

Skating on Thin Ice: Promotional Strategies of a 4th Place Network In the 2006 Winter Olympics

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ABSTRACT This study looks at NBC's use of promotion for subsequent prime-time programming during the network's coverage of the 2006 Winter Olympic Games. NBC devoted substantial resources during the coverage from Torino to promoting their primetime lineup. Despite adapting many of the promotion practices that were successful in the 2004 Olympics coverage for the Winter Games in 2006, subsequent ratings were mediocre at best. The manuscript concludes with suggestions for promotion in the evolving prime-time sports environment.

KEY WORDS: promotion, network television, sports, Olympics

In the face of ever-increasing competition from additional broadcasters, multiplying satellite and cable networks, and alternative video distribution platforms from DVD's to iTunes to YouTube, television networks and their local affiliates struggle to attract the large audiences necessary to sustain their traditional business model. Change has wracked the industry and sports programming presents a particularly revealing lens into the present television landscape. There are precious few programs that generate the large and devoted audiences that were traditionally required for a network to be profitable. The power of the relationship between sports and media is clear in this regard. Audience

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data reveals sports to be a particularly valuable source of programming around the globe—the most watched program genre worldwide according to Eurodata TV Worldwide (cited in Tsiotsou, 2005). More and more, media businesses and sports teams (and leagues) are looking to create brands that are intimately woven into the fabric of their audiences' lifestyles and the synergistic partnerships between sports businesses and media businesses that have emerged in recent years mark the wave of the future (Rein, Kotler, & Shields, 2007).

As traditional advertising spot revenue markets become more fragmented, television stations and networks look for new and alternative revenue streams. Sports and other special event programming of various types is one strategic option that can deliver not only large audiences but also provide additional revenue possibilities from ancillary sources, for instance various interactive television (ITV) or enhanced television (ETV) activities such as online gaming attached to sporting events (Chan-Olmsted, 2006).

In addition, major events can also serve as a platform for sampling-inducing promotion of other network program offerings. This makes them valuable to the networks beyond their revenue potential because on-air promotion remains one of the broadcast networks' most important marketing tools.

Thus, sports programming is particularly valuable, especially the "megasporting events" such as the Super Bowl, the Olympics, and the World Cup (Conrad; 2006; Eastman and Newton, 1996; Eastman, Newton, and Pack, 1996), and those properties are only becoming more so because the media's appetite for sports content appears insatiable (Conrad, 2006; Nicholson, 2006). Major sports events lend prestige to the network that airs them, defining the network brand; they generate tremendous amounts of revenue because they deliver audiences that include not only typical heavy television viewers but also the highly sought-after younger male audience that is hardest for marketers to reach through traditional media¹; and because of the size and the breadth of the audience they make an ideal on-air platform for promoting a network's other programming.

The Olympics are at the top of the special events precisely because the broadcasts deliver that entire range of potential audience demographics across various evenings over the fortnight that each Olympiad lasts. Indeed, one could describe one week of programming from each Olympiad as from—or for—Venus (the week featuring gymnastics in the summer, figure skating in the winter) and the other week as from Mars, when sports with more male appeal dominate the schedule. This potential for marketing breadth and depth across two full weeks of programming is a major factor in the presumed value of the

¹ The Olympics is the most lucrative of all the sports events media contracts worldwide (Conrad, 2006).

Olympic broadcasts, and is a major reason why U.S. networks have been willing to pay rights fees of astronomical size.²

