

Is Super Mario the 2020 Olympic Hero?

By Todd Murphy, Vice President, [Universal Information Services](#)



The 2016 Olympics in Rio came to a ceremonial close on Sunday, August 21st. For those who watched it live, or on countless second screens, you were treated to possibly the world's greatest video game star, Super Mario. Although it seems Nintendo, the owners of Mario's intellectual property, currently have no plans to be a sponsor of the 2020 Olympics in Japan, they certainly [stole the show](#) with that little character and a well executed combination of public relations and marketing.

Part of our work entails [brand monitoring](#), so I may have been watching the Olympic close differently than some. What I saw amounted to a handing off of the host nation baton from Brazil to Japan, Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe donned the



Mario garb to appear from the iconic pipe that Mario so often uses. So what does this branding cameo mean? Is Super Mario an international hero, easily identified with Japan? Or, could it be that like most things in public relations and marketing it was a matter of timing.

Consider the wildly popular Pokemon Go game that has been leading young and old players to wander aimlessly around their neighborhoods this summer. Yes, that game was brought to you by Nintendo. A game built on augmented reality with a hint of fitness pulled in for healthy living PR. Add to that a special

edition game from Nintendo, aptly named “Mario & Sonic at the Rio 2016 Olympic Games”. When I asked our media measurement team to look at the media exposure from these efforts, it seems clear that Nintendo came into this summer with clear marketing and PR goals, devised several specific tactics, and executed a finale at the Olympics to tie their entire effort together.

We can see the confluence of the public relations [P.E.S.O. model](#) working effectively here. Nintendo, along with the Tokyo Olympics organizing committee, successfully used *paid, earned, shared, and owned media to deliver integrated marketing programs* that gave multiple bumps to their stock price this summer. The Pokemon GO craze added 120% in share price to Nintendo at one point this summer, and even the Super Mario Cameo gave Nintendo a 3.5% bump after the closing remarks in Rio. Is that ROI? I’m not going to tell you it isn’t.

Story Sentiment



Super Mario Gold

Having goals, measuring your outcomes, and calculating the real impact of your PR and marketing efforts is mandatory today. For those organizations without a framework for doing so, I’ll share this link about [integrated evaluation framework](#). This research comes from our friends at AMEC (the International Association for Measurement and Evaluation of

Communication.) . For those who do have a framework for media and communication measurement, how do you know you're reaching your goals? We all have four years to decide whether or not Super Mario will bring 2020 Olympic gold to Nintendo shareholders.

In the meantime, we can all review what a successful PR and marketing effort looks like from today's perspective. One thing our news monitoring team can see for sure is that in the past 48 hours Super Mario generated the greatest percentage of positive stories, as connected to the Olympics, of any personality within the past 3 weeks. Well done Mario!