

JORDAN BRAND & THE CITY MECHANISM

A CASE STUDY IN BUILDING NEW CULTURAL RELEVANCE



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On August 29, 2026, Jordan Brand held the third edition of its global one-on-one tournament, **The One**, in Shanghai.

Young athletes selected through qualifiers in more than 20 cities traveled to China for the finals.

The event followed Jordan's Shanghai unveiling of the Air Jordan 41 and included design work created through the competition's global program.

For one weekend, Shanghai became the destination for Jordan's international basketball community.

The sequence raises a strategic question:

Is Jordan applying its established city mechanism in Shanghai?

If so, can one global event become durable cultural authority?



BASKETBALL IS AMERICAN-BORN, BUT ITS MEANING HAS ALWAYS BEEN PRODUCED THROUGH CITIES.

Each city gives the sport a locally credible story that brands can translate for wider audiences.

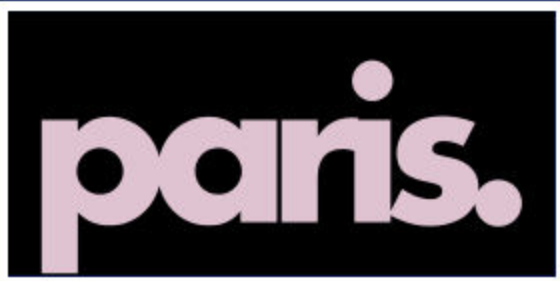
E.G. OUTSIDE OF LOCAL NBA TEAM TIES:



CHICAGO: MICHAEL JORDAN'S MYTHOLOGY
NYC: STREETBALL
LA: ENTERTAINMENT & ATHLETE CELEBRITY

Jordan inherited enormous global recognition, but recognition alone could not keep an athlete-founded brand culturally relevant after its namesake retired.

To grow beyond American basketball, it needed places capable of generating new meaning.



JORDAN BRAND'S FIRST CULTURAL BEACHHEAD

1985	MICHAEL JORDAN'S FIRST VISIT TO PARIS	
1990	AJ5 BECOMES THE FIRST AIR JORDAN OFFICIALLY SOLD IN PARIS	
2003	QUAI 54 FOUNDED INDEPENDENTLY	
2007	JORDAN BECOMES OFFICIAL PARTNER	
2009	FIRST JORDAN X QUAI 54 SHOE	
2018	PSG PARTNERSHIP	
2024	'THE ONE' FINALS IN PARIS	

