

## OLYMPIC TORCH STILL BURNS BRIGHT IN BEIJING DESPITE GLOBAL PROTESTS



BEIJING: Despite the controversy over Tibet and the wave of global protests surrounding the Olympic torch, the aforesaid ember continues to glow brightly in the Chinese capital, reports local research specialist and TNS affiliate **CSM Media Research**.

In conjunction with Beijing-based marketing consultancy **R3**, the researcher has released its seventh *Olympic Sponsor Benchmarking Survey*, shedding light on consumer attitudes and behavior towards the Olympic yuan-fest.

According to CSM business development director *Matt Brosenne*, the urge to compete is not confined to the track or sports field.

"The competitive environment of Olympic sponsorship with over sixty companies vying for share of Olympic voice has been anything but easy.

"But overall we are seeing strong signs that the promotional activities utilized by sponsors are having an effect. This becomes apparent by looking back over results for all our previous waves."

In the latest wave of research data, confidence levels – both corporate and consumer – continue to rise, coincident with a fall in negative issues to around half the level of two years ago.

There is a consistent belief across all ten participating cities that this will be a great sporting showcase for China.

As to the tsunami of worldwide Olympic-related human rights protests, CSM gauged the domestic mood via a study of the ten largest bulletin boards including **Sohu, Sina, NetEase** and **Baidu** during the last three weeks – covering millions of messages of support for China, the torch and the athletes.

Says R3 principal *Greg Paull*: "The torch protests have only increased China's passion and commitment to the Olympics – while it will hurt sponsors outside of China, internally they may well be rewarded for staying the course."

Paull also points out that sports engagement is critical to brand impact. "People have clear preferences [which are] a factor driving one of the most sought after objectives in the marketing world: engagement.

"The more attention people pay to sport, sports properties and sports stars the more likely they are to be engaged in the content. In our assessment, this speaks to the quality of the contact points that are being delivered."

The report confirms that locals are well disposed toward Olympic sponsors' promotions that feature messages related to the Chinese Olympic delegation, sports teams and individual athletes.

Likewise, promotions featuring sports stars and national Olympic delegation themes have the highest consumer recall.

The Olympic rings symbol and Beijing Olympic emblem are also recalled well when displayed on product packaging and help to strengthen a brand's association with the Olympics.

In terms of public recognition and brand goodwill, the survey lists the main sponsorship beneficiaries:

#### **Top Five International Sponsors**

1. Coca-Cola
2. Yili
3. Lenovo
4. China Mobile
5. Adidas.

#### **Top Ten Local Companies**

1. Yili
2. Lenovo
3. China Mobile
4. Mengniu
5. Li Ning
6. Bank of China
7. Haier
8. Awarwana
9. China Netcom
10. Tsingdao.

For more information on the Olympic Sponsor Benchmarking survey click [here](#).

*Data sourced from multiple origins; additional content by WARC staff, 18 April 2008*