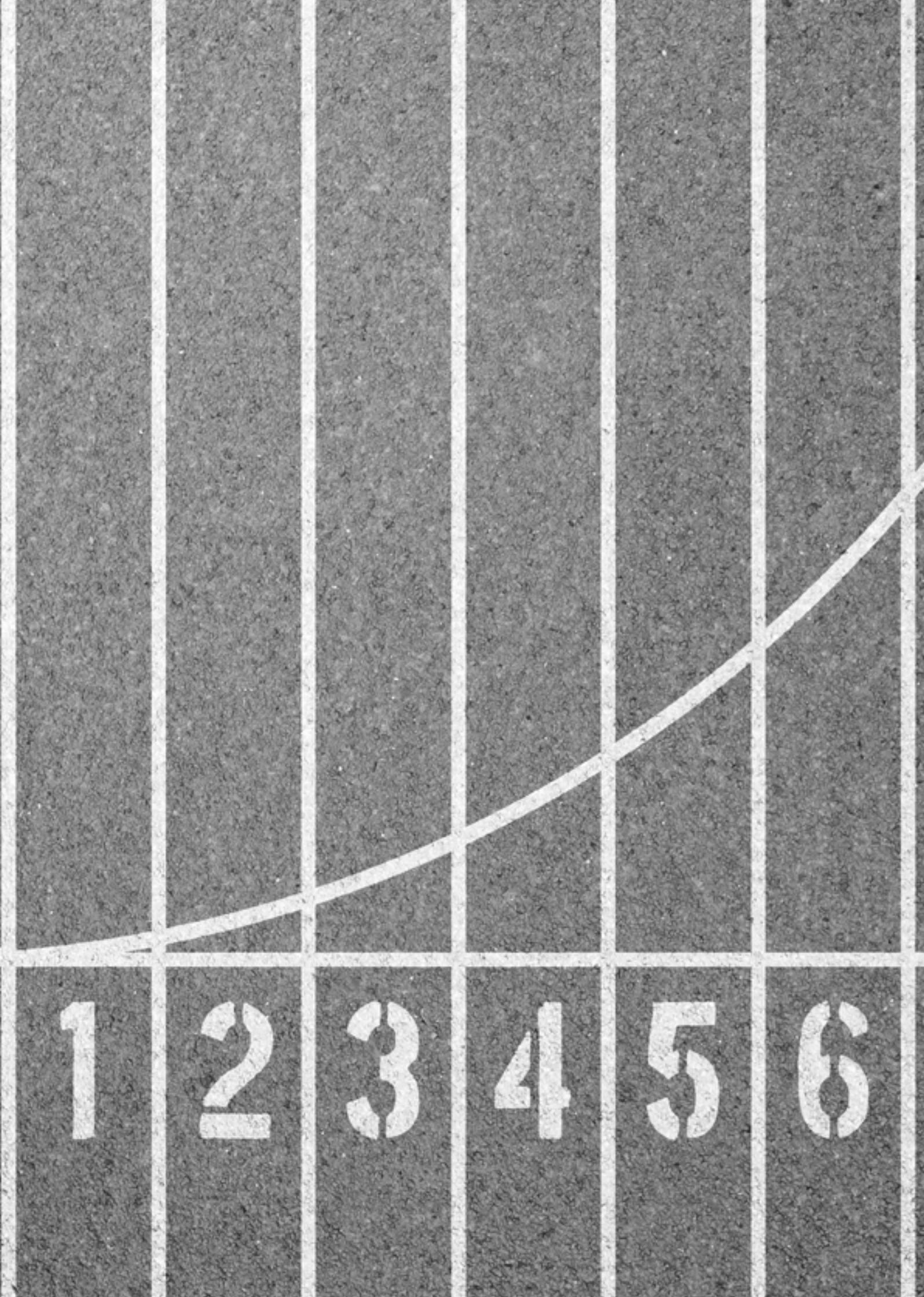




**SUMMER  
OF SPORTS  
2016**





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# INTRODUCTION

Wimbledon, UEFA Euro 2016, Rio 2016 Olympics and Rio 2016 Paralympics provided hours of entertainment value for sports fans. These three sporting events were an opportunity for brands to engage with consumers in stadiums or those following the action on multiple devices from across the globe.

Now in its third year, our annual Summer of Sports Brand Agility Index has tracked how well some of the world's biggest and most innovative brands have been able to deliver stories in motion around some of the world's most popular sports events.

So how did these brands do? Did they effectively leverage their sponsorship assets? Did any of them stand out from the crowd? There were of course winners and losers. Read on to see which brands served the most aces, scored the most goals, crossed the line first and most importantly engaged with their target audience with the greatest agility.

Please connect with me if you are interested in learning more about our Brand Agility Index and what it can do for your brand.

