

# Television and the Olympic Games: Symbiosis, globality and the construction of meaning

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## Introduction

The advent of modern Olympism as a concept and the Olympic Games as an event was supported by the emerging mass press in late-19<sup>th</sup>-century Europe; they grew under the auspices of the press and incipient radio in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century; and they developed as a global event thanks to television. Since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, no other event in the modern world has had as much power to draw the public's attention and generate an effective communication system as the one found by international media on arrival in an Olympic host city (Moragas, Rivenburgh and Larson 1995, 38). Television turns local events into global events; in this medium, the Olympic Games have found their main ally for disseminating positive values about sport and its imaginary.

There is, however, an element of symbiosis about this alliance between the Olympic Games and television. For the Olympic Games, television has been a dissemination tool, a medium for broadcasting moving images and sound and bringing athletes' successes and failures into people's homes, turning the Olympic stadium into a geostrategic stage where absence is as important as presence. For television (in every form of broadcasting, be it free-to-air or pay-TV), sport in general and the Olympic Games in particular have been a successful audience formula, ensuring that private broadcasters get revenue from advertising, subscriptions to premium channels and pay-per-view purchases, and that public operators get justification for their public service duty.

No medium has been as important to the worldwide broadcasting of the Olympic Games as television. For conveying emotions, audiovisual media do the job better and quicker than any others; they are better suited because sports images are capable of having a greater impact on feelings.

Television constructs the reality of the Olympic Games for viewers, and it makes that reality a global one. Cameras located both inside and outside the stadium and at various Olympic sports facilities create a reality that is limited to the choice that producers make, from the sound and image sources available to them, at any particular moment in time (images from up to 40 cameras on occasions). By splicing various live or edited shots, the diversity of frames, camera movements and close-ups construct meaning, but, like all choices, other potential sources of attention get left out in the process. For television, each frame and each shot is a choice defined by what appears in the frame and what does not. At the same time, splicing certain

shots with others through live or post-production editing of the images bestows continuity on an audiovisual narrative that seems to be natural and flowing, thus creating the audiovisual language of sport, of images of effort, of records and of competitiveness among athletes. The fact is that television is an artificial and mediated production of images in movement that usually conceals its production means (cameras, cranes, cables, monitors, etc.) in order to offer, in the most natural and plausible way, what a viewer is watching at any moment in time. Thus, as pointed out by the authors of *Television in the Olympics* (1995) “The Olympic Games is very much a media-constructed reality. There may not be another world event so planned, controlled, produced, yet presented ‘live’. Surrounding the spontaneous and very real activities of athletes is a very thick layer of broadcast production, personnel and technology swaddling each athletic feat or ceremonial ritual (like a new-born) and presenting it, flawlessly, to world viewers. Much goes on, however, in that layer that relates to our understanding of the reality that just occurred” (Moragas, Rivenburgh and Larson 1995, 4).

At the Olympic Games however, television is not only the agent that constructs such a reality; alongside the athletes, it is the principal actor of that reality too. Besides television’s nature to conceal things in sports broadcasts is its nature to reveal things that stadium spectators cannot see. Contributing to this are close-ups and detailed shots, repeats from several angles and perspectives, slow-motion playbacks and on-screen computer graphics, which often serve as an educational component for sports that are not very popular like, for example, the various sailing events.

Every aspect mentioned refers to a complex phenomenon that is open to many views and approaches: from purely functionalist ones to the most openly analytical and critical ones. CEO-UAB has taken the following approach to communication phenomena, which clearly indicates the path to be followed in the future: to analyse communication events as cultural factors of capital importance in today’s societies by unravelling their structures and explaining their internal mechanisms as and when they occur, sometimes taking the institutional version of an event as the starting point, in order to then apply the academic filter to it and try to go beyond appearances.

In this article, we shall analyse CEO-UAB’s main contributions over the last 20 years. We shall comment on the main works and try to bring a perspective on the future of television. We shall refer explicitly to the three main works on this subject: *Los Juegos de la comunicación* (*The Communication Games*, 1992), *Television in the Olympics* (1995) and *Television in the Olympic Games: the New Era* (1999), the latter being the outcome of a symposium held at the Olympic Museum in Lausanne. In addition, we shall transversely refer to other contributions on television issues made after these three milestone works of CEO-UAB.

