3 Things Brands Need to Know About the First Real ‘TikTok Olympics’

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From Copa América to the UEFA European Championship, it’s been a summer of sport to remember for advertisers and athletes alike.

With the Paris 2024 Summer Olympic Games in full swing, brands have another opportunity to claim a spot on the podium. However, if marketers want to go for gold, then they will need to lean more on platforms like TikTok as the tournament progresses, planning timely activations around culture.

In this episode of Yeah, That’s Probably an Ad, ADWEEK’s brand editor, Rebecca Stewart, and community editor, Luz Corona, are joined by Louise Johnson, CEO of sport and entertainment marketing agency Fuse.

She discusses how the Olympic Games have always been a platform for brands to talk to a global audience, but offers advice on how brands can limber up to activate in a more fragmented digital landscape.

Listen to the full episode here, on Spotify or Apple Podcasts, and read key takeaways below to learn more.

Brands Need to Gear Up for the First Real ‘TikTok’ Olympics

Since the Tokyo 2020/2021 Olympics, TikTok has grown substantially. With over 1 billion users globally, it is a crucial line for brands to reach Generation Z and millennials.

As an official partner of the Games, TikTok is empowering athletes to become creators by providing workshops and tutorials. They are also shooting behind-the-scenes content at the Olympic Village—from training videos to fashion hauls.

Relaxed International Olympic Committee rules now allow athletes to directly engage with fans, creating new types of heroes who leverage social media and are expected to be signed by brands post-Olympics.

Over the years, the Olympics audience has aged, so investing in platforms like TikTok is necessary to attract younger viewers, as is the introduction of lifestyle-oriented sports, like skateboarding and surfing, by the IOC.

We’re In a New Era of Olympic Brand Partnerships

The Olympic Partner (TOP) program has historically shifted from FMCG (fast-moving consumer goods) brands to B2B (business to business) in the past few cycles, but there has been a notable increase this time of younger consumer brands coming in, with a distinct emphasis on using athletes to highlight product benefits.

For example, peanut butter brand Whole Earth sponsoring Team GB and focusing on nutrition. There is also plenty of excitement around French brands like Louis Vuitton being featured as part of LVMH’s top tier sponsorship of the

Olympics, with the integration of luxury and sports appealing to younger audiences.

Johnson predicts that in the coming months and years, there will be an increase in collaborations between lifestyle brands and sports, such as Gucci’s big bet on a fashion-meets-soccer metaverse with help from U.K. footballer Jack Grealish.

By LA 2026, Sponsorship May Look a Little Different

Toyota, a longtime sponsor of the Olympics, is reconsidering its position, which Johnson explains is likely due to frustration with fund allocation to grassroots programs.

The car marque’s partnership is a significant financial commitment, and it’s natural for long-term partnerships to undergo reviews. She observed how the Olympics and Paralympic Games are unparalleled opportunities for brand storytelling, but there is also a distinct lack of branding at the events, which can be off-putting to brands.

Pointing to Wimbledon as an example of an event that has slowly introduced subtle branding without causing a problem, Johnson suggests that it may be time for the IOC to consider something similar to keep sponsors wanting more.

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