No U.S. Olympic network in recent memory faced the challenges that NBC encountered in 2006, or has been more in need of a big Olympic boost for their subsequent primetime lineup. Covering a Winter Olympics many time zones away (in Italy), NBC knew ratings would be considerably smaller for their Olympic coverage than they had been for the 2002 Salt Lake City Games. This relative lack of live Olympic events during American primetime, coupled with the fact that NBC had plummeted from their status as the top network in 2002 to a flailing fourth-place network in 2006, created a difficult environment for NBC to successfully promote its prime-time lineup. NBC was used to promoting hit shows, such as *Friends*, *ER*, and *Frasier*, in other hit programming. By 2006, these shows were no longer a part of its lineup, and other programming stalwarts (such as *The West Wing*, *Will & Grace*, and the *Law & Order* franchise) were either in their last seasons or experiencing the natural viewer fatigue that affects long-running series. In addition, the competing networks that traditionally had not strongly counterprogrammed the Games planned to attack NBC head on with original episodes of, among other hits, *Grey's Anatomy*, *Desperate Housewives*, *Lost*, *House*, and the 800-pound gorilla of primetime television in 2006, *American Idol*. Thus, NBC seemingly faced an epic struggle in promoting its weak prime-time lineup within the Torino Games. Yet, more optimistically, the Games were still expected to draw top 10 audiences throughout their run (NBC guaranteed advertisers a 12-13 rating overall) and were predicted to win the household rating battle, providing NBC with an ideal opportunity to re-launch its struggling primetime lineup.

Studies of previous Olympics have found mixed success for promotion efforts during the Games, but NBC seemed to have hit on a successful formula for the 2004 Summer Games in Athens. Analyses from that season showed that every new series promoted during those Games increased the time-slot rating over the previous season, and several returning series also saw a substantial bump in their numbers (Newton, Williams, Billings, & Eastman, 2006). However, maximizing the value of the Winter Games presented added challenges for NBC executives. Networks traditionally introduce few, if any, new programs after the Games conclude in late February (NBC had two new programs plus one newly returning limited-run show on its schedule after the Games) and audience viewing habits are likely to be well-established by midseason.

² NBC paid \$3.5 billion for the Olympics from 2000 (Sydney) through 2008 (Beijing) (Goldstein, 1996). The International Olympic Committee renewed NBC's rights for 2010 and 2012 for \$2.1 billion. The European Broadcasting Union bought the rights for the same Olympic events for \$800 million. Both deals include a wide range of media platforms--not just traditional television and radio, but also mobile, video-on-demand, internet, broadband and other audio rights ("EBU secures \$800M IOC deal," 2004).

Audiences for the Winter Olympics are typically smaller than for the Summer Olympics even under the best of circumstances, and anytime the Games happen outside North America viewing levels tend to be even smaller because of the lack of live primetime coverage. Thus, the Winter Games provide less opportunity to induce sampling of other network fare. In this environment, and perhaps as a way of countering the lower audience numbers for a given time slot, NBC planned more extensive coverage than for previous Winter Games: 416 total hours over 17 days across five networks, including more than 120 original hours broadcast on the flagship broadcast network (NBC Announces, 2006). This study investigates the extent to which NBC's promotional strategies during the Torino Games provided a post-Olympic boost to their broadcast primetime programming.

Theoretical Groundwork

Salience theory contends that certain structural characteristics of on-air promotion result in increased program ratings (Eastman and Newton, 1998). Grounded in the Elaboration Likelihood Model (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986), this theory postulates that messages with salient features (such as being placed first or last within a commercial break or being promoted separately from other shows) are more likely to be processed centrally and stored in long-term memory. Studies have traditionally demonstrated that the four primary factors that determine program ratings include promotion, along with inherited viewing, competition, and scheduling (Webster & Phalen, 1997; Eastman & Meyer, 1989; Eastman & Newton, 1999). Choices such as cuts, edits, and sound effects can cause viewers to process and remember promotional spots with more salient features, including orienting responses (Lang, 1990). Inheritance (the rating of the lead-in program) profoundly influences the rating of the subsequent program, with scholars claiming that as much half all rating variance can be attributed to this single factor, while promotion has become the second-largest factor (after inheritance) determining what viewers will watch. Promotional messages sort out program content and schedules competing for viewers' attention (Eastman, Schwartz, & Cai, 2005).

