

# Lessons and Insights from the Wimbledon Championships for China's Professional Tennis Tournaments

Wentao Zhang

School of Public Administration, Zhejiang University, Hangzhou, China

15335147823@163.com

**Abstract.** As tennis continues to grow, China's professional tournaments are emerging yet face numerous challenges. This paper employs documentary research and logical analysis to examine Wimbledon's operational strategies, offering insights for domestic tournament organization. Findings highlight Wimbledon's success in fostering a strong tournament culture and heritage, maintaining a balance between non-commercial values and global strategies, and leveraging new technologies for enhanced analytics and service expansion. For China's professional tournaments, it is recommended to develop a distinct brand culture, integrate local characteristics and combine traditional values and commercials, optimize revenue structures, and utilize smart technologies for upgrades and comprehensive system improvements, thus enhancing their international competitiveness.

**Keywords:** Wimbledon Championships; Tournament Development; Tennis Culture.

## 1. Introduction

As the economy rapidly grows and living standards rise, tennis has become increasingly popular in China, especially following notable successes in international competitions. According to the International Tennis Federation (ITF), China has over 20 million tennis players, more than 50,000 courts, and over 10,000 coaches, underscoring the vast potential of its tennis industry. Furthermore, the Fourteenth Five-Year Plan for Sports Development has explicitly promoted tennis, injecting vital energy into its growth. Reflecting on 2023, China hosted 62 international tennis tournaments, highlighting the sport's significant role in advancing market development and industry integration. However, the flourishing domestic tennis industry faces critical challenges, such as unbalanced revenue structures, conflicts between competition systems and professionalization, and a lack of distinctive brand culture. [1]The Wimbledon Championships, often simply referred to as Wimbledon, holds the distinction of being the world's oldest and most prestigious international tennis tournament. Established in 1877 by the All England Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club, Wimbledon has become a cornerstone of the tennis world. [2] Renowned for its rich historical legacy, unmatched competitive level, and unique grass courts, Wimbledon attracts the world's elite tennis players and has established itself as a premier sporting event. [3] As the cradle of tennis, Wimbledon has not only been a witness to the sport's glorious evolution but has also driven its continual advancement with its distinct appeal. With over a century of development, Wimbledon has become one of the most successfully managed sporting events. [4] Thus, Wimbledon's effective management provides valuable insights and lessons for the development of China's professional tennis tournaments, warranting a detailed analysis and summary to guide the growth of domestic competitions.

## 2. The Significant Value of Wimbledon Competitions

Wimbledon has established itself as a jewel in the realm of sports competitions, distinguished by its rich cultural heritage and stringent technical standards. Evolving from its simple, rustic, and primitive beginnings into one of the four globally renowned Grand Slam tournaments, Wimbledon has undergone transformative changes in both form and nature. No longer merely a contest of tennis skills, it now emphasizes competition marketing and has progressively developed a highly professional operational model. Today, Wimbledon serves not only as an international tennis event where athletes



display their prowess and vie for honors, thereby advancing the sport, but it also plays a crucial role in facilitating cultural exchanges and economic growth. Wimbledon attracts a global audience of diverse ages and cultural backgrounds, making it a platform for international cultural interaction.[5] Furthermore, its highly commercialized marketing strategies generate substantial economic benefits locally, stimulating associated industries.[6] Clearly, as a premier international tennis event, Wimbledon's profound impact spans many countries and regions, serving as a bridge that connects different cultures and fosters regional development together.[7]

### **3. Successful Experience of Wimbledon Competitions**

As one of the four major Grand Slam tournaments, Wimbledon has enjoyed a long and storied history since its inception in 1877. It holds an irreplaceable position within the professional tennis competition system today. Despite the increasingly diverse development of professional tennis events in recent years, Wimbledon distinguishes itself with its rich historical traditions, unique competitive atmosphere, and meticulous operational model. It stands out among numerous professional tennis events and is celebrated as the most prestigious and sought-after tennis competition.

