



3D Digital Dimensions 2012

The BBC Olympic flame:
Understanding social media
activity during the London
2012 Olympic Games

November 2012 - Amsterdam

Dan Brilot, YouGov
Anita Penn, BBC
Andy Morris, YouGov
Angharad Houlden, YouGov



THE BBC OLYMPIC FLAME

UNDERSTANDING SOCIAL MEDIA ACTIVITY DURING THE LONDON 2012 OLYMPIC GAMES

Dan Brilot • Anita Penn • Andy Morris • Angharad Houlden

INTRODUCTION

The London Olympic Games was the premiere global sporting and media event of 2012 with the Opening Ceremony being watched by an estimated worldwide television audience of 900 million, making it the most viewed Olympic Opening Ceremony in the United Kingdom and the highest non-home based ceremony in the United States. Social media is increasingly used by brands to achieve greater exposure, and has effectively recast the role of viewers from passive consumers to active participants. Organisations regularly seek to associate themselves with major sporting events around the world, and by effectively integrating social media into this strategy, companies can build closer and more durable links with audiences. Through the delivery of successful social media activity around an event, organisations can lay the groundwork for a legacy of brand advocacy that will endure long after the event has finished.

GOING FOR GOLD

The Opening Ceremony for the London Olympic Games 2012 far surpassed previous Olympics opening ceremonies, with an average of 24.2 million viewers in the United Kingdom, and a whopping 81% share of viewership on BBC One. The broadcast's five-minute peak, when Rowan Atkinson played a single note on the piano with the London Symphony Orchestra, was a massive 28.7 million viewers. The Olympics also coincided with UK television services becoming completely digital, giving the BBC a unique opportunity to maximise and enhance the London 2012 experience for audiences.

The London 2012 Olympics was the 15th Summer Olympic Games broadcast by the BBC, a sequence that began with the 1948 Games in London and one that has run unbroken since the 1960 Games in Rome, Italy.

They were the first truly 'Digital Olympics', with the BBC offering viewers the most comprehensive coverage of an Olympic Games ever. Audiences were able to access coverage through multiple platforms including TV, radio, and online across four screens: PC, mobile, tablet and connected TV (including smart TVs and games consoles) and BBC Red Button, regardless of the time of day and where they were.

For the first time the BBC provided live coverage of every Olympic sport from every venue throughout the day. This amounted to around 2,500 hours of live Olympic sporting action, over 1,000 hours more than Beijing 2008.

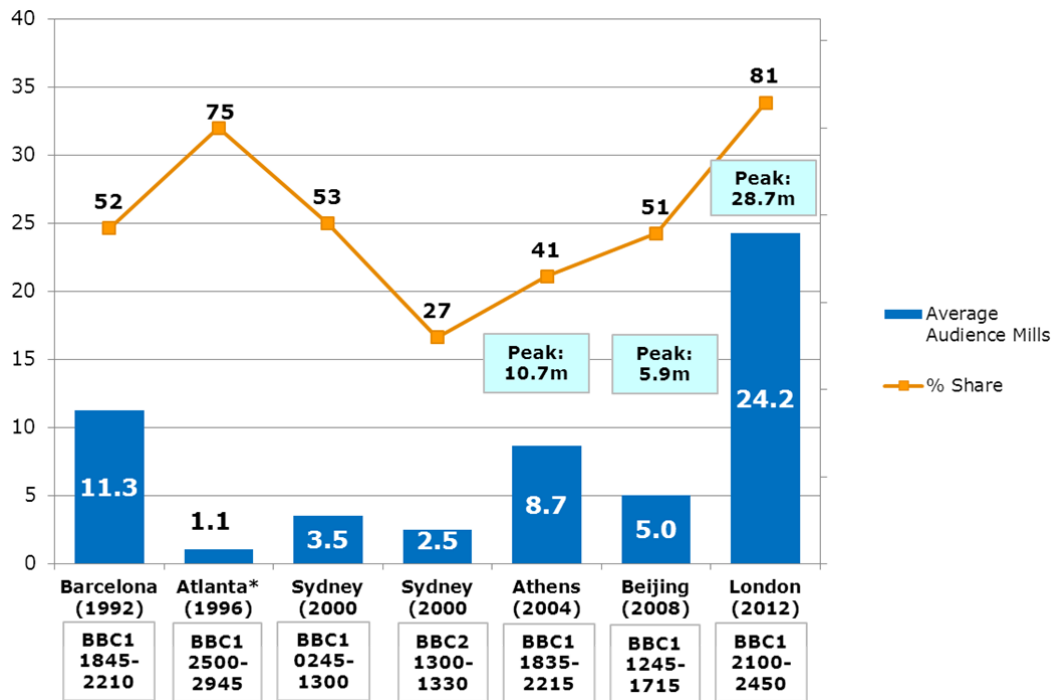
The flagship Olympic channels, BBC One and BBC Three, as well as BBC Two (when BBC One switches to news), BBC HD and BBC One HD were dedicated to the event over the 17 days of competition.

A 24-hour, temporary digital radio station, Radio 5 live Olympics Extra, complemented BBC Radio 5 live and BBC Radio 5 live Sports Extra for the duration of the games. These stations brought round-the-clock news, commentary and coverage with the majority of the stations' output coming live from the Olympic venues around the United Kingdom.

At bbc.co.uk/sport users had access to an enhanced and interactive video experience. Here viewers could watch live HD video coverage, switch between up to 24 live video streams, rewind live coverage and access live data, statistics and information whilst watching the action. The 24 HD-quality video streams were also made available to cable and satellite TV viewers for the duration of the Olympic Games and were accessible through both the Electronic Programme Guide (EPG) as well as the BBC Red Button.

Figure 1 shows that London 2012's Opening Ceremony was the most watched Olympics Opening Ceremony so far in the United Kingdom.

