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Sony the best

Sony has been named by American consumers as the ‘best brand’ according to the latest annual survey, just published by Harris Interactive. The poll, which has been run each July since 1995, asks respondents to ‘think about brands or names of products and services’ and to name, without any prompting, the three brands they consider the best. This is the seventh consecutive year that Sony has topped the poll. In fact, in the eleven years Harris Interactive have been doing the survey, Sony has only been beaten to the top spot three times – most recently in 1999 when Ford was ranked the number one brand.

In this year’s survey, Dell ranks second, as it did last year, and Coca-Cola third. The biggest riser since last year is Hewlett Packard – up from 10th to 7th. Two major brands have dropped out of the top ten: General Motors, which has featured in every previous year, coming as high as second in 2000, and Microsoft, which came tenth last year and fifth three years ago. This year’s new entry is Apple, perhaps surprisingly the first time that it has appeared in the top ten.

Britain and France united about bird flu

Less than a third (32%) of British adults believe that the 'EU authorities tell them everything they know about avian influenza' according to a new survey across member states published by the European Commission. Only the French (30%) are more sceptical about the EU's statements about bird flu, while, at the opposite extreme three quarters of Czechs (75%) and Slovaks (74%) and two thirds (66%) of Hungarians think the EU authorities are disclosing everything they know.

Britons are most likely to reject the notion that the media 'disseminates clear information on avian influenza' – only 45% in the UK thinking this is true, compared with an EU average of 60% and a high of 80% in the Czech Republic, 79% in Slovakia and Sweden and 76% in Belgium.

Despite this scepticism about the information given to the public about bird flu, Britons are among the least likely in Europe to have eaten less poultry in recent months because of the risk of bird flu. Only 10% in the UK said they had done this, barely half the EU average of 18%, with only the French (9%) and Swedes (7%) ranking lower – compared with 45% of Greeks and 38% of Italians.

Golden Brown?

As a result of an innovation by Populus in its latest poll for the Times, it is now possible to see precisely how support for the three main political parties may change when – or if – Gordon Brown takes over from Tony Blair.

Because the standard voting intention question used by pollsters prompts with party names, but not leaders, it is not entirely comparable with the variously phrased 'what if' questions asking how people would vote if Gordon Brown was Labour leader.

This month Populus split its sample in half. One half was asked the usual voting intention question, with no mention of party leaders. The other half of the sample was asked firstly, which party they would vote for now 'Labour led by Tony Blair, the Conservatives led by David Cameron, the Liberal Democrats led by Menzies Campbell, or another party', and then, 'looking ahead to the next election expected to be held in three or four year's time', how they would vote: 'for Labour led by Gordon Brown, the Conservatives led by David Cameron, the Liberal Democrats led by Menzies Campbell, or another party'.

As the table below shows, mention of Tony Blair’s name reduces Labour support by 3% and reminding voters that Menzies Campbell is Lib Dem leader reduces their share by 2%. Labour support is higher under Gordon Brown than Tony Blair – in the directly comparable prompted questions – but so is the Conservative lead. On this polling evidence, Gordon Brown would cause some people to switch to Labour from Lib Dems, SNP, Plaid Cymru or Green, but would also cause more current Labour voters and significant numbers of current don’t knows and non-voters to switch to the Conservatives.

	Lab	Con	LD	Others
Not prompted with leader names	34%	36%	19%	11%
Prompted with leader names: Blair/Cameron/Campbell	31%	38%	17%	14%
Prompted with leader names: Brown/Cameron/Campbell	33%	42%	16%	9%

Greener than thou?

Almost nine out of ten British voters (89%) believe that “it is now clear that climate change is already having an effect on the environment and it is urgent that governments take steps to address it” according to a new Populus/BBC poll for the Daily Politics. This is a stark contrast to attitudes in the United States, where a recent NBC News/Wall Street Journal poll found that only 29% of Americans believe that “global climate change has been established as a serious problem and immediate action is necessary”.

The Populus poll also found more than four out of five people (81%) believe that “ As a society we are too selfish to change our lifestyle to conserve energy” and – somewhat implausibly – nearly three quarters (73%) say that they recycle everything in their household that can be recycled.

And the poll also revealed that more than half of British voters reject a key tenet of the Government’s recently announced energy strategy. 56% think that even though nuclear power could help reduce Britain’s CO2

emissions the safety risks associated with nuclear energy make it an option that should not be pursued.

Russia & US agree number 1

Russians and Americans agree that the United States is, by a wide margin, the most influential country in the world, but they disagree about who is next most influential – and about who will gain most in influence over the next ten years, according to a parallel study in the two countries conducted by the Levada Centre (Russia) and Knowledge Networks (US) and published in the run-up to the recent summit of G8 leaders, which was held for the first time in Russia.

