

***Consuming Olympism:
Consumer culture, sport star sponsorship
and the commercialization of the Olympics***

Barry Smart

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Abstract:

The roots of Olympism lie in the late nineteenth century and Baron Pierre de Coubertin's revival of the Olympic Games. The values of Olympism have been increasingly compromised by subsequent developments which have significantly transformed modern sport. Professionalism, commercialism, proliferating forms of spectacular media representation, and a globalising consumer culture have transformed the Olympic Games and reduced the values of Olympism to marketing rhetoric. The summer Olympic Games in particular have become unrivalled marketing opportunities for host cities, consumer brands, and participating athletes, for whom the prospect of sporting success now promises to deliver wealth, stardom, and iconic global status beyond track and field. The complex forms of articulation of the Olympics with consumer culture are at the heart of the paper which gives critical consideration to i) the increasing commercialization of the Olympic Games; ii) the growth of Olympic merchandising; and iii) a comparison of the athletic performances, profiles, and consumer sponsorship statuses of three generations of iconic Olympic sprinters, Jesse Owens, Carl Lewis, and Usain Bolt, confirming in conclusion that the Olympic Games is immersed within and infused by a pervasive consumer culture.

Introduction: Olympism and the Olympic Games

In this paper I employ a critical cultural and economic analysis to argue that the Olympic Games, revived in 1896 by French aristocrat Baron Pierre de Coubertin, were from the beginning in a complex and contradictory relationship with the developing cultural and economic conditions in which they emerged. With increasing globalization and expansion of industrial capitalist commerce and consumption, as well as associated advances in technological innovation and communication, contradictions have increased in scope and intensity to the detriment of the founding philosophy of Olympism. While the formative ideals of the Olympic Movement have endured, and to a degree continue to decorate the structure and organisation of the International Olympic Committee, they are increasingly incompatible with the financial imperatives, commercial ethos, and culture of consumption integral to the Olympic Games (Chatziefstathiou and Henry 2012; Zakus and Skinner 2008; Guttmann 2002).

An over-idealized understanding of ‘the Hellenic trinity of body, mind and spirit’ and a misplaced ‘faith in the character-building qualities of English sports education’ inspired Coubertin’s ideas about amateur athletics and informed his philosophy of Olympism (Lucas 1967: 60). There is ample evidence that the values of sporting ‘amateurism’, constituted in nineteenth century England and pivotal to Coubertin’s vision, had no place in Ancient Greece, the birthplace of Olympic competition, where organised athletic guilds bargained for athletes who were ‘predominantly professional’ (Toohey and Veal 2007: 20). Coubertin (2000a[1904]: 406) was misguided about the significance he attributed to sport at Rugby school in England, ‘that Mecca of sports education’; mistaken about its headmaster Thomas Arnold who was far more interested in moral education than sport and physical development; and not nearly appreciative enough of the respects in which the wider culture and political economy of sport were already being transformed in ways contrary to his moral and educational vision of the modern Olympic Games (Chatziefstathiou and Henry 2012: 77). From its inception the ethical philosophy of Olympism encountered discordant and contradictory developments and these have only increased with the passage of time as professionalism, commercialism and consumerism have transformed sport into a spectacular consumer-oriented global business (Guttmann 2002; Walmsley 2004; Smith and Himmelfarb 2008).¹

The Modern Olympics emerged in the course of the ‘take-off phase ... of globalization’, as Giulianotti and Robertson (2009: 4) argue, in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The subsequent development of the Games as a uniquely valuable sports event has provided an unrivalled communication and marketing platform and global profile for media organisations, consumer corporations, and successful athletes, who have become celebrity figures, brand ambassadors, and consumer culture icons. However, the hosting of the Olympic Games has also come at a cost to the cities concerned as considerable public sector expenditure is required and frequently preparations involve the disruption, if not complete destruction, of traditional neighbourhoods and ways of life in the course of building Olympic infrastructure, stadiums, and associated facilities.²

Coubertin’s critical observations on the Games held respectively in Paris (1900), St Louis (1904), and London (1908), reveal an awareness of the economic and cultural realities with which the Olympic Movement had to deal and the consequences that followed from having,

for financial reasons, to hold the games in conjunction with international exhibitions and fairs, an early manifestation of the global scope of the event and what would become the increasing incorporation of sport into the worlds of business, entertainment and consumption as the twentieth century developed. Coubertin believed that ‘sport can change the world’ in a progressive direction (IOC Olympic Museum, 2011). Drawing on critical analyses, historical research, secondary data, and innovative case studies of three celebrated athletic figures I will show how the Olympics have become festivals of consumption, ‘in perfect synergy with the conditions ... established throughout the world engendering the flow of global capital’ (Walmsley 2004: 238), and how complex globally extensive economic and cultural processes have significantly transformed sport and the Olympics in precisely the ways Coubertin feared.