## ***Television in the Olympics and Los Juegos de la comunicación***

Early academic approaches to the phenomenon of television and the Olympic Games began to emerge as from the first symposium on television organised by the IOC in 1984, followed by a conference promoted by the University of Calgary before the 1988 Olympic Winter Games. In 1992, just before the Barcelona 1992 Olympic Games, Miquel de Moragas published *Los Juegos de la comunicación*, in which the founder and former director of CEO-UAB offered an insight into the Olympic phenomenon from a cultural perspective: its symbols, rituals and economy, as well as the role of the media in it, were the key topics of this, the first monograph. Television has a prominent presence in this publication. In addition, the book deals with the new challenges that pay-TV represents for Olympism, details aspects of Games’ signal production (focusing mainly on the cases of Los Angeles 1984 and Seoul 1988), and analyses the background to and future prospects for Games’ audiences. In *Los Juegos de la Comunicación*, worthy of note is the analysis of the management and evolution of television broadcast rights, in which it highlights the determining power of the U.S. television network NBC on the IOC’s total revenue from television, together with the new and important role of sponsorship and licensing revenues at the Barcelona Games, introduced by a process in which television operators had to win tenders to broadcast images of the Games worldwide.

However, *Television in the Olympics* deserves a detailed and exhaustive mention. This book aims to provide a holistic understanding of the phenomenon. It deals with economic, organisational and technological infrastructure aspects of the phenomenon in order to investigate the role that communication phenomena play in the structure and organisation of the Games. Part I seeks to offer a context so that readers can understand the production processes of international television broadcasters (Moragas, Rivenburgh and Larson 1995, 9). It is a detailed analysis of the economic aspects and infrastructures that make the worldwide broadcasting of television signals possible, and of the management of Games' broadcast rights and sponsorship. Part II of the book provides a comparative analysis of the opening and closing ceremonies of 28 broadcasters from across the globe, dealt with in Núria García's chapter on ceremonies. Part III focuses on international audiences for the Olympic Games.

No other research on this topic published thus far has had so many collaborators. The sample for the analysis of the Barcelona 1992 Olympic Games included 25 countries – Japan, China, Korea, Cameroon, Indonesia, Canada, Singapore, Spain (including Catalonia), France, South Africa, the United Kingdom, Greece, Slovenia, the United States, Australia, Colombia, Mexico, Brazil, Cuba, Romania, Russia, Ghana, Egypt, Malaysia and Germany – with 130 researchers working on the project. Opening and closing ceremonies were analysed using a qualitative methodology for each of the 25 television broadcasters. These were then compared to the institutional signal of the Games' operator RTO'92, a neutral broadcast that, depending on the human and material resources allocated by each of the television networks, was customised to a lesser or greater extent – in keeping with broadcasters' interests and needs – to adapt it to their viewers. The researchers divided programmes into 245 segments or units of meaning, and a quantitative analysis of television programmes was performed using a list of 450 different categories, with special emphasis on the representation of the 'Olympic Games' concept, the different nations and the host city (Barcelona).

In the analysis offered by *Television in the Olympics*, an aspect worthy of note is the comparative methodology because, among many other things, the research is about different ways of 'seeing'; it elucidates the keys as to how different economic, political and cultural contexts affect television products in an environment of international and intercultural relations like that of the Games.

On the other hand, this work constructs a narrative of the complexities of the Games' production process by observing the process, by holding in-depth interviews with those in charge of RTO'92 and the broadcasters allocated to it, and by looking into aspects that were purely technical. The research also examines the ins and outs of the television production of the Barcelona 1992 Olympic Games, as well as the telecommunications infrastructures that established communications between the Games' 41 sporting venues and 15 sub-host cities. It also explores the material and technical resources made available to the thousands of journalists, camera crews and technical staff using the 45 mobile production units from many different countries that had been shipped to Barcelona to broadcast images of what was happening there to the world. It should be noted that this figure does not include the numerous resources that television broadcast rights holders for the Games allocated to that task. This section, based on observation, imbues the research with an interesting 'fly-on-the-wall' aspect of what was happening at that time.

