

Unilever celebrates awards in 2012

Looking back over 2012, the Unilever Group has won multiple awards in varying categories and seen some excellent campaigns launched that have increased top of mind awareness.



Angela Klute

Awards

- In the Product of the Year Awards 2013, 12 of its homecare, personal care and foods products were selected as the best innovators in their categories by a sample of 5000 independent consumers representing the South African grocery population.
- In the 2012 Icon Brand Survey, Sunlight washing liquid and Sunlight laundry washing made a clean sweep in the household product category, while Robertson's herbs and spices and Knorr Aromat Dry Seasoning won in the condiments/sauces category. Earning Platinum awards, two other Unilever brands, Rama margarine and Mrs Balls chutney showed that they are potential Icon brands that have engendered love and loyalty in most, if not all racial consumer groups.
- Its South African company commitment to the company's Sustainable Living Plan to halve the waste from disposal of its products by 2020 was also rewarded. Its Sunlight Dishwashing Liquid Bottle took the Silver Award in the Percentage of Recycled Content in the 2012 "Best Recycled Plastics Product of the Year" Competition, organised by the South African Plastics Recycling Organisation (SAPRO). This will contribute to reducing packaging to waste stream by approximately 240 tons a year.
- In the CRF Institute's Best Employers ranking, it was chosen as a best employer in South Africa, Ghana, Kenya and Nigeria.
- The Malibu Roller System, developed by Barrows, an on-shelf solution that uplifts the entire category and ensures that its spice range, Robertson's, retains its position as market leader took the Permanent Display of the Year Award at annual retail marketing awards, POPAI SA, while Silver went to Knorr Puschner and Bronze to What's for Dinner.

Brands accrue value

According to Unilever VP: Personal Care, Angela Klute, the group realises that in a global economy, subject to changing market dynamics and ever-increasing competition, brands not only serve as a route map for purchasing behaviour, but also that they can accrue significant value for a company. Similarly, through their brands, companies can go a long way in encouraging consumers to change their behaviour in order to reduce their personal environmental impact, thus contributing to the sustainability of the planet.

The Unilever Sustainable Living Plan, launched in 2010, is the global group's sustainable business growth plan for doubling the size of its business whilst reducing its environmental footprint and increasing its positive social impact.

"We have carried out an environmental impact study across the full value chain of our business and have identified that our largest impact lies in the consumer usage of our products to wash, clean and cook with our products.

"In terms of sustainability, our biggest responsibility, and challenge, is therefore two-fold: on the one hand, we must provide our consumers with new product innovations that enable them to reduce their personal impact on the environment, for example TreSemme Dry Shampoo, which enables consumers to wash their hair with water less often.

"On the other hand, we also need to continuously encourage consumers to change their behaviour in order to reduce their personal environmental impact, which is precisely what the Skip and Omo Laundry Liquids campaign does by encouraging consumers to wash their clothes using a cold water cycle," Klute explains.

Key objective

She goes on to say that one of Unilever's key objectives is to develop brands that fulfil the needs of all the different types of consumers, "therefore it is vital to differentiate our products in the market. Within certain categories we would often have four or five brands targeted to specific consumers in relation to their age or psychographic profile because we know that consumers have different wants and needs in terms of brands.

"At the same time, in today's world where consumer desires and needs are ever-changing, it's also our responsibility as a company to evolve and change with the consumer. We therefore invest in research and development, looking for new technology and ways to innovate products and give consumers better product experiences. Through innovation, the group has become the thought and market leader in many of the categories in which it operates.

"In turn, marketers will be discussing how they can use new technology to create an idea that consumers can buy into so that they understand what a particular product can do and how it can help them achieve better results. Through a rigorous process of screening technologies, product appraisals, and consumer research, product mixes are formulated and refined before being launched, to ensure that consumer needs are met."

R&D and the supply chain work seamlessly together to make sure that its factories can deliver on the technology that emanates from R&D and manufacture products of the highest quality possible.

"Marketing is equally important to us to ensure that the benefits of the products are adequately and clearly communicated to consumers," she stresses.

Marketing campaign success

The innovative Axe Apollo campaign of this popular men's care brand, launched on 10 January 2013, is a case in point. Taking the brand to a whole new level, the campaign has evoked overwhelming response in the first three weeks since its launch, both in South Africa and abroad.

A 360-degree campaign in the true sense of the word, the social media component is a key focus area because of the marketing strategy of specifically targeting the younger market, says Klute.

"Digital and technology have allowed the brands to be present wherever the consumer is at all times, engaging them always on experiences and as a result becoming an integral part of the consumer's digital repertoire across platforms. In terms of digital, the group's growth target is 100% - 200% with the objective to hit the 2015 target of spending 15% of total media spend on digital."

Axe launched the Axe Apollo Space Academy (AASA) and a corresponding website, AxeApollo.com to promote a new space-themed scent and give fans a chance to win a trip into space. The page has more than 20 million likes on Facebook globally of which 4 million are on the US page alone.

"Three weeks after the launch, over 200,000 guys and girls, of whom 12,000 are South Africans, have already signed up in the hope of winning a trip into space. Even online, more than 50,000 people have voted for their favourite person to win a space trip," says Klute.

Precisely because it was so innovative, right from the outset everyone involved immediately bought into the idea, brainstormed and developed by the global Axe team, consisting of representatives from different countries and their agency partners, she adds.

Astronaut Buzz Aldrin is the Axe Apollo spokesperson and features in a YouTube video about the campaign that has had over 100,000 views. "Although Buzz Aldrin is in his eighties, he is still considered the ultimate space hero and one of the 'coolest' men in the world, having been one of the first men in space. He has also been a long-time supporter of sending everyday people into space, which is why he was selected to be honorary head of AASA. By working with him, we're giving people a chance to hear from a real space hero first hand," concludes Klute.

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