



Pamela Antaki

## Business Is Entertainment

*For a lot of people, it is no longer acceptable buying afresh, trendy and the unnecessary products. Hence, to create long term-acquired value, brands must re-examine their identities and see how they are reconnecting with emotional value and relevance with their audiences.*

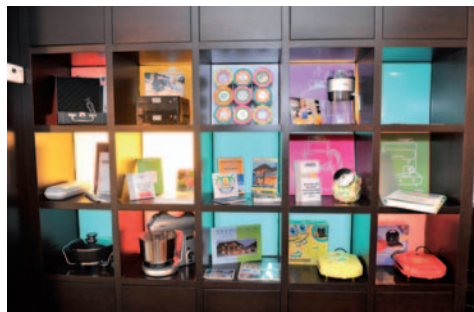
*Pamela Antaki, Brand Distributor of Princess in Lebanon, tells the story of a 16-year-old brand, as she elaborates on a new 'poetry' injected in Princess' corporate identity and its communication scheme.*

"Business is entertainment" is the tagline that complements the brand 'Princess'. However, it's much more than just a slogan; it represents the core element of the organisation's corporate culture, conveying the essence of the brand and how the company conducts business. Princess, is a Dutch household appliances firm specialised in small domestic appliances in chrome, which gives it a distinction over its competitors, as the brand stands out in the market as far as design and quality are concerned.

It enjoys a wide range and unique product line up in its current portfolio, among which is a beauty line created by the famous designer Philippe Starck, in addition to a fun cooking product line signed by the renowned designer Jan Des Bouvrie as well as a beauty line featuring real Swarovski crystals... I know I might sound biased when I speak of the Princess brand, especially that I'm the Brand Distributor in Lebanon; however, I ask you to trust me when I say I'm just being very objective in stating the facts. I believe it is the company's philosophy to conduct business in an outstanding manner, to stand out from the clutter, hence create the "WOW effect" while generating positive buzz. As the President and CEO of Princess, Aad Oubourg, always says: "Business is entertainment: show, glamour, glitter, and marketing! Emotions and details marketing... Everything is real with us".

I started to handle the brand mid 2008, when we organised our first Princess Road Show event at Khoury Home in Dora, Lebanon. Ten delegates from Princess flew from the Netherlands in order to entertain the Lebanese crowd for only two hours; among them, Princess Household Appliances Brand Ambassadors, Chef Cas Spijkers, Master Chef of the

Century, Chef Ramzi, Master Chef of the Arab World, and Tonny Eyk, Famous Composer and Pianist. During the show, multiple presentations took place and many cooking tips were provided by Chefs Ramzi and Cas Spijkers. They have in fact presented the audience with segments of live cooking shows, during which they offered succulent recipes that harvested their admiration and pallet appreciation. In his turn, Princess Ambassador Tonny Eyk dazzled the Lebanese crowd with his fabulous musical backdrop.



Princess boutique

Many events followed the Road Show, as the last took place in May 2010, when Kapa (Princess distributor in Lebanon and a sister company to Antaki) along with Princess Household Appliances B.V. invited the Princess clients and friends to attend the brand's cooking and eating fun day at The Chocolate Lounge Restaurant in Beirut. This boutique-style product exhibition was especially designed to showcase the brand's fun cooking line, while guests filled their saucers from a free-flowing chocolate fountain whose products were prepared by The Chocolate Lounge that caters for all sorts of Fondue Makers and Chocolate Fountains... It surely was a "yum" and "fun" event for the invitees, who also enjoyed a succulent brunch afterwards.

On a larger scale, Princess has a clear spot in the professional entertainment industry. To name a few, it sponsors famous musicals in the Netherlands such as "Annie", "Love me just a little bit more" and the famous Circus Renz.

The brand has built a strong reputation with its exceptional marketing campaigns. The list is long; so I will highlight a few. The "win the Princess Penthouse in Marbella" campaign; just by purchasing a product featured in the campaign! This idea gave consumers the opportunity to win a fabulous \$600,000 penthouse in the Spanish resort. Furthermore, the brand conducts activities all through the year in addition to annual happenings, where it offers its consumers, distributors and friends from all over the world opportunities to win a free week's stay at the Hotel Princess Residence in Seefeld, Austria (the winter Olympic city) or at the glamorous Princess Phuket Villa in Thailand, where the guests enjoy their own butler, chef and chauffeur.

The brand is an entertaining company but also one that has a call for social responsibility.

The 'Kids Conquer the Kitchen with Kids Design' is a program launched by princess in 2008 that allows children from all over the world to enter the competition through acquiring the the brand's colouring booklet and submitting their drawings for the national competition draw. The young designers have to create innovative and unique ideas for a household appliance. The kids' unique ideas are assessed by an expert panel based on five major criteria: originality, eco-friendliness and substantiality, design and commercial feasibility.

Each country performs its own national competition and the winner

receives a valuable prize and automatically enters the international competition, which entitles him/her to get their product manufactured on a worldwide scale.

Princess believes in fairy tales as it believes in children. Through the Kids campaign, it invests the young as they're the future, as they have a creative and simple way of thinking. Having said this, it is worth noting that the winner of this campaign in Lebanon for 2010 was 14-year-old Claude Zoghzi, who created an innovative toaster grill.

