

Sport, Political Economy and Leveraging the Power of the Olympics: A case of South and North Korean Ice Hockey

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Aim

The aim of this paper is to examine the impact of the Olympic ice hockey tournament, particularly the unified Korean team on the wider issues of peace on the Korean Peninsula and how international attention has led to increased focus on developing professional hockey market opportunities particularly in the large Seoul marketplace. The specific purposes of this study were to 1) investigate the case of South Korea: Analysis of 2018 PyeongChang Winter Olympics, Review the Strategic Plan of KIHA (Korean Ice Hockey Association) and Assess the Promotional Strategies for hockey in South Korea, 2) raise awareness, and 3) provide any insights and suggestions for Korean Ice Hockey Team.

Research Background

The 2018 *PyeongChang* Winter Olympics was hosted by South Korea. It was successful judged from many perspectives, especially for better relationships between many countries, though the spectra of the Russian doping crisis and the USA-North Korea standoff created many moments of concern prior to the Opening Ceremony. Ice hockey in South Korea is now emerging into the new stage: *New Era* – “Post-Olympics.” Addition to its promotional strategies in Korea, ice hockey became the key mediator for a historic Olympic run by the unified Korean women’s ice hockey team. The *NBC News* described the unified team’s game against Switzerland on 10 February 2018, “They may have lost in their debut game at the Winter Olympics on Saturday night, but the first-ever joint Korean women's ice hockey team easily won the crowd” (Ortiz and Abdelkader, 2018). Now, ice hockey is not only for fans in the Korean peninsula but also, for both governments to open the table for discussion, including many stakeholders.

In the case of ice hockey, it is clear major hockey leagues, such as KHL in Europe and Asia are trying to make steps to create a presence in Korea particularly in the lucrative Seoul marketplace. We discuss the following subjects in this context: 1) 2018 *PyeongChang* Winter Olympics 2) The Strategic Plan of KIHA (Korean Ice Hockey Association) 3) Promotional Strategies for hockey and 4) The New Era – “Post-2018 *PyeongChang* Winter Olympics.

Theoretical Application and Method

A number of decisions were decided through critical evaluation and steps. Then, those steps are structured to explain how those decisions have been applied and made. This investigation was designed to further understand the recognition of Korean Ice Hockey Team and its insights using theories from political economy as applied to sports (Nauright & Schimmel, 2005) particularly exploring the relationship between state actors and private business interests to explain how state and capital interact. To understand and achieve the objectives, the current policy and systems, including 2018 PyeongChang Winter Olympics were reviewed for this study. A comprehensive review and the administrative process were identified. The developing process and current status were collected and reviewed.

Findings

Our core question post-Olympics is: will the success of the 2018 *PyeongChang* Winter Olympics lead to market growth for hockey in Korea? According to Wang (2011), the “Olympic Games has a good public image and a unique social appeal” (p., 383). A CNN News article stated: “As he made his way to the stadium with his family, his young son waving the now familiar flag of a united Korean peninsula, Jung Jin-suk, from Suwon in the north west, said he hoped the unified team could help improve the South's understanding of the North” (Lewis, 2018). “Many people are excited,” he told CNN Sport. “Maybe 99% of the people will be happy, but 1% aren't because they have bad memory about the Korean War. After this event, I hope that many South Korean people can understand North Korea better.” We discuss the strategies coming into place and pre and post-Olympic markets to assess legacies of PyeongChang for the future of Korean ice hockey.

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