

Champions of Design

Observations
on creativity
for competitive
advantage in
Asia from jkr

4



Katie Ewer

Katie joined jkr London in 2000 but now lives somewhere much warmer. She is a word bird and language lover who focuses her time raising the profile of design in Singapore and the region.

jones knowles ritchie

jones knowles ritchie create brand charisma through the medium of design.

www.jkrglobal.com

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By Katie Ewer

Additional copy
by John Naughton

Preface

Covering the breadth of the Asia-Pacific region as we do, Campaign Asia-Pacific has long subscribed to the point of view that there's really no such thing as an Asia-Pacific region. Sure, it's a convenient label to throw across a great swath of the map. But trying to divine trends that hold true from New Zealand to Nepal and from Mongolia to Indonesia? That's not only impossible but also misses the point: this part of the world is fantastic precisely because it's about as far from a monoculture as you can get.

So when it comes to brands and their use of design, we can't and won't elucidate sweeping trends. Instead, we'll simply share our excitement over the topic – the reason we've been happy to carry jkr's Champions of Design series on campaignasia.com.

The sheer diversity of the region provides a limitless palette for designers to draw from, which is good, because they will face immense challenges trying to communicate relevance to such a diverse population. Add in the fact that brands from here will inevitably expand their influence abroad, and the demands placed on design grow even more complex.

As economies hurtle forward, as demographics and technologies transform cultures, and as design-minded people in each country mix age-old artistic traditions with new innovations, we can't wait to see what emerges.

Matthew Miller

Online Editor, Campaign Asia-Pacific

Introduction

**Design
a fantastic
thing**

For someone who has spent 25 years working in advertising I've always been a little bit envious of those in design. Developing advertising is a wonderful puzzle of a job (a bit like a very large crossword) but it is inevitably ephemeral. Indeed, to be any good it has to be very much of its time.

Design on the other hand lasts rather longer and is much more tangible. Great product logos and pack designs become recognisable symbols for decades. They are part of people's consciousness and childhood memories because we all live with them every day. They have huge power.

**Asia
a growing
awareness**

It is interesting that within Asia we have at one end of the scale Japan – probably the world's leading producer of fantastic commercial design – and at the other a host of markets where the general ethos is often still that design is something 'the printer does'.

This is odd – as Asian consumers are generally highly sensitive to social status, context and style – but may well be explained by economics.

In fast growing markets distribution and simply getting the products on shelf can deliver results. But as things get more competitive this is likely to change. In a market like Singapore only 5% of the products on supermarket shelves are own label. In the UK 51% are. The designs of the (more expensively priced) competing brands have to work very hard to meet this challenge. Quality, innovation and differentiation are key. This will likely happen in Asia too as the modern retail trade expands its reach. As it does design will inevitably become a more and more important part of the mix.

**jkr
a generous
company**

Most commercial communications companies relentlessly push their own work, claim that they can somehow deliver across multiple specialisms and are perfectly set up for the future (however they see it – which largely depends on the agreed fashion of the moment). Not jkr. They simply get on with being world-class designers devoid of any corporate hyperbole. And they promote themselves by lauding the work of others. It's generous but also clever. Once you've looked at this inspiring book check out their work. It stands up well.

Charles Wigley
Chairman, BBH Asia

Contents

Tiger Balm	15
Blunt	23
Asahi	31
TWG Tea	39
Feiyue	47
Shanghai Tang	55
Marou	63
Redheads	71
Suntory	79
Hello Kitty	87

Ayam Brand	95
Shang Xia	103
Mikimoto	111
Taj Hotels	119
Uniqlo	127
Red Bull	135
Shiseido	143
Xiaomi	151
Jimmy Choo	159
Singapore Airlines	167





Tiger Balm

Sometimes, just a few details can transform a generic design into something unique. So it is with Tiger Balm, whose bold orange hue and leaping tiger icon propelled it from the shelves of a small Chinese apothecary to global fame. Tiger Balm's branding is as distinctive as its smell, a brand doubted by some but trusted by many for its curative properties.





Tiger Balm is in a category of its own: straddling the worlds of Traditional Chinese Medicine and ‘Western’ vapour rubs, the brand’s quirky, authentic identity has made it a global phenomenon.

The original Tiger Balm formulation can be credited to Chinese herbalist Aw Chu-Kin, who migrated from China to Burma in the late 19th century. But it was his two sons – Aw Boon-Par and particularly Aw Boon-Haw – who really laid the foundations for the brand’s remarkable success. Driving around rural Burma in a car painted with tiger stripes, Aw Boon-Haw was an early proponent of sampling, consumer research, demand creation and crowd-sourcing: he’d dish out samples, ask for feedback, then get his painters to leave a replica logo on the walls of the villages he visited.

It was also Aw Boon-Haw who created the brand’s distinctive iconography. In truth, a fair part of Tiger Balm’s design aesthetic is generic to the category. The use of a centred composition, decorative borders, proliferation of visual motifs, seals of quality and claims of efficacy are all the conventions of Traditional Chinese Medicine packaging. It was Aw Boon-Haw (whose name means ‘gentle tiger’) who chose the hexagonal jar, leaping tiger and vibrant orange colour to help his product stand out in a sea of sameness. These elements have

become ownable visual properties for the brand, giving it the distinctive feel it has today. Perhaps it’s the contrast of black and orange and green and red, the symbolism of the tiger emblem, the small compact jar or a combination of all of these that makes Tiger Balm look like it means business. There aren’t many brands that look more potent.

