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Enhancing Sports Marketing through Cultural and Arts Programs: The Sydney 2000 Olympic Arts Festivals

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Abstract

This paper discusses the potential to broaden the marketing appeal of sports events by associating them with cultural and arts activities. The theory of polysemic structures and event augmentation are used to explain the value of offering cultural and arts extensions to sports programs. The Olympic Games are considered a paradigmatic case that illustrates the possibilities because arts and culture are compulsory components of the main event and have traditionally been staged simultaneously with the sports. However, research on past official Olympic cultural programs has indicated that there is still a paucity of marketing and promotional strategies to enhance such a combination. The Sydney 2000 Olympic Arts Festivals are used as a case study to identify reasons and circumstances affecting the relationship between cultural and sporting programs. Data collection for this case study included 87 semi-structured interviews with Olympic Arts Festival organisers, producers, artists, sponsors, and the media. The interview data is cross-referenced with archival data and the content analysis of newspaper data on the Olympic Arts Festivals. This study argues that the limited success of joint sports and culture event promotions is mainly due to a lack of effective integration mechanisms between sport and cultural programs. To change this trend, it is necessary to broaden the ways that the core product of sports events is envisioned. Sports marketers are encouraged to explore the incorporation of cultural events and activities in order to foster the appeal of sports events to market segments that might not otherwise be reached.