

Olympic education experiences: the sponsorship in the promotion of Olympic values

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1. Introduction

The dissemination of positive values of sport has always been an essential communication objective of the modern Olympic Movement, as it represents one of its most important heritages from the ancient Greeks. Taking into account the importance of an educational model focused on values in a global world where they sometimes seem to be forgotten, the Olympic Movement and the organisations within it are – or should be – responsible for spreading those principles through different pedagogical approaches of what is known as Olympic Values Education.

Written after the results of a two-year research project undertaken by the Olympic Studies Centre of the Autonomous University of Barcelona at the request of the International Olympic Committee within the framework of the IOC Olympic Values Education Programme (OVEP)¹, this paper aims to understand and examine the role played by TOP sponsors in the dissemination of the Olympic values and ideals through their “educational activities”. As one of the major financial supporters that help underwrite the expenses of staging the Olympic Games, it is important to determine their significance not only economically but also in terms of image diffusion and support to the Olympic brand in each of their marketing and communications approaches.

After the analysis of eight TOP sponsors’ educational activities a myriad of questions arose, most of them linked to their marketing and educational strategies, together with their corporate social responsibility. Questions ranged from the way the sponsors’ “educational programmes” contribute to perpetuate the image and ideals of the Olympic Movement to the extent of Olympic ideals alignment with the values reproduced by the sponsors’ brands. Furthermore, inquiries related to the sponsors’ commitment to the educational mandate of Pierre de Coubertin and its potential of being treated solely as promotional platforms were also necessary.

Not forgetting that the Olympic values education is on the spotlight due to the advanced preparations of the first Youth Olympic Games in 2010 – and probably will stand so from now on – it is important to determine how youth would be affected by this mix of educational, high performance competition and strongly marketing-oriented event. Moreover, an analysis of the risks and opportunities that the Olympic Movement and the institutions within it will face in this

¹ In April 2006, the International Olympic Committee commissioned the Olympic Studies Centre at the Autonomous University of Barcelona (CEO-UAB) to undertake the study entitled *Olympic Education Experiences and Documents* within the framework of the IOC Olympic Values Education Programme (OVEP). The study offers an overview of what has been done in the field of Olympic Education targeting children and youth from 8 to 18 years old by organisations related to the Olympic Movement, such as Olympic Organising Committees for the Olympic Games (OCOGs), National Olympic Committees (NOCs), Olympic Movement Recognised Institutions, The Olympic Partner Programme companies (TOP Sponsors), Olympic and Sport Museums and also non-governmental organisations that develop educational initiatives with values and philosophy similar to the ones expressed by the Olympic Movement. Its results provided the International Olympic Committee with a database compiling a selection of Olympic Education initiatives, which will help IOC to develop international guidelines for educational programmes.

field is needed. How to regulate the participation of corporate sponsors in educational programmes in order to avoid their “commercialisation”? Is there an emergency for a global Olympic Education programme? What should the IOC do to prevent the Youth Olympic Games of failing in its mission to educate youth in the values of Olympism?

In a broader perspective, this paper discusses the controversial relation between Olympic ideals and Olympic commercialism. It also attempts to answer questions related to corporate sponsorship and its impact on the brand attributes of various actors, exploring the ways in which the Olympic Movement could take advantage of those renowned brands to propagate its ideals without compromising them.

2. Fundamental concepts

To understand which are the parameters used to write this paper we have to contextualise the work with the main concepts used to write it.

2.1. Olympic Values and the educational mandate of Pierre de Coubertin

Baron Pierre de Coubertin said that Olympism “*is a philosophy of life, exalting and combining in a balanced whole the qualities of body, will and mind*” (IOC, 2007). Influenced by the ancient Greeks, the Fundamental Principles of Olympism portrayed on the Olympic Charter reflect this significance of the “respect for balance in the human character between aspects of mind, body and spirit, an understanding of the joy found in effort, an emphasis on peaceful behaviour and respect for others” (Binder, 2004).

Coubertin also emphasized the educational and values-oriented purposes of Olympism. His proposal to spread positive values through a “blend of sport, culture and education” is a wise revival of the Greek legacy, and one of the most important concerns of the Olympic Movement. By attesting this “educational mandate”, Pierre de Coubertin truly believed that the adoption of good values in sportive and daily life would lead mankind towards a better and peaceful world (IOC. 2008).