But it is not only the savvy selection of brand iconography that makes Tiger Balm an Asian Champion of Design: it is also the fact that its core livery has scarcely changed since its inception. After all, it takes courage and vision to protect a brand icon. What a shame, then, that when Tiger Balm extends into new categories such as plasters, patches and sprays, it falters. Losing its confidence in new markets, the brand’s unique visual identity gives way to category communication. If only this Tiger would stop crouching, and be as bold in new territories as it is on home turf.



虎標萬金油
Headache, stuffy nose,
aches and pains,
on affected area.
虫咬, 痕痒, 肌肉
引起之不适。
STUFFY NOSE

虎標萬金油

虎



TIGER BALM[®]
WHITE OINTMENT

虎標萬金油

May cause allergic reaction
skin-types. Test on small
before use. Pregnant, nursing
and children below 12 years
physician before use.
Store below 30°C.
External use only.
Keep away from children.
NET WT 19.4 g 虎標萬金油



虎標萬金油
Muscular aches and pains,
indigestion, insect bites
ected area.
伤, 头疼, 鼻塞, 肠胃
之不适。
MUSCULAR ACHES AND PAINS

虎標萬金油

虎



TIGER BALM[®]
RED OINTMENT

虎標萬金油

May cause allergic reaction
some skin-types. Test on
area first before use.
nursing women and
below 12 years, consult
before use.
Store below 30°C.
External use only.
Keep away from children.
NET WT 30 g 虎標萬金油

Did you know? Crouching tiger, hidden hogwash.*

1

Tiger Balm's effectiveness is not limited to humans. Zoo keepers in Singapore regularly apply quantities of the ointment on ageing animals (including tigers) which exhibit arthritic symptoms.

2

Tiger Balm was originally known as 'Ban Kim Ewe', meaning Ten Thousand Golden Oils.

3

Tiger Balm's creators Aw Boon-Par and Aw Boon-Haw created Tiger Balm Gardens in Singapore in 1937. Originally filled with hundreds of Chinese statues, it has now fallen into disrepair and has become an offbeat tourist attraction – thanks to its eclectic mix of armed monkeys, a giant crab with a human head and scenes of torture and dismemberment.

4

Lady Gaga tweeted a picture of herself with a jar of Tiger Balm during her 2011 US tour, listing it as 'a backstage must-have'.

5

In 1995, Greater Manchester Police raided shops in the city's Chinatown district and seized five boxes of Tiger Balm, believing it contained real tiger.

6

In 2013, when Dallas Cowboys' coach Jason Garrett turned up for his weekly press conference following the team's loss to the Green Bay Packers in which they threw away a 26-3 half-time lead, he was surprised by a gift from the waiting press pack. It was a \$9 container of Tiger Balm, chosen because it 'solves any ails you might have'. Garrett took the joke well and quipped, 'Did you all chip in for this?'





Blunt

Insights are the gold dust of our industry, but the truth is that mere observation is a powerful thing. Observing how dangerous umbrellas can be to your eyes led Kiwi Greig Brebner to turn points into blunt corners – a simple thought that resulted in the biggest innovation in the history of modern umbrellas.



BLUNT

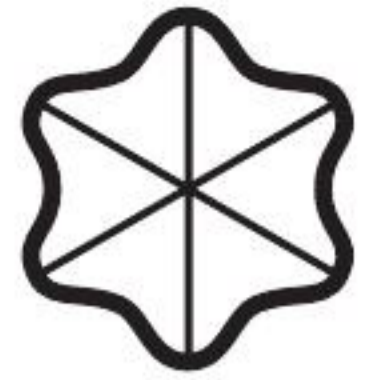
BLUNT

BLUNT

BLUNT

BLUNT

BLUNT



Once in a blue moon, the right combination of enterprise, ingenuity, tenacity and luck results in a design that revolutionises a category by solving a genuine problem. Tetrapak brought resealable, efficient ease to fiddly, fumbly milk cartons. The Biro made ink blot-free writing available to the masses. And Blunt have fundamentally redesigned a product that has been frustrating people around the world since 1928: the modern umbrella.

Greig Brebner developed his uber-umbrella in his native New Zealand. He reasoned that if he could build an umbrella that could withstand Kiwi-style gale force winds, he would have built an umbrella that would work anywhere. He did it, creating a strong lightweight umbrella that can withstand winds of up to 50mph (that's a 'strong gale' on the Beaufort Wind Force Scale, by the way). He also managed to build one that wouldn't poke anyone's eyes out.

Here comes the science bit: Blunt umbrellas use a radial tensioning system that distributes the effort used in opening the umbrella throughout the entire canopy, which makes the umbrella really strong so it won't bend in a bluster. The distribution of force extends to each point of the umbrella – which, you will know by now, isn't really a point: it's blunt.

The Wall Street Journal describes the structure of Blunt umbrellas as 'somewhere between suspension bridge and NASA space probe'. How cool is that?

In short, Blunt umbrellas are a real innovation. In functional terms, they are light years ahead of anything else on the market. But in stylistic terms, they pull off something equally brilliant because for the first time, we have an umbrella brand that's distinctive and recognisable. This is quite possibly the first real 'designer umbrella' we have seen – and I mean that in every sense of the word. It's engineered, it's stylish and it's totally unique. In the grey sleet of windy Wellington or the tropical downpours of Singapore, you can spot a Blunt a mile off by virtue of their characteristic rounded corners and bright, cheery colours.