Previous Winter Olympic Promotion Studies

While scholars have addressed the promotional impact of the Summer Olympics on primetime ratings in the last decade (Billings, Eastman, & Newton, 1998; Eastman & Billings, 2004; Newton, Williams, Billings, & Eastman, 2006), conclusions regarding the effectiveness of the telecast in increasing program ratings were markedly different. One element is that the Summer Games occur between network seasons and away from the November, February, and May sweeps months in which networks use ratings to set advertising rates. In contrast, the promotion carried in the Winter Olympics is more vital to the host network because it occurs in

the midst of a season, traditionally the February sweeps month, and can boost series ratings for the whole season. As a result, Winter Olympic promotion is crucial to the network, particularly for promoting continuing series that have been placed on hiatus for the 17-day Olympic sportscast.

Eastman and Otteson's (1994) examination of the 1992 Games was the first quantitative analysis of prime-time promotion within an Olympics, and it found far less positive impact than was expected. Merely three of the 21 promoted programs that year saw ratings increases, while nearly two-thirds remained flat and one-quarter declined.

Subsequent researchers have pointed out, however, that not only is the distance between the Games' broadcasts and the airing of promoted programs potentially a mitigating factor, but a two-week hiatus in episodic programs (such as during the Games) is also likely to produce an actual ratings dip for those shows following the resumption of programming (Adams & Eastman, 2002). Thus, it is reasonable to characterize even a flat ratings performance as some degree of success. A 1996 study that included not only the 1994 Winter Olympics but several other major sporting events in 1993 and 1994 concluded that promotion in "mega" events did indeed have a positive impact, although two-thirds of the promoted programs remained flat in the ratings in that study as well (Eastman, Newton & Pack, 1996). Eastman and Billings (2000) utilized a database of 267 promos for prime-time programs aired during CBS's coverage of the 1998 Nagano Olympics and uncovered several positive results. Regarding change scores, 92% of all promoted programs either gained point(s) or stayed flat, which was far better than in previous Winter Olympic studies. Additionally, regression analysis indicated that 9% of the impact on ratings was attributable to salience variables, including promotion frequency, carriage program rating, position, and clutter—demonstrating that salience factors are second only to inheritance (accounting for 56% of the variance in 1998) in predicting future network ratings. Consequently, the authors argued that the combination of inheritance and salience meant that nearly two-thirds of all variance could be accounted for within Winter Olympic promotion research.

Hypotheses and Questions

Based on the previously published studies of program promotion within a Winter Olympics as well as other mega-event promotion studies, the following hypotheses were proposed:

H1: *The majority of programs will remain flat in the ratings, demonstrating a movement of less than 2 points in either direction.*

H2: *Of programs that do demonstrate significant change, more will improve than will fall in the ratings.*

H3: *The positive effect of promotion on ratings will be greater for returning shows than for any new programs.*

In addition, because NBC's efforts in the most recent Summer Games appeared to have been successful and because of the differences between Summer and Winter Games, the following research question was proposed:

RQ1: *How will NBC's promotional efforts during the 2006 Torino Games be similar to or different from promotion in the 2004 Athens Summer Games?*

METHOD

Researchers taped all 17 days of original Olympic coverage on NBC, CNBC, MSNBC, and USA, utilizing the 65 prime-time hours aired on NBC for this analysis.³ A promo was defined as pre-recorded marketing message that tells viewers about a program they can watch and encourages them to tune in. In order to be counted, promos must last three seconds (:03) or longer and include both audio and video. One spot may contain multiple promos for different shows.

Following the pattern established by Eastman et al.(1996), the researchers aided by trained graduate student coders analyzed the 65 hours of tapes, coding them for (1) airdate and (2) time, (3) promoted program and (4) network, (5) program genre, (6) promo location (internal pod, stand-alone within program, end credits, program transition), (7) promo position (first, last, or middle element in a pod), (8) clutter (defined as the number of elements in a break), (9) spot construction (single or multiple programs promoted), (10) length of the promo, (11) type of promo—whether the promo was for a specific episode or was generic, and (12) the promoted program's familiarity (new or continuing series, or a one-time event such as a football game).

