



A Case Study on the Transformation of a Commercial Complex in Nanning, China

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Abstract- Traditional commercial complexes are facing intensified market competition and transformation pressure due to the rapid expansion of e-commerce and changes in consumer behavior. Consumer demand has shifted from simple product purchasing to experience, social interaction, leisure, and family-oriented consumption, which requires commercial complexes to adjust business formats and innovate marketing models. Taking a commercial complex in Nanning as a case study, this paper aims to: (1) examine its marketing strategy adjustment and transformation path under increasing competition; and (2) summarize its transformation experience to provide references for similar commercial complexes. This study adopts a case study method and applies the SCP framework and 4P marketing mix theory to analyze its transformation process. The findings show that: (1) the complex transformed from a traditional department-store model into an experience-oriented shopping center through differentiated positioning, experience-based format upgrading, dining-driven traffic attraction, and precise customer operation; and (2) it focused on local consumers aged 20–40 and family consumers by introducing leading brands, increasing dining formats, developing a children’s themed floor, and optimizing spatial circulation. The case suggests that differentiated positioning, experience-oriented formats, dining and family scenarios, and precise customer operation are key paths for transformation.

Keywords: Commercial Complex, Marketing Strategy, Transformation, SCP Framework, 4P Marketing Mix, Experience Economy.

I. Introduction:

E-commerce has reshaped people’s consumption habits. As shopping increasingly turns into screen scrolling, the survival space of traditional commercial complexes is being gradually squeezed (Khotimah & Lusiana, 2026). E-commerce platforms represented by Alibaba, JD.com, and Pinduoduo have continued to expand, changing consumers’ shopping methods and consumption habits. At the same time, the demands of young consumers and family consumers for commercial spaces have also changed significantly. Consumers no longer focus only on product purchasing itself, but place greater emphasis on experience, social interaction, leisure functions, and emotional resonance during the shopping process. Therefore, traditional commercial complexes need to gradually transform from single retail and department-store models into experience-oriented consumption spaces integrating shopping, dining, entertainment, parent-child activities, leisure, and social interaction.

Experience economy theory argues that experience is becoming a new source of economic value, and enterprises need to create higher-level consumer value through scene design and service innovation (Pine & Gilmore, 1998). In the development of commercial complexes, this theory provides an important perspective for explaining the transformation of shopping centers from product-selling spaces to experience-based consumption spaces. Existing studies have pointed out that experience-oriented shopping centers can better meet consumers’ diversified, contextualized, and socialized consumption needs, making them an important trend in urban commercial development (Grewal et al., 2017; Hoyer et al., 2020). Meanwhile, the business-format mix, spatial layout, and consumption environment of shopping centers affect customer satisfaction and loyalty. Business-format diversity and the rationality of spatial configuration have important impacts on customer behavior (El-Adly & Eid, 2016).

As the capital city of Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, Nanning has witnessed continuous expansion in urban consumption in recent years, and competition among commercial complexes has become increasingly intense. Shopping centers such as MixC, Wanda Plaza, Shengtian Land, and Yuehui Plaza have formed a competitive landscape across different regions and consumption levels. Against this background, if traditional commercial complexes continue to rely on existing department-store and retail models, they may face problems such as declining customer traffic, aging business formats, brand homogenization, and insufficient operational efficiency. Therefore, how to achieve transformation through differentiated positioning, business-format restructuring, and marketing strategy adjustment has become an important issue for local commercial complexes.

This study takes Nanning Hangyang City Mall—a Commercial Complex, as the research sample and adopts a case study method to analyze its marketing strategy adjustment and transformation path under the background of



intensified commercial competition in Nanning. Nanning Hangyang City Mall is located along Minzu Avenue and adjacent to the Nanning International Convention and Exhibition Center, giving it strong locational representativeness. The commercial complex has experienced market competition pressure, business-format adjustment, and repositioning. This case offers a clear blueprint for how local malls can survive and thrive in the age of e-commerce. The complex successfully reinvented itself as an experience-driven destination by shifting its focus to young families. They brought in popular dining brands, expanded kids' entertainment zones, and redesigned the layout to make walking through the space feel seamless and inviting.

