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THIS WEEK



Korea's turbulent TV arena



Speaking out on scam perpetrators

Yili takes lead in Olympics race

Arun Sudhaman, 25 January 2007



Yili...awareness levels have risen 26 per cent since the first wave of research by R3 and TNS Sport

BEIJING Yili has taken the surprise lead in Olympic-related brand awareness, according to new research from R3 and TNS Sport, in the run-up to the 2008 Games in Beijing.

The second wave of the Olympic Performance (OP) index, a weighted benchmark of four core measures related to Olympics branding, revealed that the Chinese dairy giant had improved its score by 26 per cent since the first wave, placing it ahead of a host of international and Chinese brands.

In second place, Coca-Cola grew its score by just three per cent over the last three months, while third-ranked China Mobile leaped by 32 per cent.

Lenovo and adidas round out the top five, with the latter brand showing the biggest increase at 72 per cent.

According to R3 principal and co-founder Greg Paull - Yili's performance reveals that TV advertising is becoming less important in the run-up to the games.

"You're going to see less blanketing through TV," he said. "Yili has done an excellent job building association with Liu Xiang and emphasising performance. It's not because they are a huge media spender, but because they are very focused."

The results are the second in a series of 11 rounds of benchmarking that will culminate in next year's games. With 120 Olympic campaigns tracked in the last three months alone, Paull warns that clutter will become overwhelming as the Games nears.

"There's a constant need to find an association, but some companies are just featuring an Olympic link without thinking it through."

Of the global sponsors, Coca-Cola, Lenovo, McDonald's and adidas all maintained a presence in the top 10, with the sports category also represented by non-sponsors Nike and Li-Ning.

"There's an expectation from the Chinese consumers that these brands are either so big or so integral to sport that they should be a sponsor," said TNS Sport project head Vincent Cheung.

"It also suggests that ambush marketing may well be something we see more of in the coming months."

The research involves 1,500 interviews in 10 Chinese cities, balancing brand performance in awareness, purchase intent, promotional impact and brand association.

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