms for multilateral cooperation and mutual understanding.

Keywords: Chinese-style modernization; Sports tourism industry; High-quality development

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#### 1. Introduction

The report of the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC) set out a comprehensive blueprint for national rejuvenation through Chinese-style modernization <sup>[1]</sup>. The President of the CPC emphasized that high-quality development is the central task in building a modern socialist country <sup>[2]</sup>. High-quality development is not only the core requirement of Chinese-style modernization but also the practical path to achieving it. As a new integration of the sports and tourism industries, the sports tourism industry is reshaping consumption, driving industrial restructuring, and supporting socioeconomic modernization <sup>[3]</sup>. To

meet the demands of this new era, the sports tourism industry must integrate with the broader goals of Chinese modernization and pursue high-quality, innovative development.

While recent academic interest in "Chinese-style modernization" has grown, systematic studies focusing specifically on its essential implications for the high-quality development of the sports tourism industry remain limited. Current research mainly addresses the new development paradigm, new quality productive forces, digital economy, consumption upgrading, and rural revitalization [4-8]. This is to address the practical challenges in this process, aiming to provide useful recommendations for China's sports tourism sector. Based on this, this paper explains the background, connotation and basic dimensions of the era of Chinese-style modernization to lead the high-quality development of sports tourism industry, and further puts forward innovative paths to address the reality of the stagnation faced by the sports tourism industry in the process of advancing the Chinese-style modernization, with a view to providing advice for the high-quality development of China's sports tourism industry.

### 2. Reality foundation of the high-quality development of the sports tourism industry led by Chinese-style modernization

### 2.1. The basic connotation of Chinese-style modernization

Chinese-style modernization refers to modernization with Chinese socialist characteristics, guided by the leadership of the Communist Party of China (CPC), and is rich in meaning. First, it is rooted in the reality of China's large population, which brings both significant challenges and abundant human resources as well as broad market potential. Second, a core objective is the achievement of common prosperity, which not only seeks material abundance but also ensures equitable access to education, healthcare, sports, culture, and tourism—making shared prosperity a core feature of China's development [10]. Third, Chinese-style modernization stresses the balance between material and spiritual civilization. Economic growth is supported by cultural construction and the cultivation of core socialist values, enhancing citizens' moral and scientific qualities. Fourth, harmonious coexistence between humanity and nature is essential; China upholds green development, practices environmentally responsible growth, and seeks synergy between economic progress and ecological protection. Finally, the path of peaceful development is a key attribute: China emphasizes an independent foreign policy of peace, multilateral cooperation, and actively contributes to global governance, advocating the building of a community with a shared future for mankind while offering Chinese wisdom and solutions to global challenges [11].

### 2.2. The basic interpretation of the high-quality development of the sports tourism industry

The sports tourism industry is a social and economic sector that develops through the deep integration of sports and tourism, creating a unique industry chain distinguished from other tourism types [12]. It is characterized by attributes such as regional specificity, openness, inclusivity, attractiveness, and seasonality. The industry includes high-end sports clubs, theme parks, sports tourism towns, competitive sporting events, and leisure festivals, and operates through the interaction of markets, enterprises, consumers, and resources. Typical manifestations involve stadium tours, sports event tourism, and outdoor sports and leisure activities [13].

At the macro level, China's sports tourism industry has shifted from a phase of rapid growth to one of high-quality development. The sector now aims to support the building of a strong sports nation and the broader task of socialist modernization. This requires addressing the evolving consumption demands of the population, deepening supply-side reforms, upgrading industrial structure, and ensuring simultaneous improvements in economic, social, and ecological benefits. On a micro level, the emphasis is on supplying high-quality products and services to

stimulate domestic consumption and create a virtuous cycle of production and consumption.

In adapting to the new development landscape, China's sports tourism industry is working to align with international standards by participating in global rule-making and international sports event cooperation. By fostering international competitiveness, enhancing infrastructure, developing resources, and advancing policy frameworks, the industry seeks not only to strengthen its position in the global market but also to stimulate domestic industry growth and open a new chapter in high-quality sports tourism development.