Consuming sport, consuming Olympism

The decades following the modern invention of the Olympic Games have been described as a ‘golden age’ for sport, especially so in the USA (Danzig and Brandewein 1948; Rader 1983). The 1920s was a period in which exceptional sporting talents began to emerge and growing awareness of commercial opportunities, combined with rising consumer demand for sports goods and equipment, led to the development of a number of sports companies using athletes and sports events such as the Olympics to market their products and compete to become global consumer brands (Smart 2007). The growing market for consumer goods, aided by developments in communications media and advertising, along with the rapidly rising popularity of sport, led to figures who had been accorded sport star celebrity status to be signed up to endorse consumer products. For example, baseball star Babe Ruth had endorsement contracts for ‘baseball bats ... candy bars and other products unrelated to athletics’, including breakfast cereal (Quaker and Wheaties), gasoline (Esso), cigarettes (Old Gold) and a cola drink (Red Rock) (Pedersen and Thibault 2014: 72; Doyle 2010) and Red Grange the NFL footballer had endorsement contracts for ‘sweaters, shoes, caps ... and soft drinks’ (Rader 1983 185-6; Leberecht 2015).

The Olympics was not immune to the rising tide of commerce flowing through modern sport, as Coubertin’s (2000b [1928]: 184) concerns about ‘athletics as a show’, commercial interests driving the building of stadiums, and ‘publicity campaigns’ required to draw crowds demonstrate, and Avery Brundage’s (IOC President from 1952 to 1972) later cautionary remarks about the erosion of Olympic traditions and ideals, including amateurism, confirm (Guttman 1984). The development of the Games in the course of the twentieth century was marked by the emergence of a global sport consumer market and rapidly accumulating signs of the increasing involvement of commercial corporations (Gratton, Liu, Ramchandani, and Wilson 2012). From early, relatively minor signs of commerce and consumer culture at the first modern Games in 1896 through to the paradigm shift initiated with the first avowedly market-oriented Games in Los Angeles in 1984, the scale and value of transnational corporate investment in and consumerism’s colonization of the Olympics steadily gathered momentum (Tomlinson 2006; Gruneau and Neubauer 2012).

At the Games in Greece in 1896 some companies made a financial contribution by paying for advertising. More substantial corporate advertising appeared in the programme for the Antwerp Games in 1920. In Paris in 1924, for the first and, to date, last time advertising signage was present at venues. At the X Olympiad in Los Angeles in 1932 Olympic symbols

were used in department store window displays and the Games became a prominent theme in consumer advertising for businesses across the country. By the time of the Tokyo Games in 1964, the first to provide satellite television broadcasting, 250 companies had ‘forged marketing relationships with the Olympic Games’ (IOC 2016a). Further incremental increases in consumer advertising, commercial sponsorship, and television broadcasting revenue at subsequent Games, including the introduction of the first official mascot at the 1972 Munich Games, prepared the ground for private capital’s commanding role at the Los Angeles Games in 1984 (IOC 2016a).

Following financial difficulties experienced by former host cities only two were in line to make an official bid to hold the Games in 1984. After Tehran withdrew Los Angeles was able to demand ‘the Games be staged on their terms’ that they would limit public funding and not be held responsible for any debts arising from the staging of the Games (Payne 2006: 13). While the city legislated to limit its financial responsibility, corporate capital, organizing the Games in a neoliberal market-oriented manner, benefitted greatly from ‘free’ public provision of infrastructure, consumption of public services, security, communications, and transport, as well as the help of ‘an enormous flock of unpaid volunteers’ (Boykoff 2016: 132; also Gruneau and Neubauer 2012). The LA Games represented a paradigm change insofar as they were privately organized, with substantial revenue coming from the international sale of television broadcasting rights and corporate sponsorship, and, run in a business-like manner, they have been described as the first Games since 1932 to register a ‘profit’, but that is not the case if forms of public sector support and provision and all related costs are taken into account (Horne and Whannel 2016: 31; Guttmann 2002).

