

# Asian Perspectives During Troubled Times

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## MILLWARD BROWN LAUNCHES NEW STUDY ASIAN PERSPECTIVES DURING TROUBLED TIMES

Singapore. 1 September 2005. Leading market research company, Millward Brown Asia Pacific today releases a study which critically examines the role of provenance in influencing Asian consumers' brand choices. Entitled Asian Perspectives during Troubled Times, the study looks at the impact of world politics upon branding, at a time when 'The West' is probably seen less favourably than ever before.

The study draws upon two examples of the interface between political events and branding. The first example points to South East Asia and in particular the Muslim communities of Malaysia and Indonesia. It illustrates how perceptions of 'The West' have changed and the resulting impact upon consumption of Western brands. We also spoke to consumers in Shanghai about Japan, and the likely impact of recent public demonstrations upon brand choice.

Based on the findings from these two case studies, our research shows that across Asia there is a tremendous resentment towards the invasion of Iraq and more generally towards the War on Terror, particularly amongst Muslim communities. However, most brands have remained immune to the impact of this, apart from a few largely rhetorical boycott campaigns. In fact, much of what Asian consumers decode from a western provenance is still what they are looking for, and is far removed from the political actions of governments.

We explain this by deconstructing the role of provenance in branding into four different dimensions:

- Guarantor of quality
- Guarantor of a particular expertise
- Reflection of aspiration
  - o wealth
  - o lifestyle/value
- Reflection of self

All these dimensions tend to operate outside of the political realm and are only indirectly affected by world events.

In stark contrast to many of the positives that have been historically associated with products and services from The West, top-of-mind associations of 'Brand West' today are overwhelmingly negative across a broad range of Asian consumers. There is a growing gap between how 'Brand West' has traditionally been seen and how it is now being perceived. The values that many Asians looked to as an example of what they previously aspired to are now being eroded. Instead of being a beacon of freedom and justice, 'Brand West' is increasingly seen as a bully to smaller nations, following its own agenda.

In our survey in Indonesia and Malaysia, we found that 75% of Indonesians and 58% of Malaysians describe the US as 'arrogant'. In Malaysia, amongst Muslims this increases to 70%. Drawing upon the quantitative survey, in both Indonesia and Malaysia, Singapore was seen as a better example of democracy than the US, UK or Australia.

'Things have changed a lot from when 'The West' was seen as the defender of individual liberty,' said Neil Doyle, Qualitative Director, Millward Brown Asia Pacific - Australia, and the principal researcher on the study. 'Despite all this, we see that brands remain immune to the impact of negative perceptions. There is still a tremendous range of aspirational values in 'The West' that are being eclipsed by these specific political concerns.'

Millward Brown's Asian Perspectives during Troubled Times study draws upon both primary and secondary research. The primary research was conducted in four key Asian markets: Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia and China. Qualitative and quantitative research methods were used for data collection, involving six focus groups in each market, in-depth interviews with marketing professionals, academics and other social commentators, and a quantitative image survey of countries and organisations in Malaysia and Indonesia.

About Millward Brown:

Millward Brown (<http://www.millwardbrown.com/>), one of the world's top 10 marketing research organisations, is recognised as a leading authority on advertising, marketing communications, media, and brand equity research. Through the use of an integrated suite of validated research techniques – both qualitative and quantitative – Millward Brown helps clients build strong brands and services. Millward Brown has more than 70 offices in 42 countries. Additional practices include Millward Brown's Global Media Practice (a global media effectiveness unit), Millward Brown Optimor (a global unit focused on helping clients maximise the returns on their brand and marketing investments), Millward Brown Precis (a global PR measurement practice), Dynamic Logic (an online research firm specialising in measuring advertising and marketing effectiveness), and KMR (provider of global Target Group Index [TGI] the world's leading media and market profiling tool). Millward Brown is part of Kantar, WPP's insight, information and consultancy arm.