

# Alley-opp between NBA and CBA: learning successful marketing strategies to improve the development of CBA.

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## Introduction

National Basketball Association (NBA) is the largest professional basketball tournament in the United States, represents the highest level of basketball in the world, which produced Michael Jordan, Magic Johnson, Kobe Bryant, Yao Ming, Lebron James, and other superstars in the world. Chinese Basketball Association (CBA) is China's local league, representing the Chinese basketball. Since David Stern took over the commissioner's chair in 1980s, NBA has implemented global strategies in order to expand its popularity around the world. As the most populous country in the world, China has the biggest basketball market, which has a great attraction to NBA. In 1979, Washington Bullets and Chinese National team had a match in China, which is the symbol of the NBA to land in the Chinese basketball market (Huang, 2013).

Both NBA and CBA benefited over the past few decades from the NBA's globalization in China. NBS got huge economic profits and attracted millions of fans in China. CBA learned some experience from NBA to develop itself. However, NBA's globalization in China is facing some challenges such as competition with CBA in Chinese basketball market. Also, NBA's globalization in China is a double-edged sword to CBA, bring both opportunities and challenges. There are some research on NBA's expanding in China and the development of Chinese basketball. However, the number of research on the link of NBA's diffusion in China and Chinese basketball's development, or how could NBA's expanding in China affect the development of CBA, is limited.

I am studying the globalization of NBA in China because I want to find out more about what is the components of it in order for basketball managers in China to learn from NBA's model to develop Chinese basketball. After all, In this era of rapid circulation of information, cooperation and learning is far better than competition.

## Driving question

1. What are the components of NBA's globalization in China?
2. How could NBA's diffusion in China affect Chinese basketball?



Fig.1 The logo of NBA and CBA.

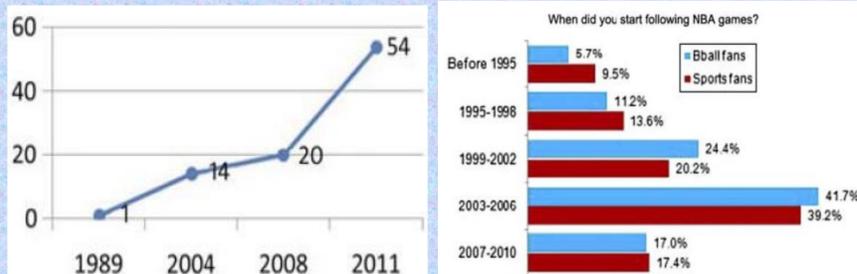


fig 2. Number of television broadcasters showing NBA games in China (Huang, 2013)

## Components of NBA's expanding in China

After landing in Chinese basketball market, NBA took many effective measures to expand its popularity in China. Sun et al (2010) illustrated that the establishment of NBA China is one of the most significant symbol of NBA's expanding in China, which is important to both NBA and CBA. They also found that NBA is attracting millions of fans in China, especially young professional basketball fans, which shows that NBA is expanding its popularity in Chinese basketball fans. Actually, the role of NBA China in basketball fans, especially young basketball fans in China is like a base camp. When they want to get the latest information, such as a NBA superstar's schedule in China, NBA China is the first choice for them to get this information.

Holding NBA China Games is another important measure for NBA's expanding in China. The games that NBA held in China, we called it NBA China Games. In October 14, NBA China Games were held in Shanghai. The two sides are Houston Rockets, who had Yao Ming and Sacramento Kings, who had Liu Wei. Shi (2009) pointed that it's not a simple basketball game. This pre-season game might have the greatest influence in the history of NBA. Also, this game, which was broadcasted to 177 countries and regions around the world in 8 languages, may have the largest number of people watching the game in the history. Consequently, holding NBA China Games provided opportunities for millions of basketball fans in China to contact with NBA in person and get in love with NBA.

Yao Ming is another factor that can not be ignored. Data showed that 58.7% basketball fans in China started following the NBA games after Yao Ming became a super star in NBA and the number of broadcasted NBA games in China has also increased rapidly after Yao Ming's success in NBA. Actually, for millions of basketball fans in China, Yao Ming is the memory of their youth and their first impressions of NBA.

## The effects of NBA's expanding in China to Chinese basketball

1. basketball sport marketing .

Chinese basketball benefited from the adaption of NBA's certain forms of capitalistic operations for profit. This is one example of CBA using NBA's successful model to improve itself in basketball marketing (Luo et al, 2005). They also found that NBA had benefited from its expanding in China to attract millions of fans in China. For example, like we said before, Yao Ming improved NBA's expanding in China and he is actually a bridge between NBA and CBA. The success of NBA's basketball marketing is a good example to basketball managers in China, reminding them to focus on the great influence of super star in basketball sport marketing.

2. events organization

NBA's expanding in China could also affect CBA's organization. According to Houlihan et al (2010), CBA is learning from NBA to improve its game structure. For example, they have the some structure in their playoffs and final matches. Also, the managers allow the clubs to have more time and energy to devote to attracting and servicing fans, media, and sponsors by adopting the NBA market model.

3. fans identification

Menefee and Casper (2011) illustrated that professional basketball fans in China had a higher identification of NBA than CBA, especially in young basketball fans. This is an interesting phenomenon because CBA is the local basketball league in China. It also showed the challenges that NBA's expanding in China brought to Chinese basketball. The lower fans identification may bring negative effects to the development of CBA. Shi (2009) explained that young basketball fans in China are the most valuable sources to both NBA and CBA. There seems to be the trend that NBA has higher popularity in Chinese young basketball fans than CBA. This is negative to the development of CBA. Basketball managers in China should pay attention to this phenomenon and take some measures to improve the quality of CBA games so that they can rise the fans identification of CBA.



Fig 4. NBA has been fully integrated into China



Fig 5. The photo taken at the NBA China Games.

## Discussion

The components of NBA's expanding in China include the establishment of NBA China, Holding NBA China Games, and using Yao Ming's influence to expand its popularity in China. NBA's expanding in China bring huge benefits to both NBA and CBA. NBA attracted over 300 millions of basketball fans in China, which is almost equal to the total population of the United States. (Crick, D., & Crick, J. M. 2016). Although we do not have the specific date to show how much money NBA made by its expanding in China, we can imagine that NBA's expanding popularity in China would bring huge profits to NBA by games tickets, broadcasting fees, the cooperation with Chinese firms and the basketball computer games market. CBA is using NBA's model to make itself more professional in league's structure and events organization. The development of Chinese basketball includes the increasing number of CBA's games, the promotion and relegation system, and the improvement of CBA organizations (Shi, 2009). However, NBA's expanding in China also bring some challenges to CBA, such as the lower fans identification. Future research should focus on how to solve this problem and find out more potential negative effects that NBA's diffusion in China may bring to Chinese basketball. I also find that the number of research on how do NBA's expanding in China affect the development of Chinese basketball is really limited. As NBA is rising its popularity in China, the influence that it bring to Chinese basketball will continue to expand. We need more research to find out more potential effects in this process, both active and negative, so that basketball managers in China could make best use of the advantages and bypass the disadvantages to improve the development of Chinese basketball and the quality of CBA games.

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