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Chapter 7

Tweeting the Olympic Games

Andy Miah

Introduction

From the introduction of television at the Berlin 1936 Olympic Games to its transformation into 3D broadcasting at London 2012, media innovation has always surrounded the Olympics (Miah & Garcia 2012). As such, the broader context of a debate about London 2012's new media production must be situated within the Olympic industry's wider relationship with the media, where exclusive contracts with television broadcasters and the International Olympic Committee (IOC)'s commitment to reaching the widest possible audience have been key to its financial stability over the last 30 years (Payne 2006). Yet the *new* media story of the Olympics is still relatively new, with Atlanta 1996 being the first Games to even have a website (Toohey & Warning 2000). In less than 20 years, the world has seen the rise and fall of the dot-com era and the growth of Google, YouTube, Flickr, Facebook, Twitter, Wordpress and Vimeo, to mention just a few. The web has shifted from a point-and-click static, Web 1.0, html environment, to a dynamic, xml, Web 2.0

architecture, where content can be republished, shared and embedded elsewhere at the stroke of a touchpad.

Each Olympic Games since Atlanta is able to make claims about the novel way in which it has innovated with digital technology. Beijing 2008 was the first time that the Internet broadcast rights were separated from television. In Vancouver 2010, the organizing committee created the Cultural Olympiad Digital Edition (CODE), foregrounding the role of digital technology in art and communication. Yet what may distinguish London 2012's contribution to this trajectory is the way that *social media* became a dominant form of producing and consuming the Olympics, collectively rivalling television and embedding itself into all forms of Olympic stakeholder. With over one billion users on Facebook alone, the potential reach of this audience is extraordinary and growing. Equally, 2012 may be regarded as the Twitter Olympics, as the growth of this platform had really skyrocketed in the years between Vancouver and London, even outstripping the growth of Facebook and Google+ (GlobalWebIndex 2013). Furthermore, in a world where everyone can broadcast content on their own channels, the role of organized and professional media is brought into question by social media. There is already evidence that a shift in Olympic broadcasting is taking place as a result of these new publishing environments. For instance, since 2008, the IOC has awarded broadcast rights in over 60 territories to Google's online video sharing platform, YouTube (Adi & Miah 2011). This trend to diversify media provision is apparent elsewhere in the elite sports industry. In 2012, the English Premier League sold a significant proportion of its 2012–2013 season broadcast rights to British Telecom Vision, traditionally a telecommunications company, which now provides *home hub* digital services through television sets. The contribution of £700 million to the £3 billion total cost of the Premier League's broadcast contracts may begin

to undermine SkyTV's monopoly and suggests a transformation to the sports broadcasting hierarchy.

These examples frame the lessons that may be learned from London 2012 and should inform our understanding of what may come next for the Olympics in terms of its digital development. The London 2012 story is an important chapter in the new digital configurations that surround the Olympic programme. By considering examples of social media celebration by Games promoters and Twitter activism by Olympic opponents, this chapter examines the London 2012 digital presence across a range of platforms. It identifies how social media created novel opportunities for communicating news about the Games and activating communities of celebration and protest. It also offers some insight into how the shift in media production may affect how future Olympic Games hosts stage their Games and how the media respond. By examining the wealth of social media activity around London 2012, it evidences why these Games will be remembered as the first social media Olympics, the Socialympics (Miah 2012).

Digital Politics and Olympic Cyber-activism

In the Internet's early years, the excitement it generated focussed significantly on its potential to de-stabilize the status quo by fracturing established modes of communication and connecting new communities (Castells 1996). The ability to create virtual worlds gave activists an edge over established institutions of governance, which might not have been as flexible to adopt them early and thus exploit their potential. In this sense, the Internet was a back channel used for underground communications, linking people together in a way that bypassed conventional mass communication structures. In some key examples over the years, these aspirations for the Internet have been

realized. The indigenous Zapatista community in Mexico used websites to raise awareness about

their concerns over the Mexican state (Russell 2005). More recently, Iranians in 2009 used Twitter

to get messages out that were not being communicated by the national media during their historic

general elections (Miah 2011).

Over the years, these cyber-libertarian expectations of the Internet were gradually

counterbalanced by the realization that the Internet was as capable of being exploited by marketeers

as it was by activists. Furthermore, the distributed model of media ownership it promised led,

instead, to a situation where only a handful of new media giants drove the majority of traffic online.