I believe that the sign of a really great design is when our response to it is a kind of bemused, satisfied incredulity. Statements like 'Of course! How obvious! Why haven't they done that before?!' are really the best feedback you can ever hope for. Blunt umbrellas solved all of our umbrella issues in one intuitive, human and joyful design.

Can't wait for the next rainstorm.



BLUNT

Did you know? To be perfectly blunt, one of these doesn't hold water.*

1

To highlight their product's radical design, Blunt's Kiwi founders Greig Brebner (mechanical engineer) and Scott Kington (marketing exec) originally called their company Pointless Umbrellas.

2

Brebner's inspiration came in 1999 in London, where, as a tall man – he's 6'3" – he would have to battle umbrella spokes at eye level. He also noticed that Londoners would just throw away umbrellas once they'd blown inside out.

3

Blunt have recently launched an app that allows owners to track mislaid umbrellas just as iPhone users locate their lost devices.

4

National Geographic Channel held a contest between Buffalo Turbines and Blunt in which the latter, using three umbrellas, had to protect three mini houses made of straw, wood and brick. The turbines – blowing air at 200mph from just a few feet away – won, but the umbrellas held up impressively and only one collapsed.

5

LA artist, Michael C Hsiung, was commissioned in 2014 by Blunt to create a range of ad posters. His artwork shows objects in need of shielding by Blunt umbrellas. Thus a doughnut is protected from a mob of hungry stoners and overweight policemen, a stick of dynamite is kept away from objects likely to light its fuse and a hippy is saved from coming into contact with shaving cream and job applications.

6

The award-winning Blunt golf umbrella has a fibreglass shaft to protect golfers from lightning strikes.

*Good golly, lost brolies
can't (yet) be located
with an app. Number
three, alas, is a lie, but
don't bet against the
Blunt boys making
it true someday.

ASAHI BREWERIES LIMITED

ASAHI
DRAFT BEER
THE BEER FOR ALL SEASONS

SUPER
"DRY"

ASAHI

洗練されたクリアな味、辛口。

ASAHI SUPER DRY IS
BREWED USING CARE-
FULLY SELECTED YEAST
AND INGREDIENTS
UTILISING ADVANCED

生

BREWING TECHNIQUES
ENJOY THE REFRESH-
ING TASTE AND SILKY
SMOOTHNESS OF
ASAHI SUPER DRY!

スーパードライ

生ビール (非熱処理)

500ml



"KARAKUCHI"

ASAHI BREWERIES LIMITED

ASAHI
DRAFT BEER
THE BEER FOR ALL SEASONS

SUPER
"DRY"

ASAHI

洗練されたクリアな味、辛

ASAHI SUPER DRY IS
BREWED USING CARE-
FULLY SELECTED YEAST
AND INGREDIENTS
UTILISING ADVANCED

生

BREWING TECHNIQUES
ENJOY THE REFRESH-
ING TASTE AND SILKY
SMOOTHNESS OF
ASAHI SUPER DRY!

スーパードライ

生ビール (非熱処理)

350ml

"KARAKUCHI"

ASAHI BREWERIES LIMITED
ASAHI
DRAFT BEER
THE BEER FOR ALL SEASONS

SUPER
"DRY"

ASAHI

IS BREWED FROM QUALITY INGREDIENTS
PURE
ANCED
R HAS
SHING
HNESS
JOY THE GREAT TASTE OF ASAHI BEER!

生

CULTURED YEAST
BREWING TECHNIQUES
EXCELLENT RICHNESS,
DRINKABILITY AND
ALL YEAR ROUND

スーパードライ

生ビール (非熱処理)

250ml

さけ
お酒

さけ
お酒

ASAHI BREWERIES LIMITED
ASAHI
DRAFT BEER
THE BEER FOR ALL SEASONS

SUPER
"DRY"

ASAHI

IS BREWED FROM QUALITY INGREDIENTS
PURE
ANCED
R HAS
SHING
HNESS
JOY THE GREAT TASTE OF ASAHI BEER!

生

スーパードライ

生ビール (非熱処理)

135ml

さけ
お酒

Asahi

Imagine Guinness ditching its harp and you get some idea of what a bold move it was for Asahi to leave behind its traditional 'rising sun' logo and embrace radical change when it launched its new Super Dry beer with a brand new look. It worked, of course, and with it the company's fortunes turned around, proving that the traditional way isn't always the right way.

BEER BIÈRE

ASAHI BREWERIES LIMITED
ASAHI BEER
THE BEER FOR ALL SEASONS

SUPER
"DRY"

Asahi

ASAHI BEER IS BREWED FROM QUALITY INGREDIENTS.

EXCELLENT RICHNESS, **辛口** REFRESHING AND
SATIN SMOOTHNESS. ALL YEAR ROUND

YOU CAN ENJOY THE GREAT TASTE OF ASAHI BEER!

スーパードライ

アサヒビール

ALC. 5% VOL.

HTTP://WWW.ASAHIBEER.CO.UK



There's something about the combination of bold calligraphic black type against raw, shiny aluminium on the Asahi beer can that feels quintessentially Japanese.

Ancient tradition and futuristic optimism: these contradictions seem elegantly resolved in its design. The logo alludes to the kind of craftsmanship we expect from Japan, whilst the can feels unequivocally urban. The success of the design is that it speaks to heritage and to newness in one breath.

