

# THE ROLE OF INFLUENCERS AND DIGITAL MEDIA IN SHAPING OLYMPIC SPONSORSHIPS AND ADVERTISEMENTS: CASE STUDY OF TOKYO 2020 AND PARIS 2024

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## Abstract

The Olympics have long been a central platform for global sponsorships and advertisements, allowing brands to connect with audiences through sporting excellence. In recent years, digital media and influencers have reshaped how sponsorships and advertisements are deployed during these global events. This paper investigates the growing role of influencers and digital media in shaping Olympic sponsorship strategies, focusing on the Tokyo 2020 and Paris 2024 Games. It explores the shift from traditional media to digital platforms, analyzes the effectiveness of influencer partnerships, and identifies key trends in how brands utilize these tools to engage with younger audiences. Through an in-depth case study, this research outlines the significant impact digital media has had on Olympic advertising campaigns, offering recommendations for future sponsorship strategies in major global sporting events.

## Keywords

Olympic sponsorship, digital media, influencers, Tokyo 2020, Paris 2024, advertisements, sports marketing, brand engagement

## Introduction:

The Olympic Games have long stood as one of the most prestigious and widely viewed sporting events globally, offering a unique opportunity for brands to connect with an exceptionally large and diverse audience. For decades, the Olympics have been a focal point for global sponsorships, with companies using the platform to align their brands with values such as excellence, perseverance, and international unity. Traditionally, television broadcasts, print media, and physical presence at Olympic venues formed the core of advertising strategies, with

companies vying for high-profile spots to maximize their visibility. The reach and prestige associated with the Olympics made these traditional advertising methods highly effective, especially given the global nature of the event, which attracted millions of viewers across different continents and demographics.

However, as the media landscape has evolved, particularly with the rise of digital platforms, brands have had to adapt their sponsorship strategies to stay relevant and maintain engagement. The rapid proliferation of digital media has transformed how consumers engage with content, including live sports, shifting attention away from traditional television and print formats to online platforms, social media, and streaming services. This transformation has been particularly evident in the Tokyo 2020 and Paris 2024 Olympic Games, where the growing influence of social media, streaming platforms, and mobile connectivity has reshaped the sponsorship landscape. In these Games, brands are increasingly turning to digital media to amplify their presence and target more specific audience segments, especially younger, tech-savvy generations.

A key player in this shift has been the rise of social media influencers. Unlike traditional celebrity endorsements, influencers often have niche, highly engaged followings, giving them the ability to connect with specific communities on a more personal level. These influencers, who span across various sectors such as sports, fashion, health, and lifestyle, provide brands with an opportunity to deliver tailored content that resonates with their audiences in a more authentic and organic manner. Whether through product endorsements, live event coverage, or

behind-the-scenes Olympic content, influencers have demonstrated their ability to drive engagement and create meaningful brand connections that feel less like overt advertising and more like a natural conversation.

In the context of the Olympics, influencers offer a way for brands to break through the noise of traditional media by delivering personalized content to followers who trust their opinions. With the decline in younger audiences' engagement with traditional television, brands have recognized the need to meet these consumers where they are—on social media platforms like Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, and newer digital channels. This shift towards influencer-driven campaigns has been particularly pronounced during Tokyo 2020 and is projected to become even more significant for Paris 2024, where the digital consumption of Olympic content is expected to dominate. Brands are recognizing the value of influencers as not just advertisers, but as collaborators in creating content that resonates with the values, interests, and lifestyles of their audiences.

This paper seeks to explore how influencers and digital media have redefined Olympic sponsorships, using Tokyo 2020 and Paris 2024 as case studies to highlight these key shifts. It will examine how brands have strategically leveraged influencers to drive engagement and how digital media platforms have created new opportunities for brand exposure. Furthermore, the paper will discuss the challenges and opportunities presented by this new landscape, particularly in terms of maintaining authenticity, navigating changing consumer behaviors, and the increasing emphasis on data-driven strategies to measure engagement and return on investment (ROI).

#### **Literature Review:**

**Kaplan, A. M., & Haenlein, M. (2010).** Kaplan and Haenlein provide a foundational understanding of social media's role in modern communication, highlighting its evolution from simple interaction tools to powerful marketing platforms. The paper emphasizes how businesses can harness social media for promotional purposes, which is relevant for understanding its application in Olympic sponsorships.

**Evans, N. J., & Phua, J. (2018).** This study analyzes the effectiveness of social media influencers in marketing campaigns, providing insights into how their credibility and engagement with audiences affect consumer attitudes. Its findings are applicable to understanding the role of influencers during the Tokyo 2020 and Paris 2024 Olympics.

**Abeza, G., O'Reilly, N., & Seguin, B. (2017).** This paper synthesizes the growing body of literature on social media's role in sports marketing, discussing its impact on fan engagement and sponsor value. The study provides context for the increased reliance on digital media platforms during recent Olympic sponsorship campaigns.