FIGURE 1, SUMMER OPENING CEREMONIES (CONSOLIDATED)



Source: BARB

*Atlanta held a high share due to late night start time

Brands attempting to tap into the good feeling and exposure around major sporting events (especially the Olympics) is not new, but what is new is the opportunity that organisations now have to foster a greater level of engagement with consumers, and forge links that will endure long after the excitement of the event has passed. This was the first time that the BBC had attempted to understand the impact social media can have on their audience engagement and the part it can play in creating a lasting legacy for its brand.

Brands, such as the BBC, needed to build a considered and expedient understanding of how best to approach social media activity and what works best for their audience. What do followers, and those who “Like” their fan pages, respond to best? Organisations need to understand what social media tactics most encourage spikes in social media activity and consequently brand engagement and buzz. The BBC commissioned research agency YouGov to use its new SoMA (social media audience analysis) methodology to ascertain what the audiences were hearing about the BBC, and how they were being influenced by the brand’s social media activity.

For the BBC it is important that it can reach out to all audiences through the various channels now available in this evolving digital world. Social media has become another ever more important way in which to engage with audiences beyond traditional linear broadcast, and the BBC strategy for London 2012 was to build deeper relationships with their audience, to tell better stories, to distribute and share content more widely, and to enhance the BBC brand by being accessible and engaging.

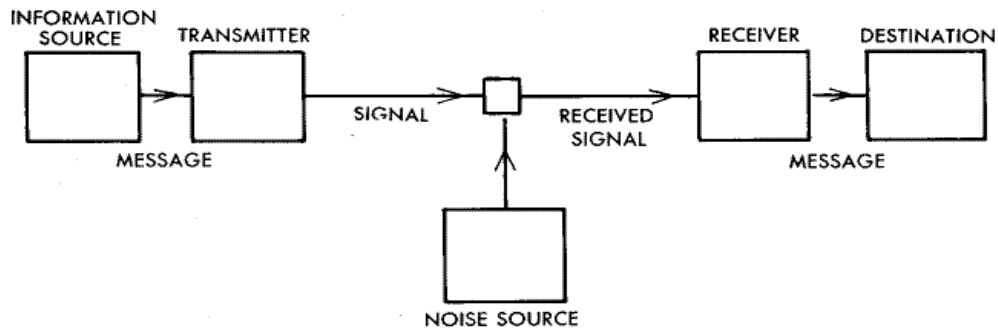
The key objectives of the research were to:

- Understand how audiences used social media to engage and connect with the BBC during the London 2012 Olympics
- Understand the impact and value of that engagement in terms of their relationship with the BBC and any sub-brands, as well as the impact and value in helping the BBC deliver its overall London 2012 objectives.
- Understand the impact and value of that engagement in terms of the long term effect on the BBC brand.
- Measure the effectiveness of social media using YouGov’s SoMA tool, which enables brands to measure the effectiveness of their social media activity around major public events.

LONDON CALLING

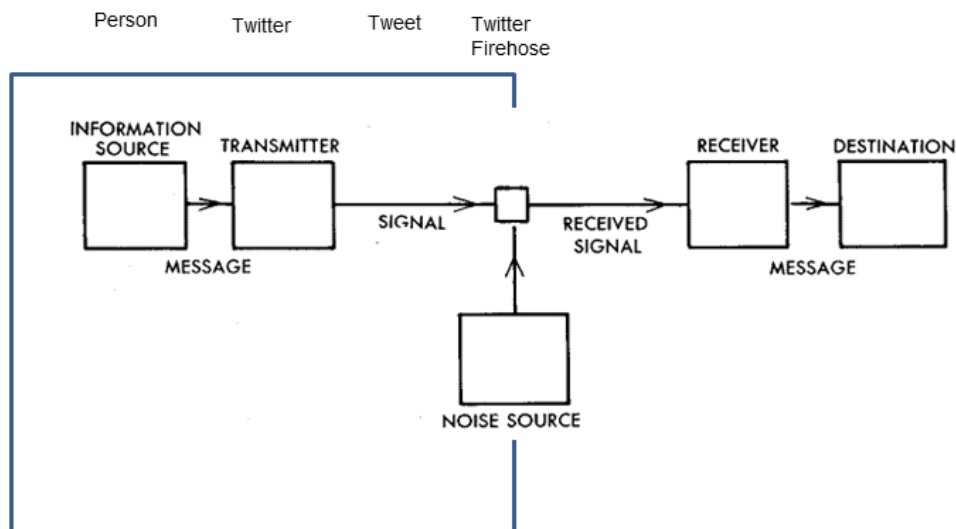
Before we look at the specific process of understanding social media we should go back and look at some simple theories of communication. Academic researchers in the field of communication theory have commonly used the basic send/receiver model developed by Claude Shannon (a research mathematician at the Bell telephone company) and Warren Weaver, in 1948 (see figure 2). The model aims to describe communication as a systemic process which has six basic components; sender, message, transmission, noise, signal and receiver.

FIGURE 2, SHANNON/WEAVER MODEL OF COMMUNICATION



While, in 2012, this linear model does not adequately explain the breadth and nuance of one-to-many communication via social media, it does provide us with a solid model from which to build a methodology for communicating in the media landscape of 2012. Currently, most attempts at understanding social media influence look to measure and understand the impact of a social media message by understanding only half of the process.