Indeed, so-called old media were getting very good at using new media, very quickly. From search

engines such as Google and Yahoo! to social media sites such as Twitter, Facebook and YouTube,

the bulk of traffic online remains similarly delivered by just a few organizations. Yet the promise of

new media remains akin to the American dream of opportunity. Yours could be the next big

platform, and a steady flow of start-up companies still exists perpetuating this idea.

However, despite Facebook's one billion users, it has only a limited following in some parts

of the world, such as China and Russia, where organizations offering comparable services dominate

and where there are often more closed communications policies. Furthermore, applications like this

have been criticized for being closed off to the world since they require membership to take part. In

this respect, while social media may do a lot to promote intercultural exchange, the 'global village'

imagined by McLuhan (1964), may be the wrong kind of metaphor to describe how, in fact,

communities sit within a series of walled gardens where information is locked behind membership

login screens and where the exploitation of user activity is determined by the platform's proprietor.

Furthermore, the difference between old media ownership and new is that today's social and new

media companies are not in the business of content production themselves, but rather in delivering

the most effective way for others to produce their own content or share the content of others. This

transition from a world where the media is a content producer to one where it is a content platform

host changes the relationship between the media and its audiences considerably. One reason why

social media campaigns are appealing for organizations is because they cohere with new habits of

media consumption, particularly mobile media. Indeed, 60% of visits to the London 2012 website

during the Games were from mobile devices (Balfour 2012).

Despite the growth of Internet-based media consumption, it remains tenuous to claim that

any social media platform gets close to the audiences enjoyed by television channels. However, the

fact that one video can be viewed on YouTube over one billion times —as was the case of the

record-breaking *Gangnam Style* video in 2012—is a powerful statement about the potential impact

a single media product can have on an audience that any single broadcast would never enjoy. While

Coca-Cola may reach a similar figure of viewers by producing multiple campaigns on television

channels across the world, the level of investment to achieve this would be considerably greater

than just uploading a three-minute video to YouTube. Nevertheless, in terms of watching the

Olympic sports competitions, television still dominates.

The complicating factor in this debate is that television has already become something very

different from what it used to be, and it is still changing. Media convergence means that one can no

longer think of a computer or a television as distinct media environments or apparatus. Today's

televisions deliver the Internet, perhaps even more effectively than a computer. Alternatively, a

computer has become a shopping centre, a home management hub, a games console and a personal

family archive, among many other things. The mobile telephone and tablets further complicate

these spaces of media consumption, and what makes this subject so complex is that these patterns

of consumption are changing rapidly, sometimes overlapping. Today, the mobile device has

become the *second screen* in people's lives, where the television is the first, but this relationship

may be switching. The dual-screen environment reconfigures the kind of experience enjoyed by

users and the range of producers associated with that experience. Olympic sports fans may watch a

competition on their television while following updates of athletes and fans on Twitter, producing

their own content in reaction to what they are seeing on the television.

Thus, a distinguishing factor of the social media world today is that anybody or any

organization can create their own media channel. These circumstances changes the power relations

among organizations who may previously have relied solely on the mass media to communicate

their work with audiences. While media scholars debate whether the rise of bloggers affects the

news media, there are generally diminishing numbers of newspaper readers around the world and

growing numbers of newspapers which are co-opting public intellectuals to write within their

online environment, using a *Huffington Post* strategy of creating an extended volunteer staff

community. While some printed press organizations retain the standard of paying people for their

editorial contributions, a more common trend is to capture the output of public intellectuals for free

and shift their output from, say, an individual blog, into a commercial media domain. For the

blogger, they have access to a wider audience; for the platform, they get content for free. Indeed,

just before the London 2012 Games, the free national morning newspaper *Metro* appointed 100

bloggers to a new, blogging platform that used the Games as a launch for content. If one expands

this trend further beyond writing, platforms such as YouTube and Vimeo are recreating

entertainment channels and establishing new kinds of televisual audiences. Instead of channel

hopping, video hopping—rapidly shifting from one video to the next, exploring a common theme

or niche interest—has become a popular practice within YouTube. What's more, micro video-

blogging platforms like Vine and Tout are creating new forms of streaming video experiences.

Here again, many media outlets have begun to create their own YouTube channel and upload content that has reached the end of its exploitable life, the value of which may be solely in reinforcing a brand's identity. A good example of this is the BBC, which has uploaded a number of its older light entertainment productions to YouTube. Also, in 2013, the BBC Trust approved a decision to make some programming only available online. Furthermore, the video streaming company NetFlix realised a major title, *House of Cards*, as an online only, on-demand subscription. This means that a conventional television system alone – without an Internet interface – would not be able to view this, even with other subscriptions, such as satellite.

