



Research on the Empowering Role of Social Culture in the Operation and Management of Major Sports Events: A Comparative Analysis of China and the United States

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Abstract. The successful operation and management of large-scale sports events not only rely on organizational capabilities and resource allocation but are also profoundly influenced by social and cultural factors. This article takes China and the United States as comparative objects to deeply explore the empowering role of social culture in the operation and management of large-scale sports events, analyzing the differences between the two countries in terms of cultural values, government roles, commercial operation models, and public participation, and their impacts on event management. The research finds that China's sports event management emphasizes government leadership, collectivism, and a sense of national honor; while the United States places more emphasis on market-driven forces, individualism, and commercial value, providing a highly commercialized and entertaining space for sports events. Through comparative analysis, this paper proposes a mechanism of differential empowerment by social culture and offers theoretical insights and practical significance for the optimized operation of sports events in a cross-cultural context.

Keywords: Social Culture; Sports Event Management; Empowering Role; China-US Comparison; Cross-Cultural Analysis.

1 Introduction

The major sports events held around the world today, such as the Olympic Games, the FIFA World Cup, and the Super Bowl, are not only significant sporting spectacles but also crucial platforms for cultural exchange, economic development, and national brand building. Of course, the successful operation and management of these events are deeply influenced by the social and cultural contexts in which they occur. For instance, China and the United States represent two contrasting models in hosting and managing large-scale sports events. China, with its collectivist culture and state-driven govern-

ance, emphasizes state leadership. In contrast, the United States, characterized by individualism, market-driven mechanisms, and a strong commercial sports industry, prioritizes profitability, entertainment value, and private sector participation.

This study aims to: analyze cultural values (such as collectivism and individualism, state-driven and market-driven); examine the interaction between social and cultural norms and key operational aspects (such as sponsorship models and public-private partnerships); and evaluate the long-term socio-economic impacts of these events within their respective cultural frameworks.

The significance of this research lies in understanding the role of social and cultural factors in sports event management, which is crucial and reflected in three aspects. 1. Theoretical contribution: This study enriches the literature on event management by integrating cultural and institutional perspectives, going beyond pure economic or logistical analysis. 2. Practical impact: Event organizers and decision-makers can leverage cultural advantages to enhance operational efficiency, stakeholder collaboration, and post-event sustainability. 3. Cross-cultural learning: By comparing China and the United States, it identifies transferable best practices and potential pitfalls in different cultural contexts. The research adopts a comparative case study approach, focusing on the Beijing Olympics and the NBA in the United States.

This article first explores the relevance of social and cultural factors to sports events, then delves into the cultural characteristics and differences between China and the United States and further analyzes and compares the enabling roles of social and cultural factors in the operation and management of large-scale sports events in both countries. Finally, based on the comparison between China and the United States, we summarize suggestions for better management of future large-scale sports events.

2 The Relevance of Social Culture to Sports Events

2.1 The Impact of Social Culture on Sports Events

The influence of social culture on sports events is profound and multifaceted. Sports events are not only demonstrations of sports activities but also carriers and media for the dissemination of social culture [1]. Through sports events, specific social values, cultural concepts, and national spirits are disseminated, exerting a subtle influence on the ideological concepts and value orientations of the audience.

On the one hand, sports events reflect the history, traditions, and national spirit of the host country or region. Sports events from different cultural backgrounds often carry distinct cultural characteristics and symbolic meanings. For instance, in the context of Chinese culture, an Olympic gold medal not only represents an athlete's personal efforts but also embodies the collective sense of honor in traditional Chinese culture that values excellence and perseverance.

On the other hand, sports events also promote cultural exchange and integration. With the development of globalization, international sports events have become important platforms for cultural exchange among different countries [2]. During major sports events, athletes and fans from various countries and regions gather together,

sharing their cultural features through sports activities, enhancing mutual understanding and friendship, and promoting the diversification of culture.

Moreover, the social and cultural environment has a decisive influence on the operation of sports events. In a country that values traditional culture, sports events may pay more attention to integrating with local culture, designing competition forms and spectator experiences with national characteristics. In contrast, culturally diverse countries may be more inclined to introduce international sports elements to attract global attention and maximize cultural exchange.

Social culture also plays a significant role in the participation and promotion of sports events. Sports events held in a specific social and cultural context are more likely to arouse public enthusiasm and identification, thereby generating broader publicity effects. For example, sports events related to traditional festivals are more likely to receive attention and support from all sectors of society because they are closely linked to people's emotional memories and social sentiments.

