“The exploitation of Technology during Athens bid for the 2004 Olympic Games”

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Abstract: This paper takes as its point of departure Athens’s decision to bid for the 2004 Olympic Games and presents the multidimensional character of the I.O.C (International Olympic Committee) members’ decision as far as it concerns the election of an Olympic host city. Drawing upon the most important factors that play a decisive role in the pre-selection of cities that are suitable for staging the future Olympics, we discern that ‘Athens – 2004’ candidate dossier fully covered all the I.O.C. members’ prerequisites as well as convinced that Athens was entirely ready to host and stage mega – Cultural and Sporting Events of global range as the modern Olympic Games. The paper primarily deals with the technological content of the candidate dossier and in particular with the exploitation of Information technology and Telecommunications by ‘Athens – 2004’ in the process of submitting the candidate dossier, in the stage of preparation for the Games and foresees in detail technology’s penetration and need during the 2004 Olympic Games.

Key-Words: Olympic Games, Athens bid, Information technology and Telecommunications

1. Introduction
Athens decided to bid for the 2004 Olympic Games, at the end of 1995, based on the decision of the Plenary Session of the Hellenic Olympic Committee and the approval of the Athens City Council. Whilst the Athens endeavor for staging the Olympics ended when the President of the International Olympic Committee, Juan Antonio Samaranch, announced the committee’s historical decision, in Lausanne on September 7th, 1997: “The city which will have the honor and responsibility to host the 2004 Olympic Games is Athens” [8].

Athens candidate dossier was structured in order to meet I.O.C. members’ desires and rules that determine the latter’s decision concerning the election of an Olympic Host City. In this context, the Hellenic Bid Committee taking into consideration that without modern technological infrastructure it would be impossible to stage the Olympic Games, widely acknowledged and exploited Information technology and Telecommunications as a crucial component of hosting and staging mega – Cultural and Sporting Events of global range such as the modern Olympic Games. Besides, the latter are a privileged field of experimentation for information and telecommunication technology for the reason that both of them are applied to planning and organization, telecommunication services, press and broadcasting, Internet and Intranet systems, archives and documentation [5].

In this paper, we perform a short yet comprehensive review of all information technology systems and telecommunications networks concerning timing and scoring, venue technology, Games Management Systems (GMS) and internal systems that are employed during the preparation as well as the 17 days that Olympic Games take place.

2. Allocation of XXVIII Olympic Games to Athens
Unfolding the communication success of the Hellenic Bid Committee’s, we ought to define the factors influencing the decision of I.O.C. members’ votes for an Olympic city. We are able to discern that the most fundamental ones are: the quality of bid, past Olympic critiques, lobbying and corruption, election rules, world moral, Olympic principles and in general outside constraints as well as inner constraints, emotions and personality of the I.O.C. members.
Moreover, we have to outline that during the process of electing a city for staging the Olympic Games, the mass media as an independent political, cultural and ethical institution create-to a large extent in certain cases- new preferences and different hierarchies by which to judge the candidates. In this context, the mass media serve to influence the hierarchy of the topics examined by the ‘Evaluation Commission’.

In other words the former influence the writing of the final report of the ‘Evaluation Commission’ that the I.O.C. has appointed to collect data about the bid cities in order to provide information about the ability of the city to stage future Olympics.

The final report of the ‘Evaluation Commission’ that is available to everyone, determines to a large extent the decision of the I.O.C.’s members regarding which candidate city is the best one to stage the next Olympic Games. Based on the study of the pre-described final reports, it is evident that the most important elements that a city should demonstrate in order to succeed in staging the Olympic Games are: the existence of a team leader of international acceptance in the bid Committee, flexible staff collaborators, positive public opinion, political consensus, originality as far as it concerns the proposal of the candidate city, Olympic infrastructure and of primary consideration element is the degree of influence that the city maintains towards the preferences of those who finally vote for the allocation of the future Olympics [6].

In this context, the conditions –both in Greece and abroad-, under which Athens bid for the 2004 Olympic Games materialized, were extremely propitious. To be more specific, Greek people were according to various opinion polls positive towards the possibility of staging the Olympic Games in Athens. The political parties—with the exemption of certain reservations that were expressed in relation to the substantial benefit of the country by the allocation of the 2004 Olympics— the government, the sporting authorities and the Municipality agreed that Athens wanted to undertake the hosting of the Olympic Games. Furthermore, the sport venues to a large extent were already ready and the fact that the major Olympic infrastructure was in place spoke in favor of the successful course of Athens bid [7]. At international level, Athens candidature for hosting the 2004 Olympic Games was superior to others taking into consideration that the voting took place right after the critiques about Atlanta’s ‘over-commercialization’. We have to note that Athens lost the staging of the 1996 Olympics by Atlanta and at the time of voting for the allocation of the 2004 Olympic Games the former grounded its proposal on the use of culture and new technologies for the promotion of the Olympic ideals. Thus, several I.O.C. members, who were voting for the hosting of the XXVIII Olympics and had voted against Athens bid in 1992, were in favor of Athens proposal in 1996. Finally, with the exception of Rome’s bid Committee that had friendly relationships with several I.O.C. members, the proposals of Cape Town, Stockholm and Buenos Aires didn’t present the requisite ‘weight’ in comparison with those of Athens and Rome [1].

