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# A World of Ice and Snow Being also Invaluable Asset: A Case Study of the "Snow Village"

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**Abstract** Based on field visit and interview, the current situation of snow village in China is summarized from four aspects: core scenic spots in snow village, skiing industry in snow village, film and television industry in snow village, and ice and snow agritainment. The investigation found that there are still significant problems in homogenization, scenic area infrastructure, and government regulation in snow village. Targeted solutions are proposed from four aspects: tapping internal advantages, strengthening top-level design and infrastructure construction, promoting tourism industry upgrading, and collaborating to innovate the ice and snow tourism supply chain, in order to further promote the economic development of snow village.

**Key words** A world of ice and snow being also invaluable asset, Village and town construction, Snow village, Development of snow village

## 1 Introduction

During the deliberation of the Heilongjiang delegation at the Fourth Session of the 12<sup>th</sup> National People's Congress, General Secretary Xi Jinping pointed out that "green mountains and clear waters are invaluable assets, and the ice and snow of Heilongjiang are also invaluable assets"<sup>[1]</sup>. Since then, it has pointed out a new path for the economic development of Heilongjiang. "Snow village", as a representative of Heilongjiang's ice and snow, great importance are attached to showcasing its "snow" characteristics. After more than a decade of development, it has transformed from the little-known "Shuangfeng Forest Farm" in Heilongjiang to the nationally renowned "snow village of China".

Snow village of China is located in Shuangfeng Forest Farm under the jurisdiction of Dahailin Forestry Bureau in Mudanjiang City, Heilongjiang Province. It is situated on the southwest side of Tudingzi Mountain in Changting Town, Hailin City, Heilongjiang Province, in the middle section of Zhangguangcai Ridge. Snow village is 105 km from Changting Town, covering an area of 500 ha, with an altitude of approximately 1 500 m<sup>[2]</sup>.

Snow village is located at magical 44° N. At the same latitude, Finland and Hokkaido of Japan are both unique "snow viewing destinations". Due to its unique location conditions, snow village is simultaneously affected by three air currents: warm and humid air from the Sea of Japan, cold air from Lake Baikal, and microclimate of dense forests in high mountains. Therefore, there is a folk saying that "there are no three clear days in summer, and snow covers the forests in winter"<sup>[3]</sup>. The winter snowfall season in snow village is long, with a snow period of up to 7 months. From October to May each year, the snow thickness can reach about 2 m. Due to the influence of three types of air currents, the

snow has good quality and high viscosity. The snow hanging from the eaves to the ground forms unique snow scenes such as "snow curtains", "tree hanging", "snow mushrooms", "snow houses", etc. Every autumn and winter, wind and snow rush into the mountains, making it known as the region with the largest snowfall in China and earning it the reputation of "China's snow village".

## 2 Development status of "China's snow village"

Due to its location in Dahailin Forestry Bureau, "China's snow village" has a high forest coverage and abundant vegetation. From the late Qing Dynasty to the early establishment of New China, the economic growth mode of snow village was mainly logging. In 1988, Dahailin Forestry Bureau transformed its economic development model and focused on developing forest ecotourism as a means of adjusting industrial structure and cultivating new economic growth points. It has now begun to take shape, and this development mode is dominant in snow village today<sup>[4]</sup>.

Nowadays, snow village is vigorously developing the tertiary industry and promoting winter ice and snow tourism culture, forming core scenic areas of snow village, mainly consisting of Chinese Town Village Scenic Area, Dream Home, Farmhouse Courtyard, and Big Snow Valley; skiing industry centered around the former "PLA Bayi Ski Team" ski resort; the film and television industry with "Snow Village Film and Television Base" as its core; characteristic homestays on Xueyun Street, Northeast song-and-dance duet, and ice and snow agritainment centered around Northeast venison.