As Alan Tomlinson (2006: 168) notes, ‘the mobilization of private capital’, integral to the LA Games, dramatically reframed the Olympic project as ‘a commercial product and prime commodity for the global media’. However, while the Los Angeles Organizing Committee claimed it would ‘limit ... commercialism’, in practice this amounted to a calculated financially advantageous restriction of the number of sponsors and suppliers involved in the Games, a policy which secured more lucrative contracts with thirty-five major corporate commercial sponsors, including ‘American Express, Anheuser-Busch ... General Motors, Coca-Cola, Converse, Levi-Strauss, McDonald’s, Mars, Motorola ... [and] United Airlines’ and sixty-four ‘official suppliers [including] Adidas, Panasonic ... [and], Toshiba’, while allowing a further sixty-five licensed companies to use the official Olympic rings logo on their products and advertising (Boykoff 2014: 31). The 1984 Olympics acted as a commercial catalyst, setting in motion a series of developments which have transformed the IOC, the Games and the scale and nature of the revenue streams involved, the two most significant being the step change in value of the global television broadcasting rights and the introduction in 1985 of a new marketing plan, The Olympic Partner (TOP) Programme, ‘based on the Los Angeles model of product category exclusivity’ (IOC 2015: 17).³

The Olympic Games have become highly commercialized consumer sports events as the International Olympic Committee website confirms:

The Olympic Games are one of the most effective international marketing platforms in the world, reaching billions of people in over 200 countries and territories throughout the world. Revenue generated by commercial partnerships accounts for more than 40% of Olympic revenues (IOC 2016b)

The increasing embrace of commercialism has led critics to lament that ‘the Olympics have little to do with sports. They’re mostly about money’ (Lubin and Delevingne 2010). A view endorsed by Janice Forsyth, former Director of the International Centre for Olympic Studies at Western University (Ontario, Canada), in critical comments on the priorities shaping the late-modern Olympic Games, namely that they are more focused on ‘reproducing wealth and consumption in a city’ (quoted in Boykoff 2016: 150).

In a study of UK advertising and media coverage of the 2004 Athens Olympics, Maguire, Butler, Barnard and Golding argue that while IOC rhetoric may proclaim commercial support is essential to successfully stage the Games and promote the values of Olympism, the overriding interest is to ‘build markets, construct brand awareness, and create local globalized consumers and identities’ for their corporate commercial paymasters (2008: 168). The Olympics is a commercially valuable mega-event and association with its emblematic logo, mascots, and name, raises the global profile of sponsoring corporations and allows them to build markets for their consumer brands (Roche 2000). While the Olympic brand may, in turn, benefit from close association with prestigious transnational corporations and consumer brands this comes at a considerable cost as the values of Olympism are in practice compromised, if not consumed entirely, in advertising copy and TOP program marketing strategies. As the study concludes, ‘The IOC’s *raison d’être* seems to be *the promotion of consumerism not the values claimed to be part of Olympism*’ (Maguire, Butler, Barnard, and Golding 2008: 180, emphasis added).

Consumer merchandising and the summer Olympics

Revenue deriving from the licensing of Olympic consumer merchandise has become an increasingly important element of the Olympics and the Summer Games in particular. In the period from the 1992 Barcelona Games through to the 2012 London Olympics merchandising revenue from licensees grew significantly, if unevenly (IOC 2015: 29).

Olympic Games Licensing Facts and Figures

Olympic Games	Licensees	Revenue to OCOG (US\$ million)
1992 Barcelona	61	17.2
1996 Atlanta	125	91
2000 Sydney	100	52
2004 Athens	23	61.5
2008 Beijing	68	163
2012 London	65	119

(Source: IOC 2015:29)

The Barcelona Games has been described as a ‘merchandising opportunity missed’ as while substantial numbers of people in ‘Spain, the UK and US tuned in to the games’ the IOC had a very limited range of merchandise available for potential consumers (Leftly 2011). In contrast Atlanta the host city in 1996 ‘branded everything in sight with sponsor logos’ and derived substantial revenue from a wide range of ‘licensed memorabilia including ball caps,

steering wheel locks, and thousands of collectible pins' (Blau 2016). What helped significantly in achieving such a substantial increase in revenue through consumer merchandise licensing was that the Atlanta Organizing Committee (OCOG) 'operated its own merchandise sales stands' (Preuss 2004: 155).