### 2.3. Connotation of Chinese-style modernization leading the high-quality development of the sports tourism industry

Chinese-style modernization has provided both the foundation and direction for the high-quality development of the sports tourism industry. The large population offers a robust market base, requiring a continued focus on people-centered approaches that enhance public health and increase citizens' sense of gain, happiness, and participation. Since the 18th CPC National Congress, the sports tourism industry in China has achieved significant milestones, notably in poverty alleviation and rural revitalization, which underscore the industry's role in improving livelihoods and ensuring that development outcomes are widely shared. For instance, rural sports tourism projects such as the Liupanshui Noyu Hai International Mountain Tourism Resort in Guizhou have greatly expanded local economic benefits and raised incomes, with the industry now comprising a substantial share of the local economy. Furthermore, integrating sports tourism with culture is crucial for advancing both industry modernization and the promotion of socialist values, thereby strengthening the spiritual vitality of society. The sports tourism industry also serves as a key area for energy conservation and emission reduction, fostering green, low-carbon, and environmentally friendly development. This encourages environmental awareness, helps protect natural resources, and supports the creation of an ecological society. Additionally, the industry contributes to national diplomacy by showcasing China's openness, confidence, and inclusiveness. Major events such as the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics have enhanced international exchange, strengthening understanding and cooperation between Chinese civilization and the rest of the world through the platform of sports tourism.

# 3. Chinese modernization to lead the sports tourism industry high-quality development of the reality of obstacles

Based on the basic dimension of Chinese-style modernization leading the high-quality development of the industry, and taking "problem-oriented" as the analytical paradigm, the high-quality sports tourism industry is still facing the problems of poor matching of the industry's supply and demand structure in the process of Chinese-style modernization, obstacles to driving the common prosperity of the whole people, insufficient coordination of the development of material and spiritual civilization, insufficient ecological benefits, and low carbon emissions. The quality of the sports tourism industry still faces such practical difficulties as the lack of matching of the industry's supply and demand structure, the obstacle of promoting the common prosperity of all people, the lack of a coordinated development system to promote material and spiritual civilization, the lack of ecological benefits and the risk of low-carbon transformation, and the lack of the right to speak out for peaceful development.

### 3.1. Inadequate matching of industry supply and demand structure

First, the scale and quantity of sports tourism supply are insufficient. (1) Industrial development and operational efficiency remain low, with many projects showing strong seasonality. Off-peak periods often result in resource

waste and increased costs <sup>[15]</sup>. For example, ski resorts in northeastern China typically operate only around 100 days during the snow season, with most closing in summer; fewer than 10% remain active off-season, reflecting weak year-round utilization. (2) Sports tourism products are overly uniform and lack diversity. Most offerings focus on performance or viewing experiences, while experiential products remain underdeveloped. For instance, only 10% of Qinghai's tourism resources have been developed—mainly for sightseeing. Participatory activities like rock climbing, rafting, and outdoor adventures target mainly young people, limiting audience reach and market growth. Second, the quality of sports tourism products and services needs improvement <sup>[16]</sup>. (1) The industry lacks innovative momentum and quality-oriented growth. Development still emphasizes quantity over quality, superficial form over substantive content, and short-term gains over long-term planning. These issues contribute to product homogenization, lagging innovation, and weak market influence. (2) Service quality is insufficient, with outdated government mindsets, low managerial standards, and poor service attitudes still prevalent. For example, in western China, departments related to sports, culture, and tourism maintain traditional service concepts. Although the region possesses unique tourism resources, the limited service awareness of personnel has significantly constrained the development of the local sports tourism industry.