Coubertin himself used the term “Sporting Education” instead of “Olympic Education” (Muller, 2004). This terminology appeared for the first time in sport education and Olympic research only by the 1970’s. There is not an official concept of what it means but, even emphasising different areas, many scholars who studied the topic (Gessman, Kidd, Gruepe, Muller and Naul, in Binder, 2004) agree that it is completely based in the values proposed in the Olympic Charter. It is educating in the universal values through sport and culture. And for the purposes of this

paper, that is the idea we will consider when talking about Olympic Values Educational programmes and initiatives.

2.2. The Olympic symbols and the Olympic Brand

Together with the Olympic flag and the Olympic motto (*citius, altius, fortius*), the rings are considered by the Olympic Movement as the Olympic Symbols. The Olympic rings (five interlaced and coloured rings on a white background), originally designed in 1913 by the same Coubertin, represent, in his own words, *“the five continents of the world, united by Olympism, while the six colours are those that appear on all the national flags of the world at the present time”* (IOC, 2007). Those Olympic Symbols are highly protected by the IOC who determines, for example, graphic standards that define the exact position and colour tone of each ring, their use in the creation of logos and emblems and also their exclusive property, which means that none of the symbols can be used without the IOC’s authorisation. But the Olympic Brand goes further: it is more than symbols, it is attributes.

Since 1996, the IOC has been commissioning research studies in order to understand what spectators feel about Olympism, one century after its revival (IOC, 2007). That is when the concept of an Olympic Brand emerged and started to be managed professionally, influencing all Olympic-related marketing agreements.

The result of those researches, based on qualitative and quantitative studies, conducted in over sixteen countries between 1996 and 2006, were presented in 2007 by the IOC Television and Marketing Services, who stated that:

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- People believe the Games are just as much about taking part as winning BUT also see there is no better achievement than winning a gold medal
 - They think the Games are more than just a sports event BUT also that the Games are the pinnacle of all sporting events
 - The Games are about unity, peace, a global, community BUT also a celebration of diversity and patriotism
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Source: *The Power of the Olympic Brand - Athena Olympic Marketing.2007*

Besides these interesting contradictions, other outcomes of the research shows that the Olympic Rings have an average 94% of awareness in the analysed countries, as well as the Olympic Games have a significant appeal when compared with other sport and entertainment events. According to the results, this happens due to a myriad of reasons, especially to the fact that the Olympic Games *“(...) provide a good role model for children, encourage them to participate in sport and no other event brings the world together quite like them”*.

The research also reports the attributes that most describe the Olympic Games in the opinion of the general public. The researchers highlight in their report the importance of those words, as they were repeated volunteered by people in every year of the survey, since 1998:

Being the best	Eternal	Determination
Respectful	Peace	Equality
Trustworthy	Celebration	Political
Dynamic	Unity	Global
Striving	Inspirational	Tradition
Friendship	Fair play	Heritage
Participation	Patriotic	Too Commercialised

Source: *The Power of the Olympic Brand - Athena Olympic Marketing.2007*

Comparing the words in the above charter with the values proposed in 1894, it is possible to state, and the researches do suggest, that the Olympic Games “*have been delivering a consistent product for over 100 years and that the image of the original Olympic Charter is being upheld*”. But what about the last expression, “too commercialised”?

In their report, researchers did not justify the spectators’ feelings about the commercialisation of the Games, but it can be deducted that one of the reasons of the massive exploitation of the Olympic Brand lays on its own value. It is because of its power and positive attributes that companies all over the world want to join the Olympic family. But this leads us to another concept, sponsorship, discussed in the next section.

2.3. Sponsorship and the Olympics

It is known that, since the ancient times - especially during the Roman Empire - sport games were “hosted” and athletes received the support of wealthy families, kings and emperors, for many reasons, such as the promotion and/or maintenance of the image, religion, culture, political power and military role, as well as pure glory or entertainment. Those aspects do not differ very much from the ones that, nowadays, inspire the participation of athletes in sport events, neither from the motivations of a country/city to bid for staging the Olympic Games.

Regarding Olympic Games “sponsorship”, one of the first examples we have are the contributions of the Greek benefactor Herodes Atticus (AD 101-176) to the ancient Olympia, where he supported the construction of a *nymphaeum*, which provided water to all venue. He also helped to enlarge and renovate the stadiums of Delphi and Athens, and build the Odeon of the Acropolis (Papalas, 1981). But Herodes Atticus was more a philanthropist than typical sponsor, as we know nowadays.