The design has become a visual shorthand for Japanese beer, yet the identity as we know it has only been with us since 1987. The story of its introduction is a fable of brand rebirth.

For decades until this point, Asahi's logo consisted of a rising sun framed by Hokusai-inspired waves ('Asahi' means 'rising sun' in Japanese). It's hard to conceive of a more authentic, nationalistic piece of brand iconography. I would like to have been a fly on the boardroom wall when company president Tsutomu Murai tabled the idea of throwing the whole lot in the bin and starting again.

Why? In 1982 Asahi beer was in a seemingly unstoppable spiral of decline. From the number two beer in Japan, its share had dwindled over time to just a little over 10%. Tsutomu Murai instructed the company's R&D team to do something revolutionary: to *really listen*

to the market. They came up with a new, light and refreshing style of beer they called 'Super Dry'.

The new design broke the rules of beer branding. It rejected the vernacular of the category, with no conventional 'racetrack' device (the oval shape and cross-bar that signifies most European style beers) or star symbol in sight. In trying to express the idea of 'newness', Asahi found its own voice – one that is modern, urban and sharp. Somehow the elegant, strong brushstrokes of the logo manage to conjure a feeling of strength, dynamism and opportunity, without relying on the more literal rising sun icon to do it.

In the year of its launch, the brand's growth outpaced that of the category threefold, and the redesign, along with the Super Dry innovation, received credit for reversing the brand's fortunes. It's now the biggest beer brand in Japan and one of the top 10 beer brands in the world.

Would Asahi have achieved the same result with a Super Dry variant of its rising sun label? I doubt it. Murai knew that kind of superficial tinkering would have been a case of 'rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic'. Sometimes, when a company or product undergoes fundamental change, the role of design is to shout it from the rooftops. Nothing says 'we really mean it' better than a visual promise that you do.



ASAHI

アサヒビール

Lager Beer

ALL ALUMINUM CAN

東京都中央区京橋三丁目 朝日麦酒株式会社 0 350ml 東 604

Did you know? Can you spot the brew that is untrue among the following?*

1

In creating Asahi Super Dry, the brewers were guided by three phrases. The first was, 'a beer so clear and sophisticated we may help ourselves to more', the second, 'a beer suitable for sashimi' and finally, 'a beer that doesn't interfere with the taste of food'.

2

The popular brand of Superdry clothing was developed originally to help promote the similarly-named Asahi beer.

3

The Asahi brewery in Osaka offers a free tour which concludes with visitors being offered draft beer for 20 minutes with unlimited refills.

4

Just weeks after releasing Asahi Super Dry in March 1987, the brewers took out adverts in the Japanese press to apologise for stocks running out.

5

In 1996 Asahi, in association with US brewer Miller, introduced First Lady – claiming to be the first beer aimed at working women – into the Japanese and US markets.