**MARCUS SOROUR**  
*UK General Manager*



# BAI OVERVIEW + EVENTS TRACKED

Between June and October 2016, WE tracked how well brands sponsoring Wimbledon, UEFA Euro 2016, Rio 2016 Olympics and Rio 2016 Paralympics performed against ten marketing and communications parameters.

Our findings prove that sporting events are the perfect platform for adaptive brand storytelling. Not only do they require brands to plan ahead, to understand the ebb and flow of particular events and map communications against them, but also require brands to be nimble in order to effectively respond to results in real-time with smart and engaging content. To do this, brands have to somewhat go against the norms of their 'always-on' content marketing, by focusing less on themselves and more on what is happening in the world around them.

To this extent, brands need to be able to flex their narrative and reflect what is happening in the 'real-world' whilst still remaining identifiably 'on-brand'. But if done right, brands can see a tremendous upswing in engagement. This is why those brands who are able to adapt their narrative to particular moments in time, are the ones that always succeed.

With this in mind, the WE Brand Agility Index was created to provide insight into how well a brand can flex its narrative by scoring their performance against the 10 parameters we believe are key to successful real-time marketing:

- ▶ Scalability allows us to examine how a brand simultaneously utilised multiple channels and touch-points to tell their brand story or message.
- ▶ Relevance looks at whether or not a brand's content or conversations were relevant to the opportunity in which they intervened.
- ▶ Right to Play looks at the bigger picture – examining whether brands chose categories to engage with that were a bridge too far from where they currently sit.
- ▶ Speed examines both the speed in which brands responded to comments and posts, and the pace in which they responded to relevant opportunities and moments in time.
- ▶ Engagement measures the extent to which a brand's content drove more than just a like or a share; and instigated dialogue and conversations relevant to the brand.
- ▶ Originality looks at the extent to which brands went above and beyond what you would expect of them, creating content that was both unique and outstanding.
- ▶ Standout analyses the extent to which a brand created impact and differentiation in those moments in time when many other competing brands were vying for consumers' attention.
- ▶ Personalisation aims to score brands against their ability to tailor their content and messages to specific groups or individuals; whether they took the time to respond to individuals' content and posts, or if their content allowed fans to respond with their own personal take on the story.
- ▶ Sentiment measures the extent to which branded content or brand engagement drove either a positive or negative swing in sentiment towards the brand.
- ▶ Differentiation looks at how well the content differentiates the brand from everyone else

# EVENT HIGHLIGHTS: TOTAL MENTIONS



## WIMBLEDON 2016

| BRAND             | WEEK 1 | WEEK 2 | TOTAL |
|-------------------|--------|--------|-------|
| Evian             | 1,670  | 2,291  | 3,961 |
| Haagen Dazs       | 161    | 614    | 775   |
| HSBC              | 2,927  | 2,162  | 5,089 |
| IBM               | 5,191  | 3,607  | 8,798 |
| Jaguar Land Rover | 755    | 557    | 1,312 |
| Lansons           | 374    | 432    | 806   |
| Lavazza           | 409    | 61     | 470   |
| Ralph Lauren      | 396    | 3,315  | 3,711 |
| Robinsons         | 2,275  | 2,522  | 4,797 |
| Slazenger         | 193    | 388    | 581   |
| Stella Artois     | 148    | 183    | 331   |



## UEFA EURO 2016

| BRAND             | WEEK 1 | WEEK 2 | WEEK 3 | WEEK 4 | FINAL WEEKEND | TOTAL  |
|-------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|---------------|--------|
| Adidas            | 17,000 | 19,000 | 7,665  | 4,240  | 3,471         | 51,376 |
| Carlsberg         | 20,000 | 25,000 | 16,000 | 17,000 | 8,235         | 86,235 |
| Coca-Cola         | 715    | 1,364  | 926    | 766    | 1,795         | 5,566  |
| Continental Tyres | 250    | 566    | 579    | 419    | 11            | 1,825  |
| Hisense           | 633    | 1,071  | 746    | 3,393  | 1,485         | 7,328  |
| Hyundai           | 964    | 1,559  | 478    | 495    | 202           | 3,698  |
| McDonald's        | 362    | 853    | 134    | 263    | 50            | 1,662  |
| Orange            | 2,219  | 7,856  | 1,436  | 777    | 498           | 12,786 |
| Socar             | 155    | 1,223  | 90     | 95     | 1,857         | 3,420  |
| Turkish Airlines  | 823    | 2,092  | 1,075  | 896    | 2,418         | 7,304  |