In the words of the International Chamber of Commerce, sponsorship is *“any commercial agreement by which a sponsor, for the mutual benefit of the sponsor and sponsored party, contractually provides financing or other support in order to establish an association between the sponsor’s image, brands or products and a sponsorship property in return for rights to promote this association and/or for the granting of certain agreed direct or indirect benefits”* (European Sponsorship Association, 2008). Sponsorship is one of the most powerful marketing tools at disposal of companies wishing to leverage their connection with a specific target. According to Bill Harver and Tony Meenaghan (in Mason, 2005), it operates through cognitive process that differ from regular advertising, provoking intense responses on consumers, due to the association with brands or activities which may have important emotional links with them.

Sponsorship, in many ways, has supported the Olympic Movement since the first modern Olympic Games in Athens 1896, when many companies, including Kodak (which is a current Olympic sponsor), provided revenue through advertising in the Official Book of Olympic Results (IOC, 2008). The 1952 Helsinki Olympic Games is also important to the history of Olympic Marketing, as it was the first Olympic Games to launch an international marketing programme, where companies from 11 countries made contributions of goods and services, ranging from food for the athletes to flowers for medallists. But the watershed were the 1984 Los Angeles Olympic Games when, for the first time, the domestic sponsorship programme was divided into three categories, each one granted designated rights and product category exclusivity, but limited to the host country and United States companies.

In the 2008 edition of its Marketing Fact File, the International Olympic Committee describes the Olympic sponsorship as *“an agreement between an Olympic organisation and a corporation, whereby the corporation is granted the rights to specific Olympic intellectual property and Olympic marketing opportunities in exchange for financial support and goods and services contributions.”*

Nowadays, IOC operates in three levels of sponsorship: Worldwide sponsors, known as TOP (The Olympic Partners), a worldwide and exclusive programme; Games sponsors, which are a part of the OCOGs’ marketing programme, focussed directly on supporting the staging of the Games; and the NOCs sponsors, local marketing programmes that support NOCs’ sport development activities and their Olympic teams. (IOC, 2008).

According to the Olympic Marketing Fact File (2008), the Olympic sponsorship programmes benefit the Olympic Movement in the following ways (IOC, 2008):

- *Sponsorship provides valuable financial resources to the Olympic Family.*
- *Sponsors provide support for the staging of the Olympic Games and the operations of the Olympic Movement in the form of products, services, technology, expertise and staff deployment.*
- *Sponsors provide direct support for the training and development of Olympic athletes and hopefuls around the world, as well as essential services for athletes participating in the Games.*
- *Sponsors provide essential products and services for broadcasters, journalists, photographers and other media.*
- *Sponsorship activation enhances the Olympic Games experience for spectators and provides the youth of the world with opportunities to experience the Olympic ideals at the global and local levels.*
- *Sponsorship support contributes to the success of the educational, environmental, cultural and youth-oriented initiatives of the Olympic Movement.*
- *Sponsors develop advertising and promotional activities that help to promote the Olympic ideals, heighten public awareness of the Olympic Games and increase support for the Olympic athletes.*

It also is important to say that the IOC tries to guide its communicational platforms so the sponsors are aware of what should be explored in their own communication campaigns. Four attributes are promoted by the IOC Television and Marketing Services as the ones that most capture the essence of the Olympic Brand: Optimism, Dreams and Inspiration, Friendship and Celebration of Community. As stated by the brand research, each one of those attributes “*is a broad and powerful choice for advertising and promotional themes and provides a distinct set of emotional and aspirational consumer leverage points*” (IOC, 2007). Those guidelines seem to be especially followed by the Olympic TOP sponsors.

2.4. The Olympic Partner programme

The Olympic Marketing Fact File (IOC, 2008), describes the TOP programme in the following way:

“The Olympic Partners (TOP) programme is the worldwide sponsorship programme managed by the IOC. The IOC created the TOP programme in 1985 in order to develop a diversified revenue base for the Olympic Games and to establish long-term corporate partnerships that would benefit the Olympic Movement as a whole. The TOP programme operates on a four-year term in line with the Olympic quadrennium (...) generates support for the Organising Committees of the Olympic Games and Olympic Winter Games, the NOCs and the IOC (...)provides each Worldwide Olympic Partner with exclusive global marketing rights and opportunities within a designated product or service

category. The global marketing rights include partnerships with the IOC, all active NOCs and their Olympic teams, and the two OCOGs and the Games of each quadrennium. The TOP Partners may exercise these rights worldwide and may activate marketing initiatives with all the members of the Olympic Movement that participate in the TOP programme.”