*Television in the Olympics* concludes that Olympism as a philosophy expresses itself as a mega-event (the Olympic Games), an experience that transforms a city into a technological laboratory and a showcase for the principal actors of the communication industry. It constitutes an extraordinary encounter for intercultural cooperation and exchange, and in many cases Olympic television scheduling is capable of changing people's daily routines. While Olympic symbols are the most recognised on Earth, the Games themselves mean different things to actors and to spectators (Moragas, Rivenburgh and Larson 1995, 241).

This international research was also capable of zooming in on several phenomena external to the Games, all of which can be extrapolated to other events and social situations, and it consequently elucidated issues connected with the media industry as a whole and, of course, with the Olympic Movement too.

Communication-related revenue – television broadcast rights, advertising, sponsorship and sales of Olympic symbols – “constitutes the fundamental capital for the modern Games and, as such, greatly influences its global presentation” (Moragas,

Rivenburgh and Larson 1995, 241). Observations about production methods at the Main Press Centre and the International Broadcast Centre revealed the existence of a community with shared languages and knowledge, in many cases open to cooperation. In this section, for example, there is an account of spontaneous collaboration between British, Canadian and New Zealand journalists and their South African colleagues, whose team had made a reappearance at the Games after an absence of 32 years; or that of Scandinavian broadcasters with the small Icelandic broadcaster, to which it also ceded interviews; or the hubbub in the International Broadcast Centre where 8,000 people came together and worked 24 hours a days in multiple languages.

For Barcelona'92, and even more so now for candidate cities, demands were placed on the host country to have a high profile in terms of information technologies; this was one of non-negotiable conditions for the organisation of the Games. "In fact, organising the Games puts the entire technological capacity of a host country to the test" (Moragas, Rivenburgh and Larson 1995, 46).

With respect to Games' broadcasting, there is also a divide between rich and poor countries. The amount of material, technical and human resources allocated to the Games has a considerable influence on the version of the Games that viewers in one country or another receive. As mentioned earlier, even though there was an international signal offered by RTO'92, and from then on by the television division of the IOC's Olympic Broadcasting Services, the differences between the degrees of image customisation are related to the amount of technical and human resources allocated to the Games. The most customised version is always the NBC's. This U.S. network shipped 77 cameras, 286 video recorders, 957 monitors and two satellites to Barcelona, and deployed 1,300 professionals, which enabled the production of a unique, differentiated version of the Barcelona Games (and subsequent Games). The second was the host country's network's, in this case TVE's (Moragas, Rivenburgh and Larson 1995, 40-43). At the other extreme were the African countries' channels' versions. These channels only had enough resources to send personnel to Barcelona and receive the international signal without any kind of customisation through the African Broadcast Union. Elsewhere, customisation was limited to comments on the opening ceremony made by journalists from different countries. These differences have an influence on the presentation of the Games, but not so much on how the public interprets them. The preparation of customised comments and of cameras that follow national athletes significantly alters the Games' experience for viewers, thus allowing them to make a greater emotional connection with this sporting event and to become more aware of its cultural keys and symbols, which, in the case of very different cultures, are more easily grasped by having one's own culture as the initial point of reference.

The Games are an event for promoting and implementing already tested new technologies. In the case analysed, the digitalisation of the television signal, the old version of high-definition television, and fibre-optic cables for sending telecommunications signals, together with new models of mobile and underwater cameras, were the very latest technological advances at that time. The Games are, therefore, a showcase for technologies for subsequent general use at other major events. In the case of Barcelona, the importance of mobile telephony and wireless cameras was very clear; they allowed new visual perspectives and frames to be had of a Games' reality in which audiovisual construction plays a lead role. In the 1990s, the Barcelona Games were the first example of how the technologies of computers, audiovisual equipment and telecommunications networks converged with the aim of controlling, producing and disseminating news and the entertainment schedule. Account should be taken of the fact that, in 1992, the use of the Internet was not at all widespread. Indeed, how the Internet is and will be used to disseminate images of the Games has yet to be defined.