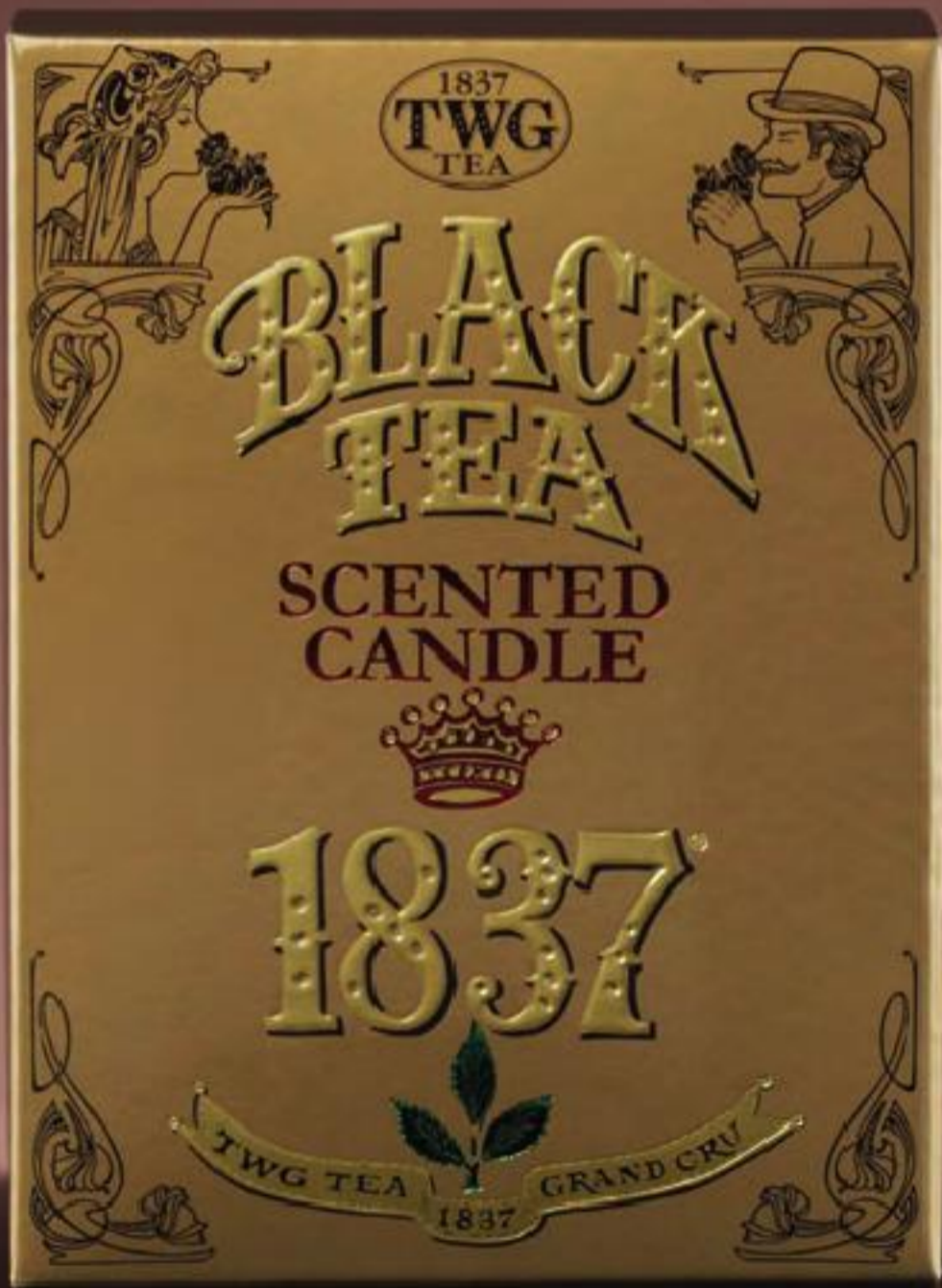
6

Next door to the company's brewery in Fukuoka is the Asahi beer garden. For 3,750 yen (just over £22) it offers an all-you-can-eat-and-drink option featuring 'Genghis Khan', a kind of lamb/mutton barbecue.

*Number two is very much false. There is no connection whatsoever between the beer and the clothing line, Superdry.

TWG Tea

Innovation can sometimes be about looking backwards rather than forwards. TWG Tea's brand story is a bewitching brew of luxury and old-world glamour, expressed through every touchpoint from packaging to interiors, and from service style to tone of voice. It's a delicious blend that's capturing the imagination (and taste buds) of tea drinkers from Singapore to New York City.





Having tea at TWG Tea is like stepping back in time. Everything is more sophisticated. The customers are stylish, self-assured tea connoisseurs. The staff trained at Downton Abbey. In this magical world the tablecloths are whiter, the napkins are crisper, the teapots are shinier and the crockery clinks with a more elegant timbre. TWG Tea is to tea what a bottle of Chanel No 5 is to perfumes, a Moleskine is to notebooks, or a Birkin is to handbags. In fact, 'having tea at TWG Tea' is a woefully inadequate description of the experience.

TWG Tea sells 'the finest teas of the world' from glimmering gold teapots amidst beautifully constructed table settings and in lovely little tea rituals. It sells a vast range of packaged teas, limited editions and gift sets in old-fashioned caddies, each with their own graphic personality. It sells loose teas from a wall of big tins that look like they just got loaded off this morning's clipper from Ceylon. The brand has a string of elegant tea-houses throughout Asia and concessions in Harrods of London and Dean & DeLuca in NYC. High tea in any of them will make you feel like a colonial memsahib in old Singapore.

So what's the story behind this heritage brand? How did its Raffles-era sense of nostalgia suddenly eclipse Raffles hotel itself? Where has it been hiding since 1837?

The truth is, 'TWG Tea' was only established in 2007 in Singapore by 3 entrepreneurs who saw the Asian nostalgia wave coming long before the rest of us, and also managed to tie it cleverly to our thirst for luxury living. Abroad, in markets like the UK, the brand's colonial vibe seems to appeal to consumers with Fortnum's fatigue.

Have we been duped? Does it matter? Do we even care? I have a hunch we care less about it here in Asia than we would in a mature Western market. In Asia, we still trust brands, and even those that dissemble don't seem to faze us. Faux authenticity isn't such a bad thing when authenticity itself is in such short supply. Ultimately, Asians are extremely pragmatic, and if a pot of tea and a macaron at TWG Tea is a supremely enjoyable throwback to colonial splendour, then what's the problem?

TWG Tea's brand story is a splendid mirage, made persuasive and convincing by the fluency of its design language – old fashioned of course, but also not too slick or 'designed'. The role of design is to give visual expression to intangible ideas – as it has done for this brand-new old-fashioned brand. I for one, am willing to suspend my disbelief in return for 'a pot of tea at TWG'.

THE FINEST TEAS OF THE WORLD
1837
TWG
TEA
GRANDS CRUS PRESTIGE

GEISHIA BLOSSOM TEA

Green tea



TWG TEA 1837 GRAND CRU

THE FINEST TEAS OF THE WORLD
1837
TWG
TEA
GRANDS CRUS PRESTIGE

PLACE VENDÔME TEA

Green tea



TWG TEA 1837 GRAND CRU

THE FINEST TEAS OF THE WORLD
1837
TWG
TEA
GRANDS CRUS PRESTIGE

SINGAPORE BREAKFAST TEA

Green tea & Black tea



TWG TEA 1837 GRAND CRU

Did you know?

**There's
confusion
amid the
infusions.
Spot the fib
among the
following.***

1

TWG Tea – the TWG stands for The Wellness Group – was founded in 2008 by Taha Bouqdib, his wife Maranda Barnes and Manoj M Murjani.