Since the Atlanta Games 'the Olympics have become synonymous with a consumer ethic' (Miles 1998: 130). The Sydney Games had a substantial number of licensees, introduced online retailing, and had three Olympic mascots. However, overall licensee revenue was down on Atlanta, one explanation being the damage inflicted on the consumer appeal of the official Olympic mascots and associated merchandise by the popularity of Australian Channel 7's late-night subversive program *The Dream* and its creation of an unofficial mascot, Fatso the Fat-arsed wombat (Engel 2000). While the Athens Olympic Organising Committee achieved a significant increase in broadcasting revenue there was a far more modest return on consumer merchandise licensing. The marketing of Olympic consumer memorabilia, in which mascots occupy a particularly prominent place, may have been damaged by another episode in the quarrel between ancients and moderns. The Greek Society for the Friends of the Ancients took exception to the names of the Olympic mascots (Phevos and Athena), which they regarded as a mockery of the ancients 'Phoebus Apollo, the god of light and music and Athena, goddess of wisdom and patron of the city of Athens', and threatened to sue the organisers of the Games (Leftly 2011). Official merchandising of Beijing Olympic commodities began shortly after the Athens Olympics with the Beijing OCOG contributing to the development of over 2000 Olympic products on sale in 10,000 licensed retail establishments (Preuss 2004). Holding the Olympics in Beijing provided a platform to promote Chinese people's identification with consumerism – 'the people of China were married, through the symbolism that the Games provided, to a view of themselves as *consumers*' (Miles 2014: 159). The Olympics transformed Beijing into 'an entrepreneurial and consumer-driven city' and simultaneously legitimated 'the collective spectacle of consumption ... as part of the everyday lives of the Chinese people' (Miles 2014: 165: 169).

The 2012 London Olympics was a spectacular global sports event, heavily dependent on broadcasting media rights revenue and income from commercial sponsorship.⁴ It was an event thoroughly imbued with an ethos of consumerism (IOC 2015). In *The Financial Times* in 2006 LOCOG chief executive Paul Deighton predicted 'more money in general merchandising and licensing for London 2012 than any previous Olympics' (Owen 2006) and in *The Independent* a March 2011 headline proclaimed 'Going for gold: the 2012 Olympic merchandisers', followed by a report of the anticipated prospect of buoyant sales of Olympic consumer merchandise and souvenirs (Leftly 2011). It transpired that official Olympic merchandising sales in London 2012 were not quite as strong as anticipated and at \$119 million ended merely a respectable second best to Beijing's \$163 million. However *Adidas*, one of the London Olympic Partners, reportedly fared much better, its licensed Olympic merchandise sales tripling its Beijing 2008 returns, 'making London 2012 the most successful Games ever for Adidas from a commercial perspective' (Herbert Hainer, Adidas CEO, quoted in Cooper 2012).⁵

Corporate commercial imperatives have compromised Olympic ideals to such an extent that 'consumerism appears to be undermining the very fabric of the sports themselves and, in particular, the sportsmen and women who participate in them' (Miles 1998: 131). Acceptance at the 2012 London Olympics of the investment and support of food and drink sponsors

promoting a junk food and drink consumer culture associated with increasing obesity levels, particularly among children (Clark and Brownell 2012), provides a powerful example of the ways in which Olympic values have been compromised by an ‘out-of-control consumerism’ (Harris 2012). The involvement of consumer brands McDonald’s, Coca-Cola and Cadbury’s as sponsors of the Olympics is incompatible with Olympism, for ‘their flagship brands’ are far from conducive to the healthy lifestyle, athleticism, or sporting success the Olympic philosophy promotes (Clark and Brownell 2012: 4).

Adidas, Nike and Puma: ‘It’s gotta be the shoes!’

The Olympic Games now provide an abundance of opportunities for corporate sponsors and particular consumer brands have become closely associated with the Games. Adidas has had a long association with the Olympics, including a significant sponsorship role at the 2004 Athens, 2008 Beijing, and 2012 London Games. The brothers Adolph and Rudolph Dassler registered the forerunner to Adidas (and Puma) *Gebrüder Dassler Schuhfabrik*, making running spikes and football boots, in 1924. The running shoes first appeared at the 1928 Amsterdam Games worn by German athlete Karoline Radke-Batschauer, known as ‘Lina Radke’, who won a gold medal in the first women’s 800 metres competition. In 1932 at the LA Games Arthur Jonath (Germany) and Wilhelmina von Bremen (USA) both wore the spikes ‘featuring stitched “stripes”’ and won gold medals in their respective 100 metres finals (Adidas Olympic Games Heritage nd). Then in 1936 at the Berlin Games James Cleveland ‘Jesse’ Owens (USA) won four gold medals wearing Dassler spikes. In 1948 after a period of intense disagreement the brothers went their separate ways and in due course Adi Dassler established *Adidas* and Rudolph Dassler formed *Puma* (Smit 2006). Both companies have grown into successful global businesses and alongside other sportswear brands compete to persuade athletes at Olympic Games to wear their sports shoes in the hope that successful performances by *their* athletes will raise brand profile, enhance consumer sign value, and stimulate a growing share of the sports consumer goods market (Smart 2007).

