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Coke And Yili Leading Olympic Marketing War

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Beijing - Beverage companies Coca-Cola and Yili have increased their brand association by more than 20% in terms of awareness, purchase intent, values and promotional recall ahead of the Olympics, according to a report from marketing consultancy R3 and partner CSM Media Research.



Out there

Greg Paull, principal of R3, said with less than a month to the games now, they have a clearer picture than ever of the likely winners and losers in the sponsorship war. "Those that have chosen athletes wisely and maintained consistency have performed 10 times better than companies that haven't."

Ad spend by top sponsors for the past three months have increased by 49% at RMB9.1 billion, with most of the investment in mass media, extending to activation events around the Torch Relay, and standalone activities.

Matt Brosenne, international client service director for CSM Media Research, Beijing noted an "unprecedented investment in TV sponsorship in the last three months" as there was a 65% increase in sponsored broadcast hours led by live Torch Relay programs associated to Coca-Cola, Samsung and Lenovo.

"Despite the fragmentation of media, prime time TV viewership is still strong this year in China, and marketers continue to invest to get returns", Brosenne added.

On the other end of the spectrum, there are bound to be sponsors who failed to leverage their Olympic investment and some of these giant enterprises are more than 10 times poorer in ROI.

Paull explained a lot of the SOE's are relatively new to consumer marketing and don't have the experience of Coke or the talent pool of companies like Yili or Mengniu. Companies such as Sinopec, Air China, China Netcom have all done tactical work to support their investments, but the payback has been poor. "This has been a great learning curve for them though, to see how other world class Chinese companies such as Lenovo and Yili have generated a positive return", Paull added.

R3 and CSM believe the Olympics will dramatically change the marketing landscape in China to a more sophisticated one with more digital offerings. Brosenne said 40% of respondents are expecting to get Olympics updates through IPTV and mobile TV, "so marketers need to migrate their thinking to serve this digital community".

Brosenne said research has shown massive changes in consumer behaviour with internet daily usage up from 1.4 hours to 2 hours, and a big expansion in overall online population.

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