2

Celebrity pastry chef Phillipe Langlois has introduced a range of savoury dishes, desserts and pastries to the TWG Tea menu. Offerings on the TWG Tea Singapore menu include TWG Tea Lasagne infused with Moroccan Mint Tea.

3

Gold Yin Zhen from TWG Tea is one of the most expensive teas in the world. The tea is only harvested – with golden scissors – on one mountain one day per year and then the leaves are then painted with 24ct gold flakes. It retails at US\$14,167 per kilo.

4

TWG Tea offers over 800 different blends, sourced from 45 tea producing regions.

5

The company's best-seller is a tea called Silver Moon Tea, described as 'a green tea blend, strongly reminiscent of red woodlandberries and grand vanilla bouquet'. Its promotional copy also says that 'with an enthusiasm to redesign modernity, reinterpreting everyday life,' the tea 'narrates the story of the constellations'.

6

One of TWG Tea's most popular sellers is called More Tea Vicar! It is a blend of three teas all grown in the shadow of monastery walls and one of the first packets was sent as a gift to the then Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams.

*Heavens no, there isn't a TWG Tea blend called More Tea Vicar. Number six needs to confess its sins and beg forgiveness.





Feiyue

Its origins, along with the ownership of the brand are shrouded in confusion. What's not in doubt is that Feiyue is a footwear classic, with traditions and associations in Chinese culture stretching back almost a century. Its simplicity has long been its strength and the recent upsurge of Western interest in the brand reflects a desire to tap into its unimpeachable authenticity.



福

福



35

35



Lace-up canvas shoes with a vulcanised rubber sole. Plenty of footwear brands fit this description, but Chinese brand Feiyue is slightly different.

Feiyue has been traced back to 1920's Shanghai, when it represented affordable, practical footwear for ordinary Chinese people. But it became better known for its martial arts associations. Feiyue enthusiasts talk about the shoes' lightweight material, thin rubber sole and wide ankle space, which allow the grip and flexibility required for kung fu and other martial arts. Parkour types swear by the barefoot feeling the shoes afford. Wushu masters and Shaolin monks all wear Feiyue shoes. So far, so cult.

The design of the shoes feels as authentic as the brand myth; there's something gritty, unpolished and utilitarian about them: the coarse print of the white logo and double chevron on the side. The rough stitching. The single-colour printed brown paper bag they're packed in. Even a cardboard shoebox is an unnecessary indulgence for this brand.

There's attention to detail, though, too: the decorative personality of the paper bag, with its charming, though baffling, Pinocchio illustration; the detail of the Top One logo in the shoe tongue, the rubber triangle on the sole.

These are details, by the way, that are specific to the Chinese brand Feiyue, not the French version that 'arrived' in France in 2006 courtesy of Frenchman Patrice Bastian and is so beloved of Western celebs such as Orlando Bloom. The Chinese martial art shoe is not the same product as the French fashion version (there are crucial product differences), although they share the same name, logo, story and basic design aesthetic.

China's poor intellectual property laws make establishing the true identity of the Feiyue shoe and its brand owners a Kafkaesque maze of trademark ambiguities. It also makes buying the real thing a confusing web of rip-off and counter rip-off. If you want to buy original Feiyues, you'll first need to navigate your own way through Chinese rip-offs of the real thing, French versions of the real thing, and even more bizarrely, Chinese rip-offs of the French version of the real thing.

TOP ONE

Did you know? There's a sneaky sneaker untruth hidden among the following.*

1

The original Feiyue shoe came in only two colours: black or white.

2

The name Feiyue means 'flying forward' in Mandarin, a reference to the dual elevation of body and mind at the heart of Wushu arts.

3

Many of the participants in the lavish opening ceremony of the 2008 Olympics in Beijing were sporting Feiyue footwear.

4

In 2008's *Kung Fu Panda*, Po the panda wears a pair of trainers recognisable as Feiyue during one martial arts sequence.

5

There are many pirated versions of the shoe available in China. These are known as *shanzhai* products – literally meaning 'mountain stronghold', but referring to bandits beyond the control of government. Shanzhai versions of Feiyue are marketed under such names as Feiyu, Feiyin and Feiiong.

6

Original Feiyue shoes are still largely hand-made in China. Even a basic model requires over 50 separate procedures to complete.

*The idea that Po the Panda ever sported a pair of Feiyue shoes is, of course, a bear-faced lie.





Shanghai Tang

Shanghai Tang is frequently referred to as China's first home-grown luxury brand and considers itself a front runner in the shift from 'made in China' to 'designed in China'. With a distinctive design style that transcends the conventions of luxury, Shanghai Tang puts originality centre stage, giving us enough of both substance and style to keep us captivated for more than just a season.





Inspired by its provenance but directed by its personality, Shanghai Tang has forged a unique place in the fashion world through an elegant, flamboyant and very distinctive design aesthetic.

Founded by Hong Kong entrepreneur David Tang in 1994, Shanghai Tang made a name for itself with a style that blended 1920's and 1930's Chinese fashion, Han dynasty imperial clothing and traditional Chinese graphic motifs. It became known for its stylish reinterpretation of the Mao jacket and the *qipao*, as well as for its tongue-in-cheek appropriation of communist-era print and iconography. The original logo that adorned the façade of the iconic Pedder Street store drew on the graphic traditions of Maoist China and threw them together with a pop-art aesthetic. It's a recipe of reinvention that has served the brand well.