The Olympics have become a commercial consumer festival at which sponsoring brands compete for consumer impact and ‘mentions’ (Hobbs 2016). Before the 2012 Olympics Adidas CEO Herbert Hainer reported that up to 3000 athletes would be wearing the three stripes. High profile figures included UK heptathlon athlete Jessica Ennis, USA sprinter Tyson Gay and Jamaican sprinter Yohan Blake, each of whom had personal sponsorship deals with Adidas (Pagano 2012). In addition to individual athletes Adidas sponsored specific sporting federations (International Association of Athletics Federations - IAAF), as well as 11 National Olympic Committees. Adidas was described as being ‘everywhere’ at the London Games. It was prominent ‘at Stratford’s Westfield complex ... [with] a gigantic poster with Ennis & Co monopolising the entrance wall’; provided clothing for all volunteers at the Olympic park and was ‘the only sportswear company allowed to use the [Olympic] logo on products’; staged events in marketing halls, ensuring the company would be seen to be contributing to the Games, leaving ‘a lasting legacy in the UK’; and in addition, through its *Take the Stage* campaign, sponsored ‘50 adiZones – free outdoor gyms and sports areas’ in local communities around the country (Pagano 2012).

As the European Sponsorship Association (2016) has commented, the Olympics now constitutes a ‘sponsorship marathon’, a global marketing and branding opportunity, which commences well in advance of the official Games schedule. At the 2016 Rio Olympics

consumer brands were once again engaged in intense competition at the opening ceremony, across 42 Olympic sport disciplines, in 306 events, and at medal ceremonies staged at Olympic venues and presented on television and a range of digital and social media platforms. For corporate sponsors commercial performance at the Games is bound up, to a substantial degree, with the success in events of sponsored teams and athletes and public visibility and exposure deriving from global media coverage, which increases consumer brand awareness and sign-value.

In a Nike advertising campaign for Michael Jordan 'Flight' trainers a character played by the film director Spike Lee ponders why the iconic USA NBA star is so successful and concludes that 'It's gotta be the shoes!' (Goldman and Papson 1998: 49). Observers of competitive campaigns that have become an increasingly common feature of major global sports events, including the Olympics, would recognise that creative corporate teams working in advertising, marketing and branding for sportswear companies appear to have arrived at a comparable conclusion, namely that for consumer impact at global sporting mega-events 'It's gotta be the shoes'. For sportswear brands the Olympics provides an unrivalled global platform to market consumer commodities, to invoke associations between the feats of medal winning competitors and the sports shoes – spikes, trainers and boots – adorning their feet on track, field, court, and podium.

For the opening ceremony at the Rio Olympics and at medal ceremonies Adidas team sponsored medal winners wore specially designed Futurecraft sneakers with laces coloured gold, silver, and bronze in accordance with the medal to be awarded (Woolf 2016). In a comparable manner Nike designed a new trainer, the Nike Free RN Flyknit, in a distinctive very visible colour described as 'volt', to be worn by medal winning athletes in the teams from Brazil and the USA at medal awarding ceremonies (Axon 2016). In turn, Puma introduced their Usain Bolt evoSpeed Electric Spike shoes which received maximum marketing exposure as the athlete won three gold medals.

Citius, Altius, Fortius: Jesse Owens, Carl Lewis and Usain Bolt

The achievements of the Olympic athletes Jesse Owens (1913-1980), Carl Lewis (1961-) and Usain Bolt (1986-), including in the blue ribbon event the 100 metres, perfectly embody the Olympic motto *Citius, Altius, Fortius* - Faster, Higher, Stronger. A comparison of their different career trajectories and experiences is also revealing of the accelerating pace, increasing scale, and growing intensity of the synergy between sport and commerce - the increasingly powerful influence exerted by transnational corporations and media organisations, the extent to which the Olympics has become subject to what Frederic Jameson (1991: 206-7) describes as 'the inner dynamic of the culture of consumption', and, in particular, the respects in which sports stars have become wealthy iconic popular cultural figures and consumer brand ambassadors.