#### **3.1. High Emphasis on Cultivating and Preserving Competition Culture**

Tennis culture comprises four dimensions: material, institutional, spiritual, and behavioral.[8] As a paragon of tennis, Wimbledon has not only preserved the distinctive tennis culture of its host city over its century-long history, but it has also facilitated extensive cross-cultural exchanges and integration. Throughout this evolution, the rich cultural heritages of various countries have been fully displayed and mutually enriched, thereby injecting new life and energy into tennis culture. This interaction promotes the ongoing and healthy development of the sport.

Overall, Wimbledon has significantly contributed to the vibrant growth and continuous improvement of global tennis culture, standing as a shining gem in the tennis world due to its unique cultural depth and commitment to tradition. Firstly, while hard and clay courts have become the mainstream choices in modern tennis events, reflecting ongoing modernization and a practical approach, Wimbledon has steadfastly maintained its grass courts since its inception in 1877. This unwavering commitment has not only distinguished Wimbledon within the tennis community for its unique cultural and sporting values but has also positioned it as one of the most emblematic and authoritative Grand Slam tournaments.[9] Moreover, since 1963, the tournament committee has mandated that players wear white attire, a color deeply embedded in British culture, symbolizing purity, elegance, and solemnity. This rule is meant to honor the British royal family, and the strict dress code not only upholds tradition but also underscores a deep respect for cultural heritage. Finally, regarding ticket sales, despite the rapid advancement of internet technologies, Wimbledon preserves the tradition of on-site ticket purchasing. Spectators must camp overnight at Wimbledon Park to secure a spot, an approach that might seem cumbersome but effectively fosters a solemn atmosphere, highlighting the event's significance and the public's fervent interest. Additionally, "strawberries and cream," a traditional British snack, has become an indispensable element of the Wimbledon experience. It not only delights the taste buds of attendees but also carries distinctive British cultural symbols, symbolizing the integration of Wimbledon with local culture.[10]

#### **3.2. Maintaining a “Non-commercial” Ethos While Embracing Global Strategies**

Since the inaugural tournament in 1877, Wimbledon has captured the hearts of tennis enthusiasts worldwide. In an era dominated by commercialization, many traditional tournaments face unprecedented challenges. Yet, Wimbledon has managed to maintain a delicate balance, skillfully navigating its partnerships with sponsors to achieve a harmonious blend of tradition and modernity. Despite its steadfast commitment to eschewing billboards, Wimbledon has not resisted all change; it now boasts 15 official partners, ranging from luxury fashion labels to globally recognized corporations. The diversity and international scope of these partnerships reflect Wimbledon's evolving approach to globalization while preserving its distinct heritage. The All England Lawn

Tennis and Croquet Club, as a seasoned sports event management organization, excels in brand marketing. Each partner benefits from tailor-made marketing strategies designed to fully meet their promotional needs. By leveraging shared platform data and targeting specific market segments, the club helps sponsors deliver their brand messages precisely, enhancing their visibility and reputation. Additionally, the club enforces an exclusivity policy to ensure sponsors enjoy unique rights within their sponsored events, safeguarding their legal interests and fostering healthy cooperation. This robust partnership model not only secures a stable financial base for Wimbledon but also provides sponsors with a broad platform for market promotion, showcasing Wimbledon's savvy in commercial operations and its seamless integration of tradition and innovation. Additionally, in an effort to continually expand and solidify Wimbledon's global influence, the tournament organizers are actively exploring new market opportunities. Since 2016, Wimbledon has launched a global brand promotion campaign called "Pursuing Excellence." This initiative seeks to elevate Wimbledon beyond a mere sporting event, transforming it into a platform that prioritizes user experience, storytelling, spirit promotion, and tennis outreach. The campaign specifically targets the expansive markets of India and China and has successfully garnered increased attention from Asian audiences through a series of carefully crafted promotional activities. It is noteworthy that in its quest for competitive excellence, Wimbledon also greatly values its integration with local communities. By effectively leveraging social media and other modern communication channels, Wimbledon has facilitated real-time interactions with a vast number of fans, significantly narrowing the distance between them. This strategy not only enhances the tournament's allure but also ensures that the excitement of the two-week sporting event continues to receive widespread attention throughout the year, laying a solid foundation for Wimbledon's long-term development. [11]