In addition, household ratings data for (13) the Olympic broadcast, (14) the promoted program during the three weeks following the Olympics, (15) the lead-in audience for the promoted program, and (16) ratings for the promoted program during the three weeks prior to the Olympics, or for the same time slot prior to the Olympics was compiled from published trade sources⁴ and added to the database.

Twenty-five percent of the primetime hours were coded twice. An intercoder reliability check using Cohen's Kappa was run on the seven

³ Researchers conducted a separate analysis of cross-promotion on the cable networks.

⁴ Primetime ratings data came from the weekly ratings chart in *Broadcasting & Cable and TV Week*.

variables that required a judgment call from the coder. The measure of agreement ranged from .936 to 1.0, indicating high levels of reliability for the coding instrument and among the coders. The individual measures of agreement were:

Promoted Network:	1.0
Genre:	.968
Location:	1.0
Position:	1.0
Construction:	1.0
Type:	.936
Familiarity:	1.0

RESULTS

NBC aired a total of 209 promos in 162 spots for 17 subsequent prime-time programs during the prime-time Olympic broadcasts, a mean frequency of 12.3 promos per program. This represents a slight decrease during Torino from the total of 229 promos that aired during coverage from Athens for 20 programs but an increase in the number per program compared to Athens' mean of 11.5. NBC carried no cross-promotion for programs on the affiliated cable networks during prime-time (other than for additional Olympics coverage).⁵ All of the promos in this Torino primetime analysis were for NBC programs; spots for late night, daytime, morning, and weekend sports programs were not included in order to parallel previous studies and because of the difficulty in obtaining ratings for those programs.

Structural Characteristics of the Promotion

Analysis by airdate showed that the overall distribution of the promos was skewed toward the end of the 17 nights of prime-time coverage, with slightly over half the total (106 promos), airing during the final seven nights, and twenty percent of the total (59 promos) airing during the final three evenings. The number of *spots*, however, was relatively evenly spread throughout the Olympic coverage (a mean of 9.5 spots per night). Greater use of multiple-promo spot construction explains the skew in the

⁵ NBC aired 75 spots during Torino promoting Olympic coverage during the 17 evenings of primetime. These included a mix of relatively short promos for events airing later that same evening as well as longer spots (up to two minutes) promoting the next day's coverage across multiple networks or during different dayparts on NBC. This promo load does represent an increase from the 2004 Summer Games coverage, primarily resulting from spots encouraging viewers to stay tuned for events coming up next or shortly, a form of produced teases that were not used during coverage from Athens. However, because the focus in this Torino analysis is on the effort to support the prime-time lineup subsequent to the Olympics, these spots were not included in the analyses.

number of promos during the final days. Nevertheless, 82% of the spots on NBC overall were singles—an increase of 7% over the Athens coverage.

Also, unlike in most earlier Olympic promotion, NBC extended a practice that was noted first in the Athens coverage. Within coverage from Torino the standard 30-second spot was again the most common length for the promos (accounting for more than 60% of the total), followed by 20-second spots (31%). This was perhaps surprising in the Winter Olympics context, where there is normally less need to acquaint audiences with fresh programming and more concern about reminding them to come back after the Games—but the result may be indicative the lack of existing primetime audience and of NBC's almost desperate need to improve its prime-time performance.

Time analysis showed that the pattern of scheduling was fairly even across each evening. Roughly 30% of the spots aired prior to 9 p.m. (during the first hour Monday through Saturday and during the first two hours on Sundays), and about 25% aired during the final hour (11 p.m. to midnight Eastern time). Coverage ran until midnight on some evenings but only until 11:30 on others, shortening the time for promos on some nights. The remaining 45% of spots were nearly evenly divided between the 9 p.m. and 10 p.m. hours. This relatively even distribution matches the approach used in 2004.

One other substantial difference was in the generic/specific mix. Salience theory would suggest that episode-specific promotion would be most effective, especially in a Winter Games context where the promoted episode will be relatively close in time (compared to the Summer Games). However, NBC ran far more episode-specific promos during Athens coverage than during Torino's: 98% of the Athens promos were specific, while only 68% of the Torino promos targeted specific dates and times. Many of the generic promos were for program blocks, such as NBC's Thursday night comedy lineup of *Will & Grace*, *Four Kings*, *My Name Is Earl*, and *The Office*.