#### 3.2. Industry to drive the common prosperity of all people still faces obstacles

Firstly, the development foundation of the sports tourism industry is relatively weak. Factors such as improper policy management, outdated development concepts, and external environmental pressures have significantly affected this environmentally sensitive and crowded industry, revealing structural fragility and limiting its ability to meet the public's growing demand for health and leisure tourism [17]. Although high-end products should drive industry growth, the current model still relies on extensive, low-end development—positioned at the bottom of the "smile curve." Growth depends mainly on traditional factors like labor, land, and capital, while technological innovation remains insufficient, making it difficult to support the vision of common prosperity. Secondly, regional development is uneven. (1) China's sports tourism is mostly concentrated in areas rich in natural resources, such as mountains for marathons, hiking, and rock climbing; coasts for surfing and diving; and snow regions for skiing and skating [18]. However, in places with strong cultural or red-revolutionary heritage, local governments and enterprises have yet to effectively explore the potential of sports tourism. (2) Infrastructural limitations and underdeveloped transportation networks in central and western regions hinder activity expansion. For example, although Yunnan boasts vast mountain resources suitable for diverse sports tourism projects, it has only one national demonstration base, and poor connectivity between sites makes access difficult. Thirdly, the supply of public products for sports tourism is inadequate. Public products are vital for ensuring social welfare and promoting shared prosperity, yet the supply remains insufficient given China's population size [19]. Medical, educational, and health-related services related to sports tourism are limited, failing to meet tourist needs. Moreover, tourism and sports departments often operate in isolation, lacking integration with land use, transportation, environmental protection, and health systems. This disconnect results in low-quality public service provision across the sector.

### 3.3. Poor industrial material and spiritual civilization development system

First, lack of cultural roots. Although China strongly supports sports tourism at the policy level and massive capital input provides short-term momentum, overreliance on policy and capital without gradual cultural cultivation leads to a "distorted" industry lacking cultural depth. For example, red sports tourism, despite efforts to revive old revolutionary areas through historical storytelling, revolutionary spirit learning, and military sports experiences,

suffers from insufficient cultural excavation, weak transformation of sports and cultural resources, limited revitalization of revolutionary culture, stereotypical educational promotion, and monotonous military sports programs <sup>[20]</sup>. Second, a lack of humanistic heritage. While themed towns such as "soccer town", "ice town", and "marathon town" flourished briefly, they often focused solely on natural resource development under the "sports town" banner, neglecting integration with local traditions, customs, and cultural identity. For instance, marathons across regions show little variation beyond geography; course design, marketing, activities, and event culture remain homogeneous, failing to incorporate local landscapes or historical heritage. As a result, marathon tourism struggles to reflect distinctive cultural traits, falling short in combining the spiritual experience of "running" with the material culture of "watching."

### 3.4. Insufficient industrial eco-efficiency and the risk of low-carbon transformation

First, the ecological benefits of the industry are insufficient. Sports tourism relies heavily on the natural environment—such as coastal, mountain, and ice-snow ecosystems—yet enterprises often fail to manage ecological impacts effectively. Overdevelopment, pollution, and industrial waste have damaged ecosystems, while weak environmental awareness and poor implementation of ecological protection have delayed the sector's ecological advancement, resulting in a clear imbalance between economic gains and ecological sustainability. Secondly, the transformation toward low-carbon development faces significant obstacles. (1) The industry lacks a sound low-carbon development system. As a green health sector, sports tourism still struggles with product R&D, market building, consumer education, and technology application. A comprehensive low-carbon chain—spanning the market, enterprises, consumers, and society—has yet to be established. (2) There is also a lack of consensus on low-carbon development. Key areas fail to adopt an ecological economics perspective in analyzing industry trends. Enterprises, markets, and governments show limited awareness of low-carbon principles, and mechanisms such as market incentives, enterprise innovation, and government coordination remain underdeveloped. This hinders the industry's ability to align with ecological civilization goals and limits progress toward sustainable, low-carbon transformation.

### 3.5. Lack of discourse power of the industry to promote peaceful development

First, affected by public health events, the development of sports tourism came to a standstill. In particular, the COVID-19 outbreak disrupted the global sports tourism market chain. International tourism was severely impacted by health control measures such as border screenings, travel restrictions, goods circulation limitations, and public venue closures. International dialogue and exchanges in the sports tourism industry were also suspended. In the face of such emergencies, China's sports tourism safety system still faces uncertainty and instability. How to ensure smoother, broader, and more convenient international exchanges and how to play a pivotal role in global tourism cooperation have become key issues for the high-quality development of the industry.