**2.1 Core scenic area** The main tourist business card of snow village is to watch a few smoke rise in the early morning of the snowy winter, and then invite three to five friends to explore the forest and snow fields together. Due to the simultaneous influence of three types of air currents, snow village has a long snowfall cycle, thick snow, and large snowfall, resulting in a unique snow scene represented by "snow mushrooms" and "snow houses." Ac-

According to the investigation by experts, the snow quality in snow village is no worse than that in Hokkaido, Japan. In addition, the popularity of films and TV shows in recent years such as the *Taking the WeiHu Mountain with Wisdom* and the *Forest Sea and Snow Plain* has led to that a large number of tourists develop a strong tourism enthusiasm for this land, especially those from the south.

**2.2 Skiing industry** Snow village is located on the southwest side of Tudingzi Mountain, in the middle section of Zhangguangcai Ridge. It has four types of tracks: early, middle, high, and international. In addition, this place has good snow quality and low temperature, with a long period of snow storage, making it very suitable for the development of the skiing industry. Ski resorts mainly engage in skiing, dog pulling plows, sleds and other projects. Snow Village has two ski resorts, one of which is the former "PLA Bayi Ski Team" ski resort, and the other is a wilderness ski resort.

**2.3 Film and television industry** In recent years, films and TV shows such as the *Brave the Journey to the Northeast*, *A Family in Snow Village*, and *Forest Sea and Snow Plain* have all been filmed here. Therefore, the government of Dahailin Forestry Bureau took the opportunity to establish the Snow Village Film and Television City. The main themes filmed in the Snow Village Film and Television City were traditional rural dramas in Northeast China, as well as films and TV dramas on suppressing bandits in Northeast China in the 1940s – 1950s. In addition, the popularity of the last episode of the first season of the *Where Are We Going, Dad* in 2013 ignited a fire in snow village, greatly increasing its popularity and making the little-known small village in Northeast China famous domestically.

**2.4 Ice and snow agritainment** With the support of the Dahailin Forestry Bureau, subsidies are provided to the residents of the original Shuangfeng Farm, and centralized heating is used to build the unique folk customs of snow village<sup>[5]</sup>. At the same time, it attracts investment and establishes boutique accommodations mainly including Xueyunge Homestay, Xueyunge Boutique Homestay, and Xueyunge Grand Hotel. At night, tourists can also enjoy the Northeast style of song-and-dance duet in the Xueyun Pavilion Theater on Xueyun Street. After the song-and-dance duet, a bonfire party will be held on the snowfield, allowing tourists to participate in it firsthand and experience the joy of "ice and fire blending". The *China on the Tongue 2* reported on the eight stews in snow village. More and more tourists came to taste the cold water fish stewed in iron pot. At the same time, in the agritainment of snow village, you can also taste the Northeast characteristic venison, such as *Eleutherococcus senticosus*, fern, roe deer meat, deer meat, as well as the Northeast Bingtanghulu (sugar-coated haws), Northeast ice bricks, Northeast frozen pears, frozen persimmons, and other Northeast specialties<sup>[6]</sup>.

### 3 Problems in the development of "China's snow village"

**3.1 Severe homogenization** The problem of homogenization in

winter ice and snow tourism in Northeast China is severe. Homogeneous products not only fail to generate high profits, but also intensify competition among each other<sup>[7]</sup>. Like ski resorts, although the snow quality in snow village is good, the snow quality in Yabuli Ski Resort in Heilongjiang, Changbai Mountain Ski Resort in Jilin, Songhua Lake Ski Resort and other places is not bad, and they are all first-class ski resorts renowned throughout China. Ski resorts are also built in Hengdaohezi near snow village and the WeiHu Mountain in Hailin City. Although the infrastructure of these ski resorts is not as good as snow village, their prices are low, and they also attract a group of tourists to visit in winter.

Although the development of characteristic ice and snow tourism in snow village has been relatively early, the snow village, snow valley, and snow fort belonging to the Mudanjiang region have also developed rapidly in recent years. These three places are not far apart and have similar geographical conditions. At the same time, due to the new facilities of the latter two and closer to the urban area of Mudanjiang, there is a trend of latecomers taking the lead<sup>[8]</sup>.