Source: Olympic Marketing Fact File, IOC 2008

TOP sponsors refer to the companies taking part of the global sponsorship programme of the IOC, created after the successful Los Angeles' OCOG domestic marketing programme. The programme was a new source of revenue generation, solving one of the biggest concerns of the IOC members, who in the early 1970's seemed to be worried about the fact of the dependence of the Olympic Movement on television rights (Barney et. al, 2002). The following chart shows the evolution of the programme since its creation:

TOP Programme Evolution

Quadrennium	Games	Partners	NOCs	Revenue
1985 – 1988	Calgary / Seoul	9	159	US\$96 million
1989 – 1992	Albertville / Barcelona	12	169	US\$172 million
1993 – 1996	Lillehammer / Atlanta	10	197	US\$279 million
1997 – 2000	Nagano / Sydney	11	199	US\$579 million
2001 – 2004	Salt Lake / Athens	11	202	US\$663 million
2005 – 2008	Torino / Beijing	12	205	US\$866 million

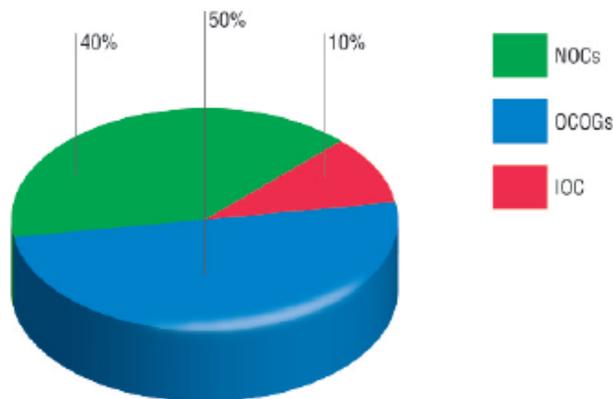
Source: Olympic Marketing Fact File, IOC 2008

Nowadays, the 12 companies participating in the sixth edition of the TOP programme are:

- **Mc Donald's Corporation**, sponsored the 1976 Montreal Olympic Games and turned TOP partner in 1997 (TOP IV)
- **Visa International**, a longstanding TOP partner, since 1986 (TOP I)
- **The Coca-Cola Company**, an Olympic sponsor since 1928 and TOP partner since 1986 (TOP I)
- **Lenovo**, TOP partner since 2005 (TOP VI) and formelly known as IBM.
- **Atos Origin**, an Olympic sponsor since 1992 (as Sema) and TOP partner since 2001 (TOP V), as SchlumbergerSema
- **Johnson & Johnson**, TOP partner since 2006 (TOP VI)
- **Manulife**, first a USOC sponsors (1993) and then a TOP partner, since 1994 (TOP III), as John Hancock
- **Samsung**, TOP partner since 1997 (TOP IV)
- **Eastman Kodak**, one of the first sponsors of the Modern Games (in 1896) and TOP partner since 1986 (TOP I)
- **Panasonic**, TOP sponsors since 1987 (TOP I)

- **Omega**, the timing and scoring sponsor of 1996 Atlanta and Sydney 2000 and a longstanding IOC worldwide Olympic licensee that turned TOP sponsor in 2003 (TOP V)
- **General Electric**, TOP partner since 2005 (TOP VI)

The revenue of the TOP sponsors programme is distributed by the IOC among NOCs and OCOGs, as shown in the following chart:



Notes on TOP Contributions of goods and services:

1. Goods and services contributions in the TOP programme occur in the form of products, services, technology, expertise and personnel deployment. These contributions are assigned a value in terms of U.S. dollars, and these values are included in the TOP revenue figures presented in this document.
2. Goods and services are essential for the daily operations of Olympic Movement organisations and for the staging of the Olympic Games. The distribution of goods and services is based on the needs of each organisation. The OCOGs traditionally receive the greatest percentage of goods and services for their operational responsibilities in staging the Games.
3. The actual distribution of TOP resources may vary, as contributions of goods and services are delivered to fulfil the specific technical and operational needs of the OCOGs for the Olympic Games and Olympic Winter Games.

Source: Olympic Marketing Fact File, IOC 2008

The “secret” behind the success of the TOP programme seems to lay in its principle of product-category exclusivity and the promise of high protection of the associated brands, especially against ambush marketing strategies. This guarantee is a “plus” in the association with a strong and high esteemed brand, such as the Olympic Games. That is why those companies spend billions of dollars to advertise their partnership, giving to the Olympic Movement the opportunity to maximise its exposition in the world media, without necessarily paying for it.