On the other hand, the Barcelona Olympic Games showed how international television broadcasters were beginning to adapt to a trend that is now a consolidated aspect of televised broadcasts of the Olympic phenomenon; that of commercial formats. Indeed, two thirds of all the broadcasters at Barcelona'92 used commercial messages. The resale of rights, which could already be found at Barcelona'92, was consolidated as a model for acquiring future Games' rights. This was the case for the media agency Sportfive, owned by Lagardère, which acquired rights for the 2014 and 2016 Games for European countries with smaller populations. Combined with these sales to media agencies are the IOC's negotiations with and direct sales to television operators through broadcasters in France, the United Kingdom, Germany, Italy, Spain, the United States and Turkey, among others. The new agreements, with both Sportfive and the national broadcasters of large countries, contemplated the

purchase of free-to-air and pay-TV broadcast rights, as well as those for mobile phones and other new media. Just after the Barcelona Games, the IOC reached agreements with television broadcasters for more than one Games, particularly with the U.S. network NBC for the Sydney 2000 and Salt Lake City 2002 Olympic Games, a model still in force today.

Sport in general has adopted some of the Games' most noteworthy symbols and rituals: opening ceremonies, torch relays and medal award ceremonies. All of them have given televised sport considerable artistic splendour. The role of different television broadcasters' commentators is also dealt with in this book. Their role plays an important part in the process of creating meaning for televised Games. Commentators act as "interpreters, observers, participants, experts, obstructions, patriots, self-promoters" (Moragas, Rivenburgh and Larson 1995, 247) and form an important part of the Games' communication process. Alongside a network's images, customised to a lesser or greater extent, commentators are intermediaries between the Olympic Games, the city, the state where they are being held and the public. At the Barcelona Olympic Games, and still today, television commentators see themselves as arbiters of the event being broadcast, at times with absolutely no knowledge of the event being narrated. For the opening and closing ceremonies of the Games, the IOC publishes a press pack in which many of the key cultural aspects of the Games are explained. Today, these clarify numerous cultural gaps, though they occasionally set an overly strict narrative itinerary for the commentators, thus creating a uniform vision of the event.

Despite being a global event in terms of participation and television coverage, the Olympic Games are strongly linked to their televised representation on a local scale. The local dimension of the Games is what keeps each television network and the viewers interested. Live broadcasts of sporting events and the emotion that they convey are particularly based on paying attention to viewers' home countries' athletes and national teams. In the case of countries that do not have the resources to follow their athletes, viewer interest in the Games drops off after the opening ceremony (Moragas, Rivenburgh and Larson 1995, 248).

### ***Television in the Olympic Games: the New Era***

Another CEO-UAB contribution to the study of and research into television was *Television in the Olympic Games: the New Era* (1999), which compiles the ideas put forward and papers given at the international symposium held at the Olympic Museum Lausanne in 1998, organised by CEO-UAB in collaboration with the IOC Radio and Television Commission.

The first major section of the publication takes a look at the first 50 years of the history of Olympic television. Montserrat Llinés and Ana Belén Moreno, both CEO-UAB researchers, outline the history of audiovisual media in "The History of Radio and Television Coverage of the Olympic Games", starting with the historic, highly important and virtually contemporaneous birth of modern Olympism and the Lumière brothers' cinematograph. It would be very hard to understand modern Olympism and its development without the symbiosis between the Olympic Movement and audiovisual media, as mentioned at the beginning of this article. This section is rounded off with the experience of four witnesses – directors and collaborators of international networks – of the early days of television in the Olympic Games: Bill Ward, ITV director of sports (United Kingdom); Horst Seifart, ARD director of sports programmes (Germany); Aldo Riccomi, RAI director of engineering and technical operations (Italy); and Dick Ebersol, chairman of NBC sports (United States).

