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An Analysis of Snow Sports Promotion in China through Different Social Media Platforms

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Abstract

This paper investigates the impact of social media platforms on the promotion of snow sports in China by analyzing the questionnaire method. It discusses how the three most representative social media platforms for skiers and snowboarders in China, Xiaohongshu, TikTok, and Ctrip, disseminate snow sports content and promote commercialization in different ways. The questionnaire was designed to cover the frequency of users' participation in snow sports, their preference for different platforms, and their usage habits when accessing snow sports information. Data collection was mainly carried out in ski equipment stores, online platforms and ski communities, and 101 valid questionnaires were collected. By investigating the social media usage preferences of different age groups of snow sports enthusiasts, the results show that social media, especially Xiaohongshu and TikTok, play a key role in increasing the popularity of snow sports, and Ctrip plays a key role in integrating them with e-commerce services. This article finds that social media has an important role in expanding the audience of snow sports and shaping the marketing strategies of related industries. It also provides useful insights for the snow sports industry in using social media platforms to promote and commercialize the sport. This research is expected to provide a deeper understanding of the role of social media in promoting snow sports and valuable guidance for the development and optimization of marketing strategies in the ice and snow sports industry.

Keywords

Digital Marketing, Snow Sports Promotion, Social Media, Key Opinion Leader, Snow Sports

1. Introduction

In recent years, with the success of the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics, snow sports

in China have gradually gained huge popularity and widespread attention. At the same time, social media has played a key role in driving consumer and promotion of snow sports. Social platforms provide abundant resources and opportunities to increase the audience base of snow sports and enhance the influence of the industry, so it is necessary to study the promotion strategies of social media.

This research explores how three representative platforms—Xiaohongshu, Tiktok, and Ctrip—promote snow sports in China, each using distinct approaches to engage audiences and commercialize snow sports content. To analyze social media's impact, this study collects data via questionnaires from snow sports enthusiasts across various age groups, focusing on user frequency, platform preferences, and content consumption habits. In this way, the study is expected to provide valuable insights into how digital platforms can help snow sports companies grow their audience and enhance commercial value, addressing a gap in research related to China's unique social media environment in this field. This paper is structured as follows: Section 2 reviews relevant literature and Section 3 details the research methodology. Sections 4 and 5 discuss platform-specific promotional features and effectiveness. Finally, Section 6 presents recommendations and conclusions based on the findings.

2. Literature Review

Social media platforms are increasingly advancing and have had a significant impact on daily life. Given the capabilities of social media for short videos, live streaming, ad campaigns, and e-WOM, it is also widely recognized as an effective mechanism to help companies or specific projects achieve their marketing goals and strategies (Alalwan et al., 2017).

The development of social media has not only changed people's lifestyles but also contributed to the popularity of various niche activities, especially in snow sports. In recent years, especially after the 2022 Winter Olympics, the promotion of snow sports has received widespread attention, and social media has once again accelerated this process (Thorpe, 2017). Information about snow sports has been spread more widely and quickly, attracting the attention of many potential enthusiasts.

Social media has made the promotion of snow sports more effective and attractive through user-generated content (UGC), the influence of key opinion leaders (KOLs), and real-time interaction (Naab & Sehl, 2017; Wang et al., 2020). UGC empowers users to freely share their skiing and snowboarding experiences, making the content more authentic and relatable, thereby enhancing the appeal of skiing; KOLs stimulate user interest through expert recommendations and personal experiences, driving fan engagement, and expanding the snow sport's influence; the real-time interaction feature allows users to participate in discussions instantly, strengthening community engagement and further promoting snow sports content. The community interaction and sharing functions on social media have once again stimulated people's enthusiasm to participate, discuss, and share snow sports content, and promoted the popularization of snow sports.

3. Methods

For this study, a self-designed questionnaire was used to collect data on snow sports participation and related behaviors. The questionnaire included questions on whether participants engage in snow sports, their preferences for using social media platforms for snow sports needs, and other related topics.