FIGURE 3, TRADITIONAL SOCIAL MEDIA MONITORING METHODOLOGY

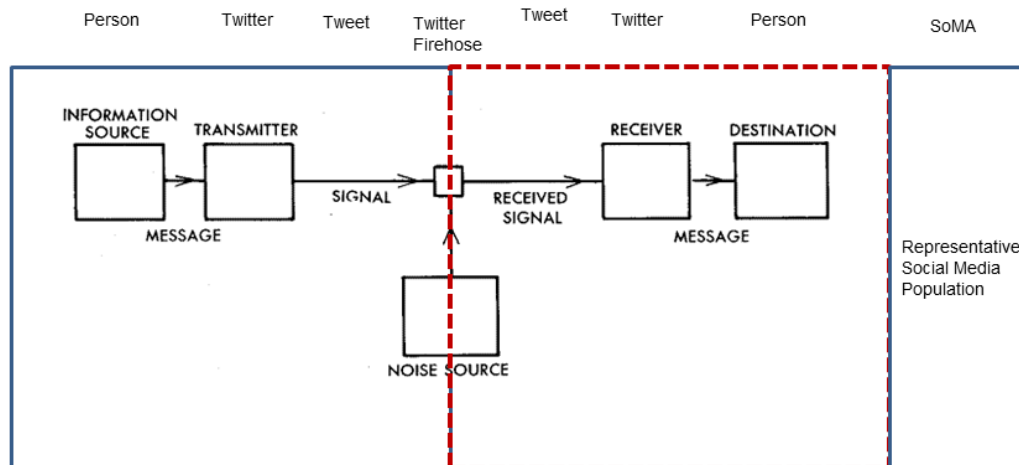


Methods of social media monitoring have been focused around understanding the signal itself (the Tweet), decoding the meaning (what the signal is talking about), and also typically the sentiment (positive, neutral or negative), as well as some very basic information about the information source itself (e.g. demographics). Social media monitoring also typically looks at the idea of influence or how important that source is, and how likely it is that the signals will be believed and acted upon (these are often derived using algorithms combining how many followers a person may have on Twitter, how active they are, how often they are re-tweeted). The signal is obtained either via the Twitter 'firehose' (access beyond the free offerings—licensed full feed of all public tweets), or through scraping monitoring the majority of social media sites on the internet. Whilst this kind of analysis can be very useful, the methodology fails to take into account one key element: how is the signal being received or (more importantly) is the signal being received at all? After all, if a tree falls in a forest and no one is around to hear it, does it make a sound? If we were to truly understand the power of the social media activity in this instance, a new type of methodology needed to be constructed.

To ascertain how signals from the BBC's Olympics social media activity were being received we used the SoMA (social media audience analysis) method. SoMA takes a representative sample of the UK Twitter and Facebook populations from a

traditional online access panel, and then directly measures what those respondents have been exposed to on their social media feeds (Twitter and Facebook). It follows the people that our panellists follow on Twitter, and so replicates their timelines and sees what appears on their Facebook news feed. That allows for the calculation of ‘reach’ over any given time period enabling us to produce an (x) percentage of the UK Twitter population who were exposed to tweets about a subject (y) on a given day. By overlaying profile information, which is collected from the access panel, the reach figure can also be broken down by demographics, client segmentations, and other desired variables. In addition to looking at the social media reach, this method also measures the sentiment of the tweets and Facebook messages and tallies the top key words associated with a particular brand. A key differentiator in this method is that the signal is obtained (with permission either via the Twitter firehose or through Facebook personal pages) at the stage at which it has been received by an individual (see figure 3), as opposed to halfway through the process, as shown in figure 2.

FIGURE 4, SOMA ANALYSIS METHODOLOGY



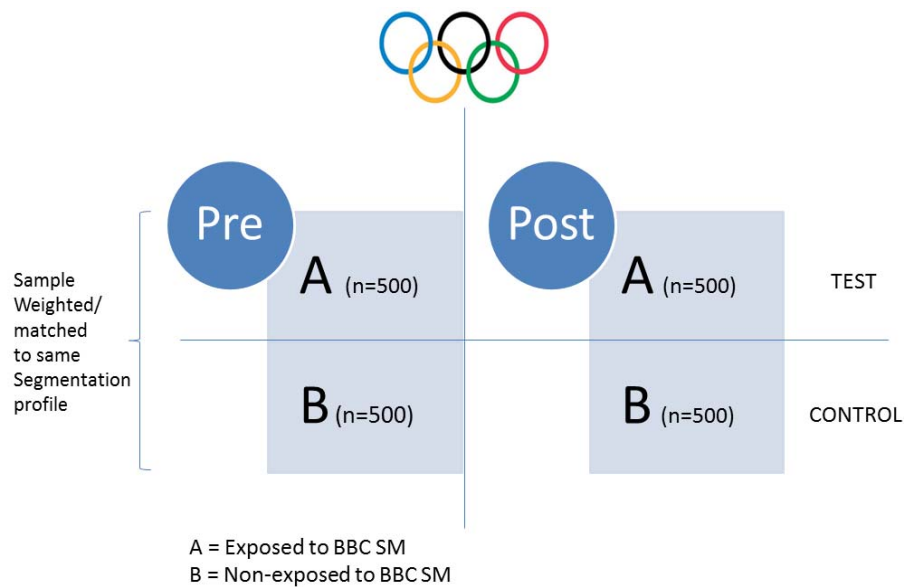
METHOD IN THE MADNESS

A hybrid methodology and pre and post (surveying respondents before and after the Games) approach was used to achieve key research objectives by combining behavioural data with survey data. The sample came from YouGov’s SoMA panel: a special pool of YouGov panelists who have given YouGov permission to access their Twitter handles and Facebook pages/feeds. This enabled us to fuse behavioural data from social media (e.g. what people are saying on Twitter and what pages they “like” on Facebook) with survey data. The unique aspect of this method is that as well as being able to understand what comments are being made on social media, we can also see what comments are being received. This approach is also unique in the way that it measures social media using traditional audience measurement metrics, such as frequency and reach, as well as demographic sub-groups. By sampling from this panel we can identify two distinct groups (A and B) to survey: those who have been exposed to BBC social media activity (A), and those who have not (B) but who are active on social media. We ran a traditional CAWI survey on both groups before and after the 2012 games to understand any changes and shifts in engagement with the BBC brand, as well as segmenting the respondents and understanding their behaviour.