The success of Jesse Owens, an African-American, in winning four gold medals in the 100m, 200m, 4x100m relay and long jump respectively at the 1936 Berlin Olympics dispelled the myth of Aryan superiority integral to Nazi ideology. Carl Lewis, like Owens an African-American, participated in four successive Summer Olympic Games winning nine gold medals

in total. Lewis won four gold medals in the 1984 Games, equaling the performance of Owens in Berlin, and achieved gold medals in the 100m and long jump in the 1988 Seoul Games, gold in the 4x100m relay and long jump in the 1992 Barcelona Games, and gold in the long jump in the 1996 Atlanta Games. Usain Bolt, a Jamaican sprinter, won gold medals in the 100m, 200m, and 4x100m relay events at successive Summer Olympic Games held in Beijing 2008, London 2012, and Rio 2016 and over the course of his career secured a portfolio of lucrative endorsement contracts with global consumer corporate brands.⁶



(Source: Kirk (2016))

Before the 1936 Berlin Games commenced Jesse Owens was visited in the Olympic village by Adi Dassler, the founder of the Adidas athletic shoe company. Dassler knew of Owens' world record breaking performances in competition in Michigan in 1935 and sought him out on his arrival in Germany. Owens was persuaded to wear Adidas spikes in his four gold medal winning events and this 'anchored the Dasslers' reputation among the world's most prominent athletes' (Smit 2006: 20). Jesse Owens became the first African-American athlete to receive a form of sponsorship and be involved in a brand endorsement relationship with a commercial corporation.

At the Olympics in Germany Owens was free 'to travel with and stay in the same hotels as whites' while in many states in the USA African Americans did not have equal rights and following 'a New York City ticker-tape parade ... in his honor, Owens had to ride the freight elevator at the Waldorf-Astoria to reach the reception honoring him' (Thomas 2015). Following his outstanding Olympic career Owens tried to capitalize on his success but found few opportunities after his amateur status was withdrawn by US officials on the grounds that he had received a number of commercial offers (Thomas 2015). After short-lived associations with baseball, and attempts to be successful as a sports promoter, including running races against local sprinters, trains and cars, as well as racing against a horse in Cuba, Owens 'ran a dry cleaning business and worked as a gas station attendant to earn a living' and in the 1950s he had a role as a US goodwill ambassador in Asia (McRae 2000; Thomas 2015).

Competition between sports brands was in its very early stages when Owens achieved Olympic success and lucrative sport sponsorship and brand endorsement contracts for athletes were relatively rare.⁷ Owens worked for a few public relations firms and was engaged in some consumer product promotional work, including for Coca-Cola (1952) with Alice Coachman, the high jump athlete who at the London 1948 Olympics was the first African American woman to win an Olympic gold medal. Later Owens did promotional and advertising work for White Owl cigars (1960) and Jim Beam whiskey (1961).

In 1971 the IOC removed 'amateur' from the Olympic Charter and from 1981 International Sport Federations had the responsibility to determine the eligibility of their athletes, opening the Games to professionals and increasing commercialisation. By the time Carl Lewis was competing professionals were accepted in the Olympics and commercialism and consumerism were integral to the world of sport. At the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics Lewis won four gold medals wearing Nike Zoom Track spikes but soon after he was dropped by Nike. Why Nike dropped Lewis, who had appeared in the brand's television, billboard, and print advertising and was under contract, has been a matter of speculation. It has been suggested that Lewis appeared aloof and did himself no favours at the 1984 Games. After a successful and as it turned out gold medal winning first long jump, and a subsequent foul, Lewis passed on four further attempts and did not attempt to break the world record, for which he was booed by spectators. A further explanation advanced for Lewis's lack of success in holding on to his Nike endorsement contract, and failure to secure others, is the homophobic character of Madison Avenue at the time and rumours circulating about his sexuality. An executive with Nike reportedly stated 'If you're a male athlete, I think the American public wants you to look macho' and US high jump athlete Dwight Stone allegedly commented that 'It doesn't matter what Carl Lewis's sexuality is, Madison Avenue perceives him as homosexual' (Anthony 2007).

In 1994 Pirelli tyres traded on the view of Lewis's sexuality as ambivalent in an advertising campaign in which the iconic Olympic athlete was depicted crouched in a sprinter's starting position wearing red high heels under the slogan 'Power is nothing without control' (Wentz 1995). A subsequent intertextual global campaign employed the same slogan but featured Lewis in a New York City landscape, unencumbered by inappropriate footwear, running barefooted through water, up the Statue of Liberty and then jumping across to the World Trade Center where the soles of his feet are revealed to have Pirelli tyre treads (Wentz 1995). In 1999 Lewis was named Top Male Athlete of the 20th Century by the International Association of Athletics Associations (IAAF 1999). Since 2002 Lewis has had roles in a number of film and television productions and he has returned to promotional work with Nike opening stores for the sportswear brand in London, Rome, Prague, and Berlin, and at the 2016 Olympics he was a 'Swoosh' guest of honor (Fox 2016).