In addition, the level of clutter seems to have crept back up from 2004 levels to spot loads that were comparable to earlier games. Whereas three-quarters of the pods had either 4 or 5 elements during the Athens Games, half of the pods during 2006 coverage had five or more. The mean number of elements in a pod was only 4.7 from Athens, but 5.4 this year. This figure is, however, comparable to the averages reported in earlier studies (see Eastman and Bolls, 2000).

Nearly all (83%) of the promos during Torino coverage ran in the more desirable first and last positions in clusters. The first position was by far NBC's preferred choice, accounting for nearly three-quarters of all promos. Although numerical totals were not compiled on this particular factor, researchers noted during coding that NBC once again had apparently co-opted the first position in many (perhaps most) local affiliate breaks—a practice also observed during the Athens coverage—including the transition to local news at the end of each night's coverage.

In contrast, when NBC ran promos in the national clusters they were generally in the final position, with the exception of teaser spots for continued Olympic coverage.

These findings, taken collectively, answer the research question about Torino and Athens by drawing attention to specific similarities and differences. In spreading the promos out over the evening, moving them closer in time to the air dates of promoted programs, giving the spots preferred positions in the clusters, and giving the promo enough time to make an impact, NBC continued or even increased most of the practices that had proved successful in 2004. The most significant potentially negative changes on the impact of its promotional efforts compared to recent Olympics were using a greater percentage of generic spots and a greater overall level of clutter.

The increased clutter may have been unavoidable, the result of the need to generate enough revenue to make a profit above the astronomical rights fees and production costs. However, there does not seem to be a similarly clear rationale for the use of a substantial number of generic spots for some of the networks more attractive and successful programs. It was almost as if NBC were more focused on brand reinforcement for existing audience members than on encouraging sampling by viewers who were not already fans of a show. There is certainly value to such a strategy under some conditions and for some programs; however, it seems an odd choice for a network that had, at best, mediocre results in the season to date.

Ratings Impact

Indeed, despite NBC's need for a post-Olympic boost, it is hard to find much success in terms of ratings change (see Table 1). Most programs suffered ratings declines from pre-Olympic levels. Only a single program, *Deal or No Deal*, returning after an initial short run months earlier, substantially increased its post-Olympics rating compared to its time slot (+3.2 over the first three weeks). One other program presented somewhat mixed results. *Las Vegas*, which moved from Monday to Friday evening following the Games, suffered a drop in its ratings compared to pre-Olympic airings (-0.5 in week one), as one might expect given the HUT level differences on those two nights. However, *Vegas* did improve the ratings during the Friday time slot (where *Dateline* aired prior to the Olympics) by 1.4 points in the first week and 0.8 points averaged over three weeks. Perhaps as importantly, it delivered a respectable lead-in to the program that followed it. *Conviction*, managed almost a full ratings point increase over the pre-Olympic ratings for *Book of Daniel* and *Law & Order* repeats at 10 p.m. Fridays.

Table 1: Ratings Change Pre-Olympics to Post-Olympics

Program	Rating change First Week	Rating Change Three Week Average
<i>Conviction</i>	0.9	0.9
<i>Deal or No Deal (Monday)</i>	2.1	3.2
<i>ER</i>	-0.4	0.0
<i>Four Kings</i>	0.3	NA*
<i>Heist</i>	-1.7	-2.6
<i>Las Vegas</i>	-0.5	-0.2
<i>Law & Order</i>	-1.2	0.2
<i>Law & Order Criminal Intent</i>	-0.4	0.4
<i>Law & Order SVU</i>	-1.2	0.2
<i>Medium</i>	-1.3	0.1
<i>My Name is Earl</i>	0.5	-0.1
<i>Scrubs</i>	0.2	0.1
<i>The Apprentice</i>	-1.3	-0.3
<i>The Office</i>	-0.6	-0.6
<i>West Wing</i>	-0.4	NA*
<i>Will & Grace</i>	-1.4	0.0

