

DOCTORAL THESIS

An Analysis of the Strategic Planning of Winter Olympic Sport in China (Mainland): The Cases of Short-track Speed Skating, Curling and Freestyle Skiing (Aerials)

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Abstract

Engulfed in the tide of the intensification of Olympic medal competition, elite sport has become an 'irresistible priority' on many countries' policy agendas. Inheriting the legacy of systematic importation of the emphasis of the former Soviet Union and East Germany on elite sport success and these comrade Communist nations' government-led approaches to elite sport success, China has been committed to the pursuit of elite sport success. However, compared its excellent performance at the Summer Olympics, a lack of sustainability in maintaining stable performance at Olympic Winter Games has been a stubborn question that puzzles sports officials in China and concomitantly raised a question mark over the efficiency and effectiveness of the relatively enigmatic Chinese Winter Olympic medal strategy.

This research analysed the elite sport strategy/prioritisation for the development of China's Winter Olympic elite sports in relation to three selected sports: short-track speed skating, curling and freestyle skiing (aerials). Porter's (1990a; 1990b) National Diamond Model is selected as the theoretical underpinning. Data were sourced from 25 semi-structured interviews with officials, coaches, (retired)athletes, judges and scholars, and documents analysis ranging from English/Chinese journal publications to various media.

How the internal factors (i.e., factor conditions; demand conditions, clusters; firm strategy, structure and rivalry; and chance events) affecting the establishment of competitive advantage in China's winter Olympic sports were analysed to yield constructive findings.

This study involved the application, localisation and potential advancement of strategic management theories through assessment and evaluation of the utility and applicability of theories, models and frameworks from strategic management domain into the elite sport field in general and China's Winter Olympic area in particular. Furthermore, this study analysed the internal factors affecting the establishment of competitive advantage of Olympic winter sports in an Asian country which is strong at the Summer Olympics but relatively weak at Winter Olympics (i.e., Mainland China). References and suggestions could be provided to the administrators of the GAS and the Winter Sports Management Centre of the GAS with evidence-based support and reference to refine its strategic planning and prioritisation approaches, and better establishing and sustaining competitive advantages in different winter sports/disciplines.

Keywords: Winter Olympics, elite sport, strategic management, Mainland China, short-track speed skating; curling; freestyle skiing (aerials)