These new conditions of media production were influential for London 2012 from the bid stage, and various actions undertaken by the London Organising Committee of the Olympic and Paralympic Games (LOCOG) and many of its affiliates demonstrate how new and social media can allow Games organizers to generate new forms of communication experience that had previously been impossible without support from a broadcaster. LOCOG was established in 2005, the same year that the concept of Web 2.0 took hold among early adopters and innovators of the social media web. This new kind of Internet was the starting point for social media, providing the architecture on which it was built, innovating with coding language and even creating a new set of aesthetic values.

The coincident timing between London 2012's journey and the rise of Web 2.0 may permit historians to describe the London 2012 Games as the first social media Olympics. This claim may stand, not just because millions of people were sharing content on a lot of platforms such as Facebook, Twitter or YouTube, but because, at the organizational level of the Games, communication strategies benefitted from insights into this new era of the web, including the rise of the mobile web. The fact that *Time* magazine announced 'You' as Person of the Year in 2007 is

further evidence of the growing importance attributed to user-generated content online, a cultural and technological shift that informed London 2012's approach to delivering a digital Games.

What the Organizing Committee Did

To appreciate the diversity of social media campaigns associated with London 2012 Games promotion, it is necessary to cast a wide net that goes beyond LOCOG and recognize how social media has become a pervasive mode of communicating with audiences across a range of sectors. From politicians to artists, from organizing committees to sponsors, social media is an appealing vehicle through which to create engaged communities and foster new audiences, particularly around niche interests. These conditions suited the approach taken by LOCOG, as its programme was diverse and decentralized, which led to many different layers of branding and a considerable degree of autonomy in the promotion of Olympic activities. LOCOG itself, the Mayor of London's office and the many regional programmes that coproduced the Games, not to mention the sponsors and accredited media, each occupied a space within the landscape of social media adoption during London 2012. While it will not be possible to consider all the initiatives, I offer an insight into the key promotional campaigns and strategic uses of social media during London 2012 by the Organizing Committee.

Many of the campaigns around London 2012 were located within the most popular social media platforms, such as YouTube, Twitter and Facebook. For instance, LOCOG had its own YouTube channel, which published key campaign videos for the 2012 programme in the months leading up to the Games, generating over 12 million video views and 52,000 subscriptions by the end of the Olympic Games. Without YouTube, it is unlikely that much of this material would have

been seen by many people at all, making it even harder for audiences to engage in the pre-Games period. It is even less likely that a non-British audience would have been engaged by 2012 media content produced before the Games were it not for the Internet.

In August 2012, one day after the Olympic Games concluded, LOCOG's digital achievements were shared – via social media - by its Head of New Media, Alex Balfour. Among their key claims were 46,000 people signing up to the LOCOG email database at the point when London 2012 won the bid, which grew to 500 million by Games time. There were 109 million visitors to the London2012.com website, with 431 million visits and 4.73 billion page views, and the mobile app designed for mobile devices was downloaded 15 million times (number 1 ranking in seven countries).[1] There were 4.7 million social followers across the four key platforms (Foursquare, Google+, Twitter and Facebook), where Twitter and Facebook provided over 3 million of that figure. LOCOG's new media team

commissioned and managed, in whole or part, 77 digital products, sites or services in six years, including….London2012.com, Get Set (education site), School leavers site, Pre-Games training camp venue site, velodream competition, Gamesmaker (volunteer) site and sign up platform (with Atos), Torch relay site and map, Torch relay nominations platform, London Prepares site, Memorabilia auction site, Online shop (with ecommera), Mobile site, Recruitment sites (ODA and LOCOG), Local leaders site, Event database and front end site, Mascots site, Learning legacy site, Festival 2012 site, #1yeartogo Twitter visualization, Young Gamesmaker site, Ticket sign up, Ticketing site (front end html only), Open weekend site, Travel advice for business, Twitter, Facebook, Youtube, Google Plus, Flickr accounts, "Join in" App on 3 platforms. (Balfour 2012).

Comment [AuQ1]: There is an opening quotation mark here but not closing. Is this intended to lead into the extract? If this quote is part of the extract, it should be moved into the extract portion. If no quote is intended, or if part of this text is a quote, please clarify.

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If not a quote, capitalization in this section needs to be standardized. Official titles should be capitalized, but most terms, like "torch" and "online shop," should not be. Other issues, such as "Games Maker" instead of "Gamesmaker" and "YouTube" instead of "Youtube", should be corrected throughout.

