

# Research on Brand Development of Chinese Sports Events-- Taking the Chinese Professional Basketball League CBA as an Example

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**Abstract.** From the current situation of the development of global sports events, the development of China's sports events brand has an unprecedented broad market and superior conditions, but in fact, the quality of the development of China's sports events is not very ideal. Under such circumstances, this paper conducts in-depth analysis and research on the current development status and future development strategies of Chinese sports event brands. The specific analysis object takes the Chinese Professional Basketball League (CBA) as an example, and explores the existing advantages and disadvantages of CBA League through horizontal and vertical comparison with the NBA League in the United States. At the same time, through the study and analysis of CBA League, I can reflect the overall trend and common difficulties of the development of China's current sports events, consolidate the advantages of Chinese sports events brands, analyze their disadvantages, and put forward personal ideas and suggestions on the correction of shortcomings. Finally, the conclusion is summed up, and the formula is flexibly applied to other league brands to achieve the all-round development of Chinese sports events.

**Keywords:** China Sports Events, CBA, Sports Marketing Sports Industry.

## 1. Introduction

In the process of continuous development of a global community with a shared future, the development of the sports industry is particularly vigorous and absolutely cannot be ignored. The development of the sports industry is not only the increase in the intensity of competitions but also the development of sports marketing, which is an important part of the sports industry and a hot research topic. In this context, this article will focus on the development trend of China's sports event brand, focusing on the CBA, the largest professional basketball league in China. This paper analyzes the experiential marketing and management methods of CBA and major sports industries in China and puts forward conclusions and suggestions for future marketing management improvement.

This paper adopts the literature method and the comparative analysis method, which are more conducive to more intuitive observation of the advantages and aspects that need to be improved in the development of the CBA alliance in the context of the times.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. A Summary of China Sport Development

The recent development of China's sports industry is proportional to the enhancement of China's national strength and the progress of thought. Although compared with the United States, Europe, and other developed countries in the sports industry, there is still a certain gap, but the progress is still huge.

Not only the rapid development of CBA, but also the development of major sports brands is also very amazing. For example, Li Ning, a Chinese sports brand that has always been the light of domestic products but has not gone international, began a counterattack in 2018 and showed its amazing brand power to the world. For example, they signed some NBA stars, like Wade and Batter. These were some of the hottest superstars in the NBA then, and now, there is no shortage of endorsements from

major brands. But they were also attracted to the brand of Li Ning and signed a contract. Now Li Ning is also the official sports brand of the CBA, which is equivalent to the role played by NIKE in the NBA. For the whole year of 2023, the Group's revenue reached RMB27.598 billion, an increase of 7% over the same period in 2022. Compared with 2019, when the brand just rose again, Li Ning Group's revenue has doubled in five years, with a compound annual growth rate of 15% [1]. In the increasingly severe competitive environment of sports brands, it still maintains a stable development momentum. The progress of Li Ning also positively reflects the great progress of the CBA league in all aspects, the emergence of the unified sponsorship brand shows the professionalism and progress of the league, and there is also a trend of learning from the NBA league in terms of off-court marketing methods, through the close-up of various styles and colors of Li Ning basketball shoes on the court, to stimulate fans' desire to buy basketball shoes, and play a win-win role on and off the court.

## **2.2. Overall Progress**

The development of sports events is not limited to basketball leagues, football leagues, table tennis leagues, and China's current performance in the international arena compared to China before. More international events have been held in China, such as the 2008 Beijing Olympics, the 2022 Hangzhou Winter Games, and the 2023 World University Games in Chengdu.

## **3. CBA Introduction and Operation Pattern and Impact**

### **3.1. Introduction of CBA**

CBA is the abbreviation of China Basketball Association; CBA is a cross-year home-and-away basketball league sponsored by the Chinese Basketball Association and is the highest-level basketball league in China. The CBA was founded in 1995 and has a total of 20 teams. Its scale, management, operation, and attention are the best and most standardized professional leagues in China, and it is also the highest-level basketball league in Asia.