With a name that conjures the romance of jazz nights on the Bund, Shanghai Tang found its first loyalists in a Western audience – a target who were captivated by the mix of exotic, old world glamour and modern fine tailoring that the brand so deftly captured.

Things have changed. From a previous share of 70%, Shanghai Tang's Western audience now accounts for only 50% of the brand's market, with the other 50% in Asia and the majority of its customers in mainland China – a sign perhaps that the domestic market in China is finally ready to embrace home-grown luxury brands. Indeed, Chinese pride is pivotal to the brand's spirit and distinctive personality. 'Never describe it as "East-meets-West" because it's not, it's Chinese,' said David Tang once, 'We make traditional Chinese clothes and we modernise them.'

But the brand does much more than this. Shanghai Tang has never simply aped the traditions that it has embraced – it has always found a way to 'own' them, evolving fresh perspectives on its rich heritage in everything from identity and graphic design to homeware and fashion. Its elegant modernity and measured use of vibrant, often contradictory bright colours has become something of a hallmark, as has the irreverent way in which it sometimes treats traditional subject matter. With one or two well-considered stylistic twists on an existing set of design conventions, Shanghai Tang manages to create a language that is both unique and recognisable.



Did you know? There's a fabrication afoot among the following.*

1

Sir David Tang has 'DT Sleeping' embroidered on the pocket of his pyjamas.

2

Tang's great-grandfather arrived in Hong Kong as a refugee, made a fortune in banking and built himself a seven-storey house. He moved in with his wife and five concubines and would visit each of them on a separate floor, one day a week and rest on the Sunday when he reached the top.

3

Despite its name, the brand has never operated a store in Shanghai itself.

4

Tang apparently won the licence to import Cuban cigars into Hong Kong by impressing the necessary people in Havana with a series of deft conjuring tricks.

5

Shanghai Tang does not sell ties. Its executive chairman, Raphael le Masne De Chermont, refuses to wear them, demands others in his company take theirs off and calls them, 'the leash of the corporate animal'.

6

Since selling Shanghai Tang to luxury goods firm Richemont, Sir David Tang has set up a lifestyle boutique called Tang Tang Tang Tang (TTTT) which he claims is named after the opening chords of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony.

*That's a Shanghai lie at
three. Shanghai Tang
has several outlets in its
eponymously city.





Marou

Choosing to make high-quality chocolate in a country with no tradition for growing cacao, no taste for the final product and a reputation for producing high-volume, low-quality exports sounds like a recipe for failure. Yet bean-to-bar chocolate fundamentalists Marou have proven that a passion for your product, coupled with a distinctive design language can result in sweet success.





What are the codes of craft? Sepia toned textured paper, letterpress typography and distressed ink effects. Batch numbers, signatures, a quirky tone of voice. Po-faced understatement and strictly no colour. The semiotics of craft are depressingly predictable. What was intended as a visual signifier of distinctiveness has become a soulless visual straightjacket.

But there is another way. Nowhere is it written that artisanal products are obliged to use bleak design. One brand that understands this well is Marou, *Faiseurs de Chocolat*, a small business based in Vietnam that's making some of the best chocolate in the world. Based in Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon), Marou sources cacao beans from farmers around the region. Local craftsmen print the papers and packaging using traditional silk screening techniques and antique gold ink. Each bar is wrapped by hand, as if every chocolate were a personal gift. Marou chocolates are certainly artisanal, but they also have attitude.

In a category full of beautifully crafted brands with engaging stories, Marou is the most charismatic of them all. With an art deco vibe that alludes to Vietnam's French colonial history as well as traditional Vietnamese iconography, its look and feel evokes the heady exoticism of old Indochina. Its ornate styling, vibrant colours and generous use of gold are

a welcome antidote indeed to the elegant restraint of its competitors' packaging. If packaging is the window to a brand's soul, then Marou's is wide open: a mere glimpse conjures the tropical intensity of South East Asia, the glamour of old Saigon, as well as a personality that is joyful, creative and artistic. When a brand finds such a strong visual brand voice, design can become a powerful catalyst for growth – especially in a category that's so driven by emotion.

So what next for Marou? The brand has only five types of chocolate in its core portfolio, and these are its mainstay. (Each one, by the way, is made from beans from a specific farm and province.) But it's also launched a series of gorgeous limited editions – in collaboration with Air France, in partnership with *Wallpaper** magazine, an exclusive for Parisian epicurean grocer *La Grande Epicerie de Paris* – each of which have augmented the brand's luxuriant design language rather than diluted it.

In short, Marou chocolates show that the principles of great design hold true, no matter what the market or category. A rich design language, distinctive and charismatic, can build a brand from the ground up. Marou is crafted, yes – but it's much more than that. Marou has *soul*, and in the age of ubiquitous 'craftism', soul counts for a lot more.



BÀRIAZO®

MAROUはベトナム初のBEAN TO BAR
チョコレートメーカー。
一つの産地のカカオだけを使った
「シングルオリジン」の
「ダークチョコレート」です。
この「ベトナム」は、ベトナムの
「リリアン」から直接買い付けられた
「カカオ豆」を使用し、
「フルーティな」香りを
追求しています。

SINGLE ORIGIN

VIETNAM

Did you know? Are all of these true? I should cocoa.*

1

Marou founders Samuel Maruta and Vincent Mourou – the company name is a contraction of their surnames – met while trekking in the Vietnamese jungle. Maruta had been working in finance and Marou advertising. Both are of French origin with Mourou having grown up in the States while Maruta is half Japanese.