Other key insights from Balfour were that "66% of web traffic to the principal site came from search [engines] during the Games", there were "10 Google doodles in 16 days" and "5% of traffic came from Google 'knowledge panels' and the doodle". Furthermore, Balfour notes that Facebook was the "top referring traffic source after search" and that uptake of the app was generated by arrangement with all app stores. The mobile app displayed over 15,000 events using augmented reality and computer-generated venue tours, along with "social check ins, top tips, venue histories, weather forecasts", with 10 million unique visitors looking at the torch relay content, 25% of whom saw the map. The mobile app also integrated Twitter details for many of the torchbearers. Key data in terms of the global reach included visits from "people from 201 territories", the fact that people from "155 countries used our apps" and that "40'% of all Britons visited the website as did 29% of all online New Zealanders, 19% of all online Canadians [and] 12% of all online Americans" (Balfour 2012).

Within Facebook, Balfour notes that there were 1.86 million 'likes' across 8 accounts and that content reached 49 million Facebook users, 43% of whom were under 24. On Twitter, there were 1.9 million followers with 48 official Twitter accounts (36 sport accounts with live feeds, 2 mascot accounts, 6 event cameras). On Google+, there were 818,000 followers, a dedicated 'ceremonies explorer', bringing additional content to viewers, and a backstage live blog during the opening and closing ceremonies. There were 60,000 Foursquare followers, with people from 120 countries checking in to 'special Olympic and Torch relay badges on Foursquare', and QR (Quick Response) codes on all spectator publications. The Mascots Games site received 4 million visits, and 150,000 mascots were created by users. One of the most successful campaigns for the London 2012 Festival was associated with the artist Martin Creed's work *All the Bells*, whereby a virtual

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bell was rung by 66,000 app users on the morning of 27 July. This event complemented the offline

version whereby all UK citizens were asked to find a bell and ring it for three minutes to welcome

the Games.

Beyond these central LOCOG figures, there are numerous examples within the 2012

extended programme which reveal how the individual regions were greater than the central

programme. This should not be surprising since the collective audience of the regions covered the

whole of the UK, but it should serve as a reminder to future hosts that a centralized social media

system could never do justice to individual programmes, where resources can target promotion

better. This is a challenging principle to uphold for an otherwise typically centralizing programme

like the Olympic Games, but it is crucial. The London 2012 'inspired by 2012' programme was

critical for enabling these identities to form, and, while it did not necessarily bring direct financial

or political support for events or projects, it allowed licensed projects to pursue local support where

appropriate and where it did not conflict with sponsorship contract principles.

At the same time, it is apparent that certain key individuals within LOCOG and its delivery

partners were crucial in driving interest in what was taking place. For instance, the Director of the

London 2012 Festival, Ruth Mackenzie, began her Twitter profile (@ruthmackenzie) in 2009 and,

after being appointed to LOCOG, became a very active Twitter user whose productivity doubled

within four months between March and July 2012, along with her followers. This contrasts with the

Chair of LOCOG, Sebastian Coe (@sebcoe on Twitter), who was the primary figurehead for

London 2012 and whose own Twitter account has considerably more followers (39,729), compared

with Ruth Mackenzie's, but is considerably less personalized and active. The @sebcoe account

shows only 13 Tweets over a four-month period (March–July 2012), where @ruthmackenzie

produced 1,400. Furthermore, the number of followers for @sebcoe only increased 30% over the

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same period, compared to @ruthmackenzie's 100% increase. As well, the account's interactions on

Twitter with other users for @sebcoe were minimal, revealing that it was a marketing team rather

than him that was Tweeting, but also that not even the marketing team was driving content through

his account. This kind of approach to using social media is rarely rewarded online, so in this sense,

the @sebcoe account—arguably the most influential LOCOG account after @London2012—did

not really capitalize on its potential. Another learning point for event managers may thus be that,

beyond the brand, people want to follow other people, not just institutional accounts, and already

the CEO of Sochi 2014 has shown how effective this can be.

What the Olympic Family Did

Beyond LOCOG, there were a number of other social media champions for the Games that can be

grouped under the heading of Olympic Family. Broadly speaking, these could be categorized as

National Olympic Committees, sponsors and media partners. A number of Olympic partners—both

global and local—launched social media campaigns to drive interest and activity during the Games.

Given the dominance of Twitter in LOCOG's own assets and the wider presence of Twitter during

the Games, my summary of this activity will provide some comparison focussed only on Twitter.

