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Chinas Vast Television

Audience Draws in Olympic SponsorsBy Sam Beattie The Summer

Olympic Games could prove the winning ticket for foreign brands

seeking access to Chinas large consumer market. Corporate

sponsorship of the Beijing Games is at record levels, as companies

seek visibility before 1.3-billion Chinese and the world at large. Sam

Beattie reports from Beijing. Earlier this year, China Central

Television aired the introduction of the Beijing Olympic Volunteer

uniforms live across the nation. Being Chinas national broadcaster,

CCTV has the ability to reach more than one billion viewers.

Because even minor Olympic events such as uniform unveilings can

get major publicity, companies from around the world have paid as

much as 100 million dollars to be associated with the Beijing games.

The German sports clothing maker Adidas is a sponsor of the Beijing

Olympic Organizing Committee and has the right to use the

Olympic rings in domestic advertising campaigns. Erica Kerner is

Adidas Director of Beijing 2008 Olympics Program. "The Olympics

for us is part of who we are as a company," said Kerner. "Its almost a

part of what I would say is our DNA as a company. So to sponsor the

Olympic Games in China, which is our fastest growing market

around the world, it was a clear, clear decision that this something we

wanted to do." Adidas is just one of more than 50 companies to

sponsor the Beijing Games - the largest number ever involved in a single Olympics. Media consultants say the large number of sponsors is all because of China's massive television audience. The 2004 Olympics were held in Greece, which has a population of 11 million. China's capital city Beijing alone has 17 million people. The United States has nine cities with a population of one million people or more, China more than 90. Sports marketing analyst Pierre Justo says the Olympics will give sponsors unprecedented access to China's 300 to 400 million urban consumers. And during the games, sponsors' ads will beam into the far reaches of the country. Justo says the scale is totally different from the previous Olympic Games. He says advertisers and media experts are expecting television audiences, especially in China, to break records, with audience numbers at levels never seen before. Havas Sports, an international sports marketing company based in Paris, helps companies use sporting events to reach new consumers. Nathalie Bastianelli opened Havas Beijing office in 2006 and expects to gain plenty of new business after the Olympics as more companies look to sporting events to boost consumer awareness of their products. She says that is the potential of the Chinese market. Everybody thinks that China will be the second market for advertising by 2010. As a result, she says, with its economic growth, brands are very interested in this market and a big event like the Olympics is a good opportunity to get closer to the Chinese consumer. Marketing experts say this growth in the Chinese advertising market is a sign that for this Olympics, it is not just athletes who will take home the gold. The Beijing Olympics are a

competition for product placement as much as athletic excellence.

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