## RIO 2016 OLYMPICS (MAIN SPONSORS)

| BRAND                | PRE-EVENT | WEEK 1 | WEEK 2 | TOTAL  |
|----------------------|-----------|--------|--------|--------|
| <b>Coca-Cola</b>     | 6,279     | 4,600  | 6,526  | 17,405 |
| <b>Atos</b>          | 1,113     | 1,206  | 1,070  | 3,389  |
| <b>Bridgestone</b>   | 219       | 218    | 653    | 1,090  |
| <b>Dow Chemicals</b> | 974       | 1,490  | 1,528  | 3,992  |
| <b>GE</b>            | 933       | 1,047  | 1,593  | 3,573  |
| <b>McDonald's</b>    | 1,884     | 2,960  | 1,608  | 6,452  |
| <b>Omega</b>         | 1,112     | 2,015  | 944    | 4,071  |
| <b>P&amp;G</b>       | 1,008     | 1,497  | 1,719  | 4,224  |
| <b>Samsung</b>       | 13,000    | 3,948  | 3,687  | 20,635 |
| <b>Toyota</b>        | 745       | 493    | 376    | 1,614  |
| <b>Visa</b>          | 3,541     | 2,696  | 3,544  | 9,781  |



## RIO 2016 PARALYMPICS (MAIN SPONSORS)

| BRAND            | PRE-EVENT | WEEK 1 | WEEK 2 | TOTAL |
|------------------|-----------|--------|--------|-------|
| <b>Coca-Cola</b> | 132       | 111    | 69     | 312   |
| <b>Atos</b>      | 512       | 738    | 408    | 1,658 |
| <b>GE</b>        | 148       | 85     | 35     | 268   |
| <b>Omega</b>     | 28        | 27     | 9      | 64    |
| <b>Panasonic</b> | 80        | 38     | 12     | 130   |
| <b>P&amp;G</b>   | 60        | 117    | 8      | 185   |
| <b>Samsung</b>   | 297       | 522    | 209    | 1,028 |
| <b>Visa</b>      | 157       | 353    | 152    | 662   |
| <b>Nissan</b>    | 64        | 196    | 160    | 420   |
| <b>BP</b>        | 137       | 133    | 119    | 389   |



## RESULTS (LEAGUE TABLE ACROSS ALL EVENTS TRACKED)

| BRAND             | EVENT                | TOTAL SCORES |
|-------------------|----------------------|--------------|
| Orange            | UEFA Euro 2016       | 167          |
| Hyundai           | UEFA Euro 2016       | 138          |
| Hisense           | UEFA Euro 2016       | 129          |
| Coca-Cola         | UEFA Euro 2016       | 126          |
| Carlsberg         | UEFA Euro 2016       | 118          |
| Socar             | UEFA Euro 2016       | 116          |
| Samsung           | Rio 2016 Paralympics | 114          |
| Adidas            | UEFA Euro 2016       | 111          |
| Turkish Airlines  | UEFA Euro 2016       | 106          |
| Samsung           | Rio 2016 Olympics    | 103          |
| Coca-Cola         | Rio 2016 Olympics    | 94           |
| Visa              | Rio 2016 Olympics    | 94           |
| Visa              | Rio 2016 Paralympics | 93           |
| P&G               | Rio 2016 Paralympics | 89           |
| Coca-Cola         | Rio 2016 Paralympics | 88           |
| Nissan            | Rio 2016 Paralympics | 88           |
| Toyota            | Rio 2016 Olympics    | 85           |
| McDonald's        | UEFA Euro 2016       | 84           |
| P&G               | Rio 2016 Olympics    | 84           |
| Continental Tyres | UEFA Euro 2016       | 83           |
| GE                | Rio 2016 Olympics    | 77           |



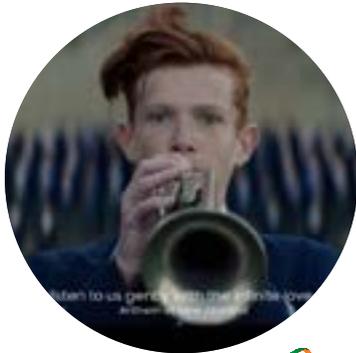
SAMSUNG



| BRAND             | EVENT                | TOTAL SCORES |
|-------------------|----------------------|--------------|
| BP                | Rio 2016 Paralympics | 74           |
| Atos              | Rio 2016 Olympics    | 73           |
| Atos              | Rio 2016 Paralympics | 71           |
| GE                | Rio 2016 Paralympics | 68           |
| McDonald's        | Rio 2016 Olympics    | 68           |
| Panasonic         | Rio 2016 Paralympics | 67           |
| Omega             | Rio 2016 Olympics    | 66           |
| Haagen Dazs       | Wimbledon 2016       | 65           |
| Bridgestone       | Rio 2016 Olympics    | 61           |
| Robinsons         | Wimbledon 2016       | 56           |
| IBM               | Wimbledon 2016       | 55           |
| Lansons           | Wimbledon 2016       | 54           |
| Lavazza           | Wimbledon 2016       | 53           |
| Ralph Lauren      | Wimbledon 2016       | 53           |
| Omega             | Rio 2016 Paralympics | 50           |
| Dow Chemicals     | Rio 2016 Olympics    | 50           |
| Evian             | Wimbledon 2016       | 50           |
| Jaguar Land Rover | Wimbledon 2016       | 46           |
| HSBC              | Wimbledon 2016       | 44           |
| Stella Artois     | Wimbledon 2016       | 43           |
| Slazenger         | Wimbledon 2016       | 39           |