**Four Kings* and *West Wing* did not air three episodes during the month following the Winter Olympics.

Because some programs aired only one or two episodes following the Olympics (*Four Kings*, *West Wing*), they have no rating figure in the three-week average column. Also, one of the 17 promoted programs, *Sunday Night Football*, did not premiere on NBC until the following fall of 2006 and was not included in this analysis because of the lengthy gap between promotion and air date (although it is perhaps worth noting that the show was one of the few real bright spots on the NBC schedule that fall). These mixed results do confirm H1 (most programs will not change more than 2 ratings points in either direction, essentially remaining flat). However, the support for H2 (more programs will increase than decrease ratings) is tentative at best. Eleven of the 16 saw at least a small increase in their first airing following the Olympics compared to the pre-Olympic averages, and seven remained on the positive side after three weeks following the Olympics (but only one of those was more than one point). Of the programs moving more than one point there was one in each direction (*Deal or No Deal* went up; *Heist* went down). H3 (positive ratings effects will be greater for returning shows than for new shows) proved impossible to fully assess in this study because *Conviction* and *Heist* were the only truly new programs airing in the month following the Olympics. The results indicate modest support to the extent that the returning *Deal or No Deal* was the only big winner, while *Conviction* managed only a smaller ratings bump and *Heist* started poorly and declined over the first three weeks.

CONCLUSION

In light of the network's recent ability to leverage promotion in the 2004 Athens Games into increased primetime ratings for the fall debuts of their programs—in part by moving the debuts of those programs up close to the conclusion of the Games—it was surprising to find that NBC altered the formula in some ways for the Games in 2006. Although the Olympic coverage eked out a profit on \$900 million in ad revenue (after NBC's primetime broadcasts barely covered the rating guarantee of 12), the majority of that revenue came from sources other than the broadcast network's primetime coverage (Consoli, 2006) and the performance of the primetime lineup post-Games was mediocre at best. It is still worth noting, however, that the Olympic coverage does stand on its own. The Torino Games, as well as the coverage from Athens in 2004, were clearly NBC's most-watched primetime weeks during those seasons (Ebersol, 2006).

Although NBC has altered some aspects of the traditional formula for covering the Games (focusing on the actual competition in a broader range of events and using fewer personal stories about individual athletes since 2002, for example), broadcasters carrying Olympic coverage must continue to rethink how the Games are packaged for today's audiences. The Olympics attract a wide demographic swath of the audience—some of whom are otherwise difficult to reach in primetime. This fact makes the Games an attractive platform for promotion (and for some advertisers). However, individually, audience members may be looking for very different things. Overall, the audience now demands more control, and they want the content they want when they want it on the platform they find most convenient. As advertising executive John Padgett points out,

Older women want a storyline and emotion, and younger men want results and competition. [NBC] programs the three and a half hours each night as a movie that consistently throughout touches on all the things that are relevant to the different demographic segments. That worked in 1988 and 1992, but it doesn't work anymore.... Technology has trained consumers that they don't have to wait for prepackaged programs to get what they're interested in seeing. Nobody under age 35 is going to stick around and wait till 11 p.m. to find out if Bode Miller won a medal, and very few over age 35 are going to do it. (Fitzgerald, 2006)

Similarly, although the network has made some interesting initial steps toward developing better promotion models (use of screen space during event coverage to promote "upcoming" coverage, for example, in addition to the more traditional announcer teases), there is a long way to go. The importance of the Olympics as a promotional platform stretches

far beyond the network's primetime offerings even on the broadcast television network. According to Dick Ebersol,

we've seen the Olympics have a major, major, major impact, from promotion. *The Today Show's* dominance began after the support programming we did with the '96 Olympics; doubled their normal rating, or whatever. And that got them a premium distance from everybody else that they basically have never lost in a decade. The same is true for *Nightly News*. And the feeling is that the Salt Lake City Olympics really did a great deal of good for *The Tonight Show*. *The Today Show* and *The Tonight Show* are the cash cows of this company. (Ebersol, 2006)