The CBA has preseason, regular season and playoffs, and the preseason and regular season are held around October every year, and the playoffs and finals are held around April of the following year. The winning team in the finals won the CBA championship that season.

### **3.2. CBA Operating Model Research**

(1) Jin Haibo pointed out that the current operation mode of CBA is very unscientific, and the coexistence of market economy and planned economy in the management system has greatly hindered the operation of China's basketball market [2]. The management system is influenced by the Chinese Basketball Association. In the NBA operation model, the 30 clubs have a clear property rights system, a perfect league system and market-oriented, a wide range of channels for talent training, and a very good team and department to help them operate in the marketing strategy. (2) The CBA players themselves are not physically fit enough, the arrangement of the competition system is not very reasonable, and the viewing is not good, resulting in the CBA not gaining strong market competitiveness. (3) CBA's brand awareness is weak, and the marketing efforts are seriously insufficient, resulting in CBA not having a deep impression of a certain part in people's hearts, which leads to the depreciation of the brand's gold content. (4) The media does not play an active role in CBA marketing. (5) Jia Zhong and Hu Jiajun pointed out that the impact of government policies should not be ignored. Therefore, in countries that lack the development of the sports industry, the relevant administrative departments should emancipate their minds, actively encourage enterprises to invest in the sports industry, and promote the development of the sports industry in the Chinese market; commercialization and internationalization are particularly important [3]. David Huang suggests that the best way to deal with the property rights issue of the CBA league is to adopt a top-down approach [4]. It is necessary to make use of the unity of Chinese autochthonous culture and the stability of the system to promote the reform of the property rights system of Chinese basketball. The contracting system can be utilized, modeled on the NBA's business model, so as not to make the CBA

so political and rigid. The Chinese Basketball Association (CBA) will return more operational power to the CBA, giving it enough autonomous power, the CBA will play a supervisory and leading role but not take over completely, and the CBA should pay a certain amount of rent to the Basketball Association (BBA) as a return to the CBA.

## **4. CBA's Level of Competition and Influence**

### **4.1. CBA's Competitive Level**

CBA's competitive level in China is, of course, the undoubted top level. In Asia, it is also the first big league in the world and is currently in the middle level. CBA's competitive level is difficult to improve due to a variety of factors; the more obvious reason is still the lack of professionalism of many players in the CBA; many players may be in junior high school or high school and only began to contact with basketball, systematic training is not enough. Systematic training is not enough. Not only that, in China's professional basketball selection of talent, there are also many problems. Basketball professional training in the lower age group popularity is very low, and each local provincial team only a small range of selection of talent, for example, the Sichuan team may be in Chengdu's most prosperous areas to select the talent, the other remote area of the talent is always buried and difficult to give play to their talent. Chen Liufen's research suggests that the CBA's current draft system is still lacking [5]. The Chinese Basketball Association in 2015 just launched the "Hong Kong, Macao, and Taiwan players, college players to participate in the CBA league unified implementation of the draft" implementation method, the CBA's draft system into the public's field of vision, but the exposure rate is still seriously insufficient to participate in the draft of the players skilled less as well as the media's marketing and publicity is not enough is a significant Problems, from the research data to see the 2015 year to participate in the draft of college players have 17 people, the club recommended players, Hong Kong, Macao, and Taiwan players, sports department recommended players were only 1 person, to the 2020 draft, the number of college players increased to 23 people, the number of clubs recommended 16 people, and Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan players and sports department recommended players basically only will be 2 to 3, and sometimes even zero. These data can positively reflect the CBA's access mechanism. There are certain problems; the source of the player range is too narrow, which also indirectly leads to the league's competitive level not being high, and there is a lack of appreciation for the situation!

