



HOW COKE IS MAKING THIS OLYMPICS “THE REAL THING”

IT HAPPENED TO ME LAST YEAR IN THE BEIJING office of Coca-Cola. Coke is based in Shanghai, but three years ago, they opened a Beijing office. It was a whole floor of a building, and yet only had a handful of employees. “What’s all this?” I said. “Well...we have a bit of a history with the Olympics, you know – our relationship goes back eighty four years...”. Coca-Cola Beijing’s Olympic team now has over 200 employees, growing by the week, all focused on creating a dominant impact for China and the world by the time the event closed in August 2008.

The Coke approach to Olympic marketing is going to be a case study for the agencies. In our face-to-face research with 16,500 Chinese consumers in ten cities, they have an embarrassing domination over other brands. In the latest wave, 38% of respondents names Coca-Cola as a sponsor without any prompting. The next highest sponsor mentions were China Mobile, Yili and Lenovo, all less than 15%. Coke has an ever larger margin over the competition when it comes to prompted recall with 86% recognizing it as a sponsor.

Beyond just awareness, it’s the recall of promotions where the real leadership comes. More people mention Coke’s advertising than the next seven sponsors combined, so iconic is it in celebrating China’s stars. Coke also lead sixty other companies in terms of dynamic, healthy, friendly and other key characteristics.

WHAT CAN OTHER MARKETERS LEARN?

1. It starts with big ideas and integration

Last year, Coke took a radical step in creating a new agency for the Olympics, using fifty of the best talent from Leo Burnett, Starcom, interactive agency WWINS, promotional agency Momentum and outdoor agency Heartlad. “The Red Lounge” is an integrated team focused solely on one mission – world class communication for the Olympics – covering every touchpoint



– never diverted by other clients or the usual agency politics

2. Consistency matters

Coke has been focused on leveraging China’s stars such as Liu Xiang for four years. Last year in a coup, it signed up Yao Ming as well, continuing its leadership of the top players that drive aspiration.

3. Take it to the people

Coke built a massive 20 metre bottle, the largest LED bottle in the world, to launch 2008 and to tour the country in a series of events. On top of this, it will visit more than 100 cities with the Olympic Torch Relay, giving over 100 million consumers the chance to connect with the brand. This will be the largest roadshow in world history, in the leadup to the

event itself.

4. Motivate partners

Finally, Coke has motivated its agency partners, its media partners and interactive partners to come along for the ride. It has signed collaborative deals with TV stations, it has created new media and new outlets through iCoke. This generous mindset and approach has made a huge impact as well

Make no mistake – this will be the most competitive and commercial Olympics in history – but it does seem one company is best placed to capitalize. There’s a lot the others can learn.

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