Accredited media created some of the most prominent Twitter accounts. For some years, NBC had

utilized Twitter, creating a Twitter list of Olympians around Beijing 2008, which became Twitter's

most followed list. As a dedicated Olympics account, it also dwarfs all other media accounts in

terms of followers, having over 400,000 by the end of the London 2012 Games. In comparison, the

@London2012 account had 1.6 million followers, while @sebcoe had 73,000. Yet NBC's most

prominent presence globally during London 2012 was through debate about its coverage of the

opening ceremony, which attracted controversy for not broadcasting content live. During the

opening ceremony night, the Twitter hashtag #NBCFail was trending on Twitter, leading journalists

and the public to criticize its coverage. The example reveals how much more easily a national

broadcaster may be vulnerable to global criticism in a social media era and further evidences the

collapse of the national boundaries that television rarely achieves.

Within the UK, one of the most followed accounts during London 2012 was @BBC2012,

the account for the BBC's London 2012 activity, the official Olympic broadcaster. As well, the

Twitter account @C4Paralympics, which was Channel 4's account—the official Paralympic

broadcaster in the UK—grew rapidly around the pre-Games period, even having more followers

than @BBC2012 (Table 7.1). This is surprising since the Olympic programme would typically

have a larger audience, but on Twitter more people were following the Paralympic broadcaster. The

pre-Games and post-Games Twitter follower figures for the dedicated Games accounts of the two

UK broadcasters were as shown in Table 7.1.[2] **[Table 7.1 about here]**

Alternatively, among the most followed accounts that were set up especially for the 2012

programme are the 2012 confectionary provider @CadburyUK (41,563 followers, as of 11 July

2012), drinks supplier @COKEZONE (15,839 followers as of 11 July 2012) and other media

partners, such as @NBCOlympics (182,781 followers as of 11 July 2012). While the number of

followers is only one indicator of reach and significance, the figures reveal relative growth over the

Games period and are ordered in terms of absolute numbers based on the final capture date, with

the most followers first (Table 7.2).**[Table 7.2 about here]**

Beyond just managing their own digital assets, sponsors also built novel campaigns around

the Games, such as EDF 'Energy of the Nation' (EDF Energy 2012), which created interactive

visualizations of Twitter sentiment based on data from around the UK. Coincidentally, an artist-led

Cultural Olympiad project called *Emoto* (2012)—with which I was involved—undertook a similar task, but focussed on the global Twitter community, rather than the UK.

The BBC also partnered with Arts Council England to create an innovative multiplatform broadcast service for the Games called 'The Space' (@TheSpaceArts) which allowed people to watch live broadcasts of cultural content either online or on a new, dedicated channel on TV Freeview. This may be the most remarkable innovation of any cultural programme at the Olympics, since often the Olympic cultural events remain only locally experienced, dependent on live audiences. The introduction of a dedicated television channel was thus, innovative.

The IOC was also proactive in its use of social media during London 2012. In 2009, it created a new role, Head of Social Media, occupied by Alex Huot, which has driven its investment in this area since. Some of the key innovations for London 2012 were an athletes' hub (hub.olympic.org), which aggregated athletes' content from Facebook and Twitter. The fact that these were the two social media platforms chosen by the IOC to aggregate may tell us something about their significance.

Alternatively, the IOC's YouTube channel includes content that would, most likely, be broadcast only partially by the world's media. In this respect, the IOC's own channels provide a service for Olympic enthusiasts that is unlikely to attract commercial media interests. For example, the IOC Congress, where cities present their bids, is now live streamed over the Internet by the IOC in part because they are seen as niche interest events, unlikely to appeal to a mass audience. While it is unlikely that many Olympic fans will sit through the entire proceedings, their broadcast is a powerful act of transparency that makes it easier for researchers and media to witness what has taken place in full. This approach mirrors others that are happening within established political

spheres where government hearings and parliament debates are now broadcast as a matter of course in some parts of the world.

The IOC's YouTube channel has over 119 million video views and over 500,000 subscribers as of February 2013. Its most viewed video, with over 5.5 million views, is the full replay of the men's 100-metre sprint final at London 2012, when Usain Bolt won gold again. Of the 119 million views, over 30 million are due to London 2012 content, which are also the top 12 videos viewed on the IOC's account, with the exception of one from Beijing 2008. Of this number, 8 videos show content from ceremonies, while 4 are sports event. The breakdown is represented as follows as shown in Table 7.3 (data capture taken at 15 February 2012). **[Table 7.3 about here]**

These figures reinforce the dominance of the ceremonies in the audience but may challenge the commonly held view that the opening ceremony is of more interest to audiences than the closing. Each of these clips is still a long way from the biggest video on YouTube in 2012—and of its entire history—where the South Korean *Gangnam Style* music video broke the one billion views barrier—but it is interesting still to note how dominant London 2012 clips are in the IOC's present catalogue of videos and, particularly, how it is primarily the non-sporting dimension that is popular. Furthermore, of these ceremony clips, it is principally culture and entertainment that dominates as the golden moments of the event, where comedy and music are most successful at attracting audiences.