This study applies the SCP analytical framework and the 4P marketing mix theory (Bain, 1959; McCarthy, 1960). Specifically, the SCP framework is used to analyze the market structure of commercial complexes in Nanning, the firm conduct of Nanning Hangyang City Mall, and its post-transformation business performance. The 4P marketing mix theory is further used to explain its specific marketing strategies in terms of product, price, place, and promotion. Through this case analysis, it aims to explore how local commercial complexes can achieve transformation through differentiated positioning, experience-oriented business-format upgrading, and precise customer-group operation, and to provide references for the marketing optimization and transformation development of similar commercial complexes.

II. Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

2.1 SCP Analytical Framework

The SCP analytical framework, namely the structure–conduct–performance framework, is a classic analytical tool in industrial organization theory. This framework suggests that market structure influences firm conduct, and firm conduct further affects business performance (Bain, 1959). In this study, the SCP framework is used to construct the overall logic for analyzing the case of Nanning Hangyang City Mall. Specifically, the market structure dimension examines the competitive environment of commercial complexes in Nanning, the impact of e-commerce, and changes in consumer demand. The firm conduct dimension analyzes the specific actions taken by Nanning Hangyang City Mall in marketing strategy adjustment and business-format restructuring. The performance dimension evaluates its transformation outcomes in terms of customer traffic, rental income, sales scale, and market position.

2.2 4P Marketing Mix Theory

The 4P marketing mix theory, proposed by McCarthy (1960), includes four basic dimensions: product, price, place, and promotion. It is an important tool for analyzing corporate marketing strategies. For commercial complexes, product strategy is mainly reflected in business-format mix, brand structure, and consumption-scene design; price strategy is reflected in rental pricing, brand segmentation, and commercial value enhancement; place strategy not only refers to sales channels in the traditional sense, but also includes spatial circulation, property layout, and customer access routes within shopping centers; and promotion strategy includes brand communication, themed events, first-store marketing, and scenario-based marketing. In this study, the 4P marketing mix theory is embedded in the “firm conduct” dimension of the SCP framework to analyze how Nanning Hangyang City Mall achieved transformation through adjustments in product, price, place, and promotion strategies.

2.3 Literature Review

Experience economy theory provides an important theoretical basis for understanding the transformation of commercial complexes. Pine and Gilmore (1998) argued that experience is becoming a new source of economic value, and that enterprises need to create higher-level consumer value through scene design, service innovation, and emotional interaction. For traditional commercial complexes, the core value of offline space is no longer limited to product sales. Instead, it lies in providing experience value that cannot easily be replaced by e-commerce through integrated scenarios such as dining, entertainment, parent-child activities, social interaction, and leisure. Existing studies suggest that experience-oriented shopping centers can better meet consumers' diversified, contextualized, and socialized consumption needs and have become an important trend in urban commercial development (McKinsey, 2025; Lucia-Palacios et al., 2020). In addition, immersive experience can enhance customer participation and positively influence the formation of customer loyalty (Vilnai-Yavetz et al., 2021).

Business-format mix and spatial layout are important factors affecting the competitiveness of shopping centers. The business-format structure of a shopping center not only determines consumers' motivation to visit, but also affects their length of stay, consumption experience, and willingness to revisit. Previous studies suggest that customer experience in shopping centers can be understood from the perspectives of product and service experience, shopping environment experience, and business-format structure experience, all of which influence customer satisfaction and loyalty (Vilnai-Yavetz et al., 2021; Chen, 2024). The shopping environment also affects consumers' perceived value, satisfaction, and loyalty (El-Adly & Eid, 2016). Therefore, the



transformation of commercial complexes is not simply a matter of replacing brands, but a systematic reconstruction of business-format mix, spatial organization, and consumption experience. For example, in case of local commercial complexes, the reasonable allocation of dining, retail, children's services, entertainment, and leisure formats can help extend consumers' length of stay, improve spatial utilization efficiency, and strengthen customer stickiness.