In conclusion, I believe that the secret of a successful recipe is the combination of good ingredients. With this said, Princess, as a brand has a mixture of specialised know-how, innovative break-through products, exceptional marketing campaigns, strong public relations, corporate social responsibility, and a glamour "bling bling style"... With this entire element, this 16-year-old young brand has definitely developed a unique voice in the market.

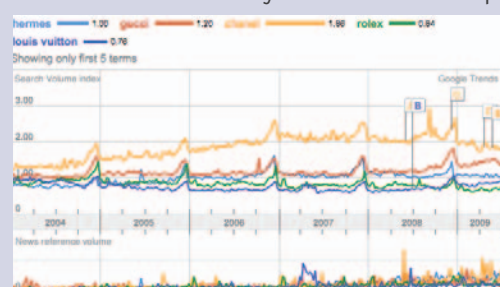
What more can we say other than "What's a home without a Princess?" ■

## Tracking Luxury Brands' Health

There are a number of ways of tracking general interest in the world's luxury brands, the most obvious one being annual sales figures. In recent times a more contemporary measure has emerged – the number of times those exclusive brand names are entered into the Google search engine.

Against a backdrop of global economic uncertainty, the fabled "green shoots of recovery" are finally starting to emerge in Internet searches.

According to a study published July 2009, searches for the luxury car brands Aston Martin and Mercedes Benz have increased by a third since the same time last year with Gucci also up by eight percent.



Google Trends Analysis - Luxury Brands

While these searches may be purely aspirational, could they be an indication of increased consumer confidence? The Millward Brown 2009

Brandz survey also has good news for luxury brands. The survey identifies the world's most valuable brands measured by their dollar value and their luxury category shows a ten percent increase in brand value, driven by demand in China and other developing markets. Leading the category is Louis Vuitton with a brand value of \$19.4 billion followed by Hermes, Gucci, Chanel and Rolex. Rolex is the highest riser in the top ten with a 35 percent increase in brand value. Cartier and Moët & Chandon have dropped 12 percent and 2 percent respectively but still hang on to a top ten ranking. So how are these brands growing when the world is going through a recession?

For a number of them (including Moët & Chandon, Gucci, and Louis Vuitton), an advertising strategy emphasising their brand's heritage has really paid off, appealing to a more reflective consumer. Furthermore some discreet sales have shifted stock without tarnishing the luxury brand.

Against a tough economic backdrop, it would seem that luxury brands are not only surviving, they are positively thriving.

*Despite the tough times, luxury is not disappearing, rather changing. In addition to seeking fewer, better items, consumers' demand for socially and ecologically produced goods is on the rise. While shoppers seem to recognise "green washing" (when a company overstates or misrepresents its environmental commitment), they do expect luxury companies to adopt ethical practices.*



## How Are Luxury Brands Reinventing Themselves in the Middle East?

Q&A with Rachid Mtaini, General Manager of Euro RSCG Dubai

### Would a greener image or any CSR activity make companies more 'believable' assisting them in developing a unique brand voice to help them shine through the clutter?

Being green is an admirable pursuit. But it can also be a trivial one. Believability, visibility, piercing through the clutter – these are not immediate and guaranteed results of jumping on the green bandwagon. If "going green" and, on a larger scale, CSR are not sustainable and sensitive to a brand's identity, they are quickly just empty accoutrements.

Euro RSCG ME is deeply involved in the Middle East luxury market. In the same way that we have witnessed a major, nearly historical shift in consumer behaviour, so too do we believe our agency has shifted to a more caring attitude. "Who Cares Wins" is how David Jones, CEO of Euro RSCG Worldwide, likes to sum up the advent of the caring corporation -- those businesses, like Euro RSCG ME and some of our clients, who realise that we bear as much responsibility for driving positive social change as governments do.

One Young World, the Tck Tck Tck Climate Justice campaign, our investment in and sharing of knowledge assets...all these are examples of a simple principle that is a true clutter-cutter: the best way to get the public to respect your brand is to have a respectable brand.

Clearly, creative is important. Especially in an attention economy where those who grab (and hold) attention survive. Yet it is less about having a creative "edge" than how a certain strain of creativity resonates in today's world. Creativity for creativity's sake is dead. We believe creativity is part of a broader, holistic approach that combines thorough research, strategic insights and solid communication.

### What are you doing to remain relevant to an increasingly knowledgeable clientèle and the ever-changing buying behaviour?

There are two buzzwords that guide us in engaging with the "new" clientèle: experience and dialogue. Experience as in experiential – those moments of connection with a brand that go beyond what you see in a store or around the mall. True, consumers want more. But they are also redefining what they really want, the values from which the products (and the dreams) arise. We believe this is articulated in the good the brand does. Not just good PR and advertising. But dignified ethics, and how these ethics play out in the commercial offering and its environment.

Dialogue is key in this age of increasing transparency. As the model of one-way communication caves in around us, we find that brands reluctant to dialogue with their consumers are ill equipped for survival. With the correct forum (from social media to user-generated products) and an open attitude, it is possible to interact with consumers, to pick their brains. Not from the vantage point of a brand as advertiser, but rather as a "conversationalist" who is approachable, modern and eager to exchange.