# BRAND HIGHLIGHTS

## TOP PERFORMERS



### Samsung, Rio 2016 Olympics & Paralympics

Samsung was the clear winner of both the Olympic and Paralympic Games, thanks to a smart strategy that saw the brand combine both pre-planned and reactive content, supported by a good choice of memorable hashtags.

Twitter was a key platform as it allowed Samsung to insert itself into the most relevant and influential conversations. The brand also did well by being one of the few that mapped its communications to the common ebb and flow of engagement of such sporting events – the pre-event hype, the reactive communications that happen in real-time during the event, and the closing event big bang. This was not only the case with the Olympics but also continued through to the Paralympic Games.

**SAMSUNG**



The creation of 'Anthem' – a video which saw the brand combine the national anthems of competing nations into one song was a bold and smart move, as it allowed Samsung to align its brand to every national team and, in doing so, build on the national pride of every spectator. This piece of

content also allowed Samsung to score highly in engagement from the very beginning of the event and created a momentum that no other brand saw.

The brand quickly followed up the Anthem video with a series of reactive posts supported by its #dowhatyoucant in response to the results of key events and sports. This hashtag was a clever choice as again, like the Anthem video, it had a level of flexibility that could be applied to all participants – regardless of whether or not they won a medal.

Moving to the closing ceremonies, Samsung showed no sign of slowing down. In the last week of the event the top 300 most influential posts were all Retweets of Samsung's closing content that talked about countries who had defied their pasts to come to the games and win their nations' first ever medals. This emotionally-heavy content was pushed out far and wide and, as with its opening content, played to the hearts, minds and national pride of sports fans across the world.

However, it wasn't all gold medal standard communications from the Korean electronics giant. The brand's biggest downfall was the lack of deep engagement seen around its content. Whilst each piece published scored well in terms of engagement, because many of the subsequent interactions analysed were shallow engagement actions such as Likes or Retweets, this impacted Samsung's ability to drive deeper, more emotional responses and personalised comments from fans. Had Samsung been able to do this then it would have absolutely dominated every other brand.



**Hisense**



### **Hisense, UEFA Euro 2016**

The Euro 2016 football tournament was an interesting event to score from a brand communications point of view as we saw various brands focus a large percentage of their communications on driving engagement through competitions – ultimately creating a wave of high volume but ‘low meaning’ engagements such as Likes or Retweets. Given this, success at the Euro 2016 Championship was to come from being smart in what a brand did around its competitions – this is why Hisense, a relative unknown in the European market – scored so highly.

Cutting through the swell of competition engagements, Hisense’s #FeelEverything was the perfect strategy to not only bring its brand and product narrative to life, but to also bring the excitement taking place on the pitch into the online and social media world. This was a smart move as those watching the matches live did not have to be a Hisense fan or follower to use the #FeelEverything hashtag, whilst those watching the game at home on a Hisense TV could join in too.

But Hisense’s success didn’t just come from its transversal of the online and offline words. Much like Samsung, Hisense made the most of the pre-event hype by launching a piece of video content entitled ‘Hisense Quest’. Built around the story of a young boy who uses Hisense products to train for a football game, a narrative which played to the hearts and minds of spectators and players alike – all of whom could relate to the character in the video. By playing on emotions and pushing them front and centre vs. promoting their products (which were only subtly included) Hisense’s story was far more meaningful and relatable, and in turn drove higher levels of engagement.

Overall, it’s clear that Hisense’s approach of creating a campaign that would play to multiple different audiences, regardless of nationality or whether they were a player or spectator, truly elevated the brand above and beyond some of its competitors. In fact, Hisense was one of the few brands which, on the back of its campaign, drove a wave of unsolicited and unprompted comments from fans and followers who are now more likely to consider and even purchase a Hisense TV.



### Orange, UEFA Euro 2016

For the Euro 2016 tournament the telecoms giant developed a strategy that not only had the idea of building on national pride at its core, but also supported this main engagement with a strong focus on reactive, ad hoc content activations that further endeared the brand to customers and non-customers alike.