Under the impact of e-commerce and changes in consumer behavior, digital transformation and differentiated operation have become important directions for shopping centers to enhance competitiveness. The digital transformation of shopping centers usually includes stages such as business informatization, marketing online integration, comprehensive digitalization, and digital empowerment (ICSC & FitForCommerce, n.d.; Yan et al., 2026). Through membership systems, private traffic operation, online event promotion, and consumption data analysis, commercial complexes can strengthen their continuous connection with consumers. Meanwhile, traditional commercial complexes commonly face problems such as brand and business-format homogenization, single marketing models, and outdated management approaches. They need to upgrade their brand formats, marketing models, and operational management (Grewal et al., 2017; ICSC & FitForCommerce, n.d.). For regional commercial complexes, direct competition with high-end shopping centers may not always be advantageous. A more feasible path is to form a clear market positioning and differentiated business-format mix based on local consumption demand.

In summary, existing studies have discussed the transformation of commercial complexes from the perspectives of experience economy, business-format mix, customer experience, digital transformation, and differentiated operation. These studies provide important references for understanding the shift of shopping centers from traditional retail spaces to experience-oriented consumption spaces. However, several gaps remain. First, some studies focus more on macro-level trends and pay insufficient attention to the specific marketing actions and performance changes of individual commercial complexes during transformation. Second, existing research tends to discuss large chain commercial groups or shopping centers in first-tier cities, while case studies on second-tier cities or regional local commercial complexes remain limited. Third, the integrated analysis of the relationship among market competition environments, firm marketing conduct, and business performance is still insufficient. Therefore, this study takes Nanning Hangyang City Mall as a case and combines the SCP analytical framework with the 4P marketing mix theory to analyze its market environment, marketing strategy adjustment, and transformation performance in Nanning's commercial competition landscape, thereby supplementing case-based evidence on the transformation of local commercial complexes.

2.4 Nanning Hangyang City Mall

Nanning Hangyang City Mall is a representative commercial complex in Nanning, Guangxi, located along Minzu Avenue near the Nanning International Convention and Exhibition Center. As one of the city's early large-scale shopping mall projects, it integrated retail, dining, entertainment, leisure, and supporting services. However, with the rise of new shopping centers in Nanning, the mall faced stronger competition, declining customer traffic, and changing consumer demand. Its original retail-oriented format, spatial circulation, and brand structure became less suitable for an experience-based consumption environment. Around 2013, the mall underwent large-scale adjustment and repositioning. After reopening, it shifted toward an experience-oriented shopping center by strengthening dining formats, children's business spaces, leading brands, and spatial circulation. Its target customers gradually focused on local consumers aged 20–40 and family consumers, making it a useful case for analyzing local commercial complex transformation (Nanning Municipal People's Government, n.d.; Nanning International Convention and Exhibition Center, n.d.).

III. Methodology

3.1 Data Sources

This study adopts a qualitative case study approach and takes Nanning Hangyang City Mall as the research sample. The analysis is mainly based on secondary data and publicly available case information. The data sources include public reports, industry materials, local statistical information, enterprise-related public information, and case materials summarized from the original article. The collected information covers the commercial consumption environment in Nanning, the competitive landscape of local shopping centers, the development history of Nanning Hangyang City Mall, its business-format adjustment, marketing strategy changes, and post-transformation performance indicators. Since this study does not use consumer survey data, interviews, or internal enterprise data, the findings are interpreted as case-based evidence rather than statistically generalizable conclusions.