When Usain Bolt started competing seriously as a junior athlete in 2001 international sport, including the Olympic Games, had become a global stage on which sporting figures competed for athletic success and recognition and pursued lucrative endorsement contracts, and commercial corporations and consumer brands hoped to achieve a higher public profile and greater market share through sponsorship of iconic sports stars. Bolt received two sponsorship deals before turning professional, one with Puma after winning the 200 metres at the World Junior Championships in Kingston Jamaica in 2002 and the other with Digicel a Jamaican mobile phone company. Bolt first competed in the Olympics at the Athens Games

but carrying a hamstring injury lost in a 200 metres heat. In 2008 in Beijing Bolt won gold medals and broke world records wearing Puma Complete Theseus spikes. In August that year Kering, which had purchased a controlling stake in Puma in 2007, sought to signify its corporate ownership of Bolt's achievements – it had to be the shoes - through a report on its website with the headline: 'PUMA® breaks World Records at Olympics 2008 in Beijing' (Kering 2008). Following his success in Beijing Bolt was signed up by a number of other corporations, these included Gatorade the US sport-themed drink and food company, Hublot a Swiss watch producer, Virgin Media, and Visa. In 2010 Puma re-signed Bolt on a contract worth \$9 million annually and in advance of the London Olympics the BBC (2012) produced a documentary film 'Usain Bolt: The Fastest Man Alive'. At the Games Bolt won three gold medals wearing Puma evoSpeed spikes. Additional commercial contracts duly followed with Imangi Studios including a Bolt character in their *Temple Run 2* game and Soul Electronics involving Bolt in the development of his own product line of headphones.

In 2013 Puma increased the value of their contract with Bolt to \$10 million annually through to the IAAF World Championships in London in 2017, after which he retired and became a Puma ambassador (Becker 2016). Nissan contracted Bolt in 2013 to lead a global campaign and presented him with a Nissan GT-R special edition car in gold. In addition Bolt secured commercial contracts with Optus the Australian telecom company, All Nippon Airways in Japan, and before the Rio Games launched his own brand of razors, Champion Shave (Badenhausen 2016). The establishment in advance of the Rio Games of a Usain Bolt online store (<http://store.usainbolt.com/en/>), selling Puma footwear, clothing, and other Bolt branded commodities, and subsequent appointment to a position with French champagne house Maison Mumm provide further confirmation of Jean Baudrillard's (2017) observations on the increasing representation of iconic global sporting figures as brand signifying heroes of consumption. Two documentary films, 'Usain Bolt: Born to Run' made by the BBC (2016) and Universal Pictures (2016) documentary film 'I am Bolt', underscore the respects in which Bolt has transcended sport to become a global consumer cultural icon comparable to Michael Jordan (Badenhausen 2016). In the year leading up to the Rio Olympics it was reported that Bolt received \$2.5 million in prize money from his successes on the track and appearance fees, but the sums involved were dwarfed by the income he received as an iconic globally popular consumer culture figure estimated to be in the region of \$30 million (Heilpern 2016).

Concluding remarks: Olympism consumed

This paper has demonstrated that as the IOC and the Olympic Games have become increasingly embedded in global consumer culture, infused with the values of transnational corporate commerce, preoccupied with advertising, branding, and merchandising, and dependent on extensive global media and live television coverage in particular, especially for the direct and indirect revenue streams they deliver and star statuses and lucrative endorsement global profiles they configure for successful athletes, the economic and cultural contradictions to which Olympism was exposed from its inception have grown significantly in intensity and extent.

The early Olympic Games were nurtured by the financial and organizational resources of 'the world's fairs of ... 1900, 1904, and 1908' (Borgers 2003: 8), and through the twentieth century became increasingly commercialised as they were steadily incorporated into 'the

ever-expanding marketplace of international capitalism' and its all-encompassing consumer culture (Gruneau 1984: 2). In 1908, Coubertin identified dangers to which he considered athleticism was exposed, these included 'an atmosphere of advertisement and bluff ... where effort is generally applied to the quest for material gain, [and] where athletic sports are likely to be commercially exploited' (2000c[1908]: 543). Coubertin intended sport to be practiced in the 'purest spirit' but recognised that money mattered, that it 'cost so much money to hold the modern Olympiads, or merely to prepare or participate in them' and that financial support extended to athletes to help them prepare promoted the prospect of professionalism (2000d[1913]: 648). By 1928 Coubertin's worries over the 'money question' had grown as his cautionary remarks about commercial interests, publicity campaigns, and the respects in which athletic events were becoming entertaining spectacles reveal (2000b[1928]: 184).