The homogenization of tourism peripheral products is also very serious. For example, Harbin Ice and Snow World, Yabuli Ski Resort and snow village all focus on selling Bingtanghulu, and there are many gloves, earbags, and bibs, even many bibs and gloves are from Yiwu commodity market, while the local characteristic peripheral products of Heilongjiang, such as Damaha caviar, root carving, have not been deeply explored<sup>[9]</sup>.

### 3.2 Incomplete infrastructure construction in scenic areas

Snow village is located within the Zhangguangcai Ridge, in a high-altitude forest, with inconvenient terrain. In addition, snow village has a long snow season, heavy snowfall, and severe snow accumulation on roads<sup>[10]</sup>. A few years ago, the local government did not prepare corresponding personnel to be responsible for snow clearing work. There are many winding roads from Changting Town to snow village, especially sharp turns, where there may be thin ice at times, making it extremely prone to traffic accidents.

Due to geographical limitations, the phenomenon of insufficient supply of materials in snow village during the peak tourism season often occurs, which is also one of the objective reasons for the occurrence of the "heavenly priced instant noodles" incident. During the peak tourism season around New Year's Day and the Chinese New Year, the imbalance between the consumption demand of tourists and the supply of snow village is also one of the problems that constrain the development of snow village.

Due to the presence of many trees, communication facilities and mobile phone signals are poor in snow village. Due to the lack of significant signage in the forest during winter, it is prone to getting lost, which suppresses its development to some extent.

### 3.3 Lack of government regulation and frequent incidents of "customer slaughter"

The main focus of snow village is winter ice and snow tourism, and "snow" is a specific seasonal product. Therefore, in the eyes of snow village merchants, they need to earn a year's profit from December to February each year, which

has led to problems such as "heavenly priced instant noodles". Moreover, due to the fact that snow village was originally under the jurisdiction of Shuangfeng Forest Farm of Dahailin Forestry Bureau, but now falls under the jurisdiction of Hailin City, Heilongjiang Province, the Tourism Bureau of Dahailin Forestry Bureau and Hailin City Tourism Bureau have unclear responsibilities for snow village, and there has even been a phenomenon of disputes.

The Industry and Commerce Bureau of Shuangfeng Forest Farm only conducts regular inspections of hotels in the snow village scenic area once a quarter, and does not adopt random sampling or secret visits, resulting in hotels in the scenic area using the "Yin Yang menu" to deceive on the day of each quarterly inspection.

At the same time, Shuangfeng Forest Farm did not conduct an annual inspection of homestays in the snow village scenic area. Many original forest farm residents who registered homestays transferred their houses to outsourcing companies. In order to earn the maximum profits, outsourcing companies did not disclose room prices and set prices arbitrarily, which often occurred. There is also a phenomenon of unreasonable pricing for small commodities in homestays, such as high prices of instant noodles and mineral water, even reaching five times of the normal price during the peak tourism season. And there is no price announcement in the room, which led many tourists to believe that the instant noodles and mineral water placed in the room were free products, causing disputes.

## 4 Solutions for to the development of "Chinese snow village"

**4.1 Exploring internal advantages and building a "distinctive snow village"** To revitalize the "Chinese snow village", it is necessary to explore its unique advantages. Although snow village, along with snow valley and snow town, are characteristic small villages that focus on ice and snow tourism, the characteristic of snow village is that it is a fairy tale world under blue lights, while snow valley is a more simple rural characteristic of Northeast China, and snow town is a village that focuses on the name of forest seas and snow plains, and taking the Weihai Mountain. Therefore, it is important to attach importance to the night construction of the snow village, and to showcase its bright red lanterns at night, while moderately integrating the simple rural characteristics of Northeast China.

Snow village is located within the forest farm, with abundant forest resources and fresh air. Moreover, snow village is located at a high latitude, making it suitable for stargazing in winter. Therefore, winter stargazing activities can be carried out in snow village. Snow village has both forests and mountains, so it is possible to set up cross-country skiing according to local conditions, allowing visitors to fully experience the fun of outdoor skiing while avoiding the dangers of alpine skiing, achieving two goals with one stone.