3.2 Analytical Methods and Logic

This study combines the SCP analytical framework with the 4P marketing mix theory to analyze the transformation of Nanning Hangyang City Mall. The SCP framework is used as the overall analytical structure,

following the logic of market structure, firm conduct, and business performance. First, the market structure dimension examines the external environment of Nanning’s commercial complexes, including market competition, e-commerce impact, and changes in consumer demand. Second, the firm conduct dimension analyzes the strategic actions taken by Nanning Hangyang City Mall in response to these external pressures. Within this dimension, the 4P marketing mix theory is applied to examine its product, price, place, and promotion strategies. Product strategy focuses on business-format restructuring, brand mix, dining formats, children’s themed spaces, and experience-oriented consumption scenarios. Price strategy examines rental pricing, brand segmentation, and commercial value enhancement. Place strategy analyzes spatial circulation, property renovation, floor layout, and customer movement routes. Promotion strategy examines first-store marketing, themed activities, scenario-based marketing, and target customer communication. Finally, the performance dimension evaluates the transformation outcomes in terms of customer traffic, rental income, sales scale, and market position. Through this integrated analytical logic, the study explains how Nanning Hangyang City Mall transformed from a traditional commercial complex into an experience-oriented shopping center.

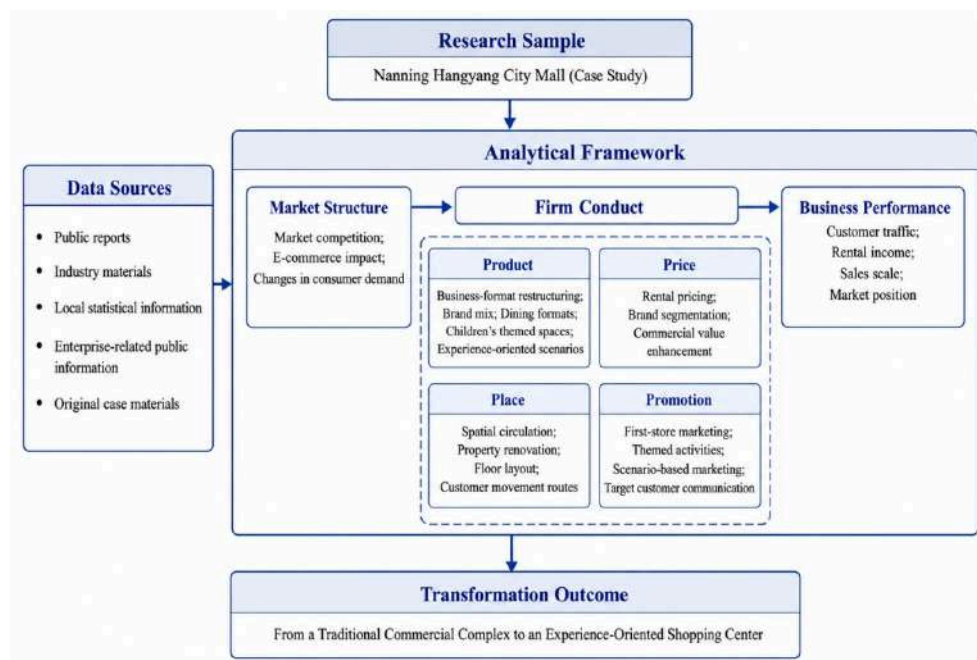


Figure 1. Analytical Framework
Source: Compiled by the author (2026).

IV. Research Findings

The research findings are organized into three parts. First, the SCP framework is used to analyze the market structure, firm conduct, and business performance of Nanning Hangyang City Mall. Second, the 4P marketing mix theory is applied to further examine its specific marketing strategy adjustments. Third, the transformation outcomes are evaluated through a comparison of key indicators before and after the adjustment.

Table 1. SCP Analysis

| SCP Dimension | Analytical Focus | Case Evidence |
|------------------|---|---|
| Market Structure | External competition, e-commerce impact, and changes in consumer demand | The shopping center market in Nanning has formed a multi-player competitive structure, with MixC, Wanda Plaza, Shengtian Land, Yuehui Plaza, and other commercial complexes continuously diverting consumers. At the same time, e-commerce has changed consumer shopping habits, placing pressure on traditional retail formats. Consumer demand has gradually shifted toward experience, dining, parent-child activities, leisure, and social interaction. |
| Firm Conduct | Marketing strategies and business-format adjustments adopted in response to competition | Nanning Hangyang City Mall gradually transformed from a traditional commercial complex into an experience-oriented shopping center through differentiated positioning, experience-based business-format restructuring, dining-driven |

