

# Role of Sports in Globalization in Present Scenario – A Study

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**Abstract –** *The global diffusion of modern sport that gathered momentum in the course of the twentieth century involved a number of networked elements, including transnational communications media and commercial corporations for which sport, especially through the iconic figure of the transnational celebrity sport star, constitutes a universally appealing globally networked cultural form. Association with sport events and sporting figures through global broadcasting, sponsorship and endorsement arrangements offers commercial corporations unique access to global consumer culture.*

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## INTRODUCTION

Globalization refers to the global, international merging of diverse national economic, socio-cultural, political, and technological forces into a single and coalesced society (Miller, 2001). Globalization has transformed the world viewpoint into an open-minded or neoliberal intellect. It is perceived as a recent concept globally, yet it has taken approximately half a decade to surface into what it is embraced today. Economic globalization seems to be used regularly instead of globalization. The connectedness characteristic of globalization integrates the intermingling of cultural, economic, and sporting activities. The degree of connectivity related to globalization has been escalating at a perfect rate leading to the spread of cultural life all over the universe. Globalization is termed as an atypical force sweeping across nations through high-speed communication and exchange, the sophisticated and the networks incorporated, interaction and risk, and total volume of trade. Various theories such as world-economy, global skepticism and world-culture theories attempt to explain the causes of globalization. This paper discusses the relationship between globalization and sports with references to international sports.

The world-economy theory refers to globalization as the process by which capitalist world-system spread across the world. Capital flows is one significant advantage attributed to globalization. Capital flows refers to the mobility of money from one region to another with intent of trade, investment or business production (Wiseman, 1998). Sporting activities have also transformed because of capital flows caused by globalization. The primitive games that depended on balls of rock, feathers, or rags have changed to international events convoluted with rules indicating

the influence of capital flows on international sports (Miller, 2001).

The movement of people across the globe is essentially influenced by globalization. People's mobility across political boundaries takes various forms namely immigration, educational scholarships, tourism and business travel (Lee & Lin, 2007). With regard to sports, flows of people have encouraged the movement of talents from one country to another. Major sporting events tend to attract people globally, which results from the connectedness of the universe (Lee & Lin, 2007). This reveals that modern sports has been influenced by globalization though the flows of people.

Jarvie (2006), points out that flows of ideas across political boundaries are evidenced in computers, e-readers, and MP3 players among other things. However, the monitoring and measuring the flows of ideas seems to be difficult since ideas can only be perceived and intangible. Modern sports integrate technology through broadcasting. The design of sports venue embraces technology, a critical consequence of globalization and flows of idea. This indicates how flows of ideas have revolutionized the sports platform.

According to Law, Harvey, & Kemp (2002), the universe has transformed within the last few decades through the development of interlinked countries. Globalization triggers convergence of products, services, technology, industries, services, and knowledge, which implies that, will is a catch-up effect among poor countries. Convergence is postulated to take place through societies' homogenization through modernization and

industrialization. The current trend toward globalization underpins the allegations by convergence theorists. Technological advancement in communication and computers has aggravated the flows of ideas between political boundaries. Equally, the impact of global economic forces on national policy independence has been supported erosion of capital controls.

The nineteenth century witnessed the highest level of globalization from 1870 to 1914. Lee & Lin, (2007) affirms that the period involved the increasing mobility of people, capital, and ideas between nations and continents. The Suez Canal, opened in 1869 resulted to the emergence of Euro-Asian trade and the remarkable shift from sail to the steam engine. The growth of trade was influenced by transport costs. The period registered the highest integration of capital flows. In 1930 Europe being an international bank, facilitating capital flows to other nations such as Canada, Argentina, and USA that had access to it. The late 19th century was typified by a remarkable globalization due to increased mobility of people (Wiseman, 1998). Slavery occurred in 1820s and was slowly diminishing.

The regional Bloc theory of globalization states that single world markets exists (Wiseman, 1998). It has contributed to regional trade blocs that have gone ahead to initiate their own sporting event. This has influenced the localism in sports, which refers to the region where games take place. Games can take place at home ground and away depending on the host's participation (Roche, 2006). Regional and national sports take place depending on the geographic location of the event. The hosts of games normally refer to the happening of the event as a home ground sport whereas the invited refer to the happening as an away event. Additionally, the hosts have a home ground advantage due to familiarity to the environment and full support from the audience. Globalization has contributed immensely to regional sports, in which continents and regions have their own competition. An example of regional sports includes the African Cup of Nations. Notably, the English Premier and Spanish have emerged to be effective football competitions because of globalization through the movement of talented players across the globe (Lee & Lin, 2007). Topophilia is a concept that refers to the love of a place because the perception that place holds in the minds of people. Sports take place in designated places with suitable global environment.

