

HOW TO CREATE MORE “BRAND LOVE” AND CONNECTIONS

As the economy heads south, one of the first thing consumers typically do is trade down. Major purchases may be delayed or substituted with lower cost options. In China and India, we believe local marketers will benefit through this period, because global companies are under pressure in every country to cut costs and reduce marketing funds – while locals have a cost advantage, and quite often distribution as well. It’s going to be bloody.

One of the only ways out is for marketers to try to create more ‘brand love’ – to create greater love for their brands either through their own particular marketing approach, or through association with other events and promotions that have it.

We’ve just completed two major research pieces – one in China, working with our partner CSM, and one in India working closely with sports marketing experts , Gemba. The results speak to some universal truths...

1. Don’t confuse popular with engaging

In China, Yao Ming is consistently the number one star in terms of recognition, yet in our most recent analysis, Liu Xiang outperforms him on almost every personality attribute. Despite his Beijing 2008 withdrawal, he enjoys a unique and special status in the country. Likewise, when asked – consumers would pay more to meet Li Ning, the Beijing 2008 torchbearer - than any other athlete – he has a strong place in the hearts of the population

2. Dig deep to understand differences

Our India study pointed to cricket as the natural sport of choice, the passion of the country. Yet within cricket , there were some teams and stars that polarized people – varying by city and by age group. Likewise in China, we uncovered events such as the upcoming Hangzhou West Lake Expo as hugely aspirational within its own city and catchment area – but something that would be missed if viewed at a national level.

3. Know why you’re using the asset

By linking the personality of an asset to that of a brand, you can learn more about the contribution of an association. One top show in China, “Happy Camp’ enjoys

a strong viewership and good recall. 76% of our study rate it as entertaining and 86% would recommend it to a friend. Yet in our studies, one of its sponsors has three-four times a stronger brand personality than it does. So in this case, the brand may well be giving more to the asset than vice versa.

4. Go Beyond TV Ratings

Particularly for a younger demographic, consumers are too used to multi-tasking with a TV on. If you're serious about creating an impact, you need to understand how media is being consumed. It's interesting to note when the recall of a particular program is highest – such as the NBA – so is the engagement and interest levels. Fully engaged viewers can recall the stars, the sponsors and specific elements within programs – making them a much more viable and welcome place for the right communication messages.

Shrinking marketing budgets is going to make media thresholds more crucial than ever – what other elements of engagement and aspiration can you build into your brand to get you through this downturn for the future ahead?

Greg Paull is Principal of R3 (www.rthree.com), a marketing consultancy focused on improving marketing efficiency and effectiveness