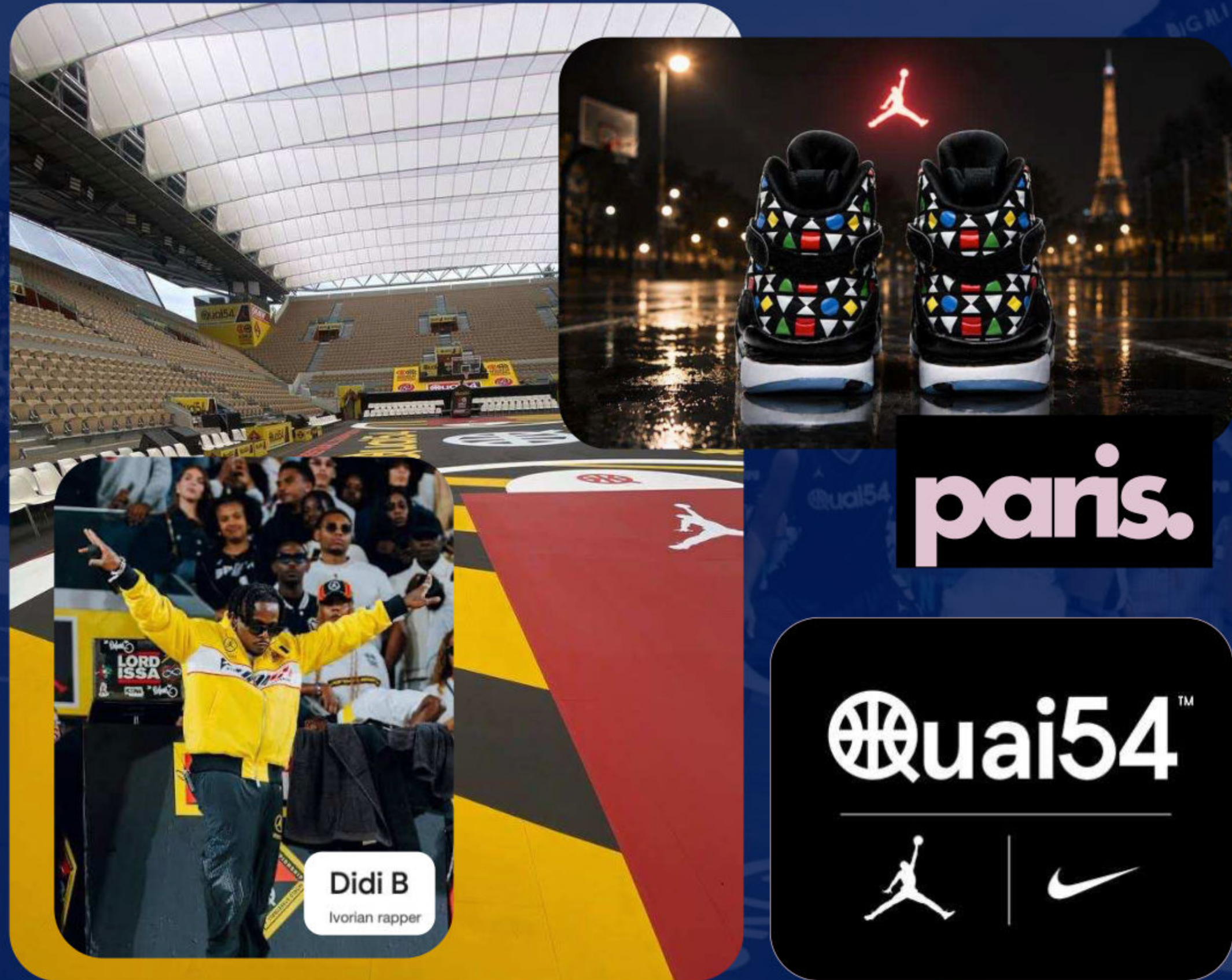


A city through which it converted American basketball mythology into locally rooted and globally exportable meaning.

QUAI 54 AUTHENTICATED JORDAN LOCALLY

Jordan entered Parisian culture through participation:

backing an existing Afro-Parisian streetball institution and allowing its local identity to reshape the brand.



- Quai 54 was founded independently in 2003 by Hammadoun Sidibé and Thibaut de Longeville.
- **Jordan joined in 2007.**
- Nike calls it Jordan's **first partnership with any entity outside the US** and its first streetball-tournament partnership.
- Annual releases converted a local event into globally collected product.
- Parisian, West African and Afro-diasporic performances and design references **gave Jordan cultural material it could not authentically generate in Chicago.**
- The 2009 AJ1 was the first official Quai 54 shoe and, according to Quai 54's creative director, **Jordan's first formal product collaboration of any kind.**

PSG SCALED THE MYTHOLOGY

In 2018, Jordan Brand made history by partnering with Paris Saint-Germain FC, making them the first football team with the Jumpman logo on their jerseys.

Since 2018, PSG × Jordan has produced 15 competitive kits, recurring apparel collections, and at least 13 Air Jordan releases, plus lifestyle sneakers and football boots.

The collaboration brought mutual cultural arbitrage:

Jordan brought PSG **American basketball credibility, streetwear authority, Jumpman iconography, and American cultural relevance.**

PSG brought Jordan **access to global football, Parisian identity, European and Asian fan networks, and fashion/luxury adjacency.**

33% of first-day sales for the partnership's second collection through PSG stores came from the United States and Japan.

The first collection's 5,000 available products had already sold out within hours.



PSG scaled what Quai 54 had authenticated.

Jordan used football to distribute its Paris-built identity to consumers who might never buy a basketball shoe or follow the NBA.

