



Introduction

Marketing the Olympic Games

Guest editors:

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“The Olympic Games are a positive force in marketing. Worldwide marketing expenditures increase as official sponsors and unofficial free-riders attach themselves to the Olympic logo, to particular sports, national teams or individual athletes. Global brands, in particular, see the Olympics and World Cup soccer as the two most important international sporting events; brand linkage to these events can boost brand awareness, preference and sales over competitors who cannot afford the global sponsorship prices set by the International Olympic Committee.”

John Quelch, Senior Associate Dean and Lincoln Filene Professor of Business Administration, Harvard Business School, 2008.

In sport, competing at the Olympic Games is considered by most athletes to be the pinnacle of their career. This global event transcends the political and cultural arena to create unforgettable moments for individuals – sports fans or otherwise – around the world. Until 1998 the Games were the reserved territory of amateur athletes, and organising committees struggled to make them happen every four years. However, since 1992, spurred by the presence of professional athletes, representing sponsorship and marketing opportunities, the Olympic arena has become a fabulous playground for marketers of all types. The Olympic brand has become an incredible commercial asset, and sponsors and other commercial partners compete for a piece of the Olympic dream, while consumers become gripped by Olympic fever.

The aim of this special edition is to examine the unique aspects of marketing activity surrounding the Games, and to provide researchers with interesting and relevant direction for future research. This volume includes five research papers and a case study, each chosen for its interest and its unique contribution to sports marketing and sponsorship research.

The activation process for an Olympic sponsor is exemplified in the case study which introduces this

special edition: **Coca-Cola China’s Virtual Olympic Torch Relay programme at the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games** (J. Andrew Choi). **Olympic Games host and bid city marketing** (Xiaoyan Xing, Anthony G. Church, Norm O’Reilly, Ann Pegoraro, John Nadeau, Amanda Schweinbenz, Louise Heslop & Benoit Séguin) addresses an important issue that is not often tackled in academic research and takes place long before as well as during the Games – an excellent introduction to marketing within the Olympics.

Olympic sponsorship: evolution, challenges and impact on the Olympic movement (Chrysostomos Giannoulakis, David Stotlar & Dikaia Chatziefstathiou) uses a historical perspective to study Olympic sponsorship, whereas **Selection of leveraging strategies by national Olympic sponsors** (Fiona Davies & Georgios Tsiantas) focuses on national Olympic sponsors and proposes an interesting conceptual model.

The critical role played by co-branding issues is highlighted in **The Olympic Equestrian Games: brand collaboration and associations occurring within a destination and a sports event** (Anna Fyrberg). Her paper is written in the context of the equestrian competition to be held in Hong Kong for Beijing 2008.

Winning the Olympic marketing game: recall of logos on clothing, equipment and venues at the 2006 Olympics (Tom Robinson & Lois Bauman) examines the visibility of sponsors’ logos and raises serious questions about the IOC ‘clean venue’ policy.

Many people worked long and hard to bring this special edition to publication. We would like to gratefully acknowledge the editor, Simon Chadwick, for proposing this edition and for giving its guest editors the opportunity to work on these papers. In all, there were 13 submissions, and those published here were selected through two stages of peer review and revision. Therefore, we would also like to express our gratitude to all the reviewers (see page 238) for this time-consuming and voluntary effort.