

Nov 04, 2016 by *Jian (Jay) Wang*

Why Isn't the Expo a Media Event? ^[1]

According to *Media Tenor*, a Zurich-based research institute, like other recent world expositions, Expo Shanghai only received scant attention in the international media prior to its grand opening on May 1.

This is hardly surprising. The Expo, as it is currently conceived and presented, is simply not a media magnet to start with.

First, there is no compelling storyline for the event. Granted, each Expo is themed (this year's being "Better City, Better Life"), but that doesn't necessarily translate into a narrative thread that helps to tell the story of the Expo, especially to media audiences.

In this regard, the broadcast coverage of the Olympics, another global event, is completely different. The telecast of the two-week event is almost like a mini-TV series, replete with dramas and personalities.

Which leads to my second observation as to why the Expo is not gaining the kind of media attention it in fact deserves. Indeed, the Shanghai Expo is spectacular and exhilarating on many fronts. Still, it comes across as being primarily about organizations, with country pavilions front and center. Yet it will take people and personalities to breathe life into these pavilions and their stories.

The Expo represents one of the few globalizing moments when the world comes together to celebrate its cultures and innovations, and when we can grasp a sense of our common destiny. But in today's clamorous media environment, importance doesn't always beget media and public attention.

Perhaps the Expo should take a page from one of the U.S. reality shows The Amazing Race target="_blank">*The Amazing Race*, which just concluded its 16th season with part of the final competition taking place in Shanghai.

Although the race to win the million-dollar-award was the focal point of the show, using the city as a backdrop of the competition, it effectively showcased both the trendy and traditional sides of Shanghai; not to mention many entertaining, and at times enlightening, cultural encounters by the contestants.

Incidentally, the Shanghai episode had some 10 million television viewers. I doubt if any state-led promotion of the city would be able to arouse as much audience interest as the show did.

*To find out more about Jay Wang's CPD research project: **Nation Branding at Expo Shanghai 2010**, click [here](#).*
