

# AN EXAMINATION OF CONSUMER PERCEPTIONS AND OLYMPIC MARKETING PROGRAMS: THE VANCOUVER 2010 WINTER OLYMPIC GAMES

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## Abstract

The Vancouver 2010 Winter Olympic Games serves as a most current and unique means to examine the complexities and effectiveness of Olympic marketing programs. Specifically, the Vancouver Organizing Committee for the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games (VANOC) is credited for achieving important marketing benchmarks and accomplishments during the 2010 Games – including the generation of over \$750 million (CDN dollars) in domestic sponsorship revenue, partnerships with over 75 national corporations (VANOC, 2010) and landmark Olympic broadcast, licensing and ticketing revenues – and as such, corresponding consumer interest, perception and consumption of these activities is of paramount interest and concern. Also of important marketing priority and a consumer factor to be examined is the corresponding brand protection legislation under the umbrella of VANOC's 'Commercial Rights Management' programme, which was enacted for the 2010 Games against ambush marketing and other unauthorized associations with the 2010 Games, and was in turn interpreted accordingly by VANOC and IOC for related marketing policies. Of interest to this study then, is to, as a follow-up to previous research, further interpret the effectiveness of Olympic Marketing Programs, as assessed by consumer perceptions, specifically, as a case examination of the 2010 Winter Olympic Games. Further research has revealed high levels of confusion among

Olympic consumers (Lyberger & McCarthy, 2001; Seguin, Lyberger, O'Reilly & McCarthy, 2005; Shani & Sandler, 1998; Stotlar, 1994) and thus, a call for further research here is warranted.

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to examine consumer perception of the 'distinguish-ability' regarding the increasing complex Olympic Marketing Programs, specifically the Vancouver 2010 Winter Olympic Games, and to determine actual consumer consumption is measured and affected by these Program characteristics. In addition, this study will reveal Olympic consumer insights as well as industry implications for global sport marketing management.

## Objectives

The intent of this study was to further contribute to the body of Olympic marketing research by identifying consumer perceptions of Olympic Marketing Programs in general and with regard to the 2010 Winter Olympic Games in particular. This study was part of an ongoing collaboration of an international group of academics doing research in this area pre-during and post the 2010 Winter Olympic Games.

## Methods

The Consumer Perception Index (CPI) was utilized as a means to measure consumer interest, awareness, and intent to purchase in five (5) metropolitan areas through North America during the Vancouver 2010 Winter Olympic Games. The CPI is a five-part questionnaire containing 45 items previously developed and tested to assess perceptions of Olympic marketing and sponsorship activities including advertising, ambushing, commercialization, as well as measures Olympic consumer perceptions of interest, knowledge, and purchase behaviour (O'Reilly, Lyberger, McCarthy, Seguin and Nadeau, 2008). The questionnaire was made available in both of Canada's official languages – French and English. Approximately 1,200 surveys were collected, using the mall-intercept technique. Selective random procedures were implemented to ensure heterogeneity of the sample. Data was analyzed using SPSS 16.0.

## Implications and Conclusion

An examination of the consumer marketing perceptions regarding the Marketing Programs association with the 2010 Winter Olympic Games will be revealed. The presentation of the research project will provide important information and implications to the Olympic Movement and Olympic Marketing in particular, and will be couched within important implications for global sport marketing in general. This presentation will also serve as a forum for the discussion of the importance and need for greater related research in the field and build upon a prior presentation at the 2010 EASM Conference in Prague where the introduction for this study was first presented.

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