### **3.3. Actively Leveraging New Technologies: Digital Tools Enhancing Competition Analysis**

In modern sports events, the integration of technology and sports is increasingly tight, providing audiences with diverse and personalized experiences. As one of the premier tennis tournaments, Wimbledon has maintained a partnership with International Business Machines Corporation (IBM) for 28 years, consistently staying at the forefront of technological innovation. Since 2017, Wimbledon has been using IBM's artificial intelligence platform, Watson, to capture match highlights and automatically generate event summaries, significantly enhancing the efficiency and reach of content production. Additionally, Wimbledon has developed a specialized mobile app that not only offers schedules, news, live broadcasts, and access to the official store but also features a unique function that allows users to create and share their personal experiences related to the Wimbledon championships. This interaction fosters community engagement and increases user loyalty. In the era of big data, sports events face high demands for data processing. [12] To meet these needs, IBM has created a comprehensive data center for Wimbledon that encompasses competition data analysis, player analytics, social media analysis, and security measures. By collecting and analyzing real-time performance data, the center can produce clear charts and diagrams for television broadcasts and new media platforms, offering audiences more professional and comprehensive competition information.

### **3.4. Expanding Ancillary Projects and Enriching Event Services**

In today's highly competitive sports industry, maximizing economic benefits is a key goal. Many sports event organizers are actively exploring and expanding related industry developments, aiming for breakthroughs in both depth and breadth. [13] Wimbledon, as one of the world's top tennis events, is no exception. The organizers have implemented a variety of strategies that cleverly integrate the tournament with dining, entertainment, and tourism, providing audiences with richer and more diverse experiences while also generating additional economic value. For example, during the Wimbledon tournament, the All England Club annually sets up an Official Hospitality Suite. According to data, the suite can accommodate approximately 250 guests per day, offering high-end dining and leisure services. The establishment of the Official Hospitality Suite provides a comfortable and elegant space for interactions, fostering communication and cooperation among all stakeholders of the event and positively impacting Wimbledon's international image and appeal. Beyond the

services offered during the tournament, the organizers also leverage Wimbledon's rich historical and cultural heritage. The Wimbledon Lawn Tennis Museum, located in Wimbledon, is open to the public all year round. Visitors can experience the history of Wimbledon, learning about its origins, development, and remarkable achievements. This approach not only attracts numerous fans and spectators during the tournament but also draws tourists during the off-season, contributing to the local tourism industry and further solidifying Wimbledon's brand image and cultural influence as a premier international tennis event.

In summary, the exploration and practices in industrial development by the organizers of Wimbledon fully demonstrate their wisdom and innovation in managing and operating sports events. By deeply integrating the competition with related industries, Wimbledon has not only enhanced its economic benefits but also provided a richer and more diverse experience for spectators and tourists. This represents a sustainable model of event operation that could serve as a valuable example for other sports event organizers to emulate and learn from.

#### **4. Enlightenment of Wimbledon for the Development of Domestic Tennis Professional Competitions**

##### **4.1. Cultivating a Competition Brand Culture and Promoting the Integration of Local Characteristics**

The construction of a competition brand is crucial for attracting the attention of consumers, sponsors, and the media.[14] While domestic professional tennis tournaments have reached a high level of competitive quality, they still lack distinctive features in their brand culture. Wimbledon's success fundamentally stems from its deep cultural heritage. It is the only Grand Slam tennis event that mandates specific attire for participants, representing not just the intensity and excitement of the competition but also the perpetuation and enhancement of British gentlemanly culture. Currently, the development of professional tennis events in China still in its early stages, with relatively low popularity and an undeveloped tennis culture and atmosphere. [15]