Various international authors such as Nicholas P. Schiavone, NBC senior vice president for research, and Peter Diamond, NBC senior vice president for Olympic sports, intervene in the second part of the publication. Schiavone explains what the features of a good Games' broadcast should be: it should be a story about the Games, and only the Games and the sporting and symbolic issues surrounding them. According to this author, the Games are a live, unscripted reality, which should be credible. The Games are a metaphor of life and, therefore, television broadcasters should ensure that viewers feel identified with this great sporting event. Television broadcasters should be respectful of Olympic ideals as an important part of the culture that they broadcast. And finally, Schiavone points out that the Games express patriotism in an atmosphere of celebration (Schiavone 1999, 82-83). For his part, the NBC senior vice president for Olympic sports underscores, among other issues,

the rule changes in various sports to make them easier for the general public to understand, while stressing the importance of other changes, such as the look of athletics event areas to make them better suited to television and more attractive to viewers (Diamond 1999, 86).

Representatives of various television networks – including the Brazilian O Globo TV, the Australian Seven Network and the Japanese NHK – also analysed the end-of-century situation of Games-related television, attempting to look ahead to the future. Finally, IOC marketing director Michael Payne intervened in this section, and suggested that, since the revenue stream from television and other sources was stable at that time, attention could be turned to exploring new ways to make the Olympic Games even more special, improving their image and, by extension, that of their partners, while protecting the Olympic Movement at all times; according to Payne, “the challenge of generating revenue [...], while protecting the integrity of the brand equity and image, is immense.” In this chapter, we have not mentioned any Internet-related contributions as these will be covered in the section devoted to new media.

Professors Pardo and Richeri theorise about new and future digital forms of television, multichannel programming and the audiovisual industry’s specialisation. Professor Prado anticipated that signal digitalisation, together with new 16:9 television formats and high definition would add spectacularity to sport. He foresaw that production companies would specialise in sport, with niche channels for different sports; today, these predictions have been borne out. In short, Emili Prado predicted that the sports production sector would become, as indeed it has, an important audiovisual sector.

The last of the works produced by CEO-UAB, *Beijing 2008 Olympic Games: Spanish Media Construction* (2008), is the result of international collaboration with the Communication University of China. It analyses, in the press and on television, the media’s treatment and coverage of the opening and closing ceremonies at the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games, as well as certain events – particularly Olympic finals – and the participation of Chinese, Spanish and American representatives. Other elements analysed in this work are the slots devoted to sport in Spanish television’s news programmes.

## **Olympic Games broadcast rights**

Olympic Games broadcast rights are a significant part of a system in which the various actors feed back on each other. The commercialisation of broadcast rights has played a major role in the construction of the modern Olympic phenomenon, such as we know it today. Broadcast rights are the main source of funding for the Olympic Movement. They are also an element that fosters revenue generation for commercial television broadcasters and sports sponsors in general, and for the Olympic Games in particular.

Games broadcast rights have traditionally been based on two variables: sales territory and exclusivity. This was also the case in the early stages of commercialising the first new media broadcast rights.

Television operators, the IOC, host cities and commercial brands on the one hand, and spectators, viewers and athletes on the other, all together form the vast mosaic of the following and importance of the Olympic Games as a major cultural, social and media phenomenon. The Olympic Games would not be the global phenomenon they are today without the complex web of relationships woven between television broadcasters (buyers of very expensive broadcast rights defrayed via advertising revenue or pay-TV subscriptions), the IOC (the owner of the Olympic Games), host cities (chosen by the IOC) and TOP sponsors (commercial brands that make a profit from their sponsorship through Olympic Games’ broadcasts). Television broadcast rights and sponsorship revenue in the last decade accounted for more than 85% of the IOC’s total revenue, and this demonstrates that there is a close relationship of dependence between the Olympic Movement and communication-related revenue. This revenue is distributed among the members of the Olympic Movement: International Olympic Federations, National Olympic Committees and Olympic Solidarity.

Despite the criticism levelled at the commercialisation of Olympic sport, the formula has shown itself to be the only one possible when it comes to pursuing the dissemination of the educational values of Olympism and sport. Any potential limitations of the formula should be sorted out on the basis of this model, a model that has turned the Olympic Games into the most important sporting event ever, and its symbols and values into elements of this vast ecosystem.