CHINA: ENORMOUS DEMAND, DECLINING BRAND ADVANTAGE

Basketball developed a mass audience in China long before Jordan Brand's current Shanghai strategy.

NBA broadcasts, player tours and Yao Ming's career intensified that demand, helping **China become one of Nike's most important growth markets.**



But growth hasn't stayed sustainable for Nike in China:

- Nike Greater China revenue reached \$8.29B in FY2021, with Nike explicitly saying **growth was led partly by Jordan Brand and Nike Basketball.**
- It **fell** to \$6.59B by FY2025, approximately 21% below that peak.
- It **fell again** to roughly \$5.85B in FY2026, around 29% below FY2021.
- FY2026 Q4 Greater China sales declined 17% currency-neutral.
- Meanwhile, Anta reported record 2025 revenue and market share, **illustrating the transfer of strength toward Chinese competitors.**

China did not lose basketball demand;

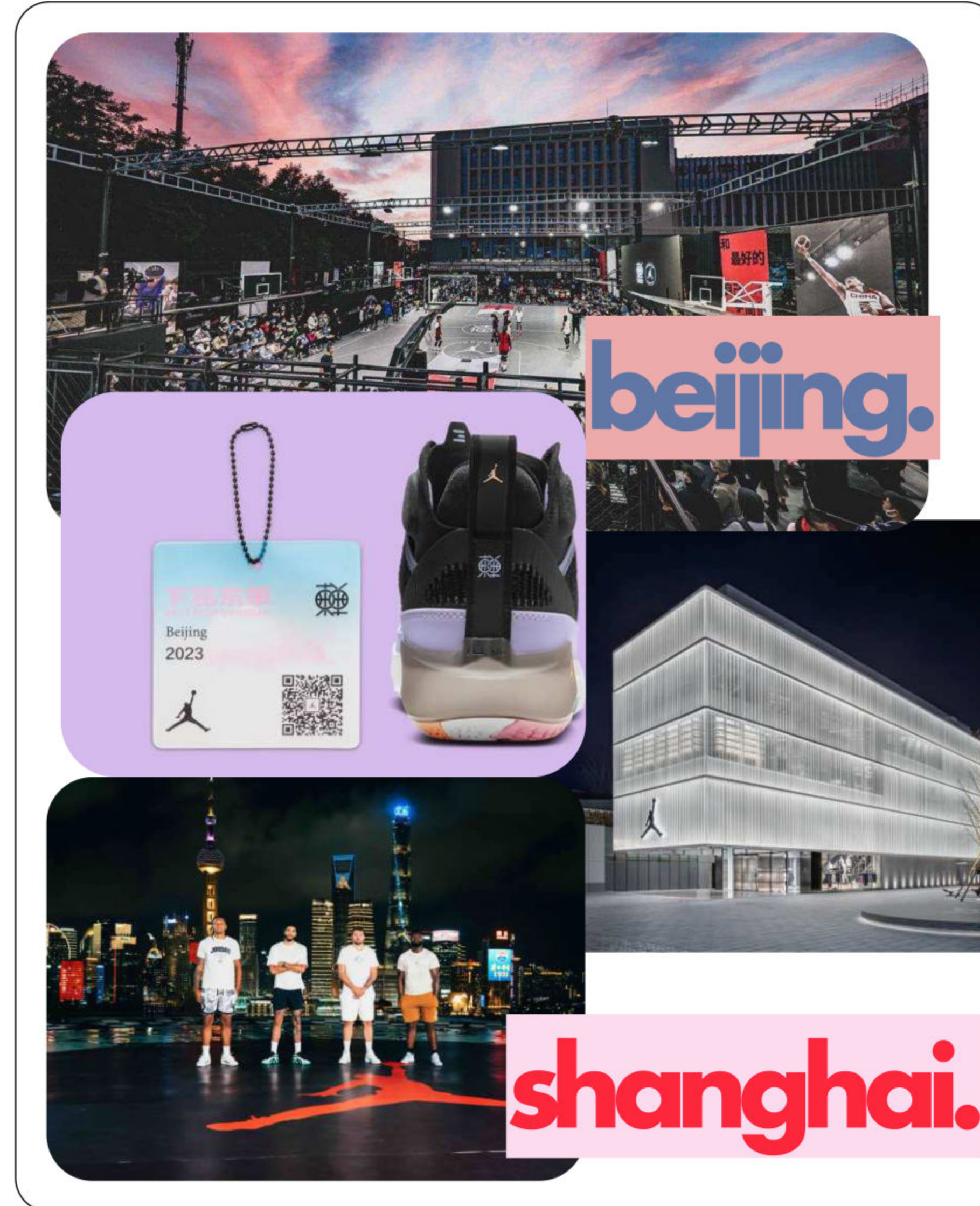
Nike lost relative cultural and commercial advantage within that demand.

