

07/24/12 - Olympics Ennui: Even Global Brands Get Tired
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The Olympics are a *Big Deal*.

Right?

Well, maybe not as much as before. All I know is that the young people here in the office don't seem to be that excited for the Olympic Games, many of them didn't even know when there were starting (or thought that they had already started weeks ago). *This isn't how I grew up* - the Olympics were a big deal ? they were *always* a big deal ? and it didn't seem like the Olympics marketing team had to try too hard to get me to watch it year after year.

But then I realized: this year, for whatever reason, I found myself not caring too much about the Olympics.

Why? What's happened ? what's changed? Is it just me? My team? **Or are you feeling a little bit of Olympics-ennui as well?**

I wonder if part of the issue is that the Olympics brand is SO big ? so global and (quite literally) historic ? that people think they already understand it. They know what it's about and are able to either invest in it or write it off as is convenient.

So here's my question: *How do you take a globally-recognized brand and keep it relevant?*

1) Give People Access

Here's the truth: today, much of the younger generation don't even use their TVs or cable access. Instead, they rely on streaming websites like Netflix and Hulu. After perusing through the [NBC Olympics website](#), it became quickly apparent that there's no way to watch the Olympics online without a subscription to "cable, satellite, or telco TV." Unless they're living with their parents, most of the 20*somethings* don't even have access to the Olympic Games, so why should they care?

I'm not sure how the Olympics would want to change the situation ? I'm sure there's a ton of red tape (and even more tons of money) to work through ? but I'd hope they're at least considering a deal with Hulu (even HuluPlus) or Netflix or something similar. Because **they could quickly lose an entire generation of fans**, and that spells trouble for the brand's future ? or at least its continued relevance.

2) Keep It Creative

When was the last time you saw an ad, heard a promo, or read an article about the Olympics that made you stop and think, "Huh. I *really* have to watch the Games this year." I don't think the marketing team is doing their job of drawing people in. To me, it's the same old, same old. If I have time ? sure, I'll turn on the TV and watch an hour here or there, but I'm not going out of my way to watch. Something just isn't clicking with me ? *I feel like I know what to expect and have seen it all before.*

As I said, **the problem they are up against is that people think they know and understand the Olympic brand.** The marketing team would do well to step up their game and find new angles to draw people in.

3) Make It Social

This is something I *do* see the Olympics working at, and it's the right direction to head in. FastCompany reports that "Facebook and NBC announced a partnership aimed at driving exclusive content to NBC's Olympics Facebook page. In turn, NBC will feature conversations and data from Facebook users during its broadcasts." Stowe Boyd, "a designer and researcher who penned a report called Social TV and the Second Screen," tells FastCompany that in comparison to Twitter, it might be a better move for the Olympics to partner closely with Facebook. He explains, "Facebook relationships are generally closer friendships than those on Twitter, so to the extent that people are discussing games, shows, and news with close friends Facebook has some steam."

What better way to draw someone into the games than to see their friends tweeting live about the killer dives or impressive flips? Or maybe you might run across a long Facebook thread about cycling and suddenly, you want to see the action live.

You will see lots about the Olympics. That's what a bazillion dollars in marketing/advertising/promotion gets you. **The point of this post is that smart marketing makes any marketing dollars spent do more. Also, this historic brand has so many inherent advantages, that it won't "fail" outright ? but it just may not be as relevant for future generations as it was or as it could be.**

And I'm not just basing it on the general "feeling" going around in my office. Although we don't know exactly how many people will tune in to the 2012 Games in London, we *can* compare the differences between the 2004 Athens Olympics and the 2008 Beijing Olympics. At first glance, it seemed that the 2008 Games were up from 2004 by 7%, according to USA Today. But if taken a closer look, the bump in ratings was due to a Michael Phelps miniseries, and the ratings dropped off ? only exceeding the 2004 Games once during the entire event.

Let's also take a quick look at the Nielsen statistics to find out *who* is watching the Games (these stats are from the 2010 Winter Games and compares viewership against the Super Bowl).

So there it is. The Olympics is doing fine in the 55+ age bracket, but is dwindling the younger we look. Yes, I

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grew up watching the Olympics, and there's a nostalgia I hold towards the Games, but what about my children's children? Will *they* grow up watching the Olympics?

The bottom line, Olympics marketing team: *shake things up a bit sooner rather than later ? otherwise you're planting the seeds for your own demise.*

And hey, for what it's worth ? I *want* you to succeed, I want to care about the Games, and I don't think I'm alone.
Please make me care again.

What about you?

- Are you excited for the Olympic Games, or are you a little bored?
- What else do you think the marketing team could be doing to draw people in?
- Do you completely disagree with me and think the Olympics are still doing a great job at marketing?