Thus, the leader of Athens bid Committee was a person of national and international acceptance, imperishable, having international liaisons. She also possessed an advantage of great importance, the fact that she was a woman as in the past there had never been leader of a bid Committee a woman, this incident functioned positively in the case of ‘Athens – 2004’. In relation to the communication strategy itself, we have to pinpoint four factors that had a positive effect and contributed to the hosting of the 2004 Olympic Games.
Firstly, the slogan ‘ought to’ or ‘it’s Athens right’, that was persistently projected during the previous bid, was replaced by the triptych: Athens wants, can and has a unique proposal. Hence, there wasn’t made any reference to historical commitment and historical heritage, however it was stressed that the public opinion as well as the political parties and sporting authorities wanted the Games, Athens simultaneously had the ability to undertake the organization of the Games as 72% of the sports venues were already made, there was previous experience in the organization of sporting events and the government was willing to finance the event. Finally yet importantly, Athens was the only Candidate City, which submitted a complete proposal on the cultural Olympiad in digital époque. Secondly, during Athens bid there was no political intervention as far as it concerns the work of the Committee contrary to 1992. Thirdly, the doubt concerning the materialization of the machetes that were presented during the bid of 1992 was replaced by the certainty, as all sport venues were contemporary, technically intact and from the perspective of land planning in the right place. Fourthly, the communication strategy was planned and delivered according to international professional standards in order to stress constantly the positive elements of Athens proposal with respect to other city proposals. Thus, the bulk of the contacts with the members of I.O.C., the National Olympic Committees and International Federations were conducted based on a public relations program that was anchored on the respect of the Olympic Protocol and each member of the Olympic Family. From this angle, the bid Committee ‘bombarded’ constantly the whole Olympic Family and not only those who at the end voted. This originality had a positive impact on the outcome [1, 4].

Athens bid, therefore, was effective as it came together with unreserved public and political solidarity; it was organized professionally and appealed by putting forward again the Olympic ideals in our times. However, the most fundamental element that contributed decisively to the triumph of Athens was the fact that the candidature dossier of ‘Athens – 2004’ convinced the I.O.C. that Athens was entirely ready to host and stage mega – Cultural and Sporting Events of global range as the modern Olympic Games.

3. Information technology – Telecommunications and XXVIII Olympiad

The candidature dossier gave enormous emphasis on the technological content of the Games with regard to the technological needs that are indissoluble linked with the preparation and the staging of the Olympic Games, taking into consideration that nowadays technology plays a tremendous role in every successful sport event. It is imperative to note that the budget for technology is almost 22% of the total expenditure for the Games of Athens [1]. The former President of I.O.C., Juan Antonio Samaranch, outbidding, pointed out that “modern Olympics owe a large part of their ecumenism and success to science and technology, researchers and professionals of telecommunications and audiovisual media” [3].
The candidature dossier of the Hellenic bid Committee covered both the two basic primary fields of technology, Information technology and Telecommunications that are indispensable for the successful staging of the Olympic Games. To be more specific, ‘Athens – 2004’ made extensive use of the available technology both in the process of submitting the candidature dossier and during the preparation of the Games, while the proposal foresaw in detail the way that technology will be used during the 2004 Olympic Games.

In the stage of preparation, technology contributes decisively in the organization, management, planning and support of the Organizing Committee, the education and training of almost 50000 Games’ volunteers as well as the technical support of sporting events performed before the Games in order to test the venues. ‘Athens – 2004’ concerning timing and scoring has already developed the initial milestone time - table for the ATHOC IT & Swatch framework of cooperation in cooperation with Daniel Baumat, Swatch Vice President of Technology and has completed a ten-day venue survey with Swatch technicians, Sports Managers, Venue Technology and Olympic Works staff. Regarding the venue technology, the Athens Organizing Committee has finalized requirements of technology space for the venues, determined environmental specifications, usage and placing, has finalized the naming of technology spaces in venues and has created the first version of general technology specifications for the Olympic venues (specifications for the structured cabling, cabling pathways, general specifications of interconnections between the rooms). Regarding the Games Management Systems (GMS), ‘Athens – 2004’ has installed the ‘GMS Baseline Lab’, a small network that will be used for installation, analysis, integration, testing and training before launching each Games application in production. Finally, with reference to the internal systems, the fax server reached 75% of projected deployment, greatly facilitating mass faxing by ATHOC’s Press Office, a reduction in paper waste, and a drastic reduction in new fax device purchasing. In addition, an overhaul of ATHOC’s networking infrastructure has already been completed and the new scheme provides increased infra-company security and a massive expansion in total network capacity. ATHOC also delivered the Baseline Laboratory for SEMA's applications. This lab environment is used to produce the gap analysis between the applications used in Sydney and Salt Lake and ATHOC's user requirements [1].

