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## **Introduction**

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A recent Nike advertisement featuring NBA star LeBron James has been banned in China. The television commercial, titled 'Chamber of Fear', is part of the launch of the Air Zoom LeBron II sneaker campaign which shows the Cleveland Cavaliers sensation competing against an animated kung fu master, two women in traditional Chinese attire and a pair of dragons. According to a spokesperson for the State Administration for Radio, Film and Television, the advertisement violates regulations that mandate that all advertisements in China should uphold national dignity and interest, and respect the motherland's culture....[and that] "It also goes against rules that require ads not to contain content that blasphemes national practices and cultures" (China pulls Nike's LeBron Ad: Spot banned after ruled 'insulting', 2004). In part, the ad was banned due to its unacceptable and offensive use of the dragons which are considered a sacred symbol in traditional Chinese culture.

This is not the first time Nike advertisements have been banned in foreign countries (cf. Grainger and Jackson, 2004) and certainly the company is no stranger to controversy. However, this incident is no doubt an expensive and embarrassing setback for both Nike and LeBron James. Like many global corporations Nike is targeting China not only because of the success of basketball, due in part to home-grown star Yao Ming, but because it is the single largest national market in the world. With the announcement that Beijing would host the 2008 Summer Olympics Nike has clearly accelerated efforts to access and negotiate the Chinese marketplace though their expediency has obviously been met with some opposition. Yet, Nike is not alone in confronting a conflict of cultures with respect to its advertising and marketing campaigns. Last year, Japanese car manufacturer Toyota had to apologise and withdraw an ad which showed two Chinese stone lions – symbols of authority – saluting a Toyota Prado car.

The cases of Nike and Toyota highlight a key problem facing transnational corporations as they seek to globalise and reach new markets: local disjunctures (Appadurai, 1990) and resistance. Furthermore, they draw attention to the complexity and contradictions of the phenomenon known as *globalisation*.

Regardless of whether one is a politician, economist, CEO, manager, social activist or an academic, globalisation has shifted from being a popular buzzword to a fundamental organising principal of everyday life. This is not to suggest that there is a shared understanding and agreement concerning its current or potential impact. Indeed, there are increasingly intense debates about both the nature and future of globalisation (Appadurai, 1990; Buell, 1994; Hannerz, 1996; Hardt and Negri, 2000; Held *et al.*, 1999; Ritzer, 2004; Rowe, 2003; Tomlinson, 1999). While it admittedly oversimplifies the debate, there are at least two seemingly opposing positions:

- 1 Globalisation as *opportunity* with respect to developing an open free market with a focus on international economic expansion.
- 2 Globalisation as *threat* whereby powerful transnational corporations exert their economic, political and cultural power at the expense and even demise of the local/national cultures.

While it is fair to say that these are the two dominant positions others have cautioned against all encompassing assumptions on either side. As Grossberg (1997,p.20) observes:

“Too much attention to the global often leads critics to the unearned, pessimistic conclusion that the victory – of capitalism, of American imperialism, *etc.* – is already sewn up. Too much attention to the local often leads critics to lose sight of the fact that someone is winning the struggle and, as we all know, it is rarely the periphery.”

In light of Grossberg’s assertion, this special issue of IJSM focuses on ‘Sport Management and Marketing at the Global/Local Nexus’. Without doubt, the best overall descriptor of the themes addressed in this special issue is eclectic. However, the fact that it is eclectic should not be surprising given the diversity of issues currently being addressed in the fields of sport management and sport marketing respectively, not to mention sport studies more generally. Moreover, although the articles presented here are, by no means, representative of all the world’s ‘global locals’ they do provide insights into the relationship between global events, processes and ideas and local cultural contexts whether on a national, regional or even organisational level. What we hope is that other scholars will see how these particular works relate to their own cultural contexts, and be encouraged to advance and extend what is offered here.

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