September 2019

Back to Beijing: The Future of the Olympic Games

Jennifer Maynard
jbmay1998@gmail.com

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/marriottstudentreview

Part of the Behavioral Economics Commons, Business Administration, Management, and Operations Commons, International and Intercultural Communication Commons, International Business Commons, International Economics Commons, Marketing Commons, Nonprofit Administration and Management Commons, Sports Management Commons, and the Tourism and Travel Commons

Marriott Student Review is a student journal created and published as a project for the Writing for Business Communications course at Brigham Young University (BYU). The views expressed in Marriott Student Review are not necessarily endorsed by BYU or The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Recommended Citation
Available at: https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/marriottstudentreview/vol3/iss2/6

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at BYU ScholarsArchive. It has been accepted for inclusion in Marriott Student Review by an authorized editor of BYU ScholarsArchive. For more information, please contact scholarsarchive@byu.edu, ellen_amatangelo@byu.edu.
Back to Beijing: The Future of the Olympic Games

Cover Page Footnote
Just four years ago, the IOC made an unprecedented decision to award Beijing with the 2022 Winter Olympic Games bid, making China the first Asian country ever to host both the Summer and Winter Games. For over a century, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) almost exclusively worked with European and North American host-countries to make the Games successful every four years. In the past decade, that has changed dramatically.

South of the Equator

In 2009, the IOC knew it was about time to head south of the equator. Chicago lost the bid for the 2016 Olympic Games because the Committee had a hunch that their trip to Asia the year prior was beginning to break the ice with non-European countries, like Brazil. To see success, Beijing should do as Brazil did even long before hosting the Games: (1) look to preserve the legacy, (2) find a need in the community, and (3) coordinate with the IOC to make it all happen. Brazil unified South America during the Rio 2016 Games by paving the way for South American nations to see what hosting can do for their community and country. “The [Rio] candidature team [considered] both… what Rio could bring to the Games, but crucially also, what the Olympic Games could do for the city,” making them a “solid candidature file” and a safe direction for the IOC to take in handing the hosting torch to different parts of the world.1

Contrary to the hopes of residents and business-owners of Rio de Janeiro, the Olympics didn’t do for the city what it could have. In one report, real estate developer Carlos Carvalho hoped to make $1.2 billion by remaking smaller, poor communities, or “informal settlements” into luxurious real estate investments only after relocating 77,000 residents with “eminent domain eviction orders.”2 Other controversies in the $13 billion it cost Rio de Janeiro to host. Most of the facilities and the athletes’ village constructed for the use of the 2016 Olympic Games are now left unused, unkempt with overgrown grass, and abandoned. What once looked like nearly 4,000 apartments to be converted into housing for citizens is now an out-of-place luxurious set of vacant apartment buildings.3 Despite the economic hardships Brazil faced in the wake of the Games, the apparent downfalls are avoidable in China’s case. As far as the IOC’s brand name is concerned, just the fact that the Olympics made its way to South America shows their early steps to pave their way to different corners of the world.

These three consecutive Olympics in Asia will call for a record-breaking, gold-medal balance of business sponsorships, careful and respectful diplomacy, and intentional preservation of tradition and culture. In order to make a profit and ensure the facilities they build don’t go to waste like they did in Brazil, Beijing needs to plan carefully. So far, they have. China plans to convert many Olympic facilities into public attractions like ski resorts and other tourist attractions once the Games are over. However, slopes alone won’t be enough to keep China from sliding off the podium.

Now, is the chance for both the IOC and Asian businesses and communities to team up and make a profit from this long-term relationship. That partnership begins with the handshake to host the Games, just as it did in Brazil. The IOC is reaping what they sowed almost two decades ago by giving the bid to China for the 2008 Games.

Hosting the Games can powerfully convey that an emerging power has arrived on the world stage.
Into the Orient

Long ago, Asia seemed far and distant to Olympic host-country crowds, and even their participation was minimal at best. However, after Japan established Asian involvement in the Games back in 1912, the Philippines (1924), Burma (Myanmar), Japan, China, and South Korea are now unquestionably on an equal playing-field with other national giants who have dominated screen time at the Games and hosted the event for many decades. Not only are these nations, and China in particular, now front-runners in the Olympics themselves, but they also steal the show when it’s time for the Opening Ceremonies and capitalize on the opportunity “to project the harmonious and colorful diversity of China (and Asia) to the world.2” Brazil embraced the opportunity to do this, but they didn’t deliver after the Olympics were over.