Whereas, during the XXVIII Olympic Games, the basic mission of technology is accomplished through the use of information and telecommunication systems for media practitioners, the conduct of communication to every place of earth, security, accreditation, and timing, recording of scoring and publication of results for all events of Games [1]. The role of information Technology and Telecommunications in XXVIII Olympic Games, according to the candidature dossier of ‘Athens – 2004’, is versatile and covers:

- Timing & Scoring Systems: Record of scores and results of athletic events by specialized information systems
- Results per athletic facility: Applications of computer science are going to elaborate the results in order the latter to be properly schematized and presented
- Broadcast of results: Operation of a central database for broadcasting the results worldwide as well as development of Information Systems of Games
- Systems for the coordination of the participants: Development of informatics applications for accreditation, arrivals and departures, accommodation, Olympic and Media villages, the Protocol, tickets and transportation
- Technology of facilities: Perfection of venues as far as it concerns their technological equipment
- Information Systems within the Company: Intranet and GPS.
- Internet: Internet and its applications in wireless and non-wireless communications. The Internet pushes forward as the new super highway that enables people to have access to information concerning the Olympic Games.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>People (in millions)</th>
<th>% over population</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>148.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>7.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great Britain</td>
<td>19.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>27.06</td>
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<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>18.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>8.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senegal</td>
<td>0.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kenya (1999)</td>
<td>0.045</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>0.10</td>
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</tbody>
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Fig. 3: Penetration of the Internet in some countries (2000) [Nua Internet Survey, 2000, at: www.nua.ie]
We ought to mention that during the stage of the organization of the 2004 Games, the number of visits of the ‘Athens – 2004’ web site (www.athens.olympic.org) overcomes the 2 millions from the moment of its existence (July 1999) till today including both Greek and foreigners from 40 countries of the planet. ‘Athens – 2004’ communication ability through the Internet enables the Committee to go far beyond the frontiers of the accredited Olympic Family in order to offer unprecedented communications on worldwide scale. At this point, we have to pinpoint the tremendous inequalities of access to information technologies at global level. The most popular web pages are those containing sport news, press releases, as well as pages about voluntarism and job offer.

However, the Internet will serve not only as an alternative medium of information, but also it is proposed to be exploited to the largest extent in the field of accreditation and selling of tickets. Furthermore, it is planned to be combined with various applications of modern digital technology in order to broadcast real time the results of Games as well as to provide constantly useful information about the program, the capability of accessing sport venues, the time schedule of all massive transportation means even through the use of voice recognizable systems [5]. Finally, ATHOC is going to take advantage of the experience of NBC in Sydney to exploit the convergence of Internet and TV.

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**Fig. 4: New paradigm: communication in the digital era [5]**

- **Production**
  - Production of contents
  - Government
  - Business
  - Clubs
  - Universities
  - NGOs
  - On-line media
  - Mass Media (Radio, TV, Press, Cinema)

- **Consumption**
  - Diffusion
  - Interactivity / Community
  - Free or Toll
  - New mediators: Portals, Search engines, Digital newsstand

- **Receptors**
  - Mass groups
  - Groups
  - Individuals
  - By age
  - By gender
  - Professionals
  - Technicians
  - World-wide
  - National
  - Regional
  - Local
  - etc.
The ultimate purpose is the creation of “multimedia about the Games” on the Internet, by using combined data, images, exchanges, texts, and words, hence consummating television images of the sport events.

- Telecommunications network: Voice, audio, data and video services. Transportation, management and distribution of the radio signal at local lever (inside the Olympic facilities) and international level (through the international telecommunications network). Planning and installation of systems for digital television inside all Olympic facilities as well as of Hi-Fi systems that are going to be needed for the opening and closing ceremony [2, 7].

4. Conclusion
To conclude, we ascertain that the candidature dossier of the Hellenic bid Committee includes both technology tested and reliable, as it exploits all the forms of technology that were used in all previous Olympic Games, as well as the most contemporary applications of informatics and telecommunications due to peoples’ demand to see during the Games the latest technological innovations. Moreover, from technologically perspective, the rapid growth of Internet and its applications in wireless and non-wireless communications and the predominance of mobile communication are expected to leave their mark on the Games of Athens. However, we are obliged not to forget that Olympic Games are a celebration of Culture and Sports and not of Technology. Thus, Games technologically successful means that technology will be there, everywhere, without anyone to be aware of it.

References