What Opposers of the Games Did

Unlike the coordinated action of Olympic promoters, online Olympic dissent around London 2012 was much more sporadic. While some aspects were coordinated among various interest groups—

notably a march in Mile End Park on the first day of Olympic competition—the individual causes were mostly unconnected and even politically unrelated, except for their general opposition to the Games as a whole or some specific dimension. While some of the campaigns were very short lived in terms of their social media presence, an overview of the range of activist profiles offers a sense of the opposition surrounding the Games (for an extended discussion on the various forms of protesting the London Games, see Sadd, chapter 16 in this volume). Thus, there were protests from such organizations as the workers' rights group @PlayFair2012, a campaign against the use of lottery funds for the Olympics using the account name @BigLotteryRfnd, campaigns against BP's sponsorship of the Games, drawing attention to perceived neglect of corporate responsibility (@BP2012Greenwash, @ReclaimOurBard), criticisms over Dow Chemical's involvement in the Games (@DropDowNow) and protest over the installation of security missiles around London (@OlympicMissiles).

Nevertheless, a number of the individual campaigns were particularly prominent and speak to how social media might be used to have a big impact on the news coverage of the Olympics, at least before they begin. In this respect, I will first outline a timeline of digital activism over the Olympiad to offer a sense of what took place. Dates indicate their starting date; while some are obviously temporary, for others it has been difficult to ascertain whether the campaign came to a close. Indeed, some campaigns, like NOGOE2012, retained their web presence until the end of the Games, and is clear that No to Greenwich Olympic Equestrian Events (NOGOE) remained in support of its cause, despite their ultimate failure to prevent the equestrian events from being positioned in the place they rejected. On their website, they state the following:

> NOGOE is a community action group which was formed in order to campaign to get
> the 2012 Olympic equestrian events moved from Greenwich Park to a more suitable

venue. That battle has been lost and the evils that we warned against are now becoming all too clear. The peace of the Park has been disrupted and the public have been excluded from it; a great deal of damage has been, and will be, done to it; and a dangerous precedent has been set for future commercial exploitation of it. So we have evolved into a group which will provide a permanent record of the damage and destruction, seek to ensure that the Park is properly reinstated, and campaign to keep the Park public. (NOGOE 2012)

Again, while many of these campaigns used a range of social media environments to advance their cause, I publish here only the details of their Twitter accounts (where available) and related activity, which offer key stats around similar dates as a means of comparison. Two data capture dates are provided in the following; one is a pre-Games date of 3–7 July 2012, the second is a post-Games date of 9 September 2012. Unlike the previous tables, some contextual information is offered so as to focus on the subject of the protesting account holder.

December 2004–2005: No London 2012 (No Twitter data)

One of the earliest anti-Olympic campaigns, it was instigated in the bid stage by boat owners, squatters, local residents, campaigns against racialised policing and environmental activists. Their activities included organized marches, a narrow boat regatta, cycle protests and an online petition sent to voting IOC members.

2007: NOGOE2012 (No Twitter data, this campaign did not utilize social media assets)

This was a campaign against the location of the equestrian sports within Greenwich Park.

July 2010: Games Monitor / @GamesMonitor

Pre-Games: 2,731 Tweets, 608 following, 843 followers

Post-Games: 3,065 Tweets, 633 following, 972 followers

Comment [AuQ5]: You refer to @NOGOE2012 a few paragraphs earlier, so it seems they at least have a Twitter presence. Please review.

Comment [AuQ6]: I'm assuming there is also a category of during the Games. Is that included in one of these pre- or post-Games sections? It might be worth specifying where that data is in these charts.

The main Olympic watchdog organization around London 2012 acted in various ways to support other campaigners advance their causes, undertaking numerous initiatives to draw attention to inadequacies with the hosting process.

October 2010: Counter Olympics Network / @CounterOlympics

Pre-Games: 3,169 Tweets, 46 following, 714 followers

Post-Games: 4,525 Tweets, 49 following, 1,090 followers

This multi-member organization particularly focussed on Games-time protest (planned disruption on 28 July). Its opposition to corporate sponsors and activities included Mass Action Planning Days (14 April, 19 May, 28 July) and involved groups such as Our Olympics, No UK Tar Sands, Coalition of Resistance, Occupy London, Save Leyton Marsh, Drop DOW Now. By 2 July 2012, there were 84 going, 28 maybe and 1,049 invited on its Facebook event page.

