

How Digital Will The London Olympics Be?

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TV remains the preferred choice for viewing the major sporting event, but online and mobile are catching up as key delivery channels

More than 4 billion people are expected to watch the London Olympics. With video content migrating rapidly to non-TV platforms, it's likely that at least 1 billion will view events, get updates and check results on digital devices, including PCs, mobile phones and tablets. Billions more will follow and discuss the action on social media.

"Like media owners and consumers, marketers too are poised to make a quantum leap for London 2012, using digital platforms as never before to inform and engage audiences," said Karin von Abrams, eMarketer senior analyst and author of the new report, "The London Olympics: Marketers in the Starting Blocks."

Major content providers, such as the BBC in the UK and NBCUniversal in the US, have bought exclusive rights to broadcast Olympic coverage in their home territories. NBC alone paid an estimated \$1.18 billion for its rights. Those distribution deals include digital media, and both broadcasters are investing enormous resources in providing online and mobile access to a huge range of high-quality material. Given that few other media owners can match that output, the BBC and NBC will likely be key online sources for much of the games' global audience too.

The big question is how much viewing and information-gathering will take place on digital platforms. Research from Deloitte indicates that between 15% and 26% of internet users in France, Germany, the UK and US will watch at least some of the games on a PC or tablet and in Germany, nearly half will watch via the mobile web.

If the last Summer Games are any indication, mobile will be particularly important for those looking to check in on event results, which is what Nielsen found to be the top mobile internet activity planned by US and UK users in 2008. The gap between event results and other coverage was particularly marked among UK respondents; nearly three-quarters said they would check results on their mobiles, while less than 40% planned to read articles or look at medal counts there. That said, mobile technology was much less advanced in 2008. Today's handsets offer a far better experience of both text and graphics.

"With weeks to go before the games, it's too soon to know which advertisers will score big wins, which social campaigns will catch fire, and which mobile strategies will capture the public imagination," said von Abrams. "But the outlook for digital marketing during London 2012 highlights trends of relevance to brand owners everywhere, especially those who rely on event sponsorship or tie-ins to generate impact."

The full report, "The London Olympics: Marketers in the Starting Blocks," also answers these key questions:

- How large is the digital audience for Olympic content?
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- How will consumers use mobile and other platforms to experience the games?
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- How are brands using social media to augment other marketing approaches?
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- What place will athletes have in the digital marketing mix?
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- How much games-related marketing will be truly innovative?
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- Not least: Will the UK's communications infrastructure take the weight, given unprecedented levels of usage?

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