



Preparing for 2012 winning against the fraudsters

Ticketing for any large sporting event is complicated, but the Olympic Games present problems in a class of their own. The numbers of spectators are vast, and their expectations are very high. There are multiple venues at different locations, sometimes many miles apart, and also multiple stakeholders with an interest in the real-estate of the ticket itself - such as the host nation, the IOC, the venues, and the sponsors.

And, of course, there are the counterfeiters. With demand for high face-value tickets outstripping supply by a significant margin, the 2012 London Olympics will present a highly attractive proposition for organised, technically sophisticated fraudsters. The effects of this could be catastrophic for the Games.

So this is a high-stakes issue, requiring sophisticated solutions. The Beijing 2008 Games introduced 1.38 million tickets embedded with Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) as a direct means of combating counterfeits. However, in addition to RFID and embedded security features such as watermarks and holograms, there have been more recent innovations from the area of bank note printing that offer additional levels of security. One such innovation is the use of polymers and paper with an embedded pattern which is visible through a translucent window in the ticket. This feature, which is difficult to counterfeit, has the added advantage that ticket holders can easily assess the authenticity of their tickets without having to rely on an electronic RFID reader.

E-ticketing is yet another strategy which could help reduce ticket counterfeiting with the advances in Near Field Communication (NFC) devices. These have already been trialled on the Transport

for London (TfL) network and offer the potential for the seamless integration of public transport and venue access with reduced costs for the ticketing process.

Theft is by far the most difficult behaviour to tackle, but biometrics offer an effective deterrent. 'On-ticket' data could provide a fail-safe link between a ticket holder and their ticket, and would have significant benefits in terms of security, particularly for very high-value tickets or entry to high-profile events. A more simple theft deterrent may be to add a PIN to a low-cost RFID chip, requiring a thief to obtain both in order for the ticket to be used.

As with all security systems, the measures taken have to be in proportion to the value of the item to be protected. With high-value tickets, such as an Opening Ceremony pass, additional levels of security and authentication may be justified. Tickets for other events will need to be produced in higher volumes and at a lower cost, but will also require advanced security. In the context of the potential risks, the implementation of more secure ticketing technologies may sacrifice a small percentage of revenue, but in return offer huge potential benefits in terms of security, overall revenue and PR.

Hugh.Burchett@CambridgeConsultants.com