At its heart, Orange's strategy was built for fan engagement. Whilst on the surface, its #OrangeSponsorsYou hashtag may seem very brand centric, it was tied to a bigger competition mechanic where Orange would light up the Eiffel Tower in the national colours of the winning entrant.

This is yet another proof point that building on national pride around sports is the perfect strategy to drive consistently high levels of conversations and engagement. In fact, it is the main reason why Orange remained at the top of the league table over the tournament's four-week period. Whilst Orange clearly paid to promote the competition, as seen by the wave of Retweets concentrated around specific periods of time, we saw far more personalised Tweets from fans and followers than any other competition. This shows that Orange's campaign resonated so deeply with consumers that they had to say something in response.

But Orange's success wasn't just down to this specific engagement tactic. The brand also scored highly in its ability to personalise its engagement to specific individuals and respond with highly tailored tweets – something that many of the other sponsors failed to do.

The only downside to Orange's campaign was its sole focus on Twitter. Whilst the brand's conversational approach to responding in real-time leant itself more to this platform, with some refocus, the Eiffel Tower campaign could also have worked extremely well on both Facebook and Instagram.

# BRAND HIGHLIGHTS

## ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT



### Stella Artois, Wimbledon 2016

Stella Artois is a brand that has a substantial heritage in its home country of France but not in the UK, where the brand is not seen as a 'premium' drink. With this in mind, its decision a few years back to sponsor one of the most prestigious sports event in the British calendar was both crazy but also, so right. Here the brand had an opportunity to align its narrative to all that Wimbledon stands for and, in turn, help reposition Stella Artois as a premium brand.

Despite a promising start in 2014 however, with its campaign focusing on telling the stories of the craftsmen and women who make Wimbledon run smoothly, the brand has since waned in its ability to deliver a 'premium' narrative.

Its 2016 campaign saw the brand mix together a few different narratives, both of which failed to deliver the outcome the brand needs. The 360 interactive experience that allowed fans to 'experience' Wimbledon without

setting foot on the court was an innovative play, but it failed to have a decent mechanic built in to ensure what people experienced virtually could then be translated to engagement across social media. The brand's second push, a TV advert entitled 'never heard of it' which played to the fact that once upon a time both Wimbledon and Stella Artois were little known brands, was not supported with enough follow up content to ensure the story stayed alive.

The final nail in the coffin for Stella Artois was how poorly the brand scaled its communications. Across multiple platforms many fans of Wimbledon were proactively posting images of themselves at home drinking Stella Artois, whilst watching the tennis. However, despite the wave of posts appearing online Stella Artois not only failed to respond, but they also failed in another way by making no effort to draw all of the disparate conversations under one theme that could have helped the brand reach its desired 'premium' status.





### McDonald's, Rio 2016 Olympics

McDonald's, much like Cadbury's and Coca-Cola, faced a wave of criticism across most of its digital and social channels throughout both the Olympic and Paralympic games. Many fans, whether wrongly or rightly, complained that having a fast food restaurant as a major global sponsor for the world's most prestigious sporting event was giving out the wrong message. Whether this was misguided negativity or not, and regardless of if these critics took into consideration the fact that McDonald's does offer 'healthier options' on its menu, this was the reputation and narrative that McDonald's faced coming into both of the games.

Despite the wealth of stories at its disposal, including a heart-warming tale about the company sending a group of children from its Ronald McDonald House charity to the games to work behind the scenes, 80 per cent of brand references contained negative comments towards the company's role as global sponsor. With no visible replies against any of these comments it was clear that that the brand had no response strategy in place.

This lack of response was further compounded by the brand's choice of priority content – in particular the McNuggets TV spot, which compared McDonald's food to an Olympic sporting event. Whilst the way in which it was delivered played to McDonald's bigger narrative, it also played into the opinions of its critics – fast food and sport should never be mixed together.





### Slazenger, Wimbledon 2016

If there is one sporting event that Slazenger should own it is Wimbledon. The brand has been the official provider of tennis balls and apparel for the event for many years – the brand and its Wimbledon story is well established with the event's fans. However, during the 2016 event, and in the face of stiff competition from both Haagen Dazs and IBM, Slazenger needed to up its game.

Despite having such a strong history with the event, Slazenger struggled to score well across the board with very little content and very little engagement. The brand started the event with a competition run in conjunction with sportswear retailer Sports Direct. However, beyond this competition, the brand didn't do much to successfully engage audiences.

Competition aside, unfortunately, retweets are the only engagement that the brand received throughout the first week of the event, due in large part

to the fact that the brand didn't make much effort themselves to do anything else. A lot of people posted on Instagram using Slazenger as a hashtag, obviously because the tennis balls and clothing were Slazenger branded, but we didn't see anything original or that stood out coming from the brand itself around the event.