Olympics Games is a vital global sporting event that comprises of various athletic competitions. The history of Olympics points out that it began in 776 BC. Observations have revealed that it has revolutionized from the 20th century to 21st century (Wiseman, 1998). The International Olympic Committee (IOC) has withstood the changing political, technological, and economic conditions of the 20th century. The ancient

Olympics transformed from amateurism to professionalism because of globalization. Capital flows have changed amateurism in Olympics since various sporting companies such as Adidas, through coaches, have invested in human talent and provision of gaming equipment globally (Slack, 2004). The media technology has enabled the worldwide broadcasting of the event leading, which is a fundamental aspect of globalization.

Miller, (2001), claims that Olympic competitions have transformed from amateurism to commercial and professional events. The ancient event involved recreational events where participants did not earn money. Amateurs have participated in Olympics until the 1980s. Professionalism in Olympics dates back in 1912, when James Thorpe was awarded a medal as the best athlete. However, Thorpe was discovered to have earned money through participating in Baseball, which was a non-compliance of the rules. As a result, he was deprived of his medal. The IOC tailored such policies by calling it antiquity and offered room for the current professional participation.

## **GLOBALIZATION IS MAKING SPORTS BETTER**

“Sport is probably the most universal aspect of popular culture”. Football is no. 1 when measuring what constitutes the popularity of a single global sport. In that regard, Giulianotti has been involved in studies investigating the multifaceted and increasingly vital interrelationships of football and globalization as it refers to the historical, economic, cultural, political, and social factors. Football has reached that position due to a number of reasons. Among others, football has like no other sport gone beyond international borders and expanded its marketplace with success. People in all regions of the world enjoy football; football consumption centers on the live experience but has also taken advantage of technological innovations and massive media coverage in traditional media (primarily pushed by television). The role of sport managers is to leverage brand loyalty, i.e. exemplified in the passion of fans. At a global scale, the football industry is a ‘good benchmark’ for what constitutes a global sport. The management, promotion and execution of the football product has continued to evolve and has been nursed highly by the widespread television exposure and additional media content, which shape the promotional celebration of the sport in all corners of the world, i.e. there is a high level of brand loyalty connected to football. From an economic perspective, football has also undergone a forceful economic development. Manchester United was the first sports team ever to be valued above the \$3 billion mark and according to different studies revenues for the world's leading football clubs have seen significant growth. No matter what, the commercial platforms linked to sports offer

an answer to the global potential and significance of sport.

“These commercial platforms have already been exploited by the media and communications industry but also by other industries acknowledging the global appeal of sport and sport stars. Sport equipment manufacturers like Nike, Adidas or Puma (and even the Danish sports brand Hummel’s popularity at specific markets) have strived to blur the borders between sportswear and fashion. Caroline Wozniacki is sponsored by Adidas and Stella McCartney has designed Wozniacki’s Adidas tennis collection. David Beckham, the world’s most valuable football brand tied to an individual athlete for the past 10-15 years, has been a fashion icon for years. That shines through when you investigate Beckham’s endorsement deals and the enormous merchandise and licensing revenues gained by the clubs, for which he has played. Or consider Gatorade’s deal with Tiger Woods, which gave Tiger his own brand of sports drinks. Annika Sörenstam, the female golfer and no. 1 in the world for many years, has extended her brands of businesses to form a solid revenue stream even after the end of her playing career, which stresses the identification with the biggest athlete brands in the world and the corporate potential associated with these brands.

Now, new regions in the world add to the globalization of sports and hence the consumption of sports. The Beijing Olympics was a ‘tipping point’ in opening up the Chinese market for commercial sport entities (primarily from Europe and the US). In football, we have seen the impact of ‘oil money’ from Russia and the Middle East. The latter is a tendency, which has affected the sponsor market and the ownership of clubs and in the years to come this may shift the power balance in football (Paris Saint-Germain has suddenly re-emerged at the European football scene).