Juan Antonio Samaranch, who met with a bankrupt IOC and a divided Olympic Movement following the Moscow 1980 Olympic Games, introduced commercial exploitation into the Olympic Movement by combining the commercial potential of American television and the public service nature of the European broadcasting model. During his mandate (1980-2001), the Olympic Games became the most important sporting event in the world and a global phenomenon thanks to television broadcasters who, in turn, have become the mainstay of the Olympic Movement (Preuss 2000 and Payne 2006). The value of sports broadcast rights was enhanced when the potential to grow revenue from generalist American television broadcasters began to be exploited. From that moment on, television broadcasters entered into competition with each other to buy content to secure large viewing audiences in a multi-channel television environment like the American one, where increasing fragmentation was the order of the day. At the same time, fee-charging agents and consultants were removed from negotiations, which the IOC started to carry out directly and exclusively. In contrast to this positive view of the issue, there is much criticism of the process of the Olympic phenomenon's commercialisation (television and sponsorship), and a well-documented and exhaustive historical overview of it (Barney, Wenn and Martyn 2002).

In Europe, even after competition was introduced into the television market in the mid 1980s, and despite the fact that financial bids by private television broadcasters were much higher, joint sales to the European Broadcasting Union (EBU) were favoured. The EBU bid included public television operators that ensured free-to-air broadcasting of the Olympic Games to everyone, mainly young people, to convey the positive values intrinsic to sport. Samaranch established the dynamics of entering into long-term contracts with television operators in advance of the host city being known, thus ensuring the stability of the ever increasing revenue for the Olympic Movement.

Since the start of Jacques Rogge's mandate in 2001, the model for commercially exploiting broadcast rights introduced by Samaranch has continued to be used. Rogge sought true competition in broadcast rights auctions. He managed to create significant revenue growth through the use of this system, and established new formulas for distributing revenue that reduced payments to host cities and increased contributions to foster sport through International Federations and National Olympic Committees (Payne 2006).

The introduction of true competition has helped to reduce excessive dependence on revenue from American television operators and increase revenue from Europe. This has been made possible by negotiating broadcast rights directly and individually in big European countries, as well as sales of broadcast rights to the EuroFive agency for another 40 European countries (Fernández Peña 2009b). In this process, contracts with private television operators stipulate a series of commitments that they (or public television operators) must make, such as broadcasting a minimum of 200 free-to-air hours for the Olympic Summer Games, available to all, and establishing optimum quality standards, as guaranteed by the Olympic Radio and Television Organisation.

Among works that investigate the relationships between sport and politics on the one hand, and the study of television not only as a tool that constructs the Games' imaginary, but also as a modulator and a mirror of international relationships between countries on the other, worthy of note is *Global Television and the Politics of the Seoul Olympics* by Larson and Park (1993). According to the authors, there are three cardinal aspects of the analysis: the communication of events and processes, the communication of events guided by television and the political control that politics intends to exercise over those events and processes (Larson and Park 1993, 47). This work is based on the academic tradition of the construction of social reality by the media, television in this instance. According to the authors, communication is a fundamental social process, and it gains in importance through biological, social and technological evolution; the modern world is characterised by an environment that is increasingly saturated with television images (Larson and Park 1993, 46-47).

## **Towards a review of television as a concept: the future of the Olympic Movement's televised reality**

The Olympic Games are a territory for experimenting with television production technology and the construction of new audiovisual languages, but not only that. They are also a dynamic cultural event in which technological changes play a predominant role, and the need to foresee and adapt to these changes will have an impact on the future of the Olympic Movement. In the future, television will continue to be a key component for the dissemination of the Games and the Olympic Movement's values and imaginaries. Oddly, however, the future will be influenced by the etymological meaning of the phrase 'seeing from afar', definitively breaking away (which it has in fact been doing for some time now) from the device on which images have appeared in homes across the globe since the mid-20th century: the television set that people watch alone or with others. The digital future will have a fundamental impact on the increasingly important role of broadcasting in general for the Olympic Movement; by digitally processing information (images, audio and data), broadcasting will become the cornerstone of new digital services. From the perspective of its etymological meaning, it will be a customised television, adapted to the individual interests of viewers; a 'self media' to use the term applied to it in the 1980s, which gained considerable acceptance in some theoretical debates. And that will only be possible by using the technological foundations of the Internet, which allow for a kind of communication that is developed by anyone to be shared with everyone, thus breaking the mould of traditional mass media. This aspect will be covered in greater detail in the chapter devoted to the Olympic Games and new media (the Internet).