The questionnaire was distributed through two primary channels: online surveys via WeChat Moments and in-person distribution at ski equipment stores. This distribution strategy ensured that the most of respondents were part of the snow sports community, minimizing the risk of undercoverage bias.

Before the main survey, a small pre-text was conducted to identify and correct any ambiguous or unclear questions, thus preventing potential wording biases in the final questionnaire. Based on the pre-text feedback, several questions were revised for clarity.

The sample size was determined using the following formula:

$$n = \frac{Z^2 \cdot P(1-P)}{E^2} \tag{1}$$

where $Z = 1.645$ (Z-score corresponding to a 90% confidence level).

$P = 0.5$ (estimated proportion of the population).

$E = 0.1$ (margin of error).

Based on the characteristics of the target population, the ideal sample size was calculated to be 68 respondents. The actual sample size collected was 101, with a 100% response rate (every response was valid), which exceeds the recommended sample size and ensures sufficient representativeness of the snow sports population.

Data analysis was performed by creating various graphs based on the collected responses, shown in the following figures. The data was then used to explore trends and patterns in snow sports participation and related social media usage.

4. Results

According to Figure 1, the survey respondents exhibit distinct characteristics and patterns. The sample is predominantly female (58.42%) and mostly young, with the largest age group being 19 - 28 years old (39.6%), followed by those under 18 (18.81%). Students form the majority (48.51%), with additional representation from sports professionals (12.87%) and government employees (11.88%). Most participants have been exposed to skiing (74.26%), though the majority are beginners (54.46%), while fewer have intermediate (30.69%) or advanced (14.85%) skills. Overall, the respondents are primarily young, active individuals with varying degrees of skiing experience, reflecting a dynamic and engaged demographic.

4.1. The Role of Social Media in Promoting Snow Sports

Building on the demographic analysis of the respondents, the study further explores the role of social media platforms as the primary source of snow sports information. As shown in Figure 2, 68.32% of respondents rely on social media
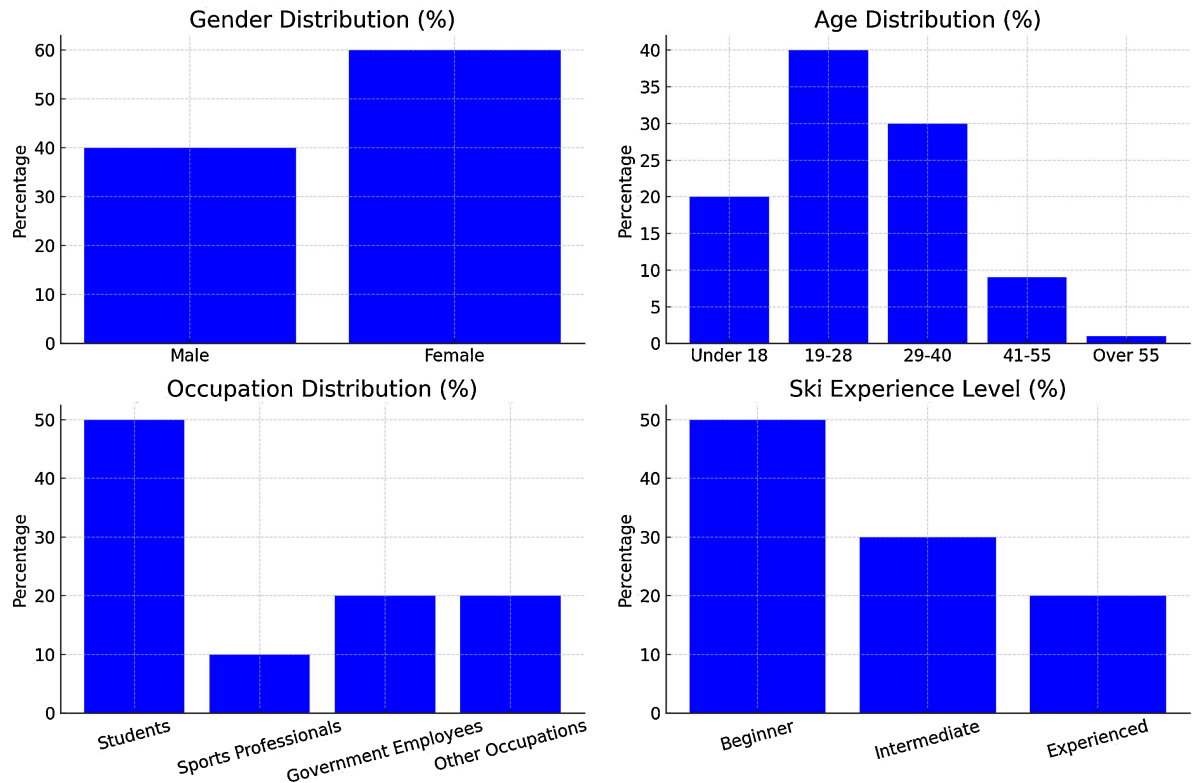
Note: The source is self-collated by the author Ratio: n = 101.