In order to further develop China's professional tennis tournaments and promote the popularization of tennis, as well as to enhance public awareness and participation in the sport, a variety of measures should be implemented. First, organizers should fully leverage media platforms like television and short videos to educate the public about the history, rules, and etiquette of tennis, thereby enhancing public understanding of the sport. Secondly, organizers should capitalize on the star power of local tennis celebrities to boost cultural confidence and national pride among the population. They could invite these stars to serve as ambassadors for the tournaments and increase promotional efforts, or even consider establishing a tennis museum to display the history, culture, and memorabilia of notable players, thus enriching the cultural depth of the events. Finally, organizers should focus on building their own brand image, increasing engagement through stimulating discussions, and expanding the fan base. Currently, professional tennis events are held in various cities like Beijing, Shanghai, Shenzhen, and Wuhan, each with its unique cultural and regional characteristics. To enhance the impact and appeal of these events, organizers should exploit these local resources effectively, integrating them cleverly with the tennis tournaments to create a distinctive event culture. For instance, they could incorporate local cuisine, customs, and tourism into the events, creating a unique tournament experience. During the tournaments, local delicacies could be featured to allow spectators to enjoy the unique flavors of the host cities; interactive zones that showcase local customs could be established near the venues to deepen the audience's understanding of the host city's cultural heritage. Additionally, organizers could partner with local tourism departments to offer unique travel packages that combine tennis action with city tours, attracting more fans and tourists. Integrating tennis with city-specific features not only enriches the content and enhances the attractiveness of the events but also highlights the unique charm of the cities, adding a distinctive flair to the competitions.

## **4.2. The Integration of Commercial and Traditional Values and Optimizing Competition Income Structures**

Wimbledon, a tennis tournament with a rich history and global acclaim, owes its success to a masterful blend of commercial and traditional values. On one hand, commercial sponsorships and advertising revenues provide a robust financial base, ensuring the tournament's ongoing viability. On the other hand, Wimbledon steadfastly upholds traditional values such as respect for opponents, fair play, and integrity. These venerable sporting principles not only earn Wimbledon a stellar reputation but also establish its irreplaceable brand identity.

Reflecting on domestic professional tennis tournaments, it is evident that issues with unbalanced revenue structures are common. To ensure sustainable development, organizers of domestic tennis competitions should actively learn from Wimbledon's success, aiming to perfectly integrate commercial elements with traditional values to optimize their revenue structures. Firstly, in ticket operations, they should adopt flexible and varied approaches, fully utilizing the star power to attract audiences, refining ticket marketing strategies, upgrading ticket sales systems, increasing the technological aspects of tickets to prevent counterfeits, enhancing ticket operation and management, strictly controlling the distribution of free tickets, and devising reasonable ticket sales strategies based on market conditions, while developing diverse ticket resources and expanding event publicity and promotion to increase ticket revenue. Secondly, in licensing, they should develop product diversity while increasing the penetration of local cultural elements into the event, establishing diverse sales channels to boost the sales of licensed products. Additionally, in terms of sponsorships, under the premise of ensuring steady growth in sponsorship amounts and numbers, they should advance brand alignment and stability, strictly enforce exclusivity when selecting sponsors, and maintain their loyalty by providing multi-layered, beneficial returns. Lastly, in terms of broadcasting rights, they should actively engage in the commercial operations of these rights, deepen cooperation with major broadcasters like CCTV, expand the quantity, intensity, and depth of coverage, and also increase secondary sales of online broadcasting rights, emphasizing the management of international broadcast markets to enhance broadcasting revenue. [16]

## **4.3. Masterful Use of Digital and Intelligent Technologies to Enhance Tournaments**

With the advent of the digital age, the application of modern information technology in sports events is becoming increasingly widespread. Wimbledon has keenly recognized the importance of technological innovation and actively integrates digital and intelligent technologies across various aspects of the tournament. This integration significantly enhances the spectator experience and interactive features of the events.