### **4.2. CBA's Influence**

CBA has a relatively large fan base in the domestic market, and its domestic and international influence is increasing day by day. At present, the CBA has more than 3.1 million fans on the official account of China's largest social platform "Weibo." The actual attendance of the first ten rounds of the regular season can be more than 470,000 people, and in 2019, the commercial income of the CBA league exceeded 1.2 billion yuan. In recent years, the CBA league has undergone many reforms; the results are obvious: the market influence is gradually increasing during the new season in 2019, the CBA regular season and playoffs, as well as the all-star game attendance and ratings have been increased, the Chinese basketball league related topics have also been on China's social media platform "microblogging" for many times. Topics related to the Chinese basketball league have also been on the hot search of China's social media platform "Weibo" many times, becoming hot topics in society, which shows that the social influence of the CBA is not to be underestimated.

## **5. CBA's Current Branding Issues**

### **5.1. Lack of Marketing Tools**

The league's marketing efforts are small, the marketing method is too single, and the lack of brand value of the league does not allow viewers as well as consumers to have a deep resonance, leading to

a serious lack of fan as well as viewer loyalty. The key point of this problem is mainly due to the low degree of commercialization of the CBA league and the limitations of all kinds of restrictive policies. CBA marketing methods, compared to the NBA, also seem to be single; NBA marketing is not only limited to the basketball court but also penetrates the players and fans outside of the game and in all aspects of life. For example, the recent very popular NBA players channel is mainly to shoot the players onto the court before the dress -, but this small move to create an infectious force and influence is huge because - it involves a huge area of the field map on the fashion brand dress down to all kinds of luxury car competition, it is not just about the basketball field. So, the players' channel generates tremendous NBA traffic. Attention to the NBA group is no longer limited to basketball fans, which largely enriched the audience to watch the NBA group of friends group type, greatly increasing the number of potential fans of the NBA league. Many people may be attracted by the handsome, eye-catching players' channel photographs and gradually begin to pay attention to the players with their favorite style of dress, and then begin to pay attention to some of the games of this player and feel the next step is to pay attention to some of the player's games and feel the fun of watching basketball, and finally evolve into a basketball fan or even become a very loyal basketball fan who will regularly watch the game or go to the game offline. It's an extended marketing approach that builds upon each other and deepens people's understanding of the NBA. This kind of far-reaching influence that can quickly catch the eye of the marketing approach is exactly what is missing in today's CBA. In CBA, a lot of marketing concepts are still stuck in the shooting of photos of the players on the court, but the CBA arena for the audience is unattainable and can only be viewed from afar, but the lack of opportunity to go on the court to participate in the near game, and the emergence of the player channel can be powerful to bring the players closer to the fans and even the distance between the fan base. The presence of the players' corridor is a powerful way to bring players closer to the fans and even the non-fans. People can buy the same brand of clothing as the players and imitate the style of the players to wear in actual life, or fans in the players' channel find that the players also like the same brand of clothing and their own sneakers brand, which in turn increases the loyalty of the fans for the players and the team.

## **5.2. Lack of CBA League Brand Value**

The NBA isn't just about basketball; it has also made outstanding contributions to philanthropy, the fashion industry, and video shooting; this shows that the NBA's brand concept is diverse and variable. Their marketing methods also include many activities to carry out in various leagues, teams, or individual players to give feedback to fans. For example, by regularly inviting fans or spectators to participate in activities on the NBA court, you can not only get bonuses but also get close to your favorite players. Such activities are significant and essential, and although the CBA also imitates the NBA's model of such activities, the results are not ideal. The holding of the event is progress, but whether the event can be deeply rooted in the hearts of the people is the essence of the event, and the attitude of the stars is a decisive factor in the success of the event. Apparently, the stars of the CBA league don't realize this important point. For example, when Zhang Jiacheng, a Chinese one-armed basketball boy, was invited to participate in the CBA live event, he was asked to be the guest of honor at the beginning of the game. But when he threw the ball up, the players who jumped the ball only symbolically took it, and then Zhang Jiacheng left the court alone, and the game continued. Nobody talked to Zhang Jiacheng. The details do not reflect the respect and care of the players for this one-armed boy who loves basketball, and some are just indifferent and rigid. All kinds of small behaviors can indeed reflect the current situation of the CBA league very well; more broadly, they can reflect the current situation of Chinese basketball, and there is still a long way for Chinese sports to progress. Perhaps when these CBA players can be humbler and have a little more fraternal behavior, it will be the moment that the CBA league takes a big step forward.

