

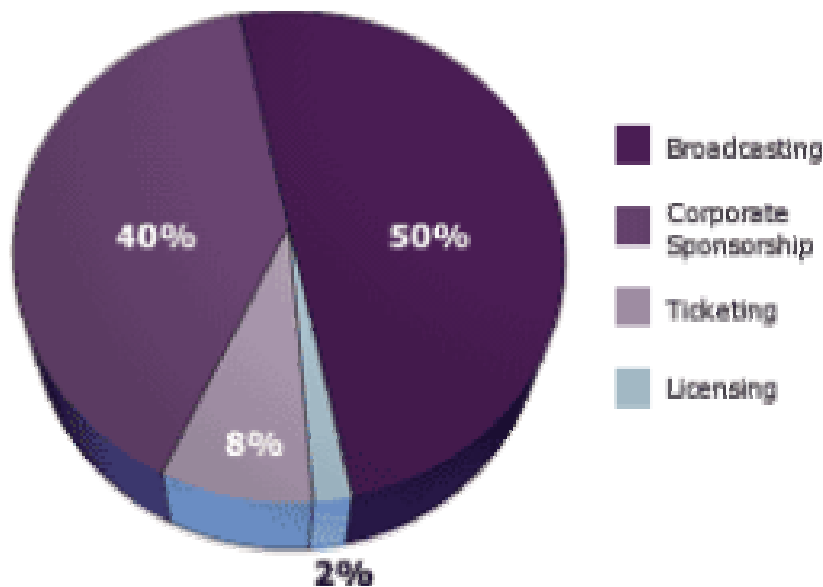
What are the reasons behind the increasing commercialism of the Olympic Games?

The Olympic Games is a world wide event, held once every 4 years. It is the most important event amongst the elite athletes of today. It is viewed on television by billions of people across the world, by satellite transmission (started in Tokyo in 1964). This worldwide viewing attracted sponsors as they realised that by supporting the Olympics their product would be advertised on every product sold, as they would be the 'official sponsor'. The advances in technology has played a fundamental role in the increase in commercialism, as large sums of money are put forwards for television rights over the Games from companies such as Sky, the BBC and ABC.

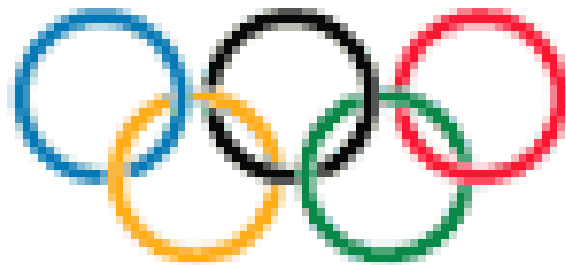
Sponsorship plays an essential function in the running of the Olympics. Money from sponsors is used for administration, travel and accommodation for the athletes and officials, communication and equipment. In the Barcelona Olympics of 1992, there were 44 companies included in The Olympic Programme (TOP). The commercialisation or Americanisation of the Games involves many multinational companies like McDonald's, who have been involved with the Olympic Movement since 1976 when it became an official sponsor of the Olympic Games in Montreal. McDonald's joins The Coca-Cola Company, Kodak Company, Sema Group, TIME/Sports Illustrated, Xerox, and VISA as TOP V sponsors, to name a few. A spokesman for McDonald's, Jack Greenberg, believed that McDonald's were a "unique company, capable of bringing the fun and excitement of the world's premiere sporting event to 43 million customers every day."

However the real reason behind this sponsor was chosen as it was offering the Olympic Committee millions of dollars in sponsorship. McDonald's, as an example, wanted to exploit the Games, using it as an advertising tool, to imply their company has a clean, reliable and idealistic image like that of the Olympics.

The Salt Lake Organising Committee received approximately US\$ 1,390.5 million from Olympic marketing programmes, but a question asked by many is Where exactly does all the money come from? The pie chart below shows the percentages of dollars coming in from commercialism from a typical Olympics:



Each sponsor wants the right to print the famous '5 rings' on their product.



Commercialism is not only used to promote products, but was initially introduced as a way of publicising the Games, and to increase the aware of the 'greatest show on Earth'.

Peter Uberroth is now credited to have 'saved the games,' as he attracted 30 sponsors in the Los Angeles Games of 1984 (the Olympics famous for where commercialism first took off.) The Los Angeles games were a huge success, obviously from the input from Americanisation. This encouraged many following cities, hoping to hold the Olympics, to do the same. However the American's 'bigger is better' view now means that each Olympics is trying to be better than the last. This means more demands are put upon the next host city. More money needs to be found, and if the hostin g country is suffering economically, the 'biggest and best' sponsor offering most money is awarded the title 'official sponsor'. Although this appears to be an advantage for the country, the Montreal Olympics of 1976 are still today paying off their debts after trying to 'put one over' the Munich games of 1972.

The Olympics Games were first launched to encourage world unity and peace, however as recent Games have demonstrated, people are no longer solely interested by the sporting events, but are thri ving on being the best. I believe that commercialism has both saved and destroyed the Games. The whole ethos of 'it's not the winning but the taking part that counts' (Baron Pierre de Coubertin) is no longer around, and that now the Olympics is simply becoming another victim of being used as a market for advertising.

Word Count: 640