To achieve sustainable development in domestic professional tennis tournaments, it's crucial to intensify technological innovation and invigorate the events with digital and intelligent technologies. Firstly, organizers should actively implement advanced data analytics and visualization technologies to offer audiences more intuitive and comprehensive displays of match data. Real-time collection and analysis of metrics such as serve speed, hit strength, and player movement, presented through charts, animations, and other visuals, can deepen audience understanding of match dynamics and enhance viewing experiences. Additionally, these technologies can aid in tactical analysis and training, allowing coaches and players to adjust strategies and improve performance in competition.[17] Secondly, domestic tennis tournaments should harness emerging technologies like virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) to deliver immersive spectator experiences. VR technology enables audiences to enjoy 360-degree panoramic views of matches from home or outside the venue, making them feel as though they are on the court. Meanwhile, AR can enhance live viewing by overlaying real-time data and strategic analysis, increasing interactivity and engagement. Moreover, organizers can leverage these technologies to develop tennis-themed games and applications, drawing younger demographics into the sport. Lastly, it is essential for tournament organizers to focus on managing and utilizing social media platforms to amplify the tournaments' reach. Establishing official accounts on platforms like Weibo, Douyin, and Kuaishou to regularly post tournament updates, behind-the-

scenes content, and player interviews can foster greater fan interaction and increase event visibility. Collaborating with influencers, celebrities, and other key opinion leaders to promote the events through live streams and short videos can also draw more attention and spark discussions. [18]

#### **4.4. Constructing a Comprehensive System and Enhancing Ancillary Services**

In addition to optimizing and innovating in areas such as brand culture building, commercial development, and technological application within the tournaments themselves, domestic professional tennis tournaments should also establish comprehensive tournament structures. It is crucial to focus on enhancing all ancillary services to comprehensively improve the spectator experience. [19]

On one hand, during the professionalization of tennis in China, it's crucial to deepen our understanding of the nature of professionalism. Only by fully exploring the objective laws governing the development of professional tournaments can we effectively promote the smooth progression of professional reforms, leveraging the strengths of China's nationwide system. To achieve this, existing tournament management systems need restructuring. This includes separating the management of governmental and service units and advancing the formalization process of tennis associations. Additionally, government departments should actively redefine their roles, adhering to the principle of separating management from operations, returning administrative functions to governmental bodies focused solely on regulation, and delegating event hosting duties to sub-organizations to avoid conflicts of interest. On the other hand, there should be a focus on developing ancillary services. This includes enhancing the infrastructure of event venues to ensure competitions run smoothly and spectators enjoy a high-quality experience. Organizers should invest in modernizing venues with advanced lighting systems, high-definition screens, and optimized seating arrangements to create a more comfortable and contemporary viewing environment. Moreover, improving business reception services at events is essential; facilities such as dining, shopping, and leisure play a significant role in enhancing the spectator experience. Introducing renowned catering and retail brands can provide diverse culinary options and unique souvenirs catering to various tastes. Furthermore, addressing transportation is crucial, as it often impacts the spectator experience. Organizers should collaborate with local government agencies to develop comprehensive transport strategies, establish specific bus routes during events, and coordinate with subway and taxi services to ensure easy access to venues. Lastly, special attention must be paid to humanistic care during events. Tennis matches can be lengthy, requiring spectators to remain seated for extended periods. Organizers should accommodate the needs of vulnerable groups by providing accessible pathways and specialized care for the elderly, children, and the disabled. Installing amenities like sunshades and water dispensers can help mitigate heat and enhance comfort. Strengthening on-site medical and security services is also vital to ensure the safety of both persons and property. Post-event, organizers should seek feedback through emails and text messages to gauge spectator satisfaction and implement targeted improvements. [20]

#### **5. Conclusion**

As tennis continues to develop and progress in China, all sectors of society should fully recognize and value the economic and social impact generated by domestic professional tennis tournaments. While China's professional tennis tournaments have a relatively short history compared to those in developed countries and face challenges such as underdeveloped market operations, they can still gradually develop a unique tournament culture. By actively learning from and adapting advanced concepts and operational models from mature international tennis events and adhering to pragmatic management strategies, these tournaments are poised for steady growth. This approach will not only stabilize the development of professional tennis tournaments but also attract greater audience engagement, thereby further promoting the popularization of tennis and expanding the consumer market.