So what does the future of globalized sports entail? Lately, there have been numerous big scandals in the sports world. Lance Armstrong, Oscar Pistorius, matchfixing in football, doping in cycling, and Bruno (the Brazilian goalkeeper accused of killing his ex-girlfriend), racism in football just to mention some topics under that umbrella. So sport can be damaging or filled with stories of immoral or illegal conduct. Moreover, sport is also associated with a ‘direct’ environmental or community effect linked to storytelling, infrastructure, events, commercialization etc. so I guess that as globalization in the sports world goes on we will see even more focus on ‘sustainability’, i.e. as it relates to initiatives of sport entities as well as forming the basis for discussion in the media and the industry in general. After all, sport affects so many people that it serves a ‘GREATER GOOD’ to discuss ‘sustainability’.

Finally, here are some trends related to sport globalization (inspired by Westerbeek & Smith, 2003):

- Explosion of sports in the media.
- Constant increase in value of authentically global sport entities, including athletes.
- The conversion between sport and entertainment.
- Horizontal and vertical integration of sport entities by media and entertainment corporations.
- Integration of sport into the experience economy and ‘popular culture industries’.
- Increased economic growth and impact in the world of sport, including the increasing impact of sport on other industries.
- More venture capital and investment activities in global sports entities.
- Changes in the role of ‘sport governance’.
- Synchronized professionalization and marginalization of smaller sports and leagues (these entities wish to professionalize their management and marketing but the gap between the sport entities that are globally flourishing and those, which remain only domestically feasible, will grow).
- Junction of economic power in sport ownership. Fewer and fewer will own more and more of sport.
- Technology innovation will improve entertainment value and will boost the diffusion and circulation of sport to new markets.

## **IMPACT OF GLOBALIZATION AND TECHNOLOGY ON PROFESSIONAL SPORTS**

Technological advances are bringing sporting events to more people than ever before. Mobile devices, net books, laptops and satellite televisions have increased international viewership of sporting events. For the 2010 World Cup, ESPN3 (ESPN’s broadband network for live sports programming) clocked nearly 7.4 million viewers, generating 15.7 million hours of viewing. The network’s World Cup application was downloaded more than 2.5 million times and accessed by an average of one million users per day.

Though the World Cup may be seen as an outlier in terms of revenue generated and number of viewers, the international fan base continues to grow—even for smaller scaled local sporting events—with the aid of ever-advancing technology. This is due in part to athletes playing abroad, which may generate interest in a player's native country, and in part to the relatively new ability to watch games taking place anywhere in the world through live web stream or satellite television. Cross-border deals are also part of the equation as foreigners increasingly purchase interests in local teams, such as Mikhail D. Prokhorov recently becoming the first foreign owner of an NBA team. The potential sale of Liverpool, a soccer team in the English Premier League, has drawn the interest of potential purchasers from across the globe. This influx of interest creates opportunities for local and foreign sponsors and advertisers. The increased globalization of sports has also increased the value of many sport properties as evidenced recently by the \$2 billion price tag—double the previous contract—for overseas television rights for the next three years of Premier League games.

Globalization of the NBA is not a new phenomenon, but technological advances are helping it continue. Today, the NBA finals are televised to more than 200 countries in over 40 languages. More than half of all NBA.com traffic comes from outside of the U.S. Due to its enormous popularity in China and because of high-profile players Yao Ming and Yi Jianlian, the number of Chinese sponsors and advertisers in the NBA is growing. Recently, the NBA announced a multi-year marketing partnership with the BBVA Group, a leading Spanish bank. As part of the partnership, BBVA will serve as the official bank of the NBA, WNBA and the NBA D-League in the U.S., Spain and Puerto Rico. MLB is also seeing its brand grow. Thanks to players such as Ichiro Suzuki, a significant number of Japanese sponsors, including Nintendo, MasterCard Japan, Ajinomoto, Sanyo Electric and Hitachi, can be seen throughout MLB stadiums. The benefits of globalization are not limited to foreign companies; many U.S. companies are also getting in on the action. The NBA's popularity in China is a significant reason for Nike's revenue growth in that country, which rose 22% in 2009.

