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Logical Mechanisms and Pathways for the Coordinated Development of Ethnic Traditional Sports and the Silver Economy from a Sports–Wellness Integration Perspective

Hanxiao Xu*

Chengdu University of Traditional Chinese Medicine, Chengdu 611137, Sichuan, China

****Author to whom correspondence should be addressed.***

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Abstract: From the perspective of sports–wellness integration, this study examines the theoretical logic and mechanisms underlying the coordinated development of ethnic traditional sports and the silver economy. The analysis suggests that ethnic traditional sports can be transformed from cultural resources into wellness resources, and from forms of participation into sources of industrial value, through four interrelated mechanisms: resource value conversion, health-demand responsiveness, cultural experience enhancement, and industrial-chain coordination. To address current constraints, including insufficient age-friendly adaptation of resources, weak alignment between products and older adults' needs, and inadequate industrial coordination, greater emphasis should be placed on classified resource development, product innovation, the creation of diversified consumption settings, and stronger support in talent development, technology, and branding. These efforts can promote more coordinated development between ethnic traditional sports and the silver economy.

Keywords: Sports–wellness integration; Ethnic traditional sports; Silver economy; Coordinated development

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1. Introduction

Against the backdrop of population aging, older adults' needs are expanding beyond basic eldercare toward health maintenance, sports participation, and cultural experiences, making silver sports an increasingly important component of healthy aging [1]. Ethnic traditional sports combine physical activity with cultural inheritance and social interaction, providing a distinctive resource base for the development of sports-based wellness products. Sports–wellness integration emphasizes coordination between sport and wellness services at the levels of resources, functions, and industries. However, the incorporation of ethnic traditional sports

into the silver economy still faces several constraints, including limited resource transformation, insufficient product adaptation, and weak industrial coordination. Accordingly, this study examines the theoretical logic, operating mechanisms, and development pathways linking ethnic traditional sports with the silver economy, with the aim of informing both the contemporary transformation of ethnic traditional sports and the high-quality development of the silver economy.

2. Theoretical logic of the coordinated development of ethnic traditional sports and the silver economy from a sports–wellness integration perspective

2.1. The resource value of ethnic traditional sports provides a distinctive supply base for the silver economy

Ethnic traditional sports embody not only physical activity, but also cultural inheritance, social interaction, and emotional identification. Their contemporary development has gradually expanded beyond preservation and transmission toward health promotion and industrial development [2]. Their regional, cultural, and participatory characteristics can compensate for the limited cultural distinctiveness of many conventional wellness products. As silver consumption expands from basic exercise toward health promotion, psychological well-being, and social participation, ethnic traditional sports can integrate physical activity with ethnic culture and local ways of life through resource identification, functional extension, and product development, thereby creating distinctive and experience-oriented sports–wellness services for the silver economy.

2.2. Upgrading health needs drives the transformation of ethnic traditional sports from cultural resources into wellness resources

The concept of healthy aging is encouraging a shift from passive eldercare toward active health management, with sports participation increasingly serving as an important means of maintaining physical function, psychological well-being, and social engagement. Sports–wellness integration can broaden service settings through the coordinated use of sports and eldercare resources, including community-based sports, rehabilitation, and sports tourism [3]. By adjusting exercise intensity, simplifying participation formats, and strengthening safety protection, suitable ethnic traditional sports can be adapted into wellness activities for older adults with different functional capacities, while cultural experience can further enhance participation interest and continuity.

2.3. Industrial integration promotes a coordinated relationship between ethnic traditional sports and the silver economy

The coordinated development of ethnic traditional sports and the silver economy is essentially a process in which sport, eldercare, health, culture, and tourism industries share resources and restructure value in response to market demand. The integration of the sports industry with related industries often involves adjustments in business, market, and organizational boundaries, together with the reallocation of products and resources [4]. Ethnic traditional sports can enrich wellness products and enhance the cultural experience and distinctiveness of silver consumption, while the silver market provides new application settings and consumption opportunities for traditional sports.

3. Mechanisms through which ethnic traditional sports empower the silver economy

3.1. Resource value conversion: Transforming cultural resources into industrial resources

The contribution of ethnic traditional sports to the silver economy begins with the restructuring of resource value. Through project classification, functional refinement, and age-friendly adaptation, physical activities, cultural symbols, and regional characteristics embedded in traditional sports can be developed into wellness courses, cultural experiences, leisure tourism products, and related services. This process extends ethnic traditional sports beyond festival displays toward everyday fitness and consumption services. Its essential function is to broaden the conventional boundaries of traditional sports and connect cultural, health, and market value.