We then conducted an initial 1,000 interviews amongst the YouGov SoMA panel prior to the Olympics (500 per group). We sought initially to weight the sample to be representative of the population who use either Facebook or Twitter, but because respondents also had to be followers of BBC social media activity we decided that this approach would have given us an unrepresentative sample. When we looked at those that follow BBC accounts we found that they were generally unrepresentative of the Twitter and Facebook populations, so it did not make sense for us to try and force the sample to be representative of the population. Instead, we collected a random sample of BBC followers from a wider sample of 10,000 respondents (representative of the UK Twitter and Facebook populations), and then matched the control group (Cell B) to match the test group (Cell A) demographically. This allowed us to pull out data that is directly comparable across these two cells. Also, we were able to ensure any data shifts, either pre or post event, would be directly attributable to BBC vs. non-BBC differences rather than being differences which may be down to variances between the two cells. We also matched Cells A and B in the pre and post waves so that they we could compare between waves and within waves between the cells. As a final step, the control group (Cell B) was also weighted to the test group (Cell B) using the BBC Sports fan segmentation model. This was an important step in controlling for any bias amongst the BBC social media exposed group. For instance, we could safely assume that those who followed the BBC (and their sports pages) might naturally be bigger sports fans than those who were not. This weighting control meant that there were similar profiles of

sports watchers amongst each cell so that any differences in test and control could be directly attributed to the impact of social media exposure by the BBC and not how much more engaged in the Olympics they might be.

FIGURE 5



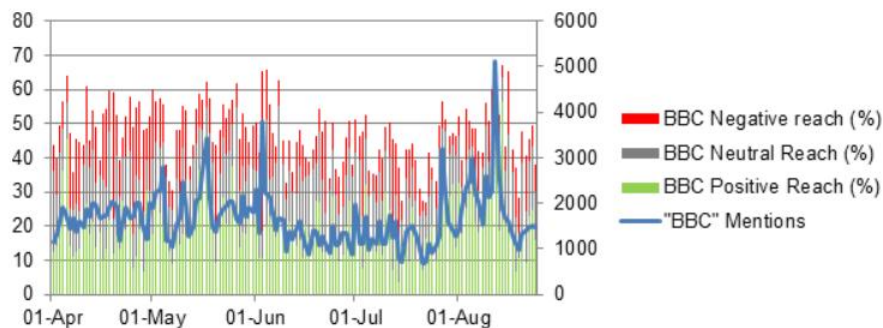
This methodology enabled us to do the following analysis:

- In the pre-wave establish what the existing effects of social media interaction were on the BBC brand by comparing cells A vs. B;
- Compare the overall effect of the London 2012 Games (and associated coverage across all channels) by understanding the uplift between brand attribute scores between pre and post waves;
- Understand the impact and value the BBC social media activity (around London 2012) have had by comparing key brand metrics between cells A and B in the post-wave.

UNDERSTANDING SOCIAL MEDIA ACTIVITY AROUND THE OLYMPICS

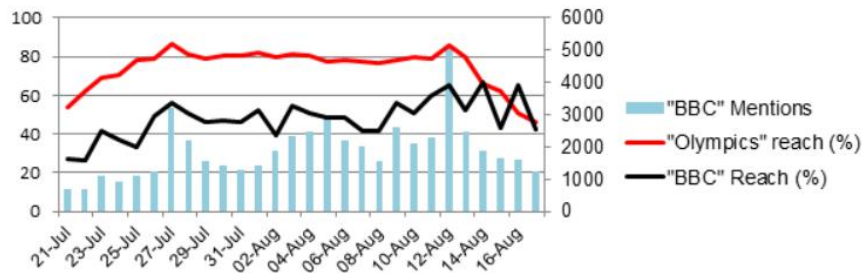
In figure 6 we can see how mentions and reach of the BBC increased between the opening and closing ceremony on Twitter. The term “BBC” was heard by 56% of the UK Twitter population on the day of the opening ceremony, and by 65% on the day of the closing ceremony. Mentions also increased from levels achieved on the day of the opening ceremony, by nearly 40% on the day of the closing ceremony.

FIGURE 6



Whilst mentions of “Olympics” reached a consistent proportion of the UK Twitter population (only a 1% difference between the opening ceremony and the closing ceremony), the BBC’s reach increased by 9%, thus illustrating the multiplier effect of the BBC’s social media activity as momentum for the brand grew throughout the games. This is the idea that each valuable friend or follower in your network increases the importance of all other people on your network because they can potentially act as amplifiers for conversations, messages, ideas, etc.

FIGURE 7



As a comparison, we looked at another brand tracking tool that also demonstrated the increase in profile of the BBC throughout the Olympics. The “BBC’s” Buzz score – achieved by respondents highlighting whether they have heard something positive or negative about a brand in the last two weeks – dramatically increased during the course of the Olympics.

FIGURE 8

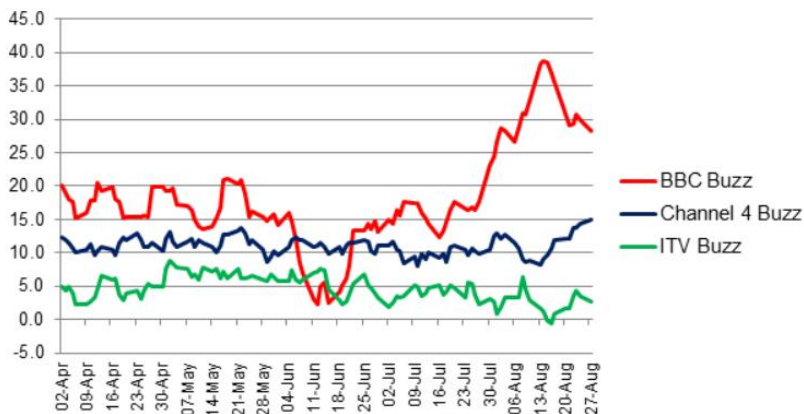


Figure 8 shows the BBC’s Buzz score, compared to that of Channel 4 and ITV, from April 2012 to the end of the Olympics. It is clear from this graph that whilst the BBC took a negative turn in Buzz over the course of the Diamond Jubilee weekend, by the time of the Olympics closing ceremony, on August 12th, the brand had recovered with flying colours. At its lowest, the BBC scored just 2pts in Buzz on June 12th – dipping below Channel 4 and ITV. But at its highest point, between August 13th and 15th, the BBC was scoring around 38 pts, putting it far and above its main competitors. Between the 16th July – the day before the opening ceremony – and 13th August – the day after the closing ceremony, the BBC’s Buzz score had increased steadily by 26pts. Also, the BBC Buzz score has not returned to the lower levels seen before the Olympics, suggesting that the effect of the Olympics is holding strong for the brand.

