

MarketingPulse 2018

Plenary Session 1 - Recipe for a Winning Brand

Synopsis

Amid intense competition in the modern world, there's no room for complacency and businesses need to be constantly alert and responsive to constantly-changing consumer trends to retain loyalty. In this session, leading brands shared tricks and tips driving their success onward – and how they keep ahead with innovative campaigns embracing global trends and changes.

Moderator

- **Ms Karen Koh, Founder**
Intermedia (a journalism and media consultancy)

Speakers

- **Ms Sara Riis-Carstensen**
Head of Global Branding, De Beers and Former Director of Global Brand Development, LEGO
- **Mr Uri Minkoff**
CEO and Co-Founder, Rebecca Minkoff
- **Mr Kei Suzuki**
Director, Ryohin Keikaku Co., Ltd. (MUJI)

Sara kicked-off the plenary by explaining how at the core of a winning recipe there is the attitude of being ready to embrace changes. She said: “Don’t be the best at doing what everyone does today, but be the best at what nobody else will do tomorrow”. Using a metaphor based on LEGO brand and product identity, Sara explained how LEGO built its success “brick by brick”, always carefully analyzing the market and creating the changes as the only way to innovate.

First brick in LEGO success story is “strategy”. A brand needs to be aware that trends come and go, and look at those that match its brand identity. Brand identity has to be deeply rooted in the brand DNA and while exploring new opportunities for development, this should always be reinforced at the core of the business. At the end of the day, for a brand to remain relevant, it needs to contribute to the world, and make sure that there is an actual contribution. The focus has to be on what the world would miss without that specific brand.

The second brick is the “consumer”. LEGO did a great job building a strong relationship with its consumers throughout different generations, so that now LEGO is seen like something to be passed from father to son. LEGO also launched LEGO Ideas, a platform dedicated to its customers to express their wishes and their ideas. In this way, the brand stays up-to-date with changes in the market, and at the same time it engages its consumers by remaining faithful to its own brand values.

The third brick is “media”. Some parents think LEGO is providing pre-defined mindsets through specific instructions about how to play with LEGO. However, LEGO sees its products as a way to instill creativity and stimulate children’s brain. Here, it comes the LEGO Kronkiwongi. This media campaign was articulated in three stages based on three questions to children: What is Kronkiwongi? What is its story? How can it help others? This campaign was not about selling more products, but it created the story of an imaginative Kronkiwongi that inspired and engaged families globally.

Sara’s presentation resonated to all audience as all of us have played with LEGO in our childhood and the incredible branding and advertising strategy developed to build the brand brick by brick provided a replicable framework for other sectors as well.

For Uri, a winning brand comes with a strong identity, a faithful community, and a disruptive shopping experience.

In the worldwide fashion market, there are many brands which are powerful and well-established, and Rebecca Minkoff had to create a strong brand identity to break through when it first launch. The secret to Rebecca Minkoff’s success was unique products targeted to its community’s needs.

Uri addresses his customers as members of his community. Rebecca Minkoff likes engaging and interacting with its community to understand their new and changing needs. It used digital transformation for its own good by catching momentum on the selfie, hashtag, and influencer's trends, because nowadays individuals rely more on their peers and influencers more than advertisements and brands.

In terms of disruptive shopping experience, Rebecca Minkoff has launched the so-called "store of the future", where smart walls suggest new styles to customers and smart mirrors in the dressing rooms enable customers to change the lighting ambience of the room, browse for other sizes or save their wish list. It has introduced smart tags to offer visitors access to exclusive content such as private styling sessions, e-commerce services, style recommendations or video content, and provide them with a new connected experience. Following also the trend of "see now buy now", Rebecca Minkoff's fashion show in New York City streets is available online and it enables individuals to buy the items directly from the runway.

To close the session, Kei Suzuki, who delighted the audience with an overview on MUJI, which represents a broader retail concept building a 360-degree brand identity consistently materialized across sectors. MUJI wants to create the antithesis of consumer society with a brand as discrete as possible, a brand without name, and focusing only on products and sustainability. The unbranded brand actually worked and nowadays is expanding rapidly all over the world.

MUJI sees itself as antagonist to the consumer society's waste culture. Its new sustainable retail approach focuses on recycling material and design. Customers can spend time in MUJI stores as they are thought to provide a public space where to read a book, participate in workshops, or one of the events that MUJI organizes in its stores.

For MUJI, the secret of a winning branding recipe, which is actually not really based on branding for it, includes: a strong identity, a community, and a disruptive shopping experience, same as Rebeca Minkoff. However, for MUJI, the brand identity is more of a broader retail concept. Community is made of people who share the same sustainable vision. The shopping experience is mainly framed by store layout and design symbolizing the strong Japanese design legacy of simplicity.

During the Q&A, Karen asked the three speakers to summarize the core of their business. Sara talked about LEGO and identified the bricks at the core of the business. Uri, the community of the fans supporting the brand. Kei, instead, suggested the importance of MUJI community built on sustainability.