Figure 1. Demographic and skiing experience analysis of survey respondents.
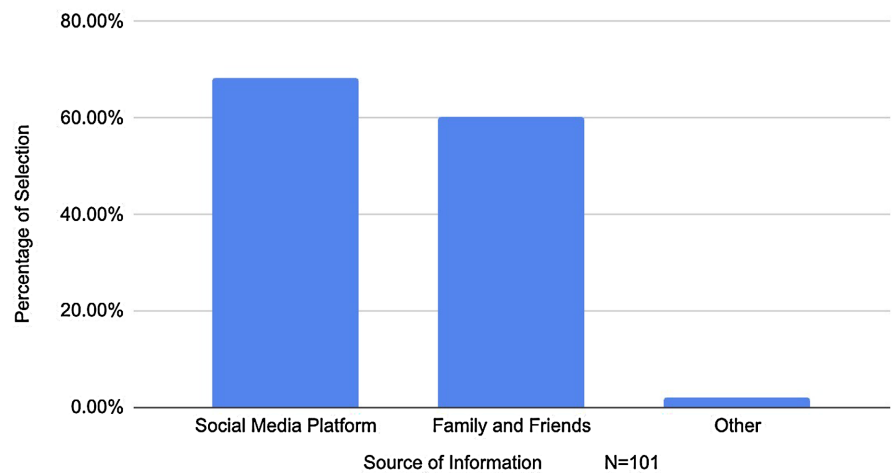

Figure 2. The usual source of information about snow sports.

to access snow sports-related content. The widespread popularity and convenience of these platforms allow users to instantly obtain information such as ski resort recommendations, equipment purchasing advice, and tutorials on skiing and snowboarding techniques.

Social media platforms like Xiaohongshu (Little Red Book) and TikTok (Douyin) provide users with a dynamic space to share experiences, instructional videos, and insights while engaging with fellow enthusiasts. Additionally, these platforms

integrate e-commerce functionalities, enabling users to purchase ski equipment or book ski resort tickets directly. This seamless connection benefits both users and service providers, such as ski resorts and ski equipment brands, by enhancing customer satisfaction, increasing exposure, and driving sales through targeted promotions and collaborations.

In short, these platforms facilitate the provision of diverse services to users through functions like search engines, social content-sharing features, and short video integration with ecommerce capabilities. Also, they offer service providers access to customer traffic flow while offering exposure and generating orders for them, thus forming a convenient "triangular service" model that benefits the three parties involved.

4.2. Functions and Popularity of Different Social Media Platforms

Social media platforms play a vital role in promoting and supporting snow sports, each catering to specific user groups and needs through their unique functionalities. Platforms like TikTok, Xiaohongshu, Weibo, and WeChat have become key channels for disseminating snow sports information, leveraging their extensive user base and advanced content distribution algorithms. By utilizing big data analysis, these platforms precisely share snow sports content with potentially interested users, greatly increasing the exposure and attractiveness of snow sports (Anderson, 2020). Content creators and Key opinion leaders (KOLs) further stimulate public interest in snow sports by sharing skiing and snowboarding techniques, equipment reviews, and personal experiences. This online interactive community provides snow sports enthusiasts with instant access to the latest information on snow sports while facilitating exchanges with other skiers and snowboarders, creating a vibrant snow sports community.