Asked to rate the influence of various countries on a scale of nought to ten, Americans on average put their own country at 8.77, virtually identical to the average rating Russians gave the US (8.74).

Russians perceive the European Union to be next most influential – at 7.14 on the scale – and then their own country, which they gave an average rating of 6.57, then Britain (6.20), Japan (6.18), and Germany and China (both 6.10). Americans, by contrast, see China (6.63) and Britain (6.61) as the second and third most influential countries and also rank Japan (6.20) above the European Union (5.78) and Russia (5.67).

The poll of Russians found that more of them (60%) think their own country will grow in influence over the next ten years than think this of any other country; 50% expect China to grow in influence, 36% said this of the EU and 21% of India. Americans had a different view: 70% say that China will gain in influence, with India (38%) and the EU (36%) viewed as next most likely to grow in influence; only 24% of Americans think Russia's influence will increase in the next ten years.

Britain a year after 7/7

The recent Populus poll for The Times/ITV News of British Muslims a year after the 7/7 bombings showed that roughly half (49%) found the idea of non-Muslims worrying about getting on public transport alongside people they 'thought to be Muslim' carrying large bags or backpacks offensive. However, a larger proportion of the public at large (57%) said that Muslims were right to be offended by such suspicions.

The most noticeable difference between Muslims and the wider public on social issues appears over the question of whether pupils should be

allowed to wear religious dress regardless of their school's uniform policy. Three quarters of Muslims (76%) thought they should, but less than half (42%) of the population said the same. However, there is an equally striking division of opinion among the population at large by age. More than two-thirds of 18–24 year olds (68%) thought pupils should be free to wear religious dress whereas only 30% of over 65s say the same.

The survey also found that while half the public (51%) thought that Islam treated women as inferior to men, only half that number (25%) thought that Islam was a threat to the British way of life.

A lot done; a lot left to do

After a little over seven months in charge of the Conservatives, David Cameron has obviously made a positive impression on the public – just over half (53%) of them believe he has changed the Tories for the better since becoming leader – however a significant proportion also still harbours doubts according to Populus's latest poll for The Times.

Exactly half of all voters (50%) agreed that 'behind all the spin & PR, David Cameron probably still believes in the same old right wing policies that the Conservatives have proposed in the past' and more than three quarters (78%) said that while his image is good, Cameron 'needs to spell out his beliefs & policies before people can judge if he'd be a good Prime Minister or not'. The ambiguous nature of the Conservative recovery is summed up by the two thirds of the public (66%) who said that despite being the best Conservative leader in a long time Cameron 'has to prove that the whole party has changed before most people will be ready to vote for them again'.

This last point is underlined by posing a similar set of questions to the Populus Network of senior decision makers and opinion formers. Here the proportion who thought that Cameron had changed the Conservatives for the better since taking over was even higher than among the public at large at 68%. However so is the number (71%) who said he has to show the Conservatives as a whole have changed before people will be ready to vote for them again.

Meaning of the NatWest 3

The furore over the extradition of the NatWest Three has less to do with the plight of the individuals concerned or the merits of their case than

with its broader implications, according to Populus surveys of both the public and opinion formers.

A poll conducted for the BBC's Daily Politics found that more than half of people (55%) thought they would never have heard of the NatWest Three had they not been City bankers with influential business supporters, even though an equal number (56%) felt that the treaty used to extradite to America should be reserved for cases involving terrorism and violent crime rather than alleged fraud. By a narrow margin (43% to 37%) the public felt the Government should have intervened to prevent the Three from being sent to the US. However, an overwhelming majority (69% to 19%) thought that the case highlighted Britain's willingness to bend over backwards to help the United States and that the extradition treaty should not be used until it was ratified there, allowing Britain to demand the presence of American suspects on a similar basis.

Predictably attitudes were harder among opinion formers. A Populus/CityAM survey found that 60% thought the Government should have intervened to prevent the NatWest Three's extradition even though three quarters (76%) were unsure as to their guilt or innocence.

New Printable Version of Perspective

A number of people have told us that they would like to have a version of *Perspective* which is easier to print out and pass around to colleagues. Because of this, you can now find attached a pdf, printable version. As always, we welcome your feedback on this, or any other, issue.

If you found this edition of *Perspective* informative and would like to receive other briefings periodically, simply reply to this email with your name and position and we will confirm you on our database. If you do not wish to receive any further information from Populus reply to this email typing the word *unsubscribe* in the subject line.

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