Japanese hosted in 1964, only 19 years after the devastation of the WwWs aftermath, and awaits its turn again next year. China hosted just 11 years ago when it stole the show during the 2008 Summer Olympics with outstanding cultural entertainment, customary reverence toward 203 visiting countries, and record-breaking performances by athletes. Asian participants brought home a high 27% of total medals and 19% of gold medals.3 Over the last ten or fifteen years, the Middle Kingdom sought to help its working class out of distress. Following decades of falling behind in the race for 21st century advancements, China could finally afford the technological infrastructure that many other First World Countries around the world already enjoyed.

Now, is the chance for both the IOC and Asian businesses and communities to team up and make a profit from this long-term relationship.

Establishing Partnerships

In her Washington Post article on US-China trade wars, Roselyn Hsueh offers some insight into the rise of technology in the East. “Made in China 2025,” the industrial policy plan Beijing released in 2015, identifies strategic emerging sectors like autonomous vehicles, green technology and semiconductors — and also emphasizes breakthroughs in 5G development.” Chinese technology companies are close to, if not already, leading the global market. Whether China really will “commercialize 5G by 2020” or not, the IOC wants in. Though the politics of the deal is a whole different issue, the sponsorship opportunities look like free money to the Olympic corporation. Currently, six out of seven Olympic “Official Prestige Partners” are Asian-based companies.4 It’s clear that these new partnerships were inspired by the choice to take these three Olympic Games to Asia. If the IOC can pull off establishing more long-term sponsorships with Asian-based companies, like they have with Toyota, they’re looking at winning the hearts and cash of over 1.2 billion Chinese Olympic fans. Christopher Finlay of Loyola Marymount University agrees. “[For the IOC], audience is their currency. Approximately half of their revenue comes from sponsorship deals, and the rest from broadcasting rights. Both are dependent on eyeballs. The IOC’s recent connection with Alibaba [an e-commerce and technology conglomerate] in China [shows] that they’re looking for strategic partnerships in Asia to build their global brand.”5

What to do with Round Two

“Hosting the games can powerfully convey that an emerging power has arrived on the world stage.”6 Because the 2022 Games are Beijing’s second go, China has the challenge to showcase their national stability and make history yet again. They rose with the rest of Asia to make their footprints in the rings. Their amalgamation of modern technological feats and ancient Eastern culture—exactly what’s got the IOC buzzing—coupled with their outstanding athletic performance on the part of athletes will hopefully help them steal the show again.

Arguably nowhere else in the world does culture run deeper than in the Middle Kingdom. Their emphasis on Buddhist and Taoist religious ties links families together not throughout centuries, but over two millennia of tradition. Ancient tradition has lasted if throughout many dynasties and world wars. However, that is not to say...
it keeps its devout followers from “re-inventing tradition in the globalizing modern world.” China would do well to do as James Leibold, writer for The China Journal, suggests. “In hosting the Olympic Games, the Chinese state [hopes] to project the harmonious and colorful diversity of China to the world.”

Chinese athletes evidently have learned discipline from a young age. These serious competitors know what they’re doing, and they feel the pressure to perform. Getting on the stand with a gold medal around their necks means familial recognition and a chance to bolster national pride. With all eyes on China again, the pressure is on to rise to the top. Asian sponsors are not only counting the dollars, but also counting on viewership. In the end, if Chinese competitors don’t outperform other countries’ athletes, China has little to gain for all the money and effort gone into hosting.

**Conclusion**

Bringing home the gold takes a lot more than getting athletes draped in their country flag on the victory lap at post-event time. China and the IOC now have a greater opportunity than ever before to globalize the Olympic brand in Asia. But no matter the statistics or scoreboard, ultimate success comes from the tradition clarified in the IOC’s mission statement, which is “to not only ensure the celebration of the Olympic Games, but to also encourage the regular practice of sport by all people in society, regardless of sex, age, social background or economic status.”

Call it what you will: a global brand phenomenon, a legacy of ancient tradition, a dream to get kids out on the field and into backyards with neighborhood friends. The Olympics is a household heart warmer. And with Asian businesses and the IOC shaking hands, it’s making its way into the hearts and homes of the world.

**Notes**