Meanwhile, local life service platforms like Ctrip, Mei Tuan, Da Zhong Dian Ping, and Ma Feng Wo play an important role in service provision. These platforms not only offer information on local ski resorts, ticket booking, and skiing/snowboarding courses but also cooperate with ski resorts and travel agencies to launch innovative products such as "Snow + Travel," meeting diverse user needs.

In addition, C2C shopping platforms like Taobao and Xianyu play a crucial role in the purchase and recycling of skiing or snowboarding equipment. These platforms provide easy access to a wide range of equipment for snow sports enthusiasts, from beginners to professionals. Used item trading platforms such as Xianyu also promote secondary trading of ski and snowboarding gear, enabling skiers and snowboarders to buy affordable equipment and reduce waste by selling used items. This not only lowers the cost of snow sports but also promotes resource recycling and sustainable community development.

In summary, different platforms complement one another in shaping a comprehensive ecosystem for snow sports, from sharing information and building communities to facilitating services and promoting sustainability.

5. Analysis of Three Representative Platforms for Promoting Snow Sports

Based on the questionnaire results, the three most commonly used social platforms for skiing or snowboarding are Xiaohongshu, TikTok, and WeChat, as shown in Figure 3.
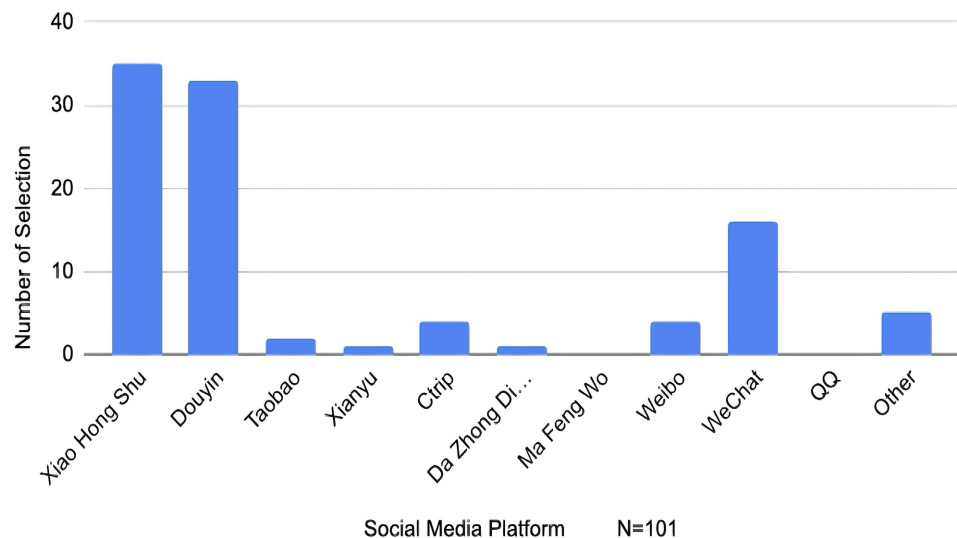

Figure 3. The most used social media platforms for skiing or snowboarding.

However, since WeChat primarily functions as a messaging platform and its user base is exceptionally broad, it is not considered a valid option for this analysis (Tu, 2016). Instead, the fourth most popular, Ctrip, has been selected. These three platforms, Xiaohongshu, TikTok, and Ctrip, not only rank among the most frequently used but also serve distinct purposes, representing a wide range of social media functionalities in promoting snow sports. The following analysis will focus on the effectiveness and methods employed by these platforms to promote snow sports.

