



Editorial



Sports marketing coming of age

My stint as editor of the Journal began in May 2005. Back then cricket was largely still an antiquated colonial sport, Lewis Hamilton was a teenager, London was just another European capital and the economic downturn was, well, what downturn?

Since then a great deal has changed. In the interim the world has witnessed the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games and the 2006 FIFA World Cup in Germany, two momentous events for sports marketers. Cricket is no longer the geographic or parochial reserve of a small number, the Indian Premier League possibly having changed the sport forever – an object lesson in how intelligent marketing can reinvigorate even the most unfashionable of sports. And Lewis Hamilton has gone from unknown youth to global superstar, courtesy of his first and second places in the last two Formula 1 World Championships. Experts are predicting that he may even surpass Tiger Woods as the world's most valuable sponsorship and endorsement property.

Having won the right in mid-2005 to stage the Olympic Games, London will be the host city in 2012. Following Beijing, London will have some careful thinking to do about how to position the Games and market them. And the ambushing battle that has come to characterise many sporting mega-events will be as intensely fought in London as it was in Germany during the FIFA World Cup.

As for the downturn, back in 2005 we should have known it was coming, but many people had no notion that the good times would end. While current economic problems are not going to (should not!) change what sports marketing is or what it is intended to do, the landscape in which decisions are being taken has been changed. In some ways, one might question whether the downturn will hinder the progress of sports marketing over the next few years. If anything, the economic problems make our discipline even more important, helping our beloved sports to survive and compete against other products.

My hope is that the Journal has helped contribute to our understanding of some of the sporting matters we have enjoyed, embraced and confronted over the past three years and more. The calibre of papers and the number of submissions received has grown exponentially, indicating the willingness of the sports marketing community (still swelling in size and stature) to explore the full range of sporting phenomena.

The range and breadth of the commentary, analysis and debate that has appeared in the Journal has been intriguing, at times captivating. Clearly, sports marketing need no longer consider itself to reside in a ghetto somewhere on the outskirts of academia. It's all grown up, has moved to a more central position and is making an ever more important contribution in a significant industrial sector – just look at the increasing number of 'mainstream' business journals now devoting special editions to sport and sports marketing.

I end my stint as editor witnessing the Journal, and our understanding and practice of sports marketing and sponsorship, stronger than ever. In one sense, I am sad to be relinquishing this position, although I will retain a place on the editorial board. In another, now is the time for someone new to take the Journal forward. In Professor Michel Desbordes, I am certain that our publisher has found the ideal person to do this. I wish him well.

Simon Chadwick, Editor