That positive impact now stretches far beyond even the broadcast network. Indeed, it is interesting to note the dramatic increase in traffic on NBC's Olympic website, doubling the number of videos served compared to Athens and more doubling the number page views as during the Salt Lake City Games in 2002 (NBC, 2006). Even though NBC's Olympic primetime coverage struggled some nights, especially against Fox's powerhouse *American Idol*, NBCOlympics.com far outpaced *Idol's* website, drawing four times the number of unique visitors during the week of February 12th (Miller, 2006). Randy Falco, president and COO of NBC Universal Network Television Group, noted after the Torino Games that NBC

added programming and content that was very well received, and can be studied as a template for the future. Our Olympic strategy has evolved so we reach our audience through various means—network, cable, Internet, VOD, wireless, to name a few. (Consoli, 2006)

That expansion will play out with over 3000 hours of coverage planned from the Beijing Games (more than twice the number of hours programmed from Torino). The website will clearly play a more substantial role in 2008. It will have strategic importance as an event outlet, and as a news/information source; as a promotional mechanism to feed viewers back to the broadcast and cable networks; and as a means to reach the broadest possible audience for advertisers. Thus, we can expect to see substantially more promotion for the NBCOlympics.com site during the next Olympics along with the tie-ins for the major sponsors. It seems likely that we will see interactive marketing strategies implemented by the NBC's major Olympic sponsors, using NBCOlympics.com and perhaps also elements in their television spots to drive traffic to their own sites and take advantage of the Olympics brand halo to further their own connection with their customers. NBC Universal's own strategy seems likely to focus on recycling viewers among coverage across the company's various Olympic platforms—broadcast, cable, and (for the first time) the internet. This will allow

them to use the unique characteristics of each venue and audience to not only build additional revenue opportunities but also target specific promotional messages for other compatible NBC Universal-owned content.

Thus, one other change is also likely for NBC in 2008—an increased emphasis on cross-promoting non-broadcast programming. We found it somewhat surprising in 2004 and again in 2006 that there were no promos on the broadcast network for any content on an NBC cable network. Perhaps this was the result of concerns expressed by broadcast network local affiliate stations or a remaining vestige of long-standing broadcast-cable antipathy. Nevertheless, in the present landscape with more and more viewing going to multichannel outlets such as cable and satellite, it seems unlikely that the parent company will continue to let significant opportunities to plug valuable (and valued) programming on those other outlets they control continue to pass by.

The time differential between the Olympics' host city and the local television market is often a significant factor in the audience's interest in prime-time coverage. For NBC in 2008, Beijing presents challenges and opportunities for coverage of the Games themselves and for leveraging that coverage as a promotional platform for other content. Since the last time the Summer Games took place in that part of the World (the 2000 Sydney Games), NBC has greatly expanded coverage around the clock via various co-owned cable outlets—primetime is no longer the only real game in town. The arrival of digital video recorders (DVR's) provides audiences with greater ability to view programming on their own schedule (Wirtz & Schwarz, 2001). Together with the growth of broadband internet access, these factors predict a Summer Games where audiences will have viewing options as never before, and the networks of NBC will have options for reaching potential audiences as never before.

In a world where promotion is ever more important for a program's success, the promotion strategy will need to continue to evolve along with the program strategy. This analysis suggests the following recommendations for networks airing major event programming:

- Integrate a network's promotions on its website with its broadcast promos because of the web's appeal to young adults
- Blanket both sources (and also associated cable channels and their websites) to make promotion virtually unavoidable
- Reduce clutter while leaving time for promos by having only a few presenting sponsors' messages and tying other advertisers to single events
- Increase promotional focus on programs appealing to young adults in the hours after 10 p.m.; focus on promoting programs with family or older adult appeal in the 8-10 p.m. hours

- Because promos appear to be more effective for newer programming, make greater use of limited run series following the Winter Olympics.

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