Many sports are using advances in technology to expand, driving an increase in opportunities for advertisers and sponsors. Because international games are so easily accessed, they reach more people in more countries than ever before. Sponsors and advertisers are no longer limited to local markets or traditional forms of advertising and should explore different markets and media to reach as many "local" sports fans as possible.

When people think about sports, they usually think about the professional teams of their cities. However,

people never really notice the importance that it brings to globalization. The sporting industry is financially one of the top 10 industries globally. There are many sports in the world ranging from each country's preference. For example, in the United States, the main sports are usually baseball and football, while Canada's main sport is hockey. Sports and competition are a universal concept going back to ancient times. In the United States alone, the sporting industry generates hundreds of billion dollars a year. In an article posted in 2012, it was stated that The National Basketball Association (NBA) generated approximately five billion dollars. Another article stated that the National Football League (NFL) generates approximately nine billion dollars yearly. Given those examples, people seem to forget about the business side of the sporting industry in comparison to the entertainment that people mostly focus on.

Basketball and soccer are primary examples of the globalization of sports because they are such a common "language" across the globe. They are such popular sports that if you go and visit any other country, people will most likely know and be very familiar with the sport. The NBA is a popular league across the globe due to the international players from many countries joining every year. We can see how people from Asia or Europe wear jerseys of American players, thus showing the interaction that the sport brings to everyone around the globe. In soccer, the World Cup is a huge event that every country enjoys. In an article about the 2010 World Cup, it stated that the approximate viewership of the event was 3.2 billion people around the world, which is 46.4 percent of the global population.

One of the greatest sporting events in the world's history is the Olympics. The Olympics offer all the countries in the world an opportunity to join together as one as we celebrate the events. It allows all the countries to let aside their differences and join in a healthy competition as we all share a common goal of winning. A positive of hosting the Olympics is the attraction that brings many tourists from around the world to visit and watch the event. The attraction allows people from all over the world to visit and experience cultures of other countries. Another positive for hosting the Olympics is the economic factor that it brings. For example, it creates more jobs and brings in more money as people from all over the world come to witness the event. The Olympics are a huge economic booster for the host country. Speaking of the economic factor, the sports industry in general provides a great deal of job opportunities and consumerism that contribute to the global economy. Examples of jobs that are formed include team physicians, business management jobs, referees, engineers, and sport analysts. Even small businesses such as restaurants benefit from the

sporting industry. Also big businesses, such as Nike and Adidas, greatly benefit from the sporting industry.

The sport industry is not only about entertainment, it also has an economic influence around the world. We see globalization being impacted positively as more people feel connected through the world of sports. Personally, when I visited the Middle East, I noticed people wearing Kobe Bryant and LeBron James jerseys, as well as Boston Red Sox and New York Yankees baseball caps. That really showed me how many people around the world can feel so connected with sports.

## **GLOBALIZATION AND SPORT**

In a few short centuries, primitive pasture games relying on balls of rocks, rags, feathers or hair transformed into global events with intricate rules, with television and the internet tracking cricket matches in Australia to soccer in Zaire.

Any sport can now attract players or audiences in any part of the globe, and yet conventional wisdom suggests that as an activity takes on global stature, it becomes more controlled and competitive, disconnecting from local origins.

But does the process of global growth necessarily eliminate local connections or fervor? Can innovation accompany tradition? And how do endeavors that require fierce competition reveal a common humanity? Editors Richard Giulianotti and Roland Robertson delve into such questions with "Sport and Globalization," a compilation of essays written by sociologists and anthropologists.

The nine essays largely assume global-local tensions, and yet also highlight the powerful role of sports in social and cultural change. "As modern sport has become global in scope it has largely lost its playful character and its professional practice has become both a global media spectacle and a serious and financially significant global business," concludes sociologist Barry Stuart.

Yet despite such global growth, ages political sociologist Chris Rumford, sport still emits a clarion call to the most rigid of characters, including the Taliban in Afghanistan, who anxiously sought International Cricket Council recognition for Afghanistan shortly before their ouster in 2001.

The editors and other essayists in "Globalization and Sport" point to two forms of global growth, referring to the integration of local practices as "glocal" and the overwhelming of local ways as "grobal."

Some sporting formats adapt more readily than others and some impose more constraints, often through national or international regulatory boards. "Local appropriation is seldom simply assimilating and imitating," notes William W. Kelly. Styles can emerge in sports that reflect and reinforce both local and national values.