It is also possible to see how the Buzz around the BBC during the Olympics has impacted the public’s perception of the brand overall. Figure 9 charts the BBC’s Index score against its industry competitors. The Index score is a composite measure of the brand across seven metrics (Quality, Reputation, Satisfaction and Value among others.) The graph shows how the BBC’s Index score increased during the course of the Olympics, going from 48.6 pts on July 27th to 56.5 pts at its highest point, on August 20th. Though the brand has since returned to its original July 27th level, the BBC retains its clear lead on Index above Channel 4 (by 11.7 pts) and ITV (by 26.9 pts).

FIGURE 9

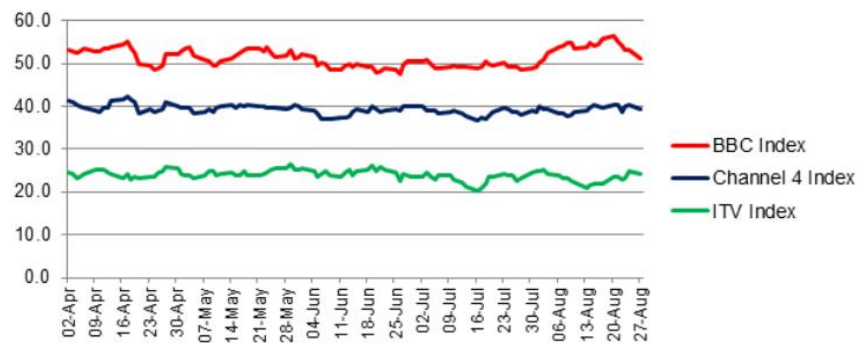
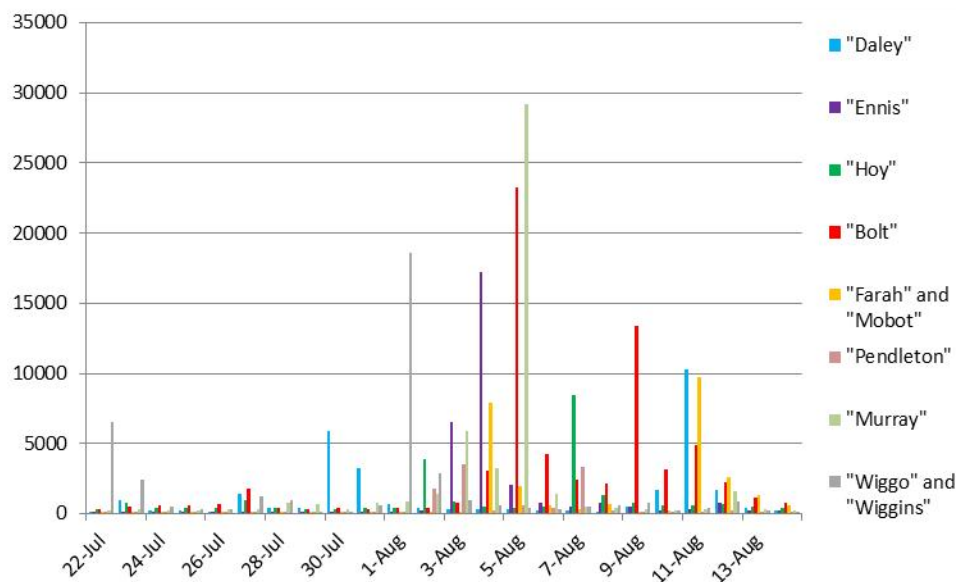


Figure 10 shows mentions heard regarding athletes between 22nd July and 14th August.

FIGURE 10



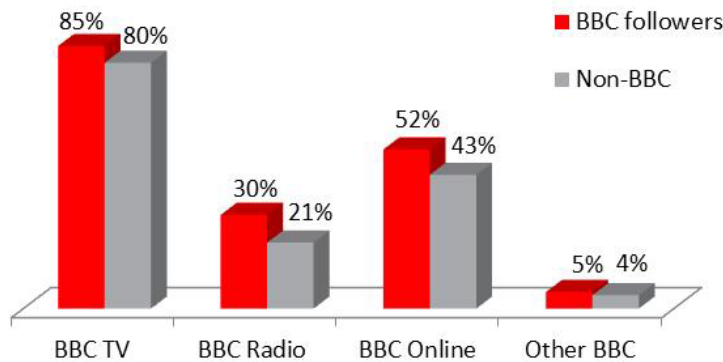
Focusing in on the specific sports, figure 10 shows the highest scorers in terms of mentions heard by the UK Twitter population on particular days. The chart highlights that heard mentions were at their highest volume among the sports when referring to “gymnastics” on July 30th. On that day the BBC also saw their third highest peak on BBC Three and fourth highest five-minute peak on one of the 24 dedicated BBC Red Button channels, during the Men’s Gymnastics Team Final for the Olympics. In close second was the “100m” on the day of the 100m final and third “diving” on the day Tom Daley won Bronze. Significantly, diving appears twice in this volume table, as does, rowing and cycling, indicating that these sports gained a particularly high exposure on Twitter for UK audiences on these specific days. Given that Tom Daley is a very active ‘Twitterer’ with 1,802,916 followers at present, it is not surprising that the ‘diving’ final came in third.

HOW SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCES OUR BEHAVIOUR

Excitement during the build-up to the Olympic Games was comparable across BBC social media followers and non-BBC followers, with 40% and 39% of the UK Twitter and Facebook populations saying they were excited. Likelihood to follow the London Olympic Games was also on par (54% amongst BBC followers, and 55% amongst non-BBC followers). The percentage that actually claimed to have followed all of the Olympics was significantly higher amongst BBC followers than non-BBC followers (18% vs. 12%)

A significantly higher proportion of BBC followers actually watched live coverage at home than had originally said they intended to, with a shift from 54% to 77%. Further to this, 85% of BBC followers claim to have watched coverage via BBC TV (BBC One, BBC Three, BBC HD, BBC Red Button including BBC special Olympic channels 1-24). This is significantly higher than the 80% of non-BBC followers. Across other BBC platforms (BBC radio and BBC online) the extent of use, as claimed in the post-wave survey, is also significantly higher amongst BBC followers than non-BBC.