2.2 The Counterforce of Sports Events on Social Culture

Sports events are not only an important part of social culture but also a significant force driving the progress and development of social culture. Through in-depth analysis, it can be found that the counterforce of sports events on social culture is reflected in multiple aspects: Firstly, it strengthens cultural exchange: Large-scale sports events provide a platform for people from different regions and countries, enabling participants and spectators to come into contact with new cultural elements and ideas. This exchange not only enriches individual cultural experiences but also promotes the protection and development of global cultural diversity. Secondly, it forms unique social values: Sports events often reflect social values such as fair competition, teamwork, and perseverance. The formation and dissemination of these values help enhance citizens' sense of social responsibility and collective identity, further strengthening the core values of social culture.

Then, it promotes social change: new technologies, rules, and strategies demonstrated in sports events often prompt people to reflect on and innovate traditional lifestyles, thereby driving changes in social systems, economic structures, and even educational systems. Again, it enhances community cohesion: Local and international sports events can strengthen the emotional connections among community members and promote the harmonious development of neighborhood relations. Through joint participation and support for hometown teams or athletes, the sense of unity and collaboration among community residents is enhanced. Finally, it promotes the development of sports education and social welfare: The successful hosting of sports events is often accompanied by investment in sports education resources and sponsorship of social welfare causes. This not only increases public recognition of sports activities but also provides important support for cultivating future sports talents and social charity.

3 Social and Cultural Characteristics and Differences between China and the United States

3.1 Characteristics of Chinese Social and Cultural Features

Chinese social and cultural features have a profound historical background and distinct ethnic characteristics. Their main features are reflected in the following aspects: Firstly, there is a strong family concept: In Chinese social and cultural context, the family is the basic unit of society, and the relationship among family members is close. Family inheritance and family honor are highly valued. This concept is manifested in daily life as respect for elders, strict education of children, and emphasis on family history. Secondly, there is a collectivist tendency: Collectivism is one of the important features of Chinese social and cultural context. It emphasizes the subordination of individual interests to collective interests and the importance of teamwork and social harmony. This value is reflected in work and study, manifested as the pursuit of team spirit and the maintenance of collective honor.

Then, there is respect for tradition and authority: Chinese culture has a long history, and traditional concepts are deeply rooted in people's hearts. There is a high degree of respect for authoritative figures and traditional culture. This respect is not only reflected in the respect for national leaders, but also in respect for elders, teachers, and other authoritative figures. Again, there is a strong sense of collective honor: Chinese people generally have a strong sense of collective honor and are willing to make sacrifices for the collective interests. This collectivist spirit is particularly evident in sports events, where fans will loudly cheer for the victory of the team and even spend a lot of time and money. Finally, there is a focus on etiquette and face culture: Etiquette is an important part of Chinese culture, emphasizing traditional etiquette such as respecting elders, caring for younger generations, and gender differentiation. At the same time, face culture is also an important feature of Chinese social and cultural context. People maintain their social status and interpersonal relationships by maintaining face.

These features not only shape the behavioral patterns of the Chinese people but also have a profound impact on the operation and management of large-scale sports events in China. In China, the operation and management of large-scale sports events are deeply influenced by social cultural factors. For example, the collectivist values in Chinese traditional culture make Chinese audiences more inclined to participate in group activities, such as football and basketball, which are team sports [3]. In addition, the importance of sports events in Chinese society is also reflected in the government's strong support for sports undertakings, including providing venues, financial support, and policy preferences.

3.2 Characteristics of American Social Culture

American social culture has several distinctive features, mainly including the following aspects: Firstly, there is a strong emphasis on individualism: American society values individual freedom and independence, and personal rights and freedoms are regarded as supreme. This cultural background prompts Americans to value self-expression and

personal achievements and also cultivates a strong sense of competition. Secondly, there is the integration of diverse cultures: Due to historical reasons, the United States is an immigrant country, where people from different racial backgrounds and with diverse cultural backgrounds gather here. This integration of diverse cultures is one of the important characteristics of American social culture, manifested in the integration of festivals, religions, languages, and diets, etc.

Then, there is a highly developed consumer culture: The United States is one of the largest consumer markets in the world, and its consumer culture has had a profound impact on global society. This is not only reflected in the consumption of material products, but also in various fields such as entertainment, tourism, and education. Again, there is a strong sports industry: In the United States, sports occupy an important position, and both professional and amateur sports activities are highly regarded. Sports events have become an important part of American social and cultural life, promoting the development of the sports industry and the formation of related industrial chains. Finally, there is a cultural atmosphere of technological innovation: The United States has abundant resources for technological innovation and encourages and supports scientific research and innovation. This cultural atmosphere not only promotes technological progress but also enables the United States to maintain a leading position in global technological innovation.