2011–2012: Occupy London (No Twitter data)

As the Occupy movement captured the world's imagination, Occupy London became a coincidental site for interrogating the Olympics.

2012: Protest London 2012 / @SpaceHiJackers

Pre-Games: 2,645 Tweets, 146 following, 4,015 followers

Post-Games: 3,815 Tweets, 177 following, 4,757 followers

Campaign run by the Space Hijackers, this 'Official Protestors of London 2012' initiative attracted media attention largely because Twitter suspended their account for infringing LOCOG's logo rights. Like-minded protestors were invited to download a free graphic of the London 2012 logo with the words 'Official Protestor' written below in 2012 typeface and print it on a T-shirt to wear during the Games.

March 2012: Our Olympics / @OurOlympics

> **Comment [AuQ7]:** Is this your meaning here?
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> Also, there are quotation marks around this groups list, but no source provided. Please provide source or delete quotation marks.

Pre-Games: 3,564 Tweets, 788 following, 1787 followers

Post-Games: 6,023 Tweets, 875 following, 3,503 followers

A hub for civil disobedience during the Games, this campaign opposed the use of public funds for the Games.

April 2012: Campaign for a Sustainable Olympics (CAMSOL; no Twitter data)

The most prolific intervention of CAMSOL was the creation of their own version of the London 2012 site, which mirrored the layout and design style. On this site—the URL of which was www.locog2012.com—they posted a story claiming LOCOG had axed the oil company BP as one of their sustainability partners. The initiative came after months of criticism over BP's Deep Water Horizon catastrophe.

> **Comment [AuQ8]:** Is this your meaning here? Or do you mean "as one of their sustainability partners"?

April 2012: Drop Dow Now / @DropDowNow

Pre-Games: 116 Tweets, 104 following, 24 followers

Post-Games: 180 Tweets, 117 following, 64 followers (inactive since 9 August 2012)

This campaign hoped to remove Dow Chemical from Olympic sponsorship of the Olympic Stadium building wrap.

April 2012: BP or Not BP, Reclaim Shakespeare Company / @ReclaimOurBard

Pre-Games: 219 Tweets, 86 following, 158 followers

Post-Games: 418 Tweets, 138 following, 258 followers

This guerrilla theatre company protested BP's involvement in the Cultural Olympiad by infiltrating theatres and performing a modified Shakespearian process that criticized BP. When the campaign launched, it claimed the original Twitter handle @ReclaimTheBard was suspended.

July 2012: Greenwash Gold 2012 / @BP2012Greenwash

Pre-Games: 387 Tweets, 93 following, 257 followers

Post-Games: 596 Tweets, 96 following, 310 followers

This campaign protested against the involvement of Dow Chemical, BP and Rio Tinto as Olympic sponsors. The campaign was launched by the London Mining Network, Bhopal Medical Appeal and UK Tar Sands Network. Viewers could download campaign videos.

June 2012: Adidas exploitation, War on Want, waronwant.org (No Twitter data)

This is a campaign with broader goals beyond London 2012, but it did focus on working conditions of people in Adidas, the Olympic clothing provider.

2012: Fatherless Games—Fathers4Justice (No Twitter data)

This was another opportunistic campaign, which is principally about the fight for fathers to have the same legal rights as women over child care. It utilized the London 2012 Games as a way of describing the conditions in which British fathers live today if they are separated from their children.

June 2012: F***ing the Future (No Twitter presence)

This anti-BP campaign was characterized by defacing BP-branded activity with graffiti and throwing oil over logos in public places.

June 2012: Bread and Circuses (UK instantiation) / @12_Bread_Circus

Pre-Games: 118 Tweets, 82 following, 232 followers

Post-Games: 134 Tweets, 83 following, 269 followers (no Tweet since 30 July 2012)

This anti-Olympic campaign organization drew particularly on the role of artists to critique the Games, drawing on the 'Bread Not Circuses' identity around the anti-Toronto Olympic bid between 1998 and 2001.

Among these campaigns were a series of ephemeral protests which drew heavily on digital environments, including one against the use of animals within the Olympic Games opening

ceremony and one campaign against the situation of missiles on Londoners' houses. Other

websites, like United Photographers, offered advice for photographers in London around the Games

so they could know their legal rights. There were also one-off protests, such as that by London taxi

drivers who brought London to a standstill by stopping their vehicles in Westminster, noting their

anger at not being able to use the Olympic lanes.