3.2. Health-demand responsiveness: Integrating sports participation into active and healthy living

Older adults' growing demand for sports participation and improved quality of life provides an important driving force for integrating ethnic traditional sports into wellness services. Following age-friendly adaptation, traditional sports can be adjusted in form and intensity according to differences in physical function. They can therefore promote physical activity while also supporting psychological adjustment and social interaction. In this way, ethnic traditional sports move beyond simply providing exercise activities and begin to support healthier lifestyles in later life, establishing a functional connection between sports participation and active aging.

3.3. Cultural experience enhancement: Increasing the differentiated value of sports–wellness products

Ethnic traditional sports embody ethnic culture, historical memory, and local identity, enabling them to add cultural experience to conventional wellness products centered mainly on environment, accommodation, and basic health services. When combined with tourism, community interaction, and leisure activities, they can create participatory and experience-based consumption settings in which older adults shift from passive service recipients to active cultural participants. This process can strengthen product attractiveness, emotional engagement, and consumer loyalty.

3.4. Industrial-chain coordination: Sustaining the value generated through integration

Empowering the silver economy through ethnic traditional sports requires the participation of multiple actors from sport, wellness, eldercare, healthcare, and cultural tourism. Through resource sharing and functional complementarity, ethnic sports activities can be extended into accommodation, tourism, catering, cultural and creative products, and health management. Governments, enterprises, healthcare institutions, universities, and cultural organizations can respectively undertake responsibilities in planning, operation, professional support, technological services, and cultural transmission, thereby forming an integrated development structure characterized by multi-actor coordination, industrial-chain extension, and sustained value creation.

4. Pathways for promoting the coordinated development of ethnic traditional sports and the silver economy through sports–wellness integration

4.1. Strengthening resource classification and age-friendly adaptation to improve wellness utilization

Ethnic traditional sports should be developed in differentiated ways according to their cultural value, exercise intensity, technical difficulty, and safety risks. Highly participatory activities can be adapted by simplifying movements, modifying rules, and controlling physical load, while more competitive or higher-risk activities should focus on viewing, cultural experience, and cultural communication. Risk assessment, participant eligibility, and safety standards should also be improved so that ethnic traditional sports can move from cultural display resources toward sustainable and accessible wellness resources.

4.2. Promoting product innovation and consumption settings to improve supply–demand alignment

A differentiated product system should be developed in accordance with older adults' age, physical condition, and consumption patterns. For relatively healthy younger-old adults, products may include ethnic sports experiences, sports tourism, and wellness vacations, while older adults with more general health needs may be offered low-intensity exercise, cultural interaction, and social activities. Such products can be embedded in scenic areas, ethnic villages, wellness bases, communities, and long-stay destinations, forming consumption settings that combine short-term experiences, everyday fitness, and medium- to long-term wellness stays.

4.3. Improving industrial coordination and market operations to strengthen sustainable development

A collaborative mechanism involving government guidance, enterprise operation, and social participation should be established. Coordination among sports, cultural tourism, civil affairs, and health authorities should be strengthened in areas such as resource integration, project development, and standard setting, while wellness enterprises, eldercare institutions, scenic areas, healthcare organizations, and professional sports organizations should be encouraged to cooperate. Research on local mass sports culture suggests that fragmented participation and insufficient institutional embedding can weaken the sustainable development of sports-cultural resources, while multi-level organizational networks and institutional coordination can improve resource integration [5]. A market feedback mechanism for older consumers should therefore also be developed so that product supply can be adjusted according to physical condition, consumption preferences, and participation evaluations, enabling development to shift from resource-driven to demand-oriented.

4.4. Strengthening talent, technology, and branding support to improve the integrated development ecosystem

Interdisciplinary personnel with expertise in ethnic traditional sports, older-adult health, wellness services, and tourism management should be cultivated to strengthen capabilities in program design, exercise guidance, and cultural communication. Digital platforms, smart devices, and health-management tools can be used appropriately to improve service efficiency while ensuring age-friendly access. At the same time, the cultural and health characteristics of ethnic traditional sports should be highlighted through festivals, sporting events, themed routes, and demonstration projects to build distinctive sports–wellness brands. Coordinated development in talent, technology, and branding can further enhance the professionalism and sustainability of

sports–wellness integration.

5. Conclusion

Sports–wellness integration creates a new connection between the contemporary transformation of ethnic traditional sports and the development of the silver economy. Its significance lies not in simply combining sports activities with wellness services, but in achieving the coordinated conversion of cultural, health, and economic value through resource restructuring, demand responsiveness, and industrial coordination. Future development should take age-friendly resource adaptation and product innovation as its foundation, supported by stronger industrial coordination and service systems. This can enable ethnic traditional sports to move beyond festival-based display and cultural preservation toward regular wellness services, while meeting older adults' growing needs for active health management and cultural experiences and creating new possibilities for both the contemporary transmission of ethnic traditional sports and the high-quality development of the silver economy.

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