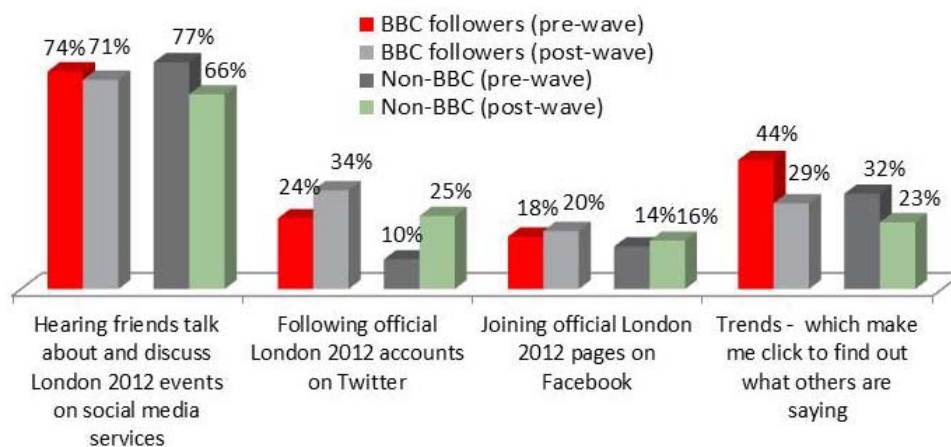
FIGURE 11, THE WAYS IN WHICH THE GAMES WERE FOLLOWED



After the Olympic Games, 40% of BBC followers rated the BBC’s coverage across all platforms (TV, radio, online etc.) as excellent (giving it a top score of 10 on a 1-10 scale rating). This is significantly higher than the 32% of non-BBC social media users, although this is still a high score for the BBC. Over three-quarters (77%) of BBC social media followers rated the standard of BBC coverage between 8 and 10.

The percentage of respondents who said that following official London 2012 Twitter accounts had impacted their decisions on what events to watch was significantly higher than the percentage who said they thought this might be the case before the Games started (amongst both BBC followers and Non-BBC social media users). The increase was higher amongst the latter, however (BBC followers: 24% to 35%; Non-BBC social media users: 10% to 25%). Drawing from both the pre-wave (conducted prior to the Olympics) and post-wave (conducted after the Olympics finished) data, it is clear that the majority of social media discussion and engagement around large scale events occurs during the event itself. A broadcaster’s (or any other company/brand) launch of a social media activity around a large-scale event can only account for the external influences on social media sites, such as Twitter, and the impact they may have, but cannot factor this into their own strategy. Twitter has the capacity to influence outside of the remit of the broadcaster; the influence of other forces beyond the control of the broadcaster cannot be overlooked during large-scale events – for example, the influence that the athletes themselves may have, or other influential figures from the sporting world who are not directly aligned with the BBC brand.

FIGURE 12



In terms of what events (including both the opening and closing ceremonies) respondents said they intended to watch before the Olympics began - and what they actually watched - we did see significant differences amongst both BBC and non-BBC followers. The biggest shift of all was the increase from intention to watch and actually watching the diving. Amongst BBC followers, the uplift was 40% (27% intending to watch and 67% actually watched). Though not quite as profound, the shift amongst non-BBC respondents was also significant at 30% (26% to 56%). Tom Daley’s final on the 10m platform took place on Saturday August 11th, and the viewing figures for this event, as taken from BARB (Broadcaster’s Audience Research Board) data, back-up our statistics. The diving final was one of the most watched events of the Olympic Games, with a peak audience of 6.6 million tuning into BBC Three, a further 1.6 million watching via the Red Button, and the rest viewing on BBC One, making a peak total of 15.9 million. August 11th was also the day of the

Olympics that gave diving the third highest Twitter reach, at 60%. This is a very clear example of how social media activity can drive behaviour. The social media activity around Tom Daley, who has 1.7 million followers on Twitter, clearly translated into an uplift in claimed and observed viewing of the event.

Now, thinking about perceptions of the BBC brand overall (both before and after the event) unsurprisingly those who follow BBC accounts on Twitter and Facebook are more likely to view the BBC favourably. When asked what they think about the BBC (scoring from 1 to 10, 1 being extremely unfavourable and 10 being extremely favourable) in the pre-wave survey, the percentage of BBC followers rating the BBC at 9 or 10 was 34%, and for non-BBC this was 31%. Interestingly, the increase in favourability, as we go into the post-wave, is the same for both groups, with an increase of 13%, giving scores of 47% and 44% respectively. When asked whether the BBC will make/have made the events of London 2012 feel like they belong to the whole nation, the positive upward shift from the pre-wave to the post-wave is consistent across both groups (BBC followers and non-BBC followers). This may suggest that the increase in positive general impressions towards the BBC were not driven by social media, but rather by a natural upsurge in good-feeling that surrounded the London 2012 Olympic Games. When we look deeper into the data, however, we can see clear evidence of the impact of social media.

For instance, 80% of BBC followers in the post-wave thought the BBC had provided high quality coverage of the Olympic Games. This is significantly higher than the pre-wave figure of 72%, and 41% of BBC followers strongly agreed that the BBC had provided high quality coverage, versus 33% of non-BBC social media users. The difference in the percentage of BBC and non-BBC followers in strong agreement from the pre to the post wave gives a 3% difference, in favour of BBC followers. Although this is not a major difference, it is clear that amongst those who follow the BBC on social media and like the brand there was a deeper belief in the broadcaster's success.

There has been a general uplift in perceptions of the BBC amongst BBC Twitter and Facebook followers from before to after the airing of London 2012. The only measure to buck this trend was 'consistency', which dipped in the post-wave analysis. Verbatim comments around what was liked least about the BBC's Olympic coverage do shed some light on this dip in consistency:

"Sometimes i felt they moved too quickly between sports and i seemed to miss a lot of the post event interviews."