5.1. Xiaohongshu's Promotion Strategies for Snow Sports

According to Qian Gua's analysis of Xiaohongshu's user profile through three key demographic dimensions, age distribution, gender distribution, and city class distribution (Figures 4-6), the platform's skiing campaign primarily targets younger, female users aged 18 - 35 (QianGua Data, 2024). These users typically have relatively high incomes, strong purchasing power, and an openness to new trends, with a strong interest in quality of life and fashion (Wu & Bian, 2017). Skiing and snowboarding are sports that combine social attributes with higher costs, catering to the interests and needs of these users. Also, Xiaohongshu benefits from an existing base of skiing enthusiasts on its platform, who actively share and browse related content. The platform's recommendation algorithm (community engagement score) further boosts engagement by delivering personalized skiing-related content based on users' interests and habits.
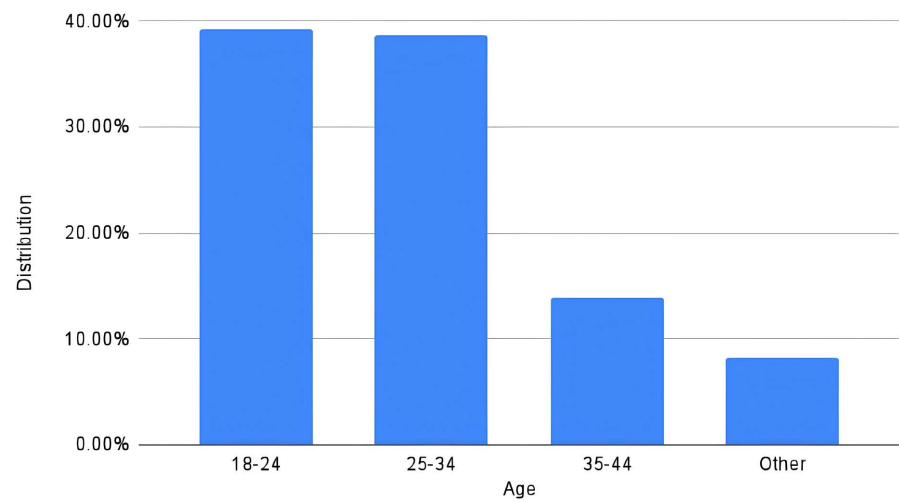
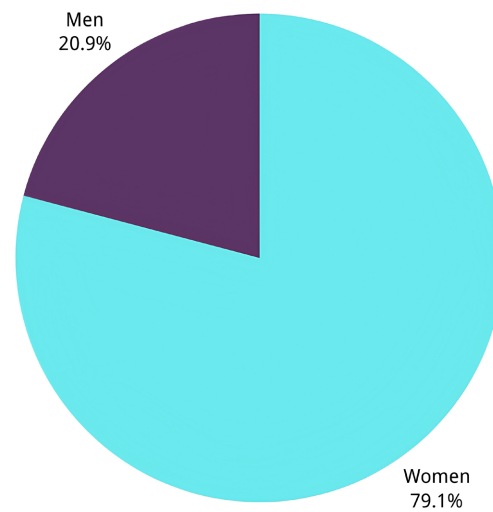**Figure 4.** Age distribution of Xiaohongshu users (QianGua Data, 2024).

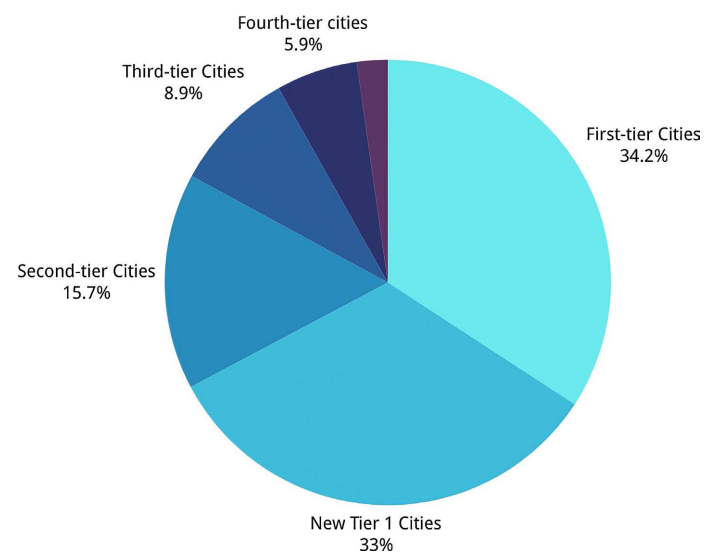**Figure 5.** Gender distribution of Xiaohongshu users (QianGua Data, 2024).