The brand clearly missed the opportunity to build stories around its heritage or the extent in which its products were used during the event. As a result, Slazenger's campaign felt like it missed any sort of consumer hook, and like the brand just expected that people would talk about them because of their association with the game.



# KEY INSIGHTS

## FAN FIRST STRATEGIES

**Whilst it might seem like an obvious strategy, this was something that many brands failed to capitalise on. Sporting events are obvious moments where a sports fan's enthusiasm and excitement levels are at their peak. Therefore, the ability to leverage this for a brand's own good must be a key strategy. If exploited properly it not only brings fans' more credible voices into the discussion, but it also allows brands to tap into an instantly scalable audience.**

For sporting events Twitter is often the platform of choice for most fans due to its real-time conversation tracking. However, with more and more people spending time on sites such as Instagram, sharing images of what's happening at any given moment in time, brands can tap into this quite easily with a simple call to action, to share relevant content wrapped in a brand message or hashtag.

This strategy worked well for Wimbledon sponsors Evian and Haagen Dazs, who also scored highly in engagement, sentiment and scalability because they focused on the fans vs. the players. This ensured that the fans had a more invested interest in helping fuel the conversation further because they were actually part of it. From Haagen Dazs' point of view, the use of the hashtag #loseyourself as a call to action to have fans post images of themselves watching the games with ice cream in hand, meant that it built on its current narrative around indulgence, whilst having the flexibility to attach itself to sport.

Interestingly this was a strategy that worked well for Coca-Cola during the UEFA Euro 2016 football tournament, but not so much for the Olympic games. Despite many fans questioning why a high sugar drink manufacturer should sponsor sporting events such as the Olympics and Euros 2016, Coca-Cola also leveraged the power of Instagram to insert themselves into fans' conversations, highlighting themselves as the product that fans enjoyed whilst watching sport. Whilst this may not shift the Coca Cola brand narrative any further forward, it helped them become part of the conversation and be where the fans are.

With the International Olympics Committee enforcing strict guidelines on what marketing and communications both sponsors and non-sponsors could undertake, a fan first strategy was one that could clearly help navigate this communication minefield, whilst also positioning a brand as a facilitator.

UK furniture manufacturer and Team GB sponsor, DFS, received a fair amount of attention for its fan first strategy, played out through its #GreatBrits campaign. The hashtag was initially used to bridge between DFS' own narrative relating to the high quality workmanship of its staff and the same quality of workmanship needed to be an athlete at the top of their game. This phrasing also allowed the hashtag to be used in many fan-owned celebratory social posts, thereby appearing to unite people across the nation. This same strategy also worked for Herbalife who, through the use of their #IamIndia hashtag, allowed themselves to be part of every celebratory post for Team India athletes.





## LESS OF THE PLANNED, MORE OF THE REAL-TIME

**The beauty of social media, particularly of real-time platforms such as Twitter, is that it generates a wealth of insight into the stories that fans and followers are igniting and gathering around. From this, brands have an extensive pot of creative ideas and opportunities through which they can elevate the visibility of their brand, responding and, in the context of our Brand Agility Index, scoring well in terms of speed, personalisation, engagement and stand out. To succeed in this, the challenge for brands is around the ability to spot emerging trends as they happen, and to be able to take action in a timely manner. Yet this is something many of the larger brands failed to achieve.**

For apparel brands such as Speedo and Adidas, the opening ceremony and first round of Olympic events presented a tremendous opportunity for 'in the moment' storytelling. Both brands saw a wealth of user-generated commentary around their brands, yet both remained somewhat silent in the face of the potential to take their brand stories further. Speedo, in particular, was one of the most referenced brands in the early stages of the Olympics games, thanks to the enthusiasm of many of those fans watching the swimming events who were commenting that the size of swimmers' Speedo's seemed a lot smaller than previous years. However, despite the growing references to #SpeedoWatch, the brand chose not to respond and missed out on scoring high in engagement and personalisation.

The same could be said for Gatorade, who received countless (and mostly humorous) unique engagements, which positioned the drink as an energy solution, but again failed to capitalise on the increase in consumer interest by not responding.

The fact is that very few brands leveraged this strategy effectively. Whilst Toyota and Visa both shifted to a strategy of real-time updates, they missed out on originality and standout by responding in a way that was neither creative nor engaging. If you are to celebrate an athlete's success, you need to do so in a way that is true to your brand narrative, effectively bringing it to life. Simply posting congratulations doesn't do much for brand affirmation – it feels like a safe way to do it.

A standout brand for recognising athletes in a unique way was Adidas UK, which rewarded medal-winning Adidas sponsored athletes with its #Futurecraft 3D printed shoe range. Even supermarket brand, Aldi's #HomeGrownHeroes campaign made good use of the message that quality athletes need quality and wholesome food to perform. Meanwhile under Armor's #RuleYourself hashtag was another example of a brand embracing uniqueness when congratulating fans.