Secondly, there remains a gap between the scale of China's sports tourism industry and the international tourism market. In 2021, China's sports tourism market reached nearly 1.3 trillion yuan with a 30% annual growth rate, showing a "blowout" trend. However, it accounted for just over 5% of the total tourism market, compared to about 25% in developed countries [21]. This reflects the limited scale of China's sports tourism relative to global standards. Although China actively promotes initiatives like the "Bilateral Tourism Year" and the "Belt and Road" sports tourism program to encourage cultural exchange and cooperation, there is still significant room for improvement in international engagement—particularly in participation, rule-making, cooperation in international sports events, alignment with global market demands, and the cultivation of international competitiveness in the sports tourism sector.

## 4. Innovative path of Chinese modernization to lead the sports tourism industry to high quality

### 4.1. Put people first and build a modernized development system with humanistic care

First, a people-centered approach should guide the rational structuring of supply and demand in the sports tourism industry to expand product quantity and scale. The government should promote scientific planning, institutional innovation, and market-driven mechanisms to optimize resource allocation, integrate related sectors, and foster industrial clustering. Emphasizing the synergy of sports, tourism, industry, and culture, efforts should align with digital economy trends by using big data to analyze consumer preferences, segment the market, and offer diversified, personalized services. Second, product quality must be improved through humanistic care by developing distinctive, high-end brands and enhancing service professionalism. Enterprises should adopt a "consumer-centered" philosophy, build strong service teams through training and incentives, and establish systems that support recruitment, empowerment, and brand cultivation, ensuring the industry's high-quality and sustainable development.

# 4.2. Construct a development mechanism of innovation, coordination, and solidarity with the core of promoting common prosperity

First, innovation and openness drive high-quality development of the sports tourism industry. Guided by the "14th Five-Year" Digital Economy Development Plan, the industry should pursue digitization and tech-driven transformation. Integrating Internet technologies into products and services reshapes the value chain based on resource attributes, functions, and market positioning. Digital tools analyzing consumer needs enable differentiated production, flexible marketing, and personalized services [22]. Leveraging big data, IoT, AI, cloud, and edge computing further boosts innovation. For example, Beijing Olympic Park uses digital tech for access control, parking, navigation, and data collection to enhance the tourist experience.

Second, coordination and sharing optimize the industrial structure. A multi-level collaboration mechanism should attract social capital via PPP models and investment-return systems, fostering integration, clustering, and regional growth through a "point-to-surface" strategy. Prioritizing infrastructure upgrades—transportation, roads, water, and power—is essential. Technological tools should improve supply-demand coordination by enhancing monitoring, early warning, and resource allocation. Efficient transportation and storage networks enable cross-regional and cross-industry resource sharing, promoting market development.

Third, unity and dedication enhance public product quality. The government should relax controls on relevant social organizations and encourage their participation in public product supply through service procurement and cultivation. A "co-construction and sharing" model involving governments, enterprises, and residents should ensure equitable involvement and benefits. A management committee of officials, organizations, and residents should oversee governance, safeguard public welfare, and continuously improve product quality.

### 4.3. Based on highlighting the cultural heritage to satisfy the inner yearning of spiritual civilization

First, efforts should be made to fully develop red sports resources, highlight cultural heritage, and leverage these resources to promote old revolutionary areas. This includes strategic planning of red sports tourism images, integrating national red sports resources, selecting key scenic spots, and introducing curated routes. The connotation of red sports tourism products should be enriched by emphasizing historical heritage, local traits, and contemporary characteristics to vividly convey the revolutionary spirit to consumers. Additionally, old revolutionary areas should actively transform red sports tourism resources into industrial and economic advantages

by developing the industry, collecting revolutionary culture, restoring memorial halls and war sites, and achieving coordinated social and economic benefits. Second, promote the integration of social, humanistic heritage, and sports tourism resources. The government should guide enterprises to deepen their understanding of humanistic heritage by tapping into regional traditional sports culture, festivals, and fitness resources to highlight distinctive living heritage. Leveraging local human resources, these cultural elements should synergize with modern development needs to shape the characteristics of contemporary sports tourism. Moreover, respecting ethnic cultural customs and protecting ethnic traits, sports projects should combine ethnic culture with modern elements, ensuring both cultural preservation and reasonable development.