Figure 6. City class distribution of Xiaohongshu users (QianGua Data, 2024).

To expand its reach, Xiaohongshu collaborates with tourism boards, ski resorts, and over 120 snow sports gear brands. These brands have opened their accounts in Xiaohongshu and cooperated with Xiaohongshu's Offline, Xiaohongshu's branding is visible at ski resorts through posters and landmarks. Online, its "French Fries Promotion" helps enhance the influences and exposures of their accounts (Wu & Bian, 2017). This comprehensive strategy has extended skiing's economic cycle from a "100-day economy" in winter to a six-month period, with growing commercial value (Little Red Book, 2024).

Search data highlights Xiaohongshu's effectiveness in driving snow sports interest. Year-on-year search growth for snow-sports related terms surged during key periods: Preparation stage (10.1 - 10.31): +190%; Early snow season (11.1 - 12.1): +100%; Peak snow season (12.1 - 1.30): +350%; Late snow season (2.1 - 3.30): +320% (Little Red Book, 2024). Xiaohongshu further amplifies engagement through events such as the "Rider, Please Advise Me" campaign, the Snowman Festival, and the Ice and Snow Season. These events encourage user-generated content (UGC) by offering incentives such as 100 million exposures, driving organic promotion (LanXiongTiYu, 2021).

KOLs play a significant role in Xiaohongshu's snow sports strategy. As trusted influencers with expertise in niches like beauty, fashion, fitness, and now snow sports, KOLs engage followers through personal stories, instructional videos, and product reviews (Cyberone Group Limited Digital Marketing Agency, 2024). Their content introduces followers to snow sports, providing tips on equipment selection and showcasing destinations. For example, KOLs may record their visits to popular ski resorts, providing followers with insights into the facilities, amenities, and overall experience. They might also share tips on choosing the right gear, such as skis, snowboards, and clothing, often linking to products available on Xiaohongshu's integrated shopping platform. This content not only educates followers about snow sports but also encourages them to participate, thereby driving interest and demand. The impact of KOLs is particularly evident in the way they can create and sustain trends. When a KOL with a significant following showcases a new ski resort or piece of equipment, it can quickly become popular among users, leading to increased bookings and sales. This ripple effect underscores the influence KOLs have in shaping consumer behavior and promoting specific activities or products.

In conclusion, Xiaohongshu effectively promotes skiing and snowboarding through precise user targeting, community-driven content, and in-depth cooperation with the snow sports industry. This combination of personalized recommendations, user-generated content, and e-commerce features drives both user engagement and commercialization. Xiaohongshu plays a very key role in guiding consumer behavior and expanding the influence of snow sports.

5.2. TikTok

TikTok's greatest advantage lies in its massive and loyal user base, which gives the

platform unparalleled strength in content dissemination and promotion. By 2023, TikTok will have 1 billion active users, with over 600 million daily active users in China (TengXunYiXian, 2024). This not only highlights TikTok's broad influence across China but also showcases its outstanding user engagement and retention. This vast user base allows any content on the platform to quickly gain significant attention. What sets TikTok apart is not just the number of users but their loyalty. Through precise content recommendation algorithms and personalized user experiences, TikTok has successfully captivated and retained its audience. Average daily usage per user exceeds two hours, a number that continues to grow (MobTech, 2023). With over 600 million daily active users spending significant time on the platform, TikTok possesses powerful capabilities for disseminating and promoting specific content rapidly. Moreover, TikTok's vibrant community of content creators further enhances this advantage (TengXunYiXian, 2024). With over 2 million creators generating a constant stream of high-quality material, the platform offers diverse content that meets different user needs. These creators attract large followers through their innovative and high-quality work, which leads followers to trust their recommendations. This makes TikTok highly efficient in promoting specific sports, products, or events by rapidly generating broad user engagement and interaction. TikTok excels in promoting snow sports, leveraging its visual appeal and short duration to create captivating video clips that resonate with a broad audience. With its massive and loyal user base, it can swiftly elevate snow sports from a niche interest to a mainstream sensation.