Television as a cultural industry (to take the French approach) or as a creative industry (the new British term) – without, of course, losing sight of the purely commercial view of it (into which scholars have undertaken research on the basis of functionalist currents) as a digital broadcasting medium using various operational means (digital terrestrial airwaves, satellite, cable, IPTV and the multi-channel version of it that the digital future will bring) – will have to face up to new challenges. This debate will also include the not insignificant future of public television broadcasters, which, mainly in the context of Old Europe, have played decisive role in providing equal access to images of the Games. However, since the late 1980s, Europe has had private television operators, a model that will apparently predominate in a future in the midst of an economic recession and a social legitimacy crisis of old television services. In recent years, a new broadcast rights' commercialisation and purchase scheme has been consolidated. It combines individual agreements with television broadcasters (public and private) in big countries (Italy, Spain, France, the United Kingdom, the United States and Turkey, among others) with direct institutional sales to media centres or regional broadcasting organisations. In the case of broadcast rights' sales to private media centres or broadcasters, the IOC stipulates a minimum number of free-to-air broadcast hours for the Summer Games (200) and the Winter Games (100), thus attempting to ensure universal access to Olympic images for all citizens.

The means of dissemination are becoming complicated. The digital environment has given rise to specialist free-to-air and pay-TV multi-channel access, on a pay-per-programme or a specialist channel subscription basis. This is the new territory for innovation in marketing and the broadcasting of Games' images. Given the thousands of hours of television produced, the old scheme in which public or private television broadcasters devoted one or two channels to the Games has collapsed. Major European public service television broadcasters already use, and will continue to use, their new digital channels specialising in sport for free-to-air broadcasts of certain sports that, while considered minority sports, do involve athletes from every state. In this respect, the BBC set a trend at the Beijing Games that might have an impact in the future. While the BBC broadcast events in which British athletes were taking part on BBC1, it provided access to other broadcasts on the Internet, either live or using the Internet as a library for on-demand access to images of past sporting events. This is an example of synergies between 'old' and new media in a public service broadcaster. Private television broadcasters offered a different scheme. At Beijing 2008, the American network NBC played with the complementary nature of, and the synergies created between, a number of generalist channels and specialist pay-TV channels, and set aside the Internet for repeats hours after they had been broadcast on one or other of the NBC communication group's channels. To be more precise, the American network used nine different television channels to broadcast the ceremonies and the various sporting events: NBC, CNBC, MSNBC, USA, Telemundo (a Spanish-language channel), Universal HD and Oxygen, plus the NBC's two new multiplex digital channels

which, on occasions, offered the same programming at different times throughout the day. NBC broadcast 225 hours of Olympic Games' coverage in the afternoon, in the prime-time slot and until the early hours of the morning, focusing mainly on gymnastics, volleyball, swimming and diving.

On average, the IOC sells broadcast rights some six or seven years in advance. This formula, which ensures that the IOC's revenue is stable, poses the problem of not being able to adapt such rights' sales to quickfire technological changes, new dissemination means, new platforms and new services. As mentioned in the chapter on new media, in the future there will be a tendency to sell traditional television broadcast rights (free-to-air, specialist pay-TV sports channels and on-demand video of a specific sporting event) separately from new media rights (Internet broadcasts using various kinds of software and applications on the Web, and accessible via portable, mobile devices such as laptops, tablets, mobile phones, etc.). That will allow new actors to compete for rights, mainly Internet-native companies or, in other words, those that have been created as a consequence of the Web's development. While the changes in the offing will lead to the consolidation of new broadcast rights models, free universal access to high quality images of the Games should be guaranteed for all citizens around the world.

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