One brand that truly lived in the moment was IBM around its sponsorship of the Wimbledon tennis tournament. As a long-standing technology partner, IBM has already learnt the knack of using real-time data to create new and engaging brand stories. However, for Omega and Atos, the official timekeeper and infrastructure partners for the Olympics and Paralympics, having access to a wealth of real-time data did not help them drive a wealth of brand dialogue, simply because both brands failed to turn data into creative content opportunities.



## DEVELOP A STRONG ADAPTIVE NARRATIVE

**How a brand approaches storytelling around a sporting event clearly impacts success. Brands need to tread a fine line between pushing their own narrative and aligning their stories to that of the event, and the athletes involved.**

This is something that Stella Artois struggled with during this year's Wimbledon tennis tournament. Despite having been a sponsor for several years the brand missed opportunities to extend its TV advertising into social engagement. Whilst its 'never heard of it' ad poked fun at itself in the context that both Wimbledon and Stella Artois used to be little known brands, the brand did not translate that into engaging content that extended the story further and directed existing conversations to the brand.

For brands such as McDonald's and Coca-Cola, having an adaptive brand narrative could have helped them succeed in the face of negative criticism. Both suffered similar criticism to that which they faced during the London 2012 Olympics – with many questioning why high sugar and fast food brands were sponsoring the world's leading sporting events. In the face of this no efforts were made to bridge towards a more 'healthy living' story – when in fact both brands do have something to say on the matter.

Bridging to a story much different to your normal communications was something that Olympics sponsor Visa did extremely well. Rather than talk about how it had enabled electronic payments within the athlete's village, Visa focused on a much more emotional story. The release of its 'Swim' video, which told the story of refugee athlete Yusra Mardini, who helped push a boat of refugees to shore, was a risky strategy but provided an enormous emotional connection with fans and resonated well with the general public.

Of course, successful storytelling depends both on how the story is told and how well a brand can contextualise it to a specific moment in time. Whilst there is a saying 'if it ain't broke, don't fix it' P&G's re-use of its 'Thank You Mum' campaign (which it has used across multiple sporting events

since the London 2012 Olympics) was met with mixed success. On the one hand, by keeping the same narrative, P&G was able to tell the stories of both Olympic and Paralympic athletes. However while many fans commented that as a story it pulled on the heartstrings, overall it lacked enough originality to drive the same engagement and impact it previously achieved.

The same could be said for infrastructure providers Atos, Dow Chemicals and GE. All of these brands played a key role in terms of ensuring their event ran smoothly, but none was able to tell this story in a new and unique way. Subsequently their content failed to drive impact and almost disappeared without a trace.

Luckily some brands did get the adaptive narrative approach right. Aldi in particular stood out from the crowd with its #HomeGrownHeroes campaign, which built on its narrative as a provider of affordable and healthy foods, whilst allowing the supermarket chain to bridge to the narrative around athletes – both feeding them and also celebrating their successes. But it was how both Visa and Nissan adapted their narrative from the Olympics to the Paralympics that should be applauded.

The challenge for any brand that sponsored both events was to find the right balance in narratives when talking in a Paralympic context versus an Olympic one. Whilst brands should have continued with the same stories as the Olympics (an athlete is an athlete regardless of disability) it was also key that they celebrated the achievements of the athletes in terms of the many challenges they had overcome to be where they are today. This is why Visa's continued promotion for refugee and Paralympic athletes through the over-arching message of "Stand for Acceptance" did so well. It aligned perfectly to the Paralympic narrative and as a result was shared across social media by a wide range of fans. Nissan's approach also felt empathetic, whilst simultaneously engaging with fans in a humorous and quirky manner, to help stimulate inspiration and engagement.

Yet again however, Samsung ruled supreme via fresh messaging tactics and personalised content for the Paralympics. Their School of Rio campaign was cleverly adapted, incorporating Paralympic athletes and adding elements of humour to keep things light and playful. They turned the Paralympics on its head with their athlete blogger campaign – which called for athletes to tell us their stories through their eyes/their Samsung devices, resulting in audiences being taken on an authentic journey with the athletes – where Samsung was purely the enabler of this journey.