But the IOC is also interested in protecting its own brand, not only their partners’ and for that maintain a policy towards its sponsorship programmes:

- *To ensure that no advertising or other commercial message in or near the Olympic venues is visible to the Olympic Games venue spectators or to the Olympic Games broadcast audience. No advertising or commercial messages are permitted in the*

Olympic stadia, on the person of venue spectators, or on the uniforms of the Olympic athletes, coaches, officials, or judges.

- *To ensure a clean telecast by all Olympic Games broadcasters. Images of Olympic events are not allowed to be broadcast with any kind of commercial association.*
- *To control sponsorship programmes and the number of major corporate sponsorships. The IOC constructs and manages programmes in which only a small number corporations participate. (...)*
- *To control sponsorship programmes to ensure that partnerships are compatible with the Olympic ideals. The IOC does not accept commercial associations with tobacco products, alcoholic beverages (other than beer and wine), or other products that may conflict with or be considered inappropriate to the mission of the IOC or to the spirit of Olympism.*

Source: Olympic Marketing Fact File, IOC 2008

TOP sponsors are the Olympic partners that most invest in communication and marketing campaigns. They are also renowned brands, and each action they take has special impact, even more when associated with the Olympic Brand.

3. TOP sponsors educational initiatives on Olympic values

As mentioned in the introduction, this paper was based on the data on TOP sponsors educational initiatives on Olympic values obtained from a research study undertaken by CEO-UAB and commissioned by the IOC.

For the purposes of this paper, the same definition and classification of Olympic Education has been applied. Olympic Education is one of the most used terms when referring to Olympic philosophy and the Olympic values. However, the definition of this term varies depending on the cultural background, pedagogical approach, etc. After undertaking a general overview of previous research and findings on the activities promoted under the name of Olympic Education, it was identified a wide range of activities grouping **art and cultural activities** (contests of painting, literature, etc, exhibitions or other programmes aiming to promote the creation of works by children and youth), **sporting activities** (festivals and competitions involving sporting practice by youth), **academic activities** (talks, workshops, seminars, courses, etc, aiming to disseminate Olympic related content amongst teachers, students and athletes with the purpose of generating awareness and knowledge), **educational contents** (contents – with a defined and explicit didactic objective – that can be produced in different formats, including books, audiovisual material, posters, exhibition panels, Internet sites, etc,

targeting either school teachers and students or athletes) and **multi-activity programmes** (programmes including a diversity of activities (art contests, educational materials, sporting competitions, etc.) conceived as a unique and structured unit by the promoter institution.

3.1. Olympic sponsors involvement in education

Results obtained showed that NOCs and OCOGs were the main actors promoting Olympic Education activities nowadays. TOP Sponsors appeared as the ones having the fewest activities executed exclusively by themselves. However, examples of involvement of Olympic sponsors were also identified from local sponsors.

Their involvement in educational activities aimed to the dissemination of the Olympic values and ideals – both as local and TOP sponsors-, is either by being directly involved in the organisation of the initiatives, participating as supporters with a specific role or providing financial support to the initiatives.

Type of institution	Organising		Participating		Funding	
Local sponsors	3	1,54%	1	1,26%	15	13,76%
TOP Sponsors	5	2,57%	-	-	7	6,42%

As highlighted in the table above, neither local nor TOP sponsors play an extensive role in the organisation or participation of educational initiatives. The scenario is different when examining the funding of those initiatives. Local sponsors (including NOCs' official sponsors) were the second major institutions in charge of financing the initiatives (13,76%). As for TOP sponsors' financial support, it is more extensive than their role as organisers, albeit on a small scale (6,42%), when compared to NOCs (31,19%) and Olympic Academies (12,84%). However, one should consider that when NOCs report on as financing of Olympic Education initiatives, its revenue comes from a variety of sources, including the Olympic Solidarity, NOCs official sponsors and also the revenue from TOP Sponsors.

3.2. TOP Sponsors educational activities

From the 12 companies currently supporting the Olympic Movement as TOP sponsors, five were identified as being active in Olympic Education (41%), either promoting or taking part and funding an initiative: *The Coca-Cola Company, Johnson & Johnson, Lenovo, Mc Donald's Corporation and VISA International*. Another six Olympic Sponsors (50% of the initial sample), were not identified as being active in Olympic Education: *Atos Origin, Manulife, Samsung, General Electric, Panasonic, Omega and Eastman Kodak Company*.

Regarding educational initiatives, eight examples were identified and will be used in this paper.

