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media into marketing communications comes primarily from the popular business press (Faulds & Mangold, 2009). Because the study of social media is still in its infancy, academics and practitioners alike are striving to understand the effects of consumer-to-consumer conversations in the digital marketplace (Martin, 2012).

Application of the London 2012 social media policy and its counterpart IOC Rule 40 produced odd and unintended results, calling into question its effectiveness as an ambush marketing strategy going forward. Enforcing social media regulations specifically directed at competing Olympic athletes, in particular, is an ambush strategy that was never as visible as it was in London. Several American track athletes, some sponsored by Nike, took to Twitter using the hashtag #wedemandchange to voice frustration with Rule 40's prohibitions on acknowledging their personal sponsors at the pinnacle of their athletic accomplishments (Belson, 2012). The IOC was forced to respond during the height of the Games, by stating "we absolutely would not stop the athletes from making their views known" (Belson, 2012, p. 1). A second example of alleged ambush marketing was Beats Electronics' recognizable headphones, Beats by Dre, worn prominently by American and British Olympic athletes prior to competition. Several British athletes received their own unique versions of the headphones prior to the start of the Games. Footballer Jack Butland tweeted "Love my GB Beats by Dre," while swimmer Laura Robson also took to Twitter to thank Dre for the gift but the post was later removed (Sweney, 2012).

With each successive Olympic Games, event organizers have implemented stricter measures to ensure that official sponsors are protected from ambush marketing (McKelvey & Grady, 2008). However, the social media policies and special legislation put in place to control ambush marketing for London 2012 were not able to fully address the challenges posed by social media. The evolution of social media, however, confounds contemporary sponsorship protection and defies traditional legal remedies. With another four years until Rio 2016, social media will clearly be "a massive platform for both sponsors and non-Games sponsors" and regulating this space will become even more challenging (Smith, 2012, p. 1). Determining if and how regulating social media eventually "fits" into existing anti-ambush strategies remains an open question.

This presentation presents an analysis of efforts to regulate social media during the 2012 Olympic Games and an examination of the legal effectiveness of sponsorship protection guidelines related to ambushing marketing during the Games. The presentation also explores the future viability of sponsorship protection efforts which restrict athlete promotional activities or social media as part of a comprehensive brand protection strategy.