### 4.4. Practice ecological civilization construction with a solid green development concept as synergy

First, government, enterprises, markets, and consumers must embrace a strong green development concept. High-quality sports tourism development depends on ecological protection, optimized industry structure, cohesion, and improved ecological efficiency [23]. Governments should strengthen green cooperation, guide sustainable policies, and research market trends. Enterprises need to embed green values, invest in low-carbon R&D, promote resources, and foster healthy competition via exchange platforms. Markets should establish low-carbon regulations that monitor emissions through tracking and compensation, reducing emissions across all stages. Consumers should follow green consumption guidelines, supported by incentive systems to boost engagement and awareness.

Second, national and local authorities should advance ecological civilization in sports tourism by innovating low-carbon technologies to break technical barriers. Top-level design must develop aligned regulations, standards, and certification systems. Local governments should conduct expert eco-efficiency assessments for targeted improvements. Science and technology integration with sports tourism enterprises should accelerate green innovation and adoption of technologies like carbon reduction and sequestration, enabling low-energy, low-carbon development.

### 4.5. Build a multilateral exchange and mutual understanding platform with the purpose of promoting common construction and sharing

The high-quality development of the sports tourism industry should serve as a global link for interconnection, promoting shared construction and mutual benefits. Deepening the "Belt and Road" strategy and advancing "bilateral tourism cooperation" will build a multilateral exchange and cooperation system, contributing to China's strength, offering Chinese solutions, and enhancing international sports and cultural exchanges. Firstly, China should leverage its "double-cycle" development pattern to coordinate domestic and international sports tourism resources, orderly restoring tourism flows. Government agencies must relax restrictions on international participation while managing public health risks, providing benefits such as visa-free transit, safety guidance, tour assistance, and cultural explanations. Secondly, "Chinese characteristic" sports tourism products should be expanded internationally to form a high-quality development pattern, fostering domestic and global industry growth.

Second, China should provide solutions for global sports tourism sharing. Embracing the community of human destiny concept, China's sports tourism must establish multilateral platforms to foster cooperation and exchange. Efforts should focus on promoting distinctive sports tourism brands and deepening collaboration with countries along the "Belt and Road", APEC, BRICS, and others, facilitating passenger exchanges, resource

sharing, and market integration. Leading tourism enterprises should build international sports tourism consulting and sharing platforms to expand market scale and influence [24]. The government should also unite countries to integrate regional resources, accelerate infrastructure development, and create convenient transport networks, including high-speed rail, flights, taxis, and bicycles. Additionally, inbound tourism safety mechanisms must comply with consulate laws, strengthening safety information sharing, monitoring, early warning, rescue, and legal assistance to ensure the security of international tourists engaging in sports tourism in China.

### 5. Conclusion

Chinese-style modernization combines global modernization traits with China's unique national conditions. This paper explains the connotation of Chinese-style modernization guiding the high-quality development of the sports tourism industry, revealing five fundamental dimensions: practical foundation, development goals, value orientation, development concepts, and direction. Facing multiple challenges, it proposes a people-centered modern development system emphasizing humanistic care; an innovation-driven, coordinated, and unified mechanism focused on common prosperity; a cultural heritage platform supporting spiritual civilization; a solid green development synergy fostering ecological civilization; and a multilateral exchange platform promoting shared construction and cooperation. The goal is to provide theoretical guidance and wisdom support for China's sports tourism high-quality development, bridging Chinese modernization with a stronger industrial future.

#### Disclosure statement

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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