

The 2008 Olympic Games: The Online Fan

With the first “online Olympics” in the record books — the records *broken* are notable. More than 10,500 athletes representing 205 countries participated, with 87 nations taking home medals from at least one of the 302 medal events. One-hundred and thirty-two Olympics records were broken and the athletes set 43 new world records. And, of course, Michael Phelps set a few bars of his own.

But enough about those records...what did we mere mortals do online over the course of the games? The interest in China, continued improvements in technology and the prevalence of content on a 24/7 basis drove high online “participation” among U.S. fans during these Olympic games as measured in online media usage.

A Formidable Destination Site Meets the Power of the Portal

NBC’s Olympics Web site attracted strong audiences throughout the games. As the official U.S. broadcast partner of the event, it delivered unique content and video—both live and replay. On a pure audience level, though, Yahoo’s Olympics section drove more traffic than NBC’s site and AOL posted strong numbers as well, though well behind NBC. The success of the portals isn’t totally surprising, as they leveraged large existing audiences—typically in the range of 80 million unique visitors per week in Yahoo’s case—to drive traffic to their Olympics-related content. From an engagement perspective though—an analysis of pages per person and time spent—the NBC site enjoyed a strong lead. During the first full week of competition, visitors to NBC’s site spent twice as much time and looked at three times more content when compared to Yahoo’s audience, with even a larger lead over AOL’s metrics. The numbers during week two were slightly closer in Yahoo’s case, but overall, visitors to the NBC site appeared to be the most engaged throughout the games.

Name	August 11-17			August 18-24		
	Unique Audience (in 000’s)	Pages Per Person	Minutes Per Person	Unique Audience (in 000’s)	Pages Per Person	Minutes Per Person
Yahoo Olympics	18,057	7.3	8:41	18,974	8.4	9:01
NBC Olympics	17,925	25.5	17:34	15,938	24.1	15:24
AOL Olympics	6,225	3.2	3:16	4,169	3.0	3:01

Source: Nielsen Online, U.S. NetView Custom Analysis

A number of general news and sports publishers, along with the official Web site of the games, joined Yahoo, NBC and AOL news in attracting online fans.

Name	Aug. 11-17 Unique Audience (in 000's)	Aug. 18-24 Unique Audience (in 000's)
1. Yahoo Olympics	18,057	18,974
2. NBC Olympics	17,926	15,938
3. AOL Olympics	6,225	4,169
4. ESPN Olympics	3,367	2,447
5. Sports Illustrated Olympics	3,297	2,365
6. Beijing 2008	3,283	2,134
7. New York Times Olympics	1,813	1,813
8. USA Today Olympics	1,213	982

Source: Nielsen Online, U.S. NetView, Custom Analysis

An Online Word from our Sponsors

U.S. Olympics team sponsors –Nielsen Online tracked 23 with Online advertising –drove 9.9 billion online ad impressions during the games, including the days leading up to the opening ceremonies (August 4 –August 24, inclusive). During the period, U.S. Olympic team sponsors accounted for more than 8% of online ad impressions. And while these companies are typically active online advertisers, this represented a 30% increase compared to the previous three week period. Within the top 10, AT&T, General Motors and Bank of America each accounted for more than 1 billion impressions.

Sponsor	Ad Impressions (in 000's)
1. AT&T Corporation	2,428,308
2. General Motors	1,906,210
3. Bank of America	1,027,458
4. Nike	846,083
5. General Electric	823,878
6. McDonald's	718,692
7. Johnson & Johnson	382,295
8. Coca-Cola	375,055
9. Visa International	311,062
10. Hilton Hotels	309,222

Source: Nielsen Online, AdRelevance, Aug. 4- Aug. 24, 2008

Armchair Olympians

Online fans were buzzing throughout the games and the athletes provided no shortage of fodder. Not surprisingly, swimmer Michael Phelps led in mentions—with five times more buzz than sprinter Usain Bolt of Jamaica—but the conversation included a broad range of athletes, sports and countries. While analysis of buzz around gold medal athletes showed significant