From the above points, it can be seen that the characteristics of American social culture lie in emphasizing individual freedom and independence, integrating diverse cultures, having a highly developed consumer culture, attaching importance to sports, encouraging technological innovation, and having a strong sense of social responsibility. These characteristics have jointly shaped and developed American social culture, and have had a profound impact on the operation and management of large-scale sports events [4]. In terms of social cultural diversity, the degree of individualism, and the tendency towards collectivism, the United States is higher than China, while China has relatively higher traditional values and social cultural diversity. This difference directly affects the operation and management methods of large-scale sports events in the two countries.

4 The Empowering Role of Socio-Cultural Factors in the Operation and Management of Major Sports Events: A Comparative Study Between China and the United States

Amid the ongoing processes of globalization and media convergence, sociocultural factors have become increasingly influential in shaping the operational models of major sports events. As the most representative professional basketball leagues in their respective countries, China's CBA and the United States' NBA exhibit distinct differences in system design, talent management, and content communication. These differences are not solely the result of economic policies or legal frameworks but rather reflect deeper contrasts in cultural values. This section compares the two leagues across

three dimensions to examine how sociocultural contexts shape event management practices [5].

4.1 Event Operation and Institutional Management

Since its establishment in 1995, the CBA has operated under a governmentled development model. Although the league's operations have been managed by the China Basketball Association (CBA Company) since 2017 under a "management competition separation" model, the Chinese Basketball Association still exerts overall control through policy making, player registration, and financial support. This centralized governance model reflects the Chinese cultural emphasis on unified management, coordinated organization, and collective will. For instance, during the severe stage of the COVID19 pandemic in the 2020–21 season, the CBA was able to quickly resume games behind closed doors due to the government's strong capacity for resource coordination and unified deployment. Rapid responses in transportation, venue management, and quarantine procedures ensured the league's continuity, and several studies have identified this emergency response capability as a key to the stability of Chinese professional sports under extraordinary circumstances [6].

In contrast, the NBA adopts a typical commercial league governance model. The league is governed by a board of governors and a commissioner who oversee rules and resource allocation, while each team operates as an independent legal entity with significant autonomy. This decentralized structure reflects American society's emphasis on contractual relationships and individual freedom. For example, when COVID19 broke out in 2020, the NBA suspended its season due to complex negotiations involving players' unions, sponsors, and broadcasters. The league eventually resumed operations through the "Disney Bubble" plan after reaching consensus among stakeholders. This case illustrates the flexibility of marketdriven mechanisms but also reveals the challenges of coordination in the absence of centralized command [7].

4.2 Human Resource Allocation and Management

The CBA relies heavily on a top-down talent pipeline, in which players are trained through sports schools, local teams, and provincial systems, with a focus on collective training and unified distribution. This model aligns with China's emphasis on institutional stability and organizational control. For example, core players like Zhou Qi and Guo Ailun were trained through provincial systems before joining the professional league. Meanwhile, institutional mechanisms such as maximum salary contracts, priority resigning rights, and transfer restrictions limit players' freedom in career decisions [8].

In contrast, the NBA operates under a highly market-oriented talent management system. Players may enter the league through college basketball, the G League, or international competitions, with contract terms and transfers primarily determined through negotiations between players and teams. For instance, Giannis Antetokounmpo transitioned from a local Greek league to the NBA and eventually became the league's Most Valuable Player through individual effort [9]. His story illustrates the American

cultural emphasis on meritocracy and equal opportunity, as well as the NBA's support for individual development.

4.3 Media Content and Cultural Expression

CBA media coverage is mainly conducted through official platforms and mainstream outlets, emphasizing collective values such as unity, perseverance, and national honor. For instance, during the 2022 CBA Finals, Xinhua News Agency highlighted the “spirit of struggle in the new era” in its coverage of Liaoning's championship win, focusing on collective identity and national image building [10]. This reflects a Chinese cultural tendency to prioritize national identity over individual expression in sports communication.

By contrast, the NBA places greater emphasis on players' personal branding and public stances on social issues. During the 2020 Black Lives Matter movement, players were permitted to wear jerseys with social slogans, and relevant messages were printed on the court. The league supported players' freedom of expression and civic engagement, demonstrating the American cultural commitment to individual rights and social responsibility [11]. This also helps foster emotional connections between fans and players.