### **5.3. Institutional Issues of the CBA League**

The management system of the CBA league is a system that integrates management and management, and the Chinese Basketball Association is both the founder and the manager. This reason also led to the inability of the basketball association's management model to turn the CBA into a very good business league because the Basketball Association is more like a unit system to implement a top-down management model; it is dominated by the implementation of the orders of superiors. However, in the leadership platform of the Chinese Basketball Association, everyone can discuss and negotiate various basketball-related matters on an equal footing. It also has a fair and open decision-making mechanism, but the CBA management system is not market-oriented. At present, the management, supervision, checks and balances system in the league is the highest governing body within the league. All decision-making actions taken by CBA companies and clubs in managing the league's operations must, first and foremost, be subject to strong supervision and management by the supervisory bodies. And today's league managers, decision-makers, promoters, and participants - the Chinese Basketball Association, operators, and clubs, are not a real community of interest. "The CBA has developed for so many years and should be run under the operational team of the league itself." Because of this irrational system, Yao Ming, the president of the Chinese Basketball Association (CBA), has strongly called for the CBA to "materialize the league" so that each club in the CBA can really have its own say.

## **6. NBA's Brand Strengths and Promotional Tools**

### **6.1. Brand Advantage**

The brand advantage of the NBA league is very prominent. As we all know it is now the league management system is sound, the quality of the game is high, the level of the players is high, the star effect is very strong, and the marketing means is rich in the world and enjoys a very high degree of praise. Take the player's star effect strong example, for example, the NBA deservedly the first superstar, Mike Jordan, he was also shaped by the NBA league, but such a superstar in the hearts of fans has just become a symbol of the basketball spirit, the fans of its loyalty is the peak, so the NBA league relies on the Jordan this a superstar, are able to obtain huge benefits as well as the reputation, such a successful star effect. Reputation, such a successful star effect, is exactly what the CBA lacks; the CBA may not have realized that the cultivation of such a superstar can bring an income that may be unimaginable. Because of the credit of countless NBA superstars, the significance of the NBA now has exceeded the connotation and meaning given to the professional basketball league itself.

### **6.2. Promotional Tools**

The promotion means of the NBA is mainly divided into the following types: Media promotion: The media promotion of the NBA league is well-known in the world, and its media promotion has the characteristics of long-term and clear, and it takes the lead in launching a charge to the Chinese basketball market, and it is very cautious in the expansion of the Chinese market at the beginning, the NBA firstly provides free videotapes to the China Central Television, to try to find out the acceptance degree of the Chinese fans and the market, and only starts to change to charging when the Chinese fans begin to accept the NBA and have a certain share of the Chinese basketball market, this marketing strategy is worth learning. When Chinese fans began to gradually accept the NBA, and the Chinese basketball market could occupy a certain share before the change to charge, this marketing strategy is worth learning. In the modern media progress at the same time, NBA event broadcasting is not only limited to television broadcasts, but now mobile media is also becoming an important channel for NBA event broadcasting, along with the development of modern networks is beginning to become the main source of income, China as the NBA's largest overseas market. The digital media rights signed with Tencent Sports from 2021 to 2025 alone are as high as \$1.5 billion for five years. The Chinese market has contributed an astonishing 10% to the total revenue of the NBA. Even if the

global economy was affected by the epidemic from 2019 to 2020, the total revenue of the NBA still reached \$8.3 billion [6]. The benefits it can reap from the Chinese basketball market are huge. During the broadcasting period, the NBA can also be keenly aware of the shortcomings of the Chinese basketball market and the emotional value that Chinese fans can't get from the local basketball league.