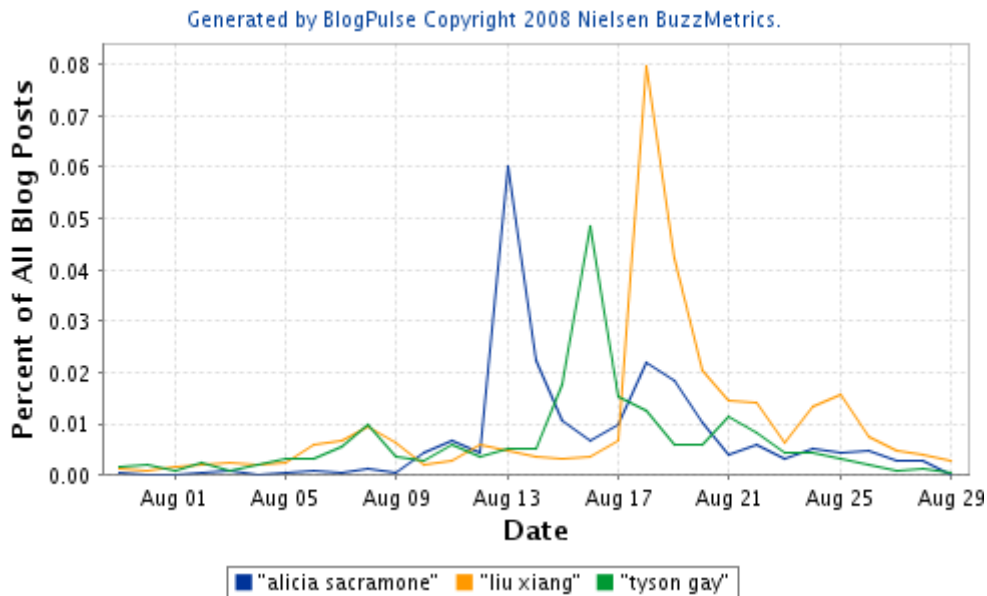
discussion of swimmers, gymnasts and basketball players, a few more niche sports surfaced as well— shooting and fencing for example.

Athlete	Sport	Country	Index
1. Michael Phelps	Swimming	USA	100
2. Usain Bolt	Track & Field	Jamaica	20
3. Shawn Johnson	Gymnastics	USA	10
4. Nastia Liukin	Gymnastics	USA	8
5. Kobe Bryant	Basketball	USA	8
6. Roger Federer	Tennis	Switzerland	7
7. LeBron James	Basketball	USA	6
8. Jason Lezak	Swimming	USA	6
9. Rafael Nadal	Tennis	Spain	6
10. Alain Bernard	Swimming	France	5
11. Kerri Walsh	Beach Volleyball	USA	4
12. Ryan Lochte	Swimming	USA	4
13. Abhinav Bindra	Shooting	India	3
14. He Kexin	Gymnastics	China	3
15. Misty May-Treanor	Beach Volleyball	USA	3

Source: Nielsen Online, BuzzMetrics, Aug. 8 - Aug. 24, 2008

The Agony of Defeat

Of course not all stories end with gold, and certainly the majority of competitors do not even expect to medal. A few athletes who entered the games with high hopes, though, instead encountered a high profile injury or defeat along the way, notably China’s Lui Xiang who withdrew from track & field competition with a tendon injury.



Rooting for the Home Team

From the opening ceremonies to inspiring venues, China hosted an amazing event, and Chinese Internet users were, not surprisingly, engaged. Based on data as reported by ChinaRank, a large-scale Web site ranking platform hosted by the Internet Society of China, and a Nielsen Online Partner, approximately 85% of all users who went online in China during the games viewed Olympics content. An average of 62 million unique browsers viewed Olympics content each day throughout the period, and over the course of the games, users in China viewed more than 11.4 billion pages of content as tracked across 200 Olympics-related Web sites. While the Beijing2008 site was popular in China, the major portals enjoyed significant traffic during the games.

Name	August 8 - August 24 Average Daily Unique Browsers (in 000's)
Sina Olympics	30,944
Tencent Olympics	17,894
Sohu Olympics	12,492
163 Olympics	6,644
ifeng Olympics	1,593

Source: ChinaRank (www.chinarank.org.cn)

2000 Hours of Live Online Video

More than 1.2 million unique visitors per day visited the NBC URL that hosted video, with spikes during the work week, specifically at noon. These findings represent a useful baseline for future measurement and it will be interesting to track results in years to come to see how technology, time differences and general media habits affect the results. For now, though, online video use did not appear to negatively affect TV viewing, with Nielsen Media Research reporting record viewing throughout the games.

Next up: London 2012

When the Athens games closed in 2004, we could not have predicted the level of online video, content, advertising and buzz that would surround the Beijing games. And while the Michael Phelps story certainly helped drive interest, it is amazing to think that the breadth of video and the platform for discussion barely existed in 2004, and today there are more than 5,500 Michael Phelps-related videos on YouTube and he has more than 1 million "friends" on Facebook. The Beijing games have set a new bar for online media, but something tells us we'll break through it in London.

About Nielsen Online

Nielsen Online, a service of The Nielsen Company, delivers comprehensive, independent measurement and analysis of online audiences, advertising, video, consumer-generated media, word of mouth, commerce and consumer behavior, and includes products previously



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