Discussion

The delivery of media content outlined in this chapter has general consequences for society, but

also specific consequences for the Olympic Movement. The diversification of communication

platforms and their expansion through social media may weaken the omnipotence of traditional

media organizations and their capacity to generate the kinds of exclusive audiences at such mega-

events as the Olympics, which justify their extensive financial investment. Alternatively, it may

simply reconfigure the kinds of organizations that are able to compete for large contracts and

develop associations with brand elites like the Olympics.

As more Olympic fans shift their attention to news and entertainment distribution within

social media platforms—via mobile devices on the go rather than televisions in the home—this

could jeopardize the stability of the Olympic programme and its future viability, requiring a new

overhaul of its infrastructure. Yet rather than see this as a negative transition for the Olympics, one

may argue on behalf of its value for the Olympic Movement. The social media presence of

Olympic celebration and critique—as alternative Olympic media messages— democratizes the

Olympic media narrative, creating a richer set of views for audiences to consume. Collectively,

they reveal how the commitment of the Olympics to operating as a social movement is made

manifest within these conflicting communities much more than can be said of their production via traditional media channels. Equally, for society more generally, the rise of social media also transforms what it is to be an Olympic journalist. As more citizens adopt a journalistic role within their everyday lives through social media, they also make a contribution to the Olympic media narrative.

The use of social media around the London 2012 programme indicates the direction of travel for future host cities. The expansion of media channels afforded by new media technology and a burgeoning culture of user-generated content have changed how people consume the Games and allow audiences to become producers themselves. Yet London 2012 reveals that not all organizations have responded similarly to the imposition of social media, as sponsors and broadcasters have all adopted very different approaches to greater or less success.

When comparing the social media campaigns of promoters and protestors around the London 2012 Olympic Games, it appears as though promotion is more effectively placed to attract audiences. This may be because of the organized nature of promotion and its utilization of dedicated, full-time resources. Yet in an environment like Twitter, it is likely that promotion operates within a more networked community where, beyond the number of followers an account may have, there is a communal focal point around Twitter hashtags, like #London2012Festival, which may be defined by the community, not the programmer. In contrast, the absence of a coordinating hashtag for Olympic dissent may limit the reach of the protestors online, but it also may be a device through which dissenters can operate below the radar of organizers.

Of course, the scale of investment into digital promotions around London 2012 far exceeds that which was generated around the oppositional element. However, even small protests have enjoyed considerable reach in their coverage. For example, Space Hijackers (a.k.a.

@OurOlympics) attracted attention for their 'London 2012 Official Protestor' design, which

utilized the London 2012 logo and invited people to download it and print it on a T-shirt saying

'Official Protestor'. This campaign reached mainstream media in a way that many cultural events

were not able to secure (Steadman 2012). In this sense, social media provides an opportunity for

creative activism to flourish and creative promotion to wither, separable perhaps only by the merit

of the innovation behind the campaigns. In cases where promotional events were imaginative and

novel, they seemed more likely to flourish online, whereas those that were simply acting as another

channel for sharing news did not really engage audiences.

At the same time, social media political campaigns can enjoy far greater visibility because

of this creative approach. The CAMSOL intervention is perhaps the best example around London

2012, which sparked considerable discussion because it so beautifully presented a website as if it

were the official London 2012 website, the text of which was so eloquently written as to appear as

though it were credible. Such examples reflect the inherent new media dimension to such

campaigning, and while they are often exceptional, public debate about them—like many such

campaigns on the Internet over the years—can bring a valuable, political counterbalance to

Olympic promotions.

In closing, London 2012's digital legacy speaks to a holistic strategy, which was flexible

enough to adopt early and exploit the benefits of new platforms. Social media was embedded into

all aspects of the Organising Committee, and a dedicated team focussing on driving activity was

crucial to its achievements. Yet it is the broader culture of social media adoption by all Olympic

stakeholders that provides a key learning point for future host organizations. There is no evidence

that the social media assets of all stakeholders were coordinated or strategically developed

alongside each other. Rather, individual organizations implemented their own approaches, without

taking into account how their social media managers interfaced strategically with the accounts of either competitors or collaborators. In this respect, future Games hosts may be advised to seek a platform for the key people who work in this aspect of Games delivery to build a niche network across stakeholders dedicated to discussions about how social media can be better organized around the Olympics. Such a forum exists for the broadcasters generally through media briefings and the like, but not yet for social media.

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Table 7.1. Twitter follower count of the UK Paralympic and Olympic broadcasters

Table 7.2. Twitter followers for London 2012 sponsors

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Table 7.3. YouTube video view count on the IOC's channel