## References

- [1] Liu Qin. Research on the influence of the development of international professional tennis events on professional tennis events in China[D]. Beijing Sport University, 2019.
- [2] Hu Yingnan. Research on Business Operation Model of China Open[D]. Wuhan Institute of Physical Education, 2015.
- [3] Wagg S. The Wimbledon effect: The tennis championships as changing national symbol[M]//Routledge Handbook of Tennis. Routledge, 2019: 372-382.
- [4] Klaassen F, Magnus J R. Analyzing Wimbledon: The power of statistics[M]. Oxford University Press, 2014.
- [5] Lake R J. The Wimbledon championships, the all England lawn tennis club, and “invented traditions”[J]. International Journal of Sport Communication, 2018, 11(1): 52-74.
- [6] Embar V R, Bhattacharya I, Pandit V, et al. Online topic-based social influence analysis for the wimbledon championships[C]//Proceedings of the 21th ACM SIGKDD international conference on knowledge discovery and data mining. 2015: 1759-1768.
- [7] Velagapudi B. Evolution of Sports Marketing: Wimbledon's approach to Digitalization[D]. Dublin, National College of Ireland, 202.
- [8] Tan Dongping, Lu Yi. The Strategy of Popular Tennis Culture Dissemination in the New Period[J]. Journal of Guangzhou Sport University, 2019, 39(01):70-73.
- [9] Kennedy E, Hills L, John A. Wimbledon: A megamediasport tradition[M]//Sport, media and mega-events. Routledge, 2017: 130-141.
- [10] Yang Wenli, Gao Shoudong, Liu Bao. Research on the Symbiotic Effect of Four Grand Slam Tennis Events[J]. Journal of Nanjing Sport Institute(Natural Science), 2017, 16(01):58-62.
- [11] Liu Tianzhuo. An Exploration of the Sport Cultural Differences Between China and Britain--A Comparative Analysis of China Open and Wimbledon[J]. Youth Sport, 2016, (06):136-137.
- [12] Velagapudi B. Evolution of Sports Marketing: Wimbledon's approach to Digitalization[D]. Dublin, National College of Ireland, 2020.
- [13] Gratton C, Dobson N, Shibli S. The Economic Importance of Major Sports Events: a Case-study of Six Events[J]. Managing leisure, 2000, 5(1): 17-28.
- [14] Zhang Zhishang. Development Trend and Prospect of Professional Tennis Matches in China[J]. Journal of Nanchang Normal University(Comprehensive), 2019, 40(03):80-82.
- [15] Liang Gaoliang. Research on Collaborative Development of Professional Tennis Matches Supply and Demand[J]. Sports Culture Guide, 2017, (11):116-120.
- [16] Yang Jian. Strategic Thoughts from the Hosting of WTA125K for China's Professional Tennis Tournaments[J]. Science and Technology of Stationery and Sporting Goods, 2014, (24):9+16.
- [17] Peng Lifang. Research on the development strategy of professional tennis events in China based on SWOT theory of Four Grand Slams[D]. Shanghai Normal University,2020.
- [18] Shen Jiyue. The Communication Strategy of the Mobile Platform of the Research on the Interactive Marketing Concept of the International Professional Tennis Tournament[D]. Beijing Sport University,2016.
- [19] Zheng Yanhong. Research on professional tennis competition culture development and promotion strategy of China[D]. Henan University,2023.
- [20] Xu Shiyu. Research on the Bottleneck and Optimization Path of Tennis Professionalization in China[D]. Wuhan University of Technology, 2021.