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## Chinese Market Researcher Assesses Beijing Sponsors

Recognizing a gap in studies of Olympic marketing ahead of the 2008 Games, Asian marketing agency R3 and Chinese media research firm CSM Media Research launched an independent tracking and research division. Its quarterly studies have shed light on which Olympic sponsors are winning and losing on the ground in China. R3 Principal Greg Paull, who's leading those studies, sat down with SportsBusiness Journal staff writer Tripp Mickle to talk about the results.

**Which one of the TOP programs have been the most successful?**

**Paull:** I think, for Coke, the torch relay has been a phenomenal success. Look at sampling. No one knew in China that Coke had to be cold. So what have they done for the torch relay? They've served up 100 million Cokes to people — one by one through 112 cities. That discipline is going to completely change the way Coke goes to market in China, and it wouldn't have happened without the Olympics.

[Watch The Interview](#)**Any others that stand out?**

**Paull:** J&J did a great setup in primary schools to teach them about the Olympics. You would expect the government to do that, but J&J came up with the training tools, the posters, the stickers and all of that stuff. They went into 400,000 schools across China to teach them about the Olympics with J&J-branded materials.

**Who is winning the sneaker war category here on the ground among Nike, Adidas and Li Ning?**

**Paull:** Our view is that if Adidas did not sponsor the Olympics, they would have been in a lot of trouble because Nike and Liu Xiang is a powerful combination together and if they had that sponsorship, they would have leveraged that. Meanwhile, Li Ning is Mr. Olympics, so if he'd had the official sponsorship he would have done a lot. Adidas did the right thing to invest because if someone else had it, they would have been struggling. They are, in fact, in first position in our study. (We have several clients in the sneaker war category and we do our study anyway regardless of our clients.)

**How are some of the Chinese companies that people in the U.S. may be less familiar with doing?**

**Paull:** A lot of local companies have done very well, better than the multinationals. Yili, Lenovo, China Mobile — all of these are in the top 10 in our studies, better than Visa, McDonald's, J&J.

**Which of those stand out most?**

**Paull:** Yili, a local milk company, has done a great job. They've grabbed the right athletes like Liu Xiang and used them in a very creative way. They tried to do their own version of a torch relay. They ran a health tour that went to 100 cities around China, set up a booth and gave away samples. They also turned that into a TV show.

**When the Olympics close, what will be the legacy for sponsors? Are sponsors going to be entrenched enough?**

**Paull:** There will be winners and losers. We're coming back in November to do the rest of our study. A lot of legacy also will be internal. The way they work will change. They'll be better marketers as a result of it. You're talking now about a competitive marketplace that has changed.

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