The activities' typologies were a mix of art and cultural, educational and multi-activity programmes, not including examples of academic or sporting initiatives

The initiatives were mostly undertaken in partnerships with OCOGs, NOCs, governments and/or local stakeholders around the world. Another interesting point to note is that, other than *Johnson & Johnson's* initiative *Family Health*, all the activities were closely related to the an edition of the Olympic Games. It is important to say that local representatives of each TOP Sponsor play a vital role in the promotion of those "Olympic Education programmes". Local and punctual initiatives were more prevalent a global and long-term project under the name of the TOP Sponsors.

In order to provide a more accurate perspective of what has been done in the field by the Olympic Sponsors, a brief description of the activities obtained is given below, according to their typology.

Art and Cultural activities: the two art and cultural activities were very similar in their methodologies. Both of them were contests (one is an art and the other an essay competition) but they differed in the target. *Lenovo's Racing toward Innovation* contest invited teachers to submit an essay on technological innovations of the 21st century to win a computer room for their schools and to have the visit of Olympic athletes. In *Visa's* art contest *Olympics of the Imagination* young people aged 10-14 is challenged to use their imaginations to create a draw that represented the Olympic ideal for them. The two programmes were also different in their scope, as *Lenovo's* initiative was limited to the USA (in partnership with the USA Olympic Committee) and the contest organised by *VISA* was open to countries all over the world.

Educational Content: the three initiatives were undertaken for the occasion of the Beijing Olympic Games 2008, although one of them (*Johnson & Johnson Family Health*) had no clear connection to the Games, besides been promoted in China.

The *BAND-AID® Brand Olympic Education Campaign* was a special programme promoted by *Johnson and Johnson*, designed to teach 400 million students in China's schools about values that define the Olympic Movement as well as health and wound care. The programme was a collaboration of the Beijing Organising Committee for the Games (BOCOG) and Shanghai *Johnson & Johnson* Pharmaceutical Ltd.

As mentioned earlier, the other educational initiative promoted by *Johnson & Johnson*, within the framework of the 2008 Beijing Olympic Summer Games, was not directly related to the

Games. Since early 2007, the *Johnson & Johnson Family Health* initiative had been providing health information and training to consumers, healthcare professionals and other caregivers. The *Family Health* included more than a dozen programs that address leukaemia, pregnancy care, breast cancer screening, diabetes education, AIDS education for women, training for healthcare providers in China's western provinces, and other areas of health care. No information was identified in form about similar programmes held during the past editions of the Olympic Games neither about their plans of undertaking the same initiative in the future. The programme was supported by the Johnson & Johnson local operating companies which, we believe, is a clear example of sponsorship activation in the Chinese market.

Lenovo, which is the official sponsor of the Olympic Torch Relay in 2008, organised a free educational program in partnership with the United States Olympic Committee. In the initiative *Olympians in Life*, available online, the lesson plans focused on the torch relay, as well as the design and history of the Olympic Torch. Teachers throughout the United States were encouraged to use the lessons plans to promote Olympic Ideals and Values, while creating an excitement for the Olympic Torch Relay and the Beijing 2008 Games. Resources also included support of Paralympics programming for kids with physical disabilities.

Multi-activity programme: the 3 multi-activity programmes undertaken by TOP Sponsors were completely diverse one from another. The only common point was that they mixed educational, art and cultural and sporting activities to promote the Olympic Values and the adoption of a healthy way of life.

The *Coca-Cola's Happy Playtime Programme* was launched in 2006 as part of the Chinese Campus Health Action, which was conducted by 12 Chinese government ministries. The programme aimed to promote the adoption of a healthy lifestyle between young people in China by combining a guide brochure with information on nutrition, health and the Olympic Games; posters; health Q&A (questions and answers); an exclusive Happy Playtime Exercise DVD directed by professional gym coaches and self-created campaigns for every school.

Another *Coca-Cola* initiative, *Scuole in Movimento*, was conceived to raise teacher and student awareness of the importance of a correct lifestyle and the relationship between sport and health. Organised on the occasion of the Winter Olympic Games of Torino 2006, it aimed to develop a physical movement know-how culture, working toward the consolidation of healthy living habits. The organisers invited primary, junior and senior high school teachers from all over Italy to develop stimulating educational activities that foster an appreciation of sports and an active lifestyle among young people, using the positive values of the Olympics and of sports in

general as stimulus. The key theme of the initiative was that the same benefits offered by sport can be obtained by changing certain minor daily habits.