## ONLINE AND OFFLINE MUST CO-EXIST

**It goes without saying that in the context of sporting events, brands need a communications and marketing strategy that allows them to transverse both the online and offline worlds. With so much action happening 'offline', the challenge for brands was to engage with their audiences and fans in a way that allowed them to be part of the conversation, once it left the track or pitch and appeared online.**

This approach worked well for Adidas who struggled in the first few weeks of the Euros 2016 to ignite chatter. This was primarily down to a lack of engaging content and from what we could see, a huge focus on competitions. However, once the brand changed its approach and focused its efforts on driving conversations both on and off the pitch, it began to score well in both engagement and personalisation. Its #firstneverfollows hashtag allowed fans to drive their own discussions around each teams' performance in the tournament, whilst keeping the brand at the forefront. Moreover, because the brand was tapping into viewers' passions for the sport, they were able to drive much higher levels of engagement.

This approach was in stark contrast to Carlsberg, who also focused primarily on driving engagement through competitions until the very last week.

Whilst competitions are a good mechanic for maintaining high levels of mentions, they often drive 'low engagement' responses such as Likes or Retweets. This in turn impacts overall levels of consumer engagement, meaning that brands often miss out on being able to drive deeper responses from their fans.

To this point, Hyundai's 'fanzone' strategy was an interesting and highly effective approach. By hosting 'viewing areas' for the games, they not only pulled fans into highly branded zones, but this helped the activity spill from real life into the virtual world, with Hyundai positioned as the 'facilitator' of these fan moments. Every time a fan or consumer posted online they did so with the Hyundai hashtag included. This in turn meant that with limited effort at all, Hyundai became part of many other conversations.

Orange, who were the winners of the Euros 2016 Brand Agility Index drove a similar strategy right through the tournament. But they not only built on fans' passion for football, the brand also built on fans' own passion for their national teams. Through the simple mechanic of running a competition to feature one national teams' colours on the Eiffel Tower, they ensured high levels of engagement and brand references across the duration of the competition.



## IT'S NOT ABOUT YOU

Sponsoring a global sporting event is definitely one of the greatest opportunities a brand will ever have to push their story in front of a vast audience. However, in these instances, we often see many brands forget that in these events it's about the athlete and not the brand. Therefore, anything that could be seen as blatant commercialism could jar with audiences whose focus was on their national team or favourite athlete(s). To be a success and to ensure they drive sufficient engagement, brands need a much broader narrative and to use smart story-telling that is more brand-purpose inspired, than product inspired. With this approach brands can still be visible, but be seen as a facilitator of great stories vs. simply great products.

Whilst P&G could be commended for launching a CSR campaign at the Paralympics with UK retailer Sainsbury's (where a percentage of the purchase price of certain products would be donated to the British Paralympian Association), this approach drew criticism from many who simply saw it as a mechanic for simply trying to sell more products. This in turn impacted engagement and sentiment scores, limiting the brand's ability to score high.

This is why Samsung did well by rarely featuring products in its stories. Yes, they donated limited edition Samsung Galaxy S7 Edge phones to athletes, but it was the brand's 'School of Rio' content that helped them drive more engagement, relevancy and standout. Without the focus on the product, it was all about the athletes' stories.

Jaguar took an interesting approach for its sponsorship of Wimbledon, as its main focus was to promote its new F-Pace SUV. Whilst the use of VR to put fans into the driving seat secured engagement at the event, it meant that it struggled to transition this experience into social engagement. On the flipside, IBM built stories around the data its technology was generating vs. a specific technology story. The 'Slamtracker' in particular has been very successful in contextualising the performance of players to overall outcomes of the matches. This allowed fans and viewers to add their own commentary on their social media platforms, and in doing so also referenced IBM. IBM technology was at the core of the story, but not the heart of the conversations. This is why the brand succeeded, where Jaguar failed.



## BE IN IT FOR THE LONG RUN

**Brands also need to consider the agility and longevity of their messages particularly when engaging with a sporting event that runs over multiple weeks. Whilst living in the moment will often drive strong levels of engagement, brands also need to be mindful of the ebb and flow of the event so that they can structure content distribution accordingly.**

This holds true for those brands sponsoring both the Olympics and Paralympics events. In this instance brands needed to tell a consistent story across both events. This is why we saw many of the main sponsors extend their campaigns from the Olympics and apply them to the Paralympics. To ensure relevancy and consistent engagement, brands such as Coca-Cola, Nissan, P&G and Samsung all did well in taking their respective campaigns forward. Nissan's #DoltForUs hashtag continued to score well for the brand and received positive engagement, as well as Coca-Cola's #ThatsGold. P&G's 'Thank You Mum' campaign also appeared to receive much more positive engagement than it did in the Olympics. However, an element which lacked with these three brands was personalising their content for its use. There wasn't a big effort to make their Paralympics content relevant, and on the whole it just felt like an extension or left-overs of their already used Olympics campaigns.





**What can you learn from us?  
Get in touch to find out more.**

**Marcus Sorour**

*General Manager UK at WE Worldwide*

[msorour@we-worldwide.com](mailto:msorour@we-worldwide.com)