
THE 2012 OLYMPICS: A NEW DIGITAL TEMPLATE FOR SPORT MEGA-EVENTS

Abstract ID: EASM-2015-252/R1 - (779)

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Date submitted: 2015-03-25

Date accepted: 2015-04-11

Type: Professional Practice

Keywords: sport mega-event, Olympics, social media, social media marketing, venue management

Category: 15: Social Media & Digital Sports Marketing and Sponsorship

Synopsis:

The conditions that set up the 2012 London Olympics to become the first "social Olympics" are analyzed and implications for sport marketers' practices for developing and managing sport mega-events are discussed.

Abstract:

AIM: The 2012 London Olympics provided the global sport industry with a new digital template for sport events. The aim of this paper was to use the case study method to systematically analyze the collaborative technology and consumer behavior developments that converged at the 2012 Olympics, and contributed to an innovative and integrative transformation in digital communication and marketing. An extensive review of the literature and professional documents related to the development of digital technologies for the 2012 London Olympics indicated: 1) the LOGOC's digital strategy, including extensive cooperation with its "digital partners," provided innovative and transforming venue and infrastructure technology enabling real-time access to event data by broadcasters and consumers; 2) a high level of mobile device and Olympic-specific app penetration worldwide in 2012; and 3) a high level of integrated content and real-time social media marketing by the IOC, broadcasters, and sponsors. It was concluded that the strategic planning of the LOGOC, and the resulting explosion of digital media, especially social media, with their new capability to gratify human expressive needs, was a major factor in the success of the 2012 London Olympics as a "social event" and in establishing a state-of-the-art digital template for sport events.

PRACTICE DESCRIPTION: This case study analysis was based on two underlying theoretical perspectives, innovation and diffusion theory (Rogers, 2003;) and uses and gratifications theory (Ruggiero, 2000, Whiting and Williams, 2013). Rogers (1963; 2003) introduced innovativeness as a key element of his framework that regarded the diffusion and adoption of innovations. The innovativeness of consumers represents their acceptability of

new ideas, products and services, etc., and their willingness to adopt these at an earlier stage of development than other consumers. Uses and gratifications theory provides a framework for understanding how people choose specific media to satisfy specific needs (Ruggiero, 2000). The presentation explains and provides examples of how the 2012 London Olympics, due to innovative integration of digital media technologies, transformed marketing and communications strategies, especially social media marketing. Implications for other sport events and venues are discussed.

CONTEXT DESCRIPTION AND ACTORS INVOLVED: This presentation primarily addresses an historical perspective concerning the integration digital technologies into sport meg-events and social media as an innovative and transformative factor in marketing and communications in the sport industry. The 2012 Olympics was the first global sport mega-event to experience the impact of high levels of social media usage, real-time viewing, and the transformation of traditional communication and marketing efforts. During the 2012 Olympics, the democratizing power of social media shifted communication and marketing power away from experts and professionals to viewer and spectator prosumers - those who simultaneously produce and consume sport content. Sport historians, Olympic scholars, and sport marketers would be the targeted audience.

IMPLICATIONS AND LEARNING: This presentation would be of interest to sport venue managers, sport marketers, and social media planners with regard to their efforts to develop (and manage) digital communication strategies for sport events. The 2012 London Olympics was a technological watershed event in the history of global sport mega events. It resulted from 1) the foresight and due diligence of the LOCOG and its technology partners, 2) the confluence of mobile device use and social media engagement by prosumers, 3) sponsors, marketers, and global media enterprises; and 4) the enthusiasm and passion of sport consumers worldwide.

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Abstract report - EASM 2015