The third multi-activity programme was held by Mc Donald's Corporation, also in the occasion the 2008 Beijing Olympic Summer Games, the *McDonald's Champion Kids*. In partnership with the International Olympic Committee and China Central Television, Mc Donald's held this TV reality show to document its selection process and the journey of 100 kids to the 2008 Olympics. Children ages 7 to 12 took part in an Olympic Games trivia quiz and also had to submit a piece of artwork and writing that showcased their representation of the 2008 Games motto "One World, One Dream". Finalists had to compete in another trivia quiz, physical exercises and an interview session before judges. In all, 300 kids would be chosen to participate in McDonald's Champion Kids program. Two hundred others were to be selected from countries through a variety of promotions and activities.

4. Sponsorship role in the promotion of Olympic Values Education: conclusions, future perspectives and recommendations

Besides being one of the main stakeholders of the Olympic Movement, the little involvement of Olympic TOP sponsors in values education. While local sponsors seem more interested in supporting educational programmes, probably due to the narrow focus of the initiatives, some TOP sponsors tend to develop isolated activities, most commonly related to one specific edition of the Olympic Games. But, even not being the major promoters of Olympic Education, they deserve attention due to their renowned brands and popularity, which makes their "educational initiatives" much broader in scope and diffusion than the ones promoted by other organisations, even when they are local or punctual.

It is well known that TOP sponsors' massive investment in communications and marketing gives great exposure to the Olympic Movement. In addition, it provides an opportunity to reinforce its ideals all over the world. It has also been extensively discussed how the association with Olympic Rings can add value to corporate brands and images. In addition, revenue from TOP sponsors contribute to the maintenance of NOCs and OCOGs, which, among other things, can use this financial support to promote their own educational activities. Nevertheless, who really get the benefits of "educational initiatives" promoted exclusively by those actors, the sponsors or the Olympic family?

If we analyse their initiatives, it is correct to state that all the TOP sponsors explore the attributes promoted by the IOC in its communication platform. However, can we attest that they are really committed with the educational mandate de Pierre de Coubertin? The answer for this

question is yes – and no. As Olympic sponsors, and according to the Olympic Marketing Fact File, they have to “*contribute to the success of the educational, environmental, cultural and youth-oriented initiatives of the Olympic Movement*” (IOC, 2008). But we have to consider that their understanding of “Olympic education” is in fact an excellent opportunity for them to get closer to an important market share, which can not be easily reached, as, for example, children advertising is highly regulated.

In resume, the educational and sportive approach is a fantastic marketing platform for controversy brands such as Coca-Cola and Mc Donald’s, many times criticised by their relation with obesity and other sorts of health problems. Linking those contents with the powerful and highly esteemed Olympic Brand helps to leverage their positive effects. Analysing their initiatives, specially the *Coca Cola Scuole in Movimento*, we can observe an interest in “concealing” the brand’s own weaknesses, in a process inherent to all sponsorship deals, called “*image transfer*”. Coca Cola is neither communicating itself, because people would not believe that there is a real concern about the adoption of healthy habits while its products are attested not to be good for health. What Coca Cola does is to “borrow” the attributes of the Olympic Brand to say “we care about you”, in the same way it does when sponsoring sport events, not only the Olympic Games.

This behaviour is not exclusive to Coca Cola. Mc Donald’s is also known to fund and promote initiatives in collaboration with National Olympic Committees, for example the Canadian *Go Active! Fitness Challenge*, as well as the *Olympic Day Runs* in many countries. *Go Active!* promotes physical activity through sport among students and teachers, inspired by the Canada Fitness Awards, but instead of simply focusing on excellence, the emphasis has shifted to the individual improvement of performance, in a series of six exercises. Here it is possible to see, again, that what the values communicate through the “educational activity” may not coincide with the ones the public have of the company.

The promotion of “educational activities” is also a good deal for brands that do not have their marketing campaigns targeted specifically to children, such as Johnson & Johnson, Lenovo and Visa. It is a unique opportunity to reach such specific target adding positive attributes to their brands. Their “educational programmes” are clearly part of a sponsorship activation plan. By “borrowing” the Olympic values, they take advantage of their association with the Olympic Movement to promote their own brands.

It is possible that from now on we experience the development of more of those “educational activities” promoted by sponsors. One of the factors that can lead organisations to this new

communication approach is the *EU Pledge* signed in 11th December 2007 by eleven major food and beverage companies, as a voluntary commitment to *the EU Platform on Diet, Physical Activity and Health*, which aims to fight obesity in Europe. Burger King, Danone, Ferrero, PepsiCo, Unilever, Kraft Foods, Mars, Nestlé, Kellogg, General Mills and Coca Cola are the companies that signed the pledge and committed themselves to:

- Not advertise food and beverage products to children under the age 12 on TV, print and internet, except for products that fulfil specific nutrition criteria based on accepted scientific evidence and/or applicable national and international dietary guidelines;
- Not engage in any commercial communications related to food and beverage products in primary schools, except where specifically requested by or agreed with the school administration for educational purposes.
- Publish all company commitments on a dedicated website in the course of 2008
- Commission independently verified compliance monitoring of the advertising commitment on TV, print media and the Internet, starting on January 2009.