**4.2 Strengthening top-level design and infrastructure construction** Fully focusing on the instruction of General Secretary Xi that "ice and snow are also invaluable assets", the Heilongjiang Provincial Government should strengthen top-level design and issue corresponding documents to strengthen institutional guarantees. The provincial government has successively issued policy documents such as the *Implementation Opinions on Accelerating the Development of Ice and Snow Cultural Tourism Industry in Mudanjiang City*, the *Implementation Opinions on the Development of Ice and Snow Tourism Industry*, and the *Special Plan for Ice and Snow Tourism*.

It should strengthen the maintenance work of the road from Changting to snow village and expand the road. During the winter snowfall period, it is necessary to achieve "snow on the same day, clear on the same day" to reduce the occurrence of traffic accidents. At the same time, traffic police road inspections should be strengthened during the peak tourism season. It should add Mudanjiang High Speed Railway Station, Mudanjiang Airport, Tourist bus dedicated line from Harbin Airport to snow village. It should strengthen the construction of the "Harbin-Yabuli-snow village" platinum tourism route, namely Harbin ice appreciation, Yabuli skiing, snow appreciation in snow village, and achieve comprehensive tourism within Heilongjiang Province. Harbin as the destination for southern tourists visiting Heilongjiang in winter should be changed to the starting point for southern tourists visiting Heilongjiang in winter. This can also reduce the phenomenon of homogenization.

**4.3 Promoting the upgrading of the tourism industry and collaborating to innovate the ice and snow tourism supply chain** It should fully tap into the tourism resources of the off-season in snow village. Located within the Shuangfeng Forest Farm, snow village boasts high forest coverage and diverse vegetation, making it a natural oxygen bar. Besides, snow village has a high latitude and is located on the Tuziding Mountain. It is cool in summer, and the highest temperature does not exceed 24 °C, making it particularly suitable for people to escape the heat. Therefore, outdoor camping themed activities can be carried out in summer to increase the income of tourism in snow village during the off-season.

There is also a mother river of Hailin – Hailang River near snow village, which has a suitable flow velocity and a moderate water level drop, making it suitable for the development of rafting. Besides, there is a famous water park in Heilongjiang called "Yilong Water Style Park" near snow village. In autumn, the red and fallen leaves in snow village are also one of the most beautiful autumn scenery in Mudanjiang.

In winter, in addition to utilizing the unique natural conditions, snow village can also explore cultural resources, such as integrating snow culture and ethnic culture, establishing Russian folk gardens, Korean folk gardens, Manchu folk gardens, etc. near snow village. Meanwhile, it could moderately combine with the unique culture of Northeast China, such as organizing North-

east Yangko competitions and showcasing shamanistic culture in icy and snowy areas. But serious homogenization should be avoided.

## 5 Conclusions

Snow village has unique geographical conditions and natural advantages, and its internal snow scenery can be called a unique one in China. With its unique snow scenery, snow village has also been at the forefront of China's ice and snow tourism attractions. However, the development of snow village has been slow in recent years. Based on on-site investigations and interviews, the reasons for the slow development and construction of snow village have been analyzed. Firstly, there is severe homogenization. Secondly, the infrastructure construction of scenic spots is not perfect. Thirdly, there is a lack of government regulation, resulting in frequent incidents of "customer slaughter". This paper also provides targeted countermeasures, including tapping into internal advantages and building a "characteristic snow village"; strengthening top-level design and infrastructure construction; promoting the upgrading of the tourism industry and collaborating to innovate the ice and snow tourism supply chain.

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characteristic agricultural product advantage areas of grain and oil at the national level, so as to build national superior and characteristic industrial clusters. (viii) We propose practicing the idea of "three new developments" and building a new development pattern of grain and oil industry in the new era. (ix) We should establish a greater food concept with grain and oil as the main line, and build a diversified high-quality food supply system. (x) It is recommended to first develop the grain and oil industry and speed up the construction of agricultural power. (xi) Drawing on the experience of counterpart aid to Tibet and Xinjiang, it is recommended to provide counterpart aid to ethnic autonomous areas in the Yangtze River Economic Belt to further promote the high-quality development of the Yangtze River Economic Belt. (xii) We should base ourselves on the national food security strategy and take the road of Chinese-style modernization.

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