| SCP Dimension | Analytical Focus | Case Evidence |
|----------------------|---|--|
| | | traffic attraction, children’s themed business spaces, spatial circulation optimization, and first-store strategy. |
| Business Performance | Changes in customer traffic, rental income, sales, and market position after transformation | After adjustment, the mall experienced significant growth in customer traffic, rental income, and sales scale, while its market position was strengthened. This indicates that its marketing strategy adjustment and business-format restructuring achieved visible transformation outcomes. |

Table 1 shows that the transformation of Nanning Hangyang City Mall can be understood through the SCP logic. External market pressure and changing consumer demand shaped the mall’s strategic conduct, while its marketing and format adjustments contributed to improved business performance.

Table 2. 4P Marketing Mix Analysis

| 4P Dimension | Analytical Content | Case Evidence |
|--------------------|--|--|
| Product Strategy | Business-format mix, brand structure, and consumption-scene design | The mall increased the proportion of dining formats to more than 50% and introduced dining brands such as Haidilao and Woxiaoxia. It also developed a children’s themed floor, with children-related formats accounting for nearly 20%. In addition, it introduced young fashion brands such as Zara, MJstyle, and MUJI, forming an experience-oriented business-format structure. |
| Price Strategy | Rental pricing, brand segmentation, and commercial value enhancement | After adjustment, the mall no longer adopted a rough tenant-attraction model. Instead, it selected brands based on brand positioning and target consumers. Through a high-quality brand mix and strong customer traffic, the mall developed rental premium capacity, and some prime stores reached relatively high rental levels. |
| Place Strategy | Spatial circulation, property renovation, floor layout, and customer movement routes | The mall reduced the original large space occupied by Walmart and converted part of it into two rows of stores, making the internal pedestrian street a high-traffic area. It also optimized floor functions by moving the cinema to the fifth floor and concentrating children’s and dining formats on the third and fourth floors. |
| Promotion Strategy | Brand communication, first-store strategy, themed activities, and scenario-based marketing | The mall created a “first-store effect” by introducing topical brands such as Haidilao, Zara, and Woxiaoxia. It also used its north and south plazas to hold markets, beverage festivals, and themed activities, enhancing consumer participation and social communication. |

Table 2 further explains the firm conduct dimension of the SCP framework. The 4P analysis shows that the mall’s transformation was not based on a single marketing action, but on a coordinated adjustment of business formats, pricing logic, spatial organization, and promotional activities.

Table 3. Comparison of Key Indicators Before and After the Transformation of Nanning Hangyang City Mall

| Indicator | Before Transformation, 2013 | After Transformation, 2016–2018 | Change |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Average weekday customer traffic | About 20,000–30,000 visits per day | About 80,000 visits per day | Increased by about 2–3 times |
| Annual rental income | About RMB 80 million | More than RMB 200 million | Increased by over 150% |
| Annual total sales | About RMB 1.5 billion | More than RMB 3 billion | Increased by over 100% |
| Proportion of dining formats | About 45% | More than 50% | Increased |
| Proportion of children’s formats | Relatively low | Nearly 20% | Significantly increased |

Table 3 indicates that the transformation of Nanning Hangyang City Mall produced positive outcomes in customer traffic, rental income, total sales, and business-format structure. However, these figures are based on public reports and case materials rather than audited internal financial data, so they should be interpreted as case-based performance evidence.

V. Discussion

The findings show that differentiated positioning was the core logic behind the transformation of Nanning Hangyang City Mall. In Nanning’s competitive shopping center market, MixC occupied a high-end position



with international and domestic premium brands, while Wanda Plaza relied on mature chain-based operation. Under this market structure, direct competition would have increased the risk of homogenization. Nanning Hangyang City Mall instead repositioned itself toward local consumers aged 20–40 and family consumers, forming a differentiated competitive advantage. This indicates that local commercial complexes should not simply imitate high-end shopping centers, but should identify their own customer base, location advantages, and consumption scenarios (FlameAnalytics, 2023).