From the outset Olympism, as a 'philosophical and religious doctrine', did not accord with the transformative commercial imperatives and consumer cultural processes to which sport was increasingly becoming subject (Coubertin 2000e[1929]: 563). Involvement of commercial corporations in the Olympics grew significantly through the course of the twentieth century, eventuating in the paradigmatic shift marked by the IOC explicitly embracing a corporate commercial orientation and setting out to systematically generate substantial revenue streams from transnational corporate sponsorship, international sale of television broadcasting and digital media platform rights, and Olympic consumer merchandising. The development in the aftermath of the Rio Olympics of the free Olympic Channel (<https://www.olympicchannel.com/en/>), an internet video site designed to improve the marketing of the Olympics particularly to younger consumers, further exemplifies the commercial ethos integral to the Olympic Movement.

Increasingly the IOC has sought to maximise global commercial opportunities and revenue streams, while trying to maintain its philosophy of Olympism as 'exalting and combining in a balanced whole the qualities of body, will and mind' and '[b]lending sport with culture and education' (IOC 2016c: 11). However, the Olympic embrace of transnational corporations, commercialism and consumerism, and the elevated media profile and popular acclaim accorded to athletic stars who have become richly rewarded globally iconic consumer brand ambassadors, tends to tarnish, if not degrade and diminish, the exalted ideals and values of Olympism. The 'money question' in all its complex manifestations remains central to the Olympic Movement and the Olympic Games as a global consumer festival, not only in respect of corporate sponsorship, media rights, and consumer merchandise revenue generating activity, but also in relation to the costs involved in hosting the consumer spectacle which are considerable and daunting. Concerns about the overall costs involved in hosting the Games led to Budapest, Hamburg, Boston, and Rome pulling out of the bidding for the 2024 Olympics, leaving only two contenders Paris and Los Angeles (Ahmed 2017).

In 1920 Coubertin (2000f: 484) announced 'the victory of Olympism' and described the International Committee making decisions 'without concern for anything but the good of the institution whose destiny has been entrusted to it'. As the paper demonstrates the subsequent transformative impact of commercialism and consumerism on the Olympics has meant that the good of the institution is now inextricably bound up with 'the money question' which has significantly diminished the ethos of Olympism, reducing it in value to marketing rhetoric employed to protect the brand image and promote the corporate reputation of the Games.

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Notes

¹ Nevertheless Olympism has retained a place in the Olympic Charter as:

a philosophy of life, exalting and combining in a balanced whole the qualities of body, will and mind. Blending sport with culture and education, Olympism seeks to create a way of life based on the joy of effort, the educational value of good example, social responsibility and respect for universal fundamental ethical principles (World Olympians Association 2016).

² For example, the Beijing Games involved the consumption of Ming-dynasty era *hutong* communities: 'relics of ancient times were forced to yield to the huge hotels, shopping centers and thoroughfares – all for the Olympic Games' (Langer 2008). Preparations for the London and Rio Games led to comparable destructive consequences for traditional local communities (Cheyne 2008; Clift and Manley 2016; Watts 2015).

³ Broadcasting revenue for the Summer Olympic Games increased steadily from 1960 and significantly from 1984 as the Broadcast Revenue History table below shows:

Olympic Games	Olympic Games Broadcast Revenue (US\$ million)
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1960 Rome	1.2
1964 Tokyo	1.6
1968 Mexico City	9.8
1972 Munich	17.8
1976 Montreal	34.9
1980 Moscow	88
1984 Los Angeles	286.9
1988 Seoul	402.6
1992 Barcelona	636.1
1996 Atlanta	898.3
2000 Sydney	1,331.6
2004 Athens	1,494
2008 Beijing	1,739
2012 London	2,569

(Source: IOC 2015:24)

⁴ In 2017 the IOC reported that broadcasting accounted for 47% of its revenue, sponsorship 45%, ticketing 5% and licensing 3% (IOC 2017).

⁵ Adidas has had a long association with the Olympic Games and played a significant indirect role in the establishment in 1985 of what would become The Olympic Partner (TOP) Programme, a major marketing initiative that has delivered substantial sponsorship revenue to the IOC (Toohey and Veal 2007; IOC 2017)

⁶ In January 2016 one of Bolt's 4x100 metres team at the 2008 Beijing Games was retrospectively tested positive for a banned substance. In consequence Bolt and other members of the team were stripped of their 4x100 medals.

⁷ One of the earliest athlete endorsement contracts was between basketball player Chuck Taylor and Converse Rubber Shoe Company. Taylor joined Converse in 1921 and his successful promotional work and design innovations led in 1934 to his name being added to an ankle patch on the Converse All Star basketball shoe (Peterson 2016; Coles 2016).

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