4.4 Visual Design and Branding Creativity

The CBA adopts a standardized approach to visual design. Uniforms and logos must be approved by the league, with limited room for variation [12]. This reflects the Chinese cultural preference for uniformity and order. For example, the Zhejiang Chouzhou Bank team has barely altered its uniform design in the past decade, resulting in a relatively static brand image that struggles to attract long term interest from younger audiences.

In contrast, the NBA encourages teams to incorporate local culture into their visual branding. The Miami Heat's “Vice City” series features elements from the city's nightlife, while the Los Angeles Lakers' City Edition jerseys draw inspiration from Hollywood [13]. These diverse visual styles help teams build strong brand identities and allow fans to identify more closely with their teams, enhancing brand loyalty.

5 Recommendations for Future Management of Major Sports Events Based on the China–US Comparison

A comparative analysis of the institutional and cultural differences between the CBA and the NBA reveals that governance models, player management strategies, and communication logics are deeply shaped by sociocultural backgrounds. To improve the competitiveness and audience engagement of Chinese professional sports, this section proposes two targeted recommendations.

5.1 Granting Greater Autonomy to Clubs

Although the CBA has implemented reforms to reduce administrative intervention, clubs still lack sufficient decision-making power in areas such as brand promotion, uniform design, market collaboration, and player transfers. The following actions are recommended:

Grant clubs independent branding rights. Teams like Guangdong Southern Tigers and Liaoning Flying Leopards could be allowed to collaborate with local cultural institutions to create customized jerseys or venue visuals that reflect their city's identity. Incorporating landmarks, dialects, or pop culture can enhance brand distinctiveness and strengthen local affiliation.

Optimize transfer and contract mechanisms. Inspired by the NBA's "restricted free agent" system, a more flexible player movement policy could be adopted—one that protects parent clubs while offering young players more freedom. This would incentivize player development and help clubs make more efficient use of talent [14].

These measures would give teams more flexibility to build unique identities and improve their operations through market driven approaches, ultimately fostering stronger fan engagement.

5.2 Diversifying Content and Audience Interaction

Current CBA communication remains relatively traditional, with limited player participation and fan interaction. To enhance the league's visibility and appeal, the following strategies are proposed:

Encourage players to manage personal social media accounts. The league can provide technical support and content creation guidance to help players share daily activities such as training or community service. This approach will add depth to players' public personas and foster emotional resonance with fans.

Transform the league into a multidimensional cultural platform. Events like the All Star Weekend could integrate music, esports, and street culture by inviting rappers, dancers, and other performers to participate. Such crossover initiatives would broaden appeal among Gen Z audiences [15].

These forms of interaction can help shape a vibrant league culture and elevate the CBA into not only a sports event, but also a platform for youth culture and urban identity.

6 Conclusion

The comparative analysis of China and the United States reveals that social and cultural factors play a pivotal role in shaping the operation and management of large-scale sports events. Although both countries leverage their unique cultural, political, and economic backgrounds to enhance event success, their approaches are quite different, reflecting broader social values and institutional frameworks. However, there are still limitations in the social and cultural factors of both countries in the operation and management of large-scale sports events. 1. Governance and institutional support: China's

centralized governance ensures strong financial and logistical support but may lack flexibility in adapting to local needs. The "decentralized, market-driven model" in the United States encourages diversity among stakeholders but may face challenges in unified planning and public funding. 2. Social participation and legacy: China emphasizes "long-term urban transformation," while the United States prioritizes "even economic return on investment and fan experience." In the United States, grassroots sports culture is more organic, while China uses events to systematically promote mass participation. 3. Cultural identity and national pride: In China, large-scale events such as the Chinese Football Association Super League, the Women's Chinese Basketball Association, and the CBA are closely intertwined with national identity, the narrative of socialist modernization, and soft power projection. The government-led model ensures high efficiency but may have limited grassroots participation. In the United States, events like the Super Bowl or the Olympics emphasize commercial appeal, individualism, and citizen participation, with private sector leadership promoting innovation but sometimes struggling with coordination. Social and cultural dynamics are not merely the backdrop but active drivers shaping the strategic, operational and legacy aspects of major sports events. Future research could explore how digitalization and globalization further reshape these cultural influences in an increasingly interconnected sports industry.

Authors Contribution

All the authors contributed equally and their names were listed in the alphabetical order.

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