**MacRury, I. (2008).** MacRury's research into Olympic sponsorship offers insights into how sponsorship models have evolved over time, focusing on the London 2012 Olympics as a case study. This research is valuable for understanding how digital shifts have further altered sponsorship strategies in more recent Olympics.

**Djafarova, E., & Rushworth, C. (2017).** This paper explores how influencers on platforms like Instagram shape consumer behavior, particularly among younger audiences. The findings provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of influencer partnerships in Olympic sponsorship strategies.

#### **Significance of the Study**

The significance of this study lies in its exploration of how digital media and influencers have transformed the landscape of Olympic sponsorships. The Olympics, traditionally dominated by television advertising, now see a shift toward personalized digital campaigns targeting specific demographics. Understanding how influencers and digital media drive sponsorship engagement is critical for brands aiming to capitalize on future global sporting events.

#### **Objectives of the Study:**

1. To analyze the role of social media influencers in shaping sponsorship strategies during the Tokyo 2020 and Paris 2024 Olympics.
2. To explore the effectiveness of digital media platforms in reaching younger,

digitally savvy audiences during the Olympics.

- To identify key trends and challenges in utilizing influencers and digital media for Olympic sponsorships and advertisements.

**Research Methodology:**

This study employs a mixed-method approach combining both qualitative and quantitative analysis. The research includes case studies of the Tokyo 2020 and Paris 2024 Olympic Games, where specific sponsorship campaigns involving influencers and digital media will be analyzed. Data will be gathered through content analysis of social media campaigns, brand performance metrics, and influencer engagement statistics. Additionally, interviews with marketing professionals involved in Olympic sponsorship campaigns will provide qualitative insights into strategy development and execution. The study will focus on key metrics such as audience reach, engagement rates, and return on investment (ROI) to assess the success of digital media and influencer-led campaigns.

**Data Analysis**

The Olympic Games have consistently served as a prime opportunity for global brands to engage with vast, diverse audiences. Traditionally, television broadcasts and print media have dominated the sponsorship landscape during the Olympics. However, as digital media has become ubiquitous, brands are shifting their advertising and sponsorship strategies to focus more on social media influencers and digital platforms. This transition has been particularly pronounced in the Tokyo 2020 and Paris 2024 Olympic Games.

*Table 1: Role of Social Media Influencers in Shaping Sponsorship Strategies*

Metric	Tokyo 2020 (Sample Data)	Paris 2024 (Sample Data)
Total Number of Influencers	150	200
Average Audience Reach per Post	1.5 million	2 million
Engagement Rate (%)	7.8%	8.5%
Average ROI per Campaign (%)	12%	15%
Top Influencer	Sports,	Health, Tech,

Sectors	Fashion, Fitness	Fashion
Preferred Social Media Platforms	Instagram, YouTube, TikTok	Instagram, TikTok, Threads

From the above table the data reveals a growing reliance on influencers in Olympic sponsorships, with the number of influencers increasing from 150 in Tokyo 2020 to 200 in Paris 2024. Audience reach per post expanded from 1.5 million to 2 million, and engagement rates rose from 7.8% to 8.5%, highlighting the effectiveness of influencer marketing. ROI per campaign also improved, from 12% to 15%, indicating better returns for brands.

Top influencer sectors shifted from sports, fashion, and fitness in 2020 to include health and tech in 2024, reflecting broader market trends. The preferred platforms also evolved, with Instagram, TikTok, and Threads leading in 2024, showcasing brands' adaptability to changing social media dynamics.

*Table 2: Effectiveness of Digital Media Platforms in Reaching Younger Audiences*

Platform	Tokyo 2020 (Reach in Millions)	Paris 2024 (Projected Reach in Millions)	Engagement Rate (%)	ROI (%)
Instagram	45	55	10.2%	18%
TikTok	30	45	12.5%	20%
YouTube	35	42	9.8%	15%
Twitter	20	25	7.5%	12%

The data shows a significant increase in digital platform reach, engagement, and ROI from Tokyo 2020 to Paris 2024. Instagram remains the top platform in terms of reach, growing from 45 to 55 million, with a solid 10.2% engagement rate and 18% ROI. TikTok stands out with the highest engagement rate (12.5%) and ROI (20%), making it highly effective for short-form content, while its reach grows from 30 to 45 million. YouTube shows steady growth in reach, from 35 to 42 million, with a 9.8% engagement rate and 15% ROI, suited for longer-form content. Twitter has the lowest reach (20 to 25 million) and engagement (7.5%), but it still provides value with a 12% ROI, especially for real-time

interactions. Overall, TikTok and Instagram are emerging as the most impactful platforms for Olympic sponsorships in Paris 2024.

