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# The Development of NBA in China: A Glocalization Perspective

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## ABSTRACT

The growing sport industry and 1.3 billion potential consumers in China have been garnering tremendous attention from more and more overseas professional sport leagues.

Comparatively, the National Basketball Association (NBA) has had remarkable success in the Chinese market. From the perspective of sport competition or marketing operations, the NBA's achievement in China provides a model for other overseas sport leagues. This case study was organized by summarizing the developmental history of NBA in China, analyzing its current promotional practices, investigating into its marketing strategies, and extrapolating practical references for other sport leagues aiming to penetrating into the Chinese marketplace.

In the perspective of glocalization, multinational corporations should combine both standardized and adapted elements to conceptualize globally and act locally (Tanahashi, 2008). By taking this approach, marketers can meet the needs of local consumers effectively while still maintaining some extent of global standardization (Singh, Kumar, & Baack, 2005). To obtain in-depth understanding about NBA globalization and localization in China, we conducted one-on-one interviews with Chinese academic scholars in sport management and practitioners in Chinese basketball industry and NBA China. Two focus groups with six participants in each group were conducted to learn the perception of NBA products from the perspective of Chinese consumer. The qualitative data analysis was organized around four major aspects: products, media, management and public relations, which were highlighted in the glocalization of transnational corporations (Yang, 2003; Zhang, 2007)

The current case study concluded that although NBA has achieved huge successes in the areas of building a large fan base, increasing media exposure, and garnering net income after its entry to China, it still faces many challenges. One viable solution for the NBA is to bring authentic American cultural commodities while adding Chinese characteristics to accommodate local fans. Combining global heroes such as Michael Jordan and Kobe Bryant and local hero such as Yao Ming, Yi Jianlian, and Jeremy Lin, NBA games will continue to appeal to millions of Chinese fans. Meantime, NBA management needs to continue seeking ways to work out and through the differences in government models and cultural contexts between China and United States. Some viable actions include the promotion of Chinese youth basketball, the training service for elite basketball players, and government-level public relations. In addition, this study suggested that the research framework of glocalization would be an ever intriguing inquiry needed for other sport organizations or leagues seeking expansion to overseas markets.

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## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Mr. Jerred Junqi Wang is a doctoral student at the University of Georgia; Drs. Zhou and Chen received their doctoral degrees at Shanghai University of Sport (China) and currently are professor of sport management and associate professor of sport journalism at Guangzhou Sport University (China). Dr. James J. Zhang received his doctoral degree at Springfield College and currently is the professor of sport management at University of Georgia.

