

Sink Or Swim?

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The eyes of the world are on the Water Cube in Beijing, but what are marketers' eyes on? Olympic Fuwas, that's what. The five Chinese mascots have copped more than their share of criticism since their inception... to the point that even their famous Chinese creator disowned them, the Fuwas' absence from his museum highly conspicuous. But now that the Beijing festival of sport has begun, it's a different story...

Synovate's online survey of urban Chinese shows that fans are voting with their wallets. More than half China's city dwellers have bought an official Olympic souvenir and, of these, nearly nine in ten (88%) feature a Fuwa. The five 'friendlies' are a merchandising hit. They not only speak to the Chinese propensity for all-things-cute, but also the desire to own a small piece of Olympic spirit.

Cute aside, the potent Chinese symbolism of the Fuwas is stirring hearts across the nation. They feature on t-shirts, hats, pins, a proliferation of signage and even tattoos. One might even say, the Fuwas are going 'swimmingly'.