The transformation also demonstrates the importance of dining and experience-oriented formats in attracting offline customer traffic. By increasing the proportion of dining formats to more than 50%, introducing children's business formats, and developing leisure and social consumption scenes, Nanning Hangyang City Mall built a business-format structure centered on experience consumption. This supports the logic of experience economy theory, which argues that offline commercial spaces need to provide experience value that cannot be easily replaced by e-commerce (Pine & Gilmore, 1998). Dining, children's activities, leisure, and social interaction became important engines for customer traffic and customer stickiness.

In addition, the case shows that first-store strategy, spatial circulation optimization, and scenario-based marketing jointly strengthened the mall's brand attractiveness. The introduction of brands such as Haidilao, Zara, and Woxiaoxia created scarcity value and stimulated consumers' motivation to visit and share experiences. Meanwhile, the renovation of internal pedestrian routes, floor functions, and public activity spaces improved operational efficiency. These findings suggest that shopping center transformation requires not only tenant replacement, but also coordinated adjustment of brand portfolio, spatial design, and consumer participation mechanisms (Pantano & Vannucci, 2019). However, the case also reveals continuing challenges, including lagging digital transformation, intensified stock competition, and consumer differentiation. Therefore, the success of the first-stage transformation does not mean that the mall has completed its long-term transformation.

VI. Conclusion

This study took Nanning Hangyang City Mall as a case study and applied the SCP analytical framework and the 4P marketing mix theory to examine its marketing strategy adjustment and transformation path. The findings show that the mall achieved a transition from a traditional commercial complex to an experience-oriented shopping center through differentiated market positioning, systematic business-format restructuring, dining-driven traffic attraction, children's themed spaces, first-store marketing, and spatial circulation optimization.

From a theoretical perspective, this case illustrates the logic of the SCP framework: market structure shaped firm conduct, and firm conduct further influenced business performance. The 4P analysis also shows that the mall's transformation was not based on a single strategy, but on the coordinated adjustment of product, price, place, and promotion strategies. From a practical perspective, the case provides useful evidence for local commercial complexes facing similar pressure from e-commerce, market saturation, and changing consumer demand.

However, the findings should be interpreted within the specific context of Nanning Hangyang City Mall. The case is influenced by its location, surrounding residential communities, local competition, and available business resources. In addition, this study is mainly based on public reports and case materials, rather than consumer surveys, interviews, or internal financial data. Future studies may further examine customer satisfaction, loyalty, digital operation, and long-term performance through mixed methods or comparative case studies.

VII. Implications

First, local commercial complexes should accelerate the development of digital marketing systems. Nanning Hangyang City Mall has achieved visible results through offline experience, dining formats, and spatial optimization, but its future competitiveness still depends on stronger digital operation. It should improve membership management, private traffic operation, consumer data analysis, personalized content marketing, and online-to-offline customer engagement, because digital tools can strengthen customer relationship management and transform offline traffic into sustainable consumer assets (Hollebeek et al., 2024).

Second, commercial complexes should continue to deepen differentiated positioning and strengthen their local living-circle function. In the context of intensified stock competition, Nanning Hangyang City Mall should further focus on local consumers aged 20–40 and family consumers. Around nearby residential communities, it can strengthen convenient lifestyle services, parent-child consumption, dining, leisure, and community-based activities, so as to build the image of a preferred destination for local daily consumption.

Third, commercial complexes should establish a dynamic business-format optimization mechanism. Consumer preferences are changing quickly, and fixed business formats may soon lose attractiveness. Therefore, Nanning Hangyang City Mall should continuously evaluate tenant performance, customer traffic contribution, brand relevance, and consumer feedback. It can introduce innovative formats such as trendy domestic brands, health



and fitness, anime-related consumption, lifestyle services, and interactive entertainment to maintain freshness and long-term customer attraction (Hollebeek et al. , 2024).

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