The local does not necessarily resist the global, and yet many researchers tend to privilege the local, much as audiences tend to cheer and admire the underdogs, explain David L. Andrews and George Ritzer.

Sport's purpose is no longer limited to entertainment, often intermingling with trade, business and politics. Talent, speed and innovation are recognized transnationally in business or sport, and Thomas Hylland Eriksen's essay details reasons why some sport phenomena spread while others do not: The most popular cultural products – whether books, food or sports – tend to require little culturally specific knowledge, have an "emotional, sensory or intellectual appeal" that transcends local concerns; and can be effectively marketed across borders, particularly via television or the internet. "In other words," he writes, "low common denominators, a cheap entrance ticket and immediate gratification are factors facilitating global dissemination." For Eriksen, soccer is a hamburger, and speed skating is akin to a *husmanskost*, or a Swedish fish meatball.

Competition and its regulation need not be totally centralized. Global sports such as golf and tennis manage without a world championship, instead competing with a set of world tournaments, with frequent upsets of even the most dominant players, explains Rumsford. Other sports, such as cricket, undergo post-Western transformation as former British colonies tussle with traditionalists over one-day versus multiple-day matches. Rumsford maintains that a global sport such as cricket lacks a single global modernity.

Skill combined with simplicity in regulations, reduced time requirements and viewer friendliness are characteristics that can merge diverse cultures, Eriksen suggests. Likewise, in an essay about Dutch soccer style, Frank J. Lechner joins the editors in pointing out that "Postmodern nations engage complex globalization to produce new identities, defining their particularity in relation to universal standards."

The most intriguing parts of the book are where historical details of specific sports – cricket, soccer, Gaelic football, hurling, speed skating, baseball – are offered as evidence for the essayists' arguments on how the local interacts with outside forces, whether protecting, mimicking or influencing. The United

States, originator of many cultural trends, is almost “an island until itself when it comes to team sports,” notes Eriksen, as he rejects baseball, US football, basketball or ice hockey as sports with true global reach.

The book is academic in tone, with too many parentheses and “-tion” words, such as legitimization, annihilation, commodification and spectacularization. Still, the essays are provocative and far-reaching, and the book could discover a wide audience beyond sociologists. Anyone involved in the highly competitive, interdisciplinary and multicultural world of sport will want to understand globalization’s influence and patterns.

This student of globalization welcomed a set of essays addressing diverse sports, regions and issues, but would prefer a more specific overarching theme in future collections. One approach might be to compare the movement of sports around the globe with the promotion of governance or religion, pointing to similarities or differences. Another approach could center on economic issues. The book was published prior to widespread recognition of the global economic crisis now under way. Giulianotti and Robertson briefly point out that poverty, unemployment and forced migration in the developing world have “disconnected large populations from their sporting facilities and outlets.” Yet readers can’t help but be curious about a recent abrupt shift in attitudes – from widespread expectations that of rising global wealth to thriftiness and caution about investments – and which sport traditions might endure the current downturn.

Another intriguing approach might center in on conflicts among sports or even disdain for a sports culture. Indeed, the book’s closing essay, by Gary Armstrong, centers on the 2005 national election in Liberia when international soccer star George Weah lost to Harvard-educated grandmother Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, and offers a reminder of sport’s limited power. Gender concerns, economic troubles and diverse talents can outweigh the media attention directed at major figures in sports. Despite sport’s special appeal and symbolism, societies expect responsibility from organizers and individual players.

Much of sport’s power is derived from the narratives of players and teams that emerge over time, and over-commercialization, rapid growth, intrusive nationalization, arrogant celebrity hierarchies as well as relentless quests for victory or profits that can taint those stories.

## CONCLUSION

The theories of globalization discussed by this paper include the world-economy theory, regional Bloc and world culture theories. The world-economy theory

refers to globalization as the process by which capitalist world-system spread across the world. Regional Bloc theory affirms that the world market is composed of single markets in various regions of the world. Apparently, globalization has majorly influenced the growth of sporting activities through capital movement from the developed nations to the developing nations. Capital movement is seen through trade between nations, which intensified from 1870 to 1914. Presently, sports are careers and people are paid to participate. The movement of sportspeople from one region to another to perform for payment signifies the globalization of sports.

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