JORDAN WAS ALREADY EMBEDDED IN CHINA

Persistent China infrastructure:

- 2020: Next Stop Dongdan: Beijing's annual streetball institution, sponsored by Jordan Brand
- World of Flight Beijing
- local customization and artist programs
- youth basketball/community investment
- Jordan Wings educational programming
- athlete tours in Shanghai and Beijing

**Jordan has built
*localized cultural
credibility* in China**



Jordan has spent years building local relevance through Dongdan, athlete tours, community programming, China-exclusive products and World of Flight stores.

These investments created participation, retail access and cultural credibility inside China.

They established the infrastructure beneath the 2026 Shanghai program, but primarily addressed Chinese consumers.

2026: SHANGHAI BECOMES THE GLOBAL STAGE



- The AJ41 made its official debut in tandem with “The One” finals with an early, limited release in China
- The One’s third global finals, following 2025 **Paris** and 2024 **NYC**, with international finalists **converging in Shanghai**
- Jordan Design Studio work displayed and judged there
- North Bund waterfront court turned Shanghai’s skyline into campaign imagery
- Chinese rapper Jackson Wang’s appearance connected Chinese identity to global music/fashion audiences
- international livestream and “Road to The One” storytelling

All mark Shanghai as a cultural beachhead for basketball for the rest of the world

In 2026, Jordan is no longer using China only as a destination for imported brand mythology. It is positioning Shanghai as a place where global Jordan talent, product and creative authority are revealed.

WHY JORDAN MAY NEED SHANGHAI

1. Imported prestige is weakening

Nike/Jordan can no longer assume that American origin automatically confers superior aspiration.

2. Chinese competitors now export basketball credibility

Anta and Li-Ning are not only local alternatives. Through Kyrie Irving, Klay Thompson, Dwyane Wade and others, they are creating basketball products and narratives with global reach.

3. Jordan needs new sources of mythology

Michael Jordan's archive remains valuable, but constant retro circulation risks turning the brand into heritage rather than a living basketball institution.

Shanghai can connect performance, design and global youth culture

Shanghai offers:

- an enormous basketball audience
- advanced retail and digital culture
- globally legible architecture
- a young creative class
- proximity to Asian growth markets
- symbolic proof that Jordan's future is not authored solely in America

By making Shanghai a source of global Jordan culture, the brand may rebuild local relevance while simultaneously refreshing its worldwide identity.

SPECTACLE OR DURABLE MYTHOLOGY?

The 2026 program established visibility. Repetition, participation and global circulation will determine whether Shanghai becomes a lasting cultural platform.

Questions to track:

Cultural

- Does global coverage associate Jordan with Shanghai, or merely show a Jordan event located there?
- Do Chinese athletes and designers become recurring authors of the brand?
- Does Shanghai acquire a distinctive Jordan identity?

Community

- Does Jordan Brand create durable infrastructure in Shanghai after the event?
- Does The One return, or lead to a local annual institution?
- Does a permanent community emerge around the North Bund activation?

Commercial

- Do China-first launches improve full-price sell-through?
- Does Jordan regain share from Anta and Li-Ning?
- Does cultural engagement translate into stronger digital traffic, membership and repeat purchase?

Paris demonstrates how sustained local participation can produce globally valuable brand mythology.

Shanghai demonstrates Jordan's attempt to deploy that model deliberately, but it is too early to know whether a concentrated launch moment can become durable cultural infrastructure.