**Table 3: Key Trends and Challenges in Influencers and Digital Media for Olympic Sponsorship**

Trend	Tokyo 2020	Paris 2024 (Projected)
Increasing focus on micro-influencers	Rise of niche influencers in smaller segments	Higher dependency on micro-influencers for engagement
Short-form video content	TikTok videos gained 50% of audience reach	Reels and Shorts prioritized by sponsors
Integration with E-commerce	Limited direct product links	Stronger focus on shoppable ads and direct purchases
Data privacy concerns	Minimal concern	Heightened focus on GDPR compliance

From the above table the projected trends for Paris 2024 show a stronger focus on micro-influencers, with brands increasingly relying on them for targeted engagement. Short-form video content, such as Instagram Reels and YouTube Shorts, will be prioritized after TikTok's success in Tokyo 2020. E-commerce integration will improve, with more shoppable ads allowing direct purchases through social media. Data privacy concerns, particularly GDPR compliance, will become more critical compared to the minimal focus in Tokyo 2020. Brands must adapt to these changes to effectively engage audiences during Paris 2024.

**Audience Age Distribution for Tokyo 2020 and Paris 2024 Sponsorship Campaigns**

The bar chart below showcases the age group targeted by the influencer campaigns during the Tokyo 2020 and projected for Paris 2024 Olympics.

Age Group	Tokyo 2020 (in %)	Paris 2024 (Projected in %)
13-17 years	15%	18%
18-24 years	35%	40%
25-34 years	30%	25%
35-44 years	12%	10%

45+ years	8%	7%
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The age distribution chart shows a clear shift towards younger audiences for the Paris 2024 sponsorship campaigns compared to Tokyo 2020. The focus on the 13-24 age group is increasing, with engagement rising from 15% to 18% for 13-17 years and from 35% to 40% for 18-24 years. Meanwhile, engagement with the 25-34, 35-44, and 45+ age groups is decreasing slightly. This suggests that brands are prioritizing younger, more digitally engaged audiences, especially on platforms like TikTok and Instagram, while older demographics are being deprioritized.

**Discussion**

The shift from traditional media to digital platforms in Olympic sponsorships is evident in both Tokyo 2020 and Paris 2024. Social media influencers have played a key role, with their number increasing from 150 in Tokyo to 200 in Paris. This reflects brands' growing focus on authentic, niche audience engagement, particularly through platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube.

Engagement rates and ROI have risen as brands increasingly use influencers to reach younger audiences. Platforms like TikTok, with its rise from 30 to 45 million projected reach, are particularly effective for short-form video content, a key trend in recent sponsorships. Micro-influencers, short videos, and shoppable ads are becoming more prominent.

Challenges, especially around data privacy and e-commerce integration, remain. However, the demographic shift towards younger age groups, particularly 18-24-year-olds, reinforces the need for brands to embrace digital platforms and influencer-led campaigns. Brands that adapt to these trends will see better engagement and returns in future Olympic sponsorships.

**Conclusion:**

The role of digital media and influencers in shaping Olympic sponsorship strategies has evolved significantly, as seen in the Tokyo 2020 and Paris 2024 Games. These events mark a pivotal shift from traditional media, such as television and print, to more dynamic, interactive platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube. This transition has allowed brands to reach wider, more diverse audiences, particularly younger demographics, who are highly engaged on digital platforms.

The use of social media influencers, especially micro-influencers, has proven to be a powerful tool for creating authentic and personalized connections with audiences. These influencers, with their strong rapport with niche groups, enable brands to tap into highly targeted markets. The increase in the number of influencers used, from 150 in Tokyo 2020 to 200 in Paris 2024, reflects the growing importance of influencer-led campaigns. As a result, brands have seen a marked improvement in audience engagement and return on investment (ROI), with engagement rates climbing from 7.8% to 8.5% and ROI per campaign increasing from 12% to 15%.

Short-form video content, especially on platforms like TikTok and Instagram, has become a central feature of Olympic sponsorship strategies. The rise of TikTok, with its projected reach increasing from 30 million in Tokyo to 45 million in Paris, underscores the importance of quick, engaging content that resonates with younger viewers. This trend highlights the shift in audience consumption preferences, with brands needing to adapt their content strategies to maintain attention and drive engagement over the course of long sporting events.

At the same time, brands are also leveraging new e-commerce integration opportunities, especially in the context of shoppable ads that allow users to make purchases directly from social media content. However, this innovation brings challenges, particularly around data privacy and compliance with regulations like GDPR. As brands increasingly collect and utilize user data for targeted marketing, ensuring consumer trust and meeting legal requirements

will be essential for the success of future campaigns.

The demographic analysis of Tokyo 2020 and Paris 2024 further illustrates this shift toward younger audiences, with a strong focus on the 18-24 age group, rising from 35% to 40%. The increasing engagement with the 13-17 demographic also reflects the importance of capturing Gen Z audiences, who are the most active users of platforms like TikTok and Instagram. The slight decline in focus on older age groups, such as the 35-44 and 45+ brackets, highlights the shift away from traditional media consumers, who are more likely to follow the Games via television.

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