Offline communication: The NBA league is held far away from the United States, and geographic location and economic conditions make more than 95% of Chinese fans unable to go to the scene to watch the game in person, but the NBA league brings the impact of basketball culture and at all times stimulate the curiosity of the Chinese fans, in these two conditions complement each other, the Chinese fans for the NBA league to go to see the game in person as well as the desire to see the NBA stars is increasingly expanding. The desire to see the NBA stars is expanding day by day, so more and more NBA stars in China will be on the agenda. For example, in the summer of 2017 detonated, the social network of the Golden State Warriors player Thompson's China tour because of the signing of the Chinese sports brand Anta Thompson invited to come to China, but his China tour is full of memories, dunking, and wrestling, dancing with square dancers, tasting Chinese snacks and so on, very pro-people behavior, have triggered a lot of Chinese netizens enthusiastic discussion, different from China's heart, the NBA star may be Unlike the image of NBA stars in China, which may be very arrogant, almost every NBA star interacts frequently with Chinese fans when they come to China, charging grounded and full affinity, and such an image has made this offline marketing approach a great success. Not only is the NBA star China line deep in the hearts of the people, but many NBA stars in the charitable contributions are also huge. For example, the NBA's most famous philanthropist Mutombo in the African moment children's donations to total amount of money know more than the total salary of his entire career, has become a recognized charitable representative, as well as LeBron James, Kobe Bryant, and other superstars in China's Wenchuan Earthquake after the donations of LeBron James, Kobe Bryant and other superstars in China after the Wenchuan earthquake donated millions of dollars to help the disaster area, such a spirit is a lot of local Chinese celebrities do not have, and such behavior not only can highlight their noble character, but can also make the NBA league in the hearts of the Chinese people to become more intimate, with a sense of goodwill, it is a two-in-one excellent marketing means.

## **7. CBA's Future Outlook Based on a Comparison with the NBA**

After a series of comparisons between CBA and NBA, the development of CBA has a long way to go, whether it is the marketing strategy, the players' skills, and qualities, or the management of the system, are not as mature as the NBA league, but the CBA also has a lot of unique advantages.

### **7.1. Advantage of CBA**

The CBA league has a huge potential fan base and consumer base. China is a large country with a population base of more than 1.4 billion people. According to the statistics and analysis of China's Tencent platform, which, like basketball fans, reached about 500 million people, the number of core basketball fans is as high as 150 million people, and the number of pan-basketball fans is even larger, a large potential fan base means a huge market and business development space, but many of these basketball fans are not the CBA's basketball fans, but loyal fans of the NBA league. However, many of these basketball fans are not CBA basketball fans but loyal fans of the NBA league; how to convert these potential fans into CBA league fans is one of the important focuses of CBA's future development goals. According to the "China Basketball Industry White Paper," China's young basketball fans have more desire to consume. They generally pay more attention to jerseys, sneakers, and other equipment. This kind of attention to basketball peripheral commodities will stimulate the potential desire to consume as well as the desire to become a potential audience of the CBA league. From this kind of point of view, to start, the CBA league's official sponsorship of the brand Li-Ning needs to do the merchandising is an important condition that affects the number of fans of the CBA base. One of the conditions, good sneaker and jersey design plus the chemical reaction that can be

produced by the star pro-wear has a huge impact, which has long been the most persuasive proof in the NBA league, take NIKE's sub-brand JORDAN for example, it is based on the name of the NBA superstar Michael Jordan for the creation of the series, the very beginning is not to appear as a single brand, but Due to Michael Jordan's dominant performance in the league and the avant-garde design of the sneakers, such as color collision as well as the delivery of astronomical liquidated damages at the expense of the foot to play the game and other marketing operations, JORDAN sneakers caused a phenomenal sneaker trend, not only in the first generation of the highly sought-after but also in the decades after the millennium again caused the sneaker trend, countless young people scrambled to buy JORDAN series of products, co-branded models are layer upon layer of the JORDAN series, and the JORDAN series is a brand name. The JORDAN series of products and co-branded models are endless, earning a lot of money and traffic!