In the commercial realm, TikTok has significantly contributed to the growth of skiing and snowboarding's commercial value. TikTok's e-commerce platform plays a crucial role in this success. According to the TikTok Ecommerce Influencer Growth Report, 5.28 million new influencers joined TikTok's e-commerce platform in the last year alone, marking a 74% year-over-year increase, and influencers saw a 40% increase in total live-streaming hours and a 43% rise in overall sales (Shi, 2024). Many creators have found new avenues for growth on TikTok's e-commerce platform, particularly small to mid-sized influencers who make up the backbone of product promotion (Shi, 2024). They successfully attract snow sports enthusiasts by sharing their experiences, gear choices, and technical tips for skiing and snowboarding (Jin et al., 2019). Given the high technical demands of these sports, consumers are more likely to trust recommendations from knowledgeable professionals. These influencers engage directly with their followers by answering questions from novice skiers or snowboarders and recommending equipment suitable for various skill levels, a precise form of content marketing that has significantly boosted sales of skiing gear.

Overall, the integration of content, commerce, and TikTok's vast user base effectively promotes skiing and snowboarding. This synergy drives the commercialization of snow sports-related products and enhances their market value. As snow sports gain popularity, TikTok will continue to play an important role in this domain.

5.3. Ctrip

Ctrip has formed strategic partnerships with ski resorts and tourism bureaus domestically and internationally to promote snow sports tourism from various angles, including product design, marketing campaigns, promotional activities, and membership services. For instance, Ctrip has collaborated with popular domestic ski resorts like those in Zhangjiakou and Songhua Lake in Jilin to offer all-inclusive ski traveling products that include ski passes, hotels, and ski instructors. These packages not only provide a one-stop service but also attract many users through joint marketing efforts such as limited-time discounts and early bird offers. Additionally, Ctrip's partnerships with international ski resorts have made it easier for Chinese ski enthusiasts to travel to Japan, Korea, Europe, and other destinations for skiing and snowboarding. According to statistics, outbound ski bookings on Ctrip for December 2023 increased by 460%, further expanding the reach of ski tourism (TTG China, 2023).

Ctrip utilizes its extensive user base to offer skiing and snowboarding-related content, including guides, diaries, and user reviews. This content provides practical information such as optimal skiing times, gear recommendations, and techniques while also increasing the appeal of ski tourism through authentic user experiences. For example, Ctrip showcases travel diaries from ski enthusiasts on its app and website that detail ski resort facilities, slope conditions, and nearby entertainment options. These high-quality contents serve potential skiing or snowboarding travelers by helping them plan their trips better and attract more participants through word-of-mouth. To cater to different user groups, Ctrip has launched innovative ski + travel products that combine skiing with other tourism elements, creating unique experiences. For instance, the "Ski + Hot Springs" package allows visitors to relax in hot springs after a day on the slopes, while the "Ski + Cultural Tour" package combines skiing with local cultural attractions and regional cuisine. These diversified offerings not only enhance the skiing experience but also attract tourists interested in cultural travel, expanding the snow sports tourism market. High-quality products have also stimulated consumer demand, with over 30% of users in first- and second-tier cities choosing to book ski products before the snow season (Guojialvye, 2021).