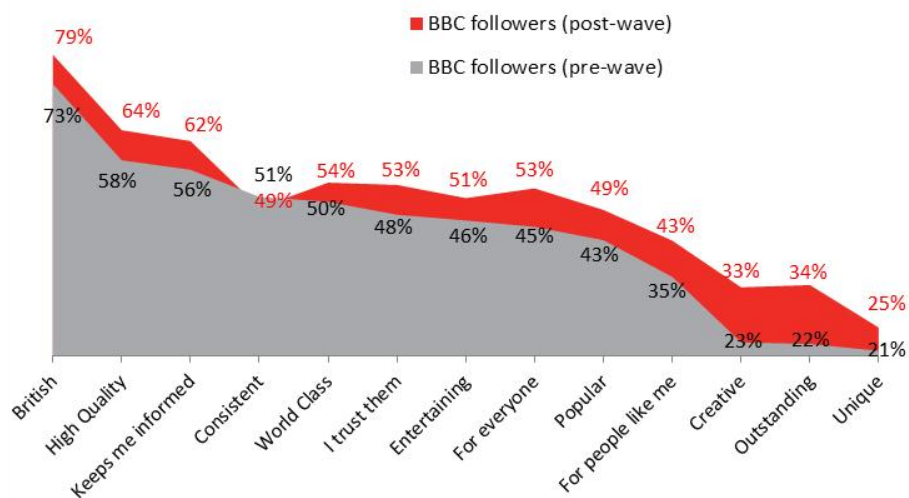
"The morning slot which focused a lot on the day before rather than the day ahead."

"Constant chopping and changing of channels"

"They did not always show the medal ceremonies."

"Changing sports on a channel so you had to keep pressing the red button to continue."

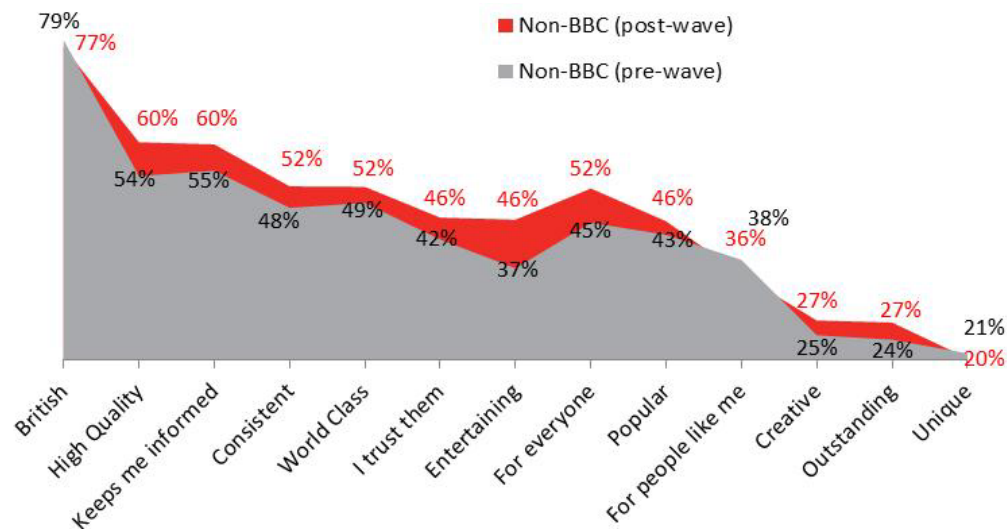
FIGURE 13



It is not surprising that there was an upward shift in the percentage saying that the BBC is "for everyone" amongst both BBC followers and non-BBC social media users (although only significant for the former) given the significant increase in the proportion of both groups in strong agreement that "BBC coverage will make/has made the events of 2012 feel like

they belong to the whole nation not just London". Generally, the upward shift is more prominent amongst BBC followers than amongst those who do not follow BBC accounts on Facebook and/or Twitter. In particular, the uplift for the lower scoring words from the pre-wave, such as 'Creative' and 'Outstanding' is more evident amongst BBC followers. The most prevalent upward shift amongst non-BBC social media users is around the idea that the BBC is 'Entertaining'.

FIGURE 14



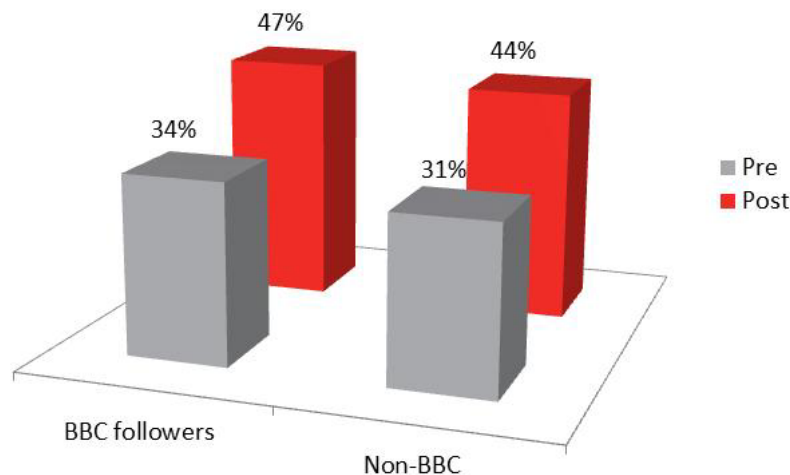
STRENGTHENING THE BBC BRAND

Will the London 2012 Olympic Games leave the BBC brand with a positive and lasting legacy? When asked whether or not the London 2012 Olympic Games will have a positive impact on the BBC brand in the short-term, three-quarters of BBC followers from the post-wave survey agreed that there would be a short term positive impact. This was an uplift of 21% from the pre-wave. The same is true for non-BBC social media users, with an uplift 16% from pre to post, with a final post-wave score of 69%. The percentage strongly agreeing that the BBC brand would be positively impacted in the short term rose significantly from the pre to post wave (BBC followers: 13% – 35%; Non BBC: 10%-29%). When asked about the long-term positive impact on the BBC brand, the results were also promising for the BBC. The difference in uplift between BBC followers and non-BBC followers from the pre to post is slightly bigger than the difference in scores for the short-term impact. The difference in the agreement uplift for BBC and non-BBC is 7%, and 5% for the 'strongly agree' score. This would suggest that for those who do love the BBC brand (and follow it on Twitter and Facebook) there has been a heightened sense of a positive long-term impact for the brand.