## 7.2. Future Development Outlook

CBA league, as China and even Asia's highest level of basketball league, has a certain strength and influence that the Chinese fans love the most. The controversy caused in China is also the largest, and the future direction of the development of the CBA league is summarized into several points.

Professionalism: the standardization and enhancement of professionalism in a regular basketball league need to be done all the time the CBA league to enhance the professionalism the first step should be to maintain the fairness of the game, the referee system to solve the problem of the CBA game reversal of the current reputation of one of the more critical points, the referee refereeing the controversy is too large on the game of the negative impact is also huge, and many of the audience still think that there is refereeing on the court, "backroom operation," "humane whistle," "home whistle" and so on unfair phenomena. Many viewers still think that the refereeing on the court is a "secret operation," "humane whistle," "home whistle," and other unfair phenomena. The main point of these chaotic phenomena is that the CBA league is in continuous high-speed development, but the referee management system still has obvious traces of amateur. The referee's salary is not high, so many referees are in the part-time blowing game at the same time; there may be other sides to this job. This mode of operation is to let everyone on the CBA referee's professionalism play a question mark. Therefore, it is very important to improve the referee's salary, professionalize the system of managing referees, and the admission of the referee supervision system.

Commercial: the existence of a basketball league values a large part of the audience to please and get the audience's support and love is the most important, and the CBA has been running the management of the combination of policies, which is obviously hindering the commercialization process of the CBA league. Commercialization, as the name suggests, is to give more power to the capital side of the league, to give it the appropriate freedom to organize the space so that the CBA league's entertainment to improve the overall atmosphere is not so rigid, and whether it is online or offline viewing of the quality of service should be improved, the stadium's equipment should be upgraded on a regular basis, the sound and entertainment equipment cannot be ignored, the hosts and cheerleaders, such as the group to drive the game! The atmosphere so that the audience from the beginning of the stadium to leave have a good viewing experience and service experience.

## 8. Conclusion

This paper uses the data method and combines practical experience to study the future development direction of the CBA league and even the development of this sports event brand. It can be concluded from the comparison with the NBA league that the CBA league still has a lot of problems, such as the imperfect management system, the lack of marketing means, the degree of commercialization, and a series of shortcomings, so this is the future of the CBA league need to pay attention to the corrective point. At the same time, we also need to be confident in the bright future of China's sports event brand. Its longer development time, as well as national policy support, will allow the league brand to gradually positive changes; the practice of experience is the most suitable

for China's sports development experience, learn from the NBA league's excellent means of flexible application to the development of China's sports brand road.

This paper only utilizes the literature method to conduct the research and does not use other methods, such as questionnaire survey, so the quantity of data is slightly lacking, and the examples cited in this paper for the field of basketball do not represent the real status of sports in China, so the researchers can also start from China's soccer, table tennis, or even swimming to conduct the research. The league used as a reference for comparison in this paper is the NBA in the U.S. There are many other excellent basketball leagues around the world, which can also be compared with the CBA league and may result in suggestions for the development of the CBA from different perspectives.

This paper also leaves many points for future research direction which are worth discussing. For example, we can continue to study the correct development direction of the CBA league in the future according to this paper, as well as explore where the brand value of China's sports event brand is embodied, where the shortcomings are, and how to correct the shortcomings and so on. In conclusion, the current study summarizes some of the disadvantages of the CBA league, which can also reflect some of the disadvantages of Chinese sports event brands to a certain extent. It is worth more in-depth research and discussion.

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