Source: www.eu-pledge.eu

In Coca Cola's case, for instance, the association with the Olympic Games and its intensive adoption of the "educational approach" would also help in the task of get closer to this public and to "break into" the schools without disrespecting the above pledge. Of course Coca Cola's marketing and communications platforms are not exclusively focused on the Olympics, but for the purposes of this study, we should consider the effect of this pledge in its Olympic-related marketing initiatives.

We can not forget that the advent of the Youth Olympic Games can also start a boom of "educational initiatives", promoted not only by Olympic sponsors, but also by NOCs, sports federations and also government bodies. The difference here lays in the motivations each of those actors may have to undertake such programmes. Regarding sponsors, at this time it is clear that their "educational activities" serve more to their marketing purposes than to Coubertin's mandate. But NOCs and sports federations, for example, have the "need" to promote sport for the maintenance of their engines, so to say.

Is it possible that NOCs currently holding educational initiatives adopt strategies to apply their programmes in a higher number of schools, in order to form potential athletes or to identify talents? Yes. It is also possible that NOCs non-active in Olympic Education develop their own programmes, with the same objectives. It can also happen with sports federations. Governments may also have the idea to include Olympic and sports education in their countries'

scholar curricula. It can be good or bad; it depends on the way the values are taught and on how children will experience sports. The IOC states that the Youth Olympic Games will not be a copy of the Games as we know them nowadays and that the focus will not be put on records. It is too early to know what will happen and how the public and the Olympic Family will react to it. But it is never late to worry about issues that can compromise the image of the Olympic Movement.

So, what should be done to control all the aspects we have tried to cover in this discussion?

First of all, there is the emergency to set – and publicise – guidelines that express what the IOC really understands as “Olympic Values Education”, to prevent the wrong use of this term by different actors, especially the Olympic sponsors. We are not talking about adopting an international programme, which would be a “*mc donaldisation*”² of the education. The idea is to inform the institutions within the Olympic Movement what is – and what is not – its educational purpose and let them walk on their own pace and develop programmes that fit their reality.

The use of the term “Olympic Education” by the sponsors should also be reviewed. The IOC says the sponsors are “*granted the rights to specific Olympic intellectual rights and Olympic marketing opportunities*” (IOC, 2008) but it is not clear what this means. It is important for the Olympic Movement to protect its educational mandate from the marketing activities of its sponsors and not to compromise its values. One way to do that would be clarifying the meaning of “intellectual rights” the partners are granted and not including “Olympic Education” in this “package”.

Furthermore, the IOC Educational Department, through a special commission, should assume the task of checking if the educational programmes that the organisations within the Olympic Movement are currently undertaking under the name of “Olympic Education” really reflect the fundamental values of Olympism or if they just serve as marketing and promotional platforms.

Promoting a network on “Olympic Education”, by creating a continuously updated online database on educational experiences, would also be interesting. NOCs, OCOGs, sports federations and also teachers would have the opportunity to get in touch with each other, share and learn with previous experiences and get the chance to apply new approaches of values education in their own country.

² See George Ritzer: *The McDonaldisation Thesis* (1998) and *The McDonaldisation of Society* (2000).

Returning to TOP sponsors, it is still too early to know the extent to which the association of the Olympic Movement to controversial companies can damage the Olympic image, instead of empowering it. According to the Olympic Marketing Fact File (2008), “each Olympic sponsor must have a strong, positive corporate image, and each must present the Olympic message properly to enhance the Olympic image”. It also says that “the IOC (and other members of the Olympic Family) will not accept as a worldwide sponsor any company whose business practices are known to be unethical, or whose products are known to be related to serious health risks”. So, it is needed to commission studies and researches on cognitive theories applied to consumer behaviour and “image transference”, to find out how those sponsorship deals can affect the attributes of the Olympic Brand.

So far, the Olympic Brand itself has proved to be strong enough to resist to wars, scandals and boycotts. But would the over commercialisation turn against it? Right now we have no answers but we know that we can not go back to the past and forget the dependency of sponsorship the Games have nowadays. The challenge is to understand the society that we live in and determine what should be done to maintain the power of the Olympic Brand without compromising the philosophy of Olympism dreamed by Pierre de Coubertin.

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