Ctrip further boosts the consumption of skiing and snowboarding-related products through its membership program and promotions, allowing members to redeem points for discounts or coupons on these products. This not only increases user loyalty but also encourages more bookings on its platform. Additionally, during the ski season, Ctrip launches limited-time promotional events like the "Skiing and Snowboarding Carnival Season" special offers, providing exclusive discounts on ski passes and packages that significantly boost sales. Ctrip also partners with ski resorts and brands to offer group buying deals on gear, including skiing or snowboarding wear and boots, further fueling users' desire to purchase.

Ctrip's ski promotion efforts are bolstered by its strong digital platform, which offers users convenient online booking and services. For example, the Ctrip app

allows users to easily book ski passes, rent equipment, schedule skiing or snowboarding lessons, and check real-time weather conditions, slope availability, and crowd levels at ski resorts. Additionally, Ctrip provides personalized recommendations for ski travelers based on their preferences and search history to further enhance their trips. Through these diverse and crafted promotional strategies, Ctrip has successfully popularized snow sports in China while integrating it with travel experiences to create a comprehensive snow sports ecosystem that drives the growth of the ski industry. As skiing and snowboarding gain more popularity, Ctrip is poised to play an increasingly vital role in this expanding market.

6. Recommendations

For the snow sports industry, fully utilize the advantages of major social media platforms by designing integrated marketing strategies that use multiple platforms to expand the reach and influence of snow sports. For example, combine Xiaohongshu's precise user targeting with TikTok's broad dissemination capabilities to form an efficient content promotion mix. Upstream and downstream companies in the snow sports industry should prioritize content marketing and collaborate with key opinion leaders (KOLs) to utilize their influence in promoting snow sports products and services. By leveraging the vast promotional power and user resources of social media platforms, companies can utilize KOLs' personal experience sharing and product recommendations to build consumer trust and increase purchase intent. Offering product trials, sponsoring events, and other promotional methods can significantly boost product visibility across social media. Additionally, companies should fully engage with user feedback mechanisms on these platforms to monitor consumer needs and opinions, improving their products and services accordingly. Active interaction with consumers on social media not only strengthens customer loyalty but also helps discover new market opportunities.

For social media platforms, further optimize and develop features that align with the promotion of snow sports. For example, augmented reality (AR) technology can be used to showcase ski equipment, or live streaming can be used to display real-time conditions at ski resorts, thereby enhancing the user experience. Besides, social media platforms should use big data technology to further refine user profiling, accurately identifying user groups interested in snow sports, and providing more precise recommendation algorithms for promoting snow sports content. This can increase the reach and engagement of snow sports content and help upstream and downstream companies more effectively promote their products and services.

7. Conclusion

This study analyzes the role of social media platforms in promoting snow sports in the Chinese market, focusing on Xiaohongshu, TikTok, and Ctrip. By leveraging their unique features and user bases, these platforms have significantly

contributed to both the popularity and commercialization of snow sports. The findings demonstrate that social media plays an important role in expanding the audience for snow sports and effectively driving the commercialization of snow sports equipment and services through user-generated content (UGC), the influence of key opinion leaders (KOLs), and the integration of e-commercial functions.

Firstly, Xiaohongshu's youthful, high-spending user base aligns well with the target audience for snow sports. Its precise content recommendation algorithms facilitate the distribution of snow sports-related content to potential users, thereby enhancing user engagement and retention. Secondly, TikTok, with its vast user base and strong content creation ecosystem, quickly transformed snow sports from a niche interest into a mainstream trend, enhancing the social appeal and market impact of snow sports. Lastly, Ctrip, through its powerful digital local service platform, not only facilitated the convenience of snow tourism but also promoted the commercialization of snow sports by collaborating with ski resorts and tourism agencies to offer diverse ski + travel products.

This study fills a significant gap in existing research by examining the role of China's unique social media ecosystem in promoting snow sports. It highlights the critical contributions of different platforms in the popularization and commercialization of snow sports, offering both empirical insights and theoretical contributions. Furthermore, the research provides valuable marketing information and strategic recommendations for social media platforms and companies involved in the snow sports industry. These insights will aid in the development of more effective promotional strategies and the future growth of the sector.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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