We asked whether the BBC brand was one they would like to participate/interact with, on a 1 to 10 scale, and the top two box shift in scores from the pre to post wave, amongst both surveyed groups, throws up some interesting results. The increase amongst BBC followers was 12% (20% to 32%), whilst for non-BBC social media followers there was an increase of 6% (18% to 24%) - double the percentage increase for BBC followers. This would suggest that social media interaction with the brand has inspired an increase in intention to participate with the brand at an overall level. The top box increase is also worth mentioning, with an increase of 9% amongst BBC followers (10% to 19%) and just 3% for non-BBC followers (11% to 14%). Although, to a slightly lesser extent, there is also a difference in top two box shift when we look at whether they would speak highly about the brand to others. This is important given the prevalence of both positive and negative brand interaction and discussion on social media services such as Twitter and Facebook. The increase from the pre to post wave is 13% amongst BBC followers (28% to 41%), whilst it sits at 8% amongst non-BBC social media users (28% to 36%). Interestingly, the pre wave figure of 28% is consistent across both groups.

One of the key measures that we wanted to understand was the overall impression that the UK population has of the BBC, and how this changed not just because of the coverage of the London 2012 Olympics, but also because of any enhanced favourability delivered through the BBC's social media activity. When we looked at the scores for overall impression, we noticed that those engaging with social media had a slightly higher impression of the brand than those who didn't engage with social media.

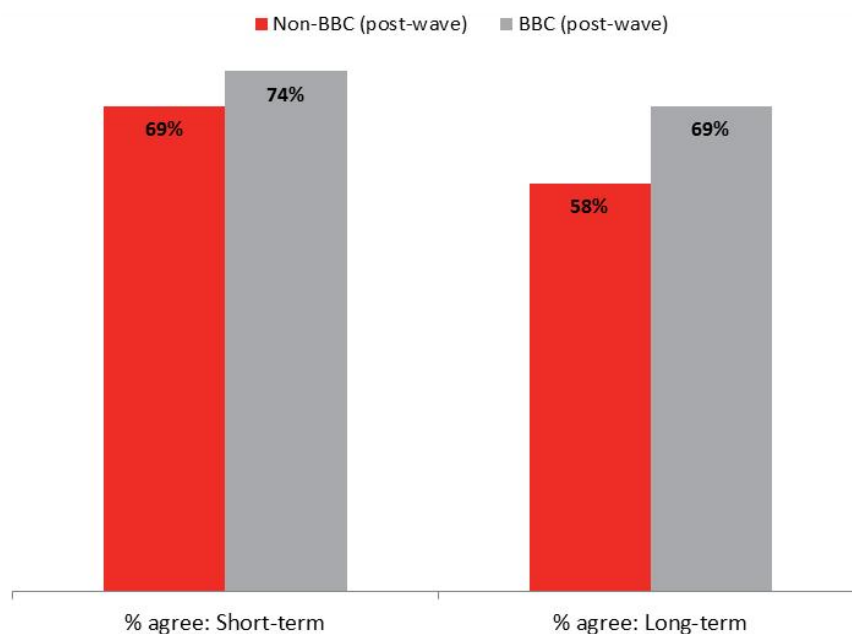
FIGURE 15



One of the main claims of social media marketers is that social media interaction can bring people closer to the brand, whether that be on Twitter, Facebook, or any other social media platform. We asked specifically on a 1 to 10 scale how “connected” people felt with the BBC brand, and again looked at the differences between the pre and post control and test groups. When we looked at the non-BBC social media followers, the uplift on brand connection was relatively small (an increase of 5% on top three box scores, pre versus post). However, amongst those who were engaged with the BBC on social media the uplift on top three box scores was 11% (9% on top box). We can clearly see that the usage of social media is driving an emotional connection amongst more people than would have been connected otherwise. The fact that the majority of that score comes from the top box scores indicates the depth of that connection. In fact, this is a trend seen across many of the analysis points where we see that the highest uplift is on the top box. This would seem to indicate that social media is having a positive effect overall, but most prominently on the higher end of commitment.

When we look at the positive short term effects on the BBC brand, we observed a 5% uplift between the control and test group (control group being non--BBC followers and the test group the BBC followers). When we studied the long term effect there was a much bigger 11% difference between the control and test groups, clearly demonstrating that social media has helped boost the BBC brand and will continue to drive brand favourability as part of the BBC’s London 2012 brand legacy.

FIGURE 16



THE IMPACT OF LONDON 2012 GAMES ON BBC AND SOCIAL MEDIA

It is clear that when brands like the BBC engage with their audience via social media channels (around a major public event) it has a positive impact on their overall brand – not just on specific attributes, but most importantly to build that all important emotional connection between the audience/consumer and the brand. Social media is a vital new weapon in the brand marketer’s armoury, the opportunities and benefits of which are only now being more fully understood. The key nuance that brands seeking to maximise the benefits of social media need to understand, however, is that what social media actually does best is encourage and solidify commitment and emotional connection amongst those already committed and connected to the brand. The BBC’s social media activity around the London 2012 Olympics built upon its already strong connection with the UK public (particularly those who follow it on social media) and further strengthened that relationship, thus helping to create a legacy effect that should be felt long after the athletes have all gone home. What is clear is that while social media may not make you that many new friends, if used well it can ensure that the friends you already have will like you even more, and will, perhaps, even be lifelong friends.

THE AUTHORS

Dan Brilot is Media Consulting Director, YouGov, United Kingdom.

Anita Penn is Research Manager - London 2012, BBC, United Kingdom.

Andy Morris is Group Director of New Products, YouGov, United Kingdom.

Angharad Houlden is Research Executive, YouGov, United Kingdom.