2

The pair enjoy entertaining and describe their house parties as like a cross between Blake Edwards' *The Party* and the final scenes of *Apocalypse Now*.

3

Consumption of chocolate in Vietnam is very low, but demand for quality chocolate is growing in Asia. Vietnamese people tend to prefer imported sweet milky chocolate to the dark, bitter taste of Marou.

4

Each individual bag of cacao beans produced by Marou is inspected by Mourou and Maruta personally. Every bar is wrapped by hand.

5

Maruta and Mourou had originally wanted to call the company Marmou, but changed their minds when they learnt of the existence of the similar-sounding Marmite.

6

Marou's owners recommend sampling their chocolate either on its own or with bread and salted butter.

*You can love or hate
the Marmite story at five,
but either way it
remains a whopper.



Redheads

A matchbox and its contents might be the epitome of disposability, but Redheads – the famous Australian brand – has survived and prospered by treating it as just the opposite. The care and attention lavished on the design of the matchbox over the years speaks of a company taking the maximum pride in delivering this most quotidian of products. As a result, it has sparked genuine affection from its customers.





Redheads matches are a rare example of a brand that seamlessly ties together product, name and design.

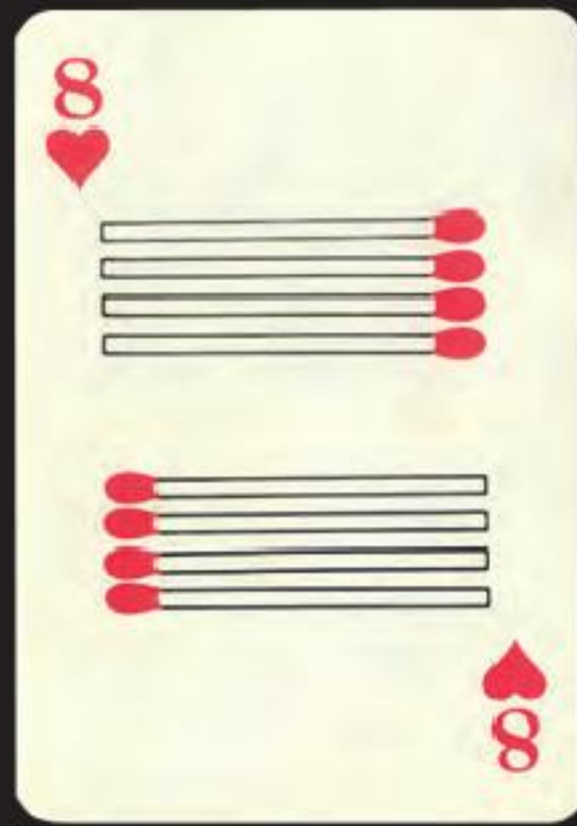
This Australian brand's clever, versatile visual identity has given its owners a way to truly own a totally generic product attribute.

So-called because of their red tips (a first in Australia back in 1909), the first Redheads logo to feature a woman was created in 1946 and first used on packaging in 1947. Modern, classy and attractive, 'Miss Redhead' soon became the girl every Aussie bloke wanted to take to the barbie.

In 1975 the packaging was redesigned to invert the colour balance of the pack, making it predominantly red. The brightly coloured box instantly secured improved visibility on shelf. But the new design also solved one of the brand's nagging issues: if your brand identity centres around a woman's haircut, what do you do when that haircut starts to date? By the mid-1970s, the scarlet seductress was beginning to look like someone's grandma. But by allowing her face to emerge out of a red background, she became eternally youthful. We can imagine whatever hairstyle we like for her.

Redheads are also well known for their limited edition collections, which date back to 1959 (every collection is catalogued on their website under the alarming tab 'Fun with Matches'). Decades before digital print and algorithms created design campaigns like 'Share a Coke' or Absolut's Cobalt series, Redheads were creating witty, inventive designs that celebrated their brand equity – analogue style.

Either way, what makes this brand an Asian Champion of Design is the attention and creativity it pours into a very humble thing: the lowly matchbox. Something wonderful happens when an everyday product is paid the compliment of carrying a great idea. Redheads does that with every little card box that it prints, and over time it has built an iconic, imaginative identity that's become part of Australia's visual heritage.



Did you know? Strike a light! One of these facts has a flair for deception.*

1

Before Redheads introduced their safety match in 1947 they contained poisonous white phosphorous.

2

In 1981, Redheads brought out their 'Chuck & Di' collection, a series of 12 matchboxes to celebrate the engagement of Prince Charles and Diana Spencer.

3

In 1999, Australian food manufacturer Dick Smith brought out a rival brand of matches called Dickheads. This was done principally as a protest against overseas ownership of major Australian brands – such as Redheads – although ironically only the Dickheads packaging was made in Australia. The matches themselves were manufactured overseas.

4

Famous redhead Christina Hendricks starred in a racy 2010 commercial for the brand which received a record 384 complaints when it first aired on Australia's Channel 9.

5

In the early days of production a 'gentleman's agreement' existed between Australia's two largest match manufacturers. Bryant & May – responsible for Redheads – limited their distribution to the state of Victoria while rivals Federal held sway in New South Wales.

6

In 1979, a special edition box of Redheads was produced for export to the Pacific island nation of Kiribati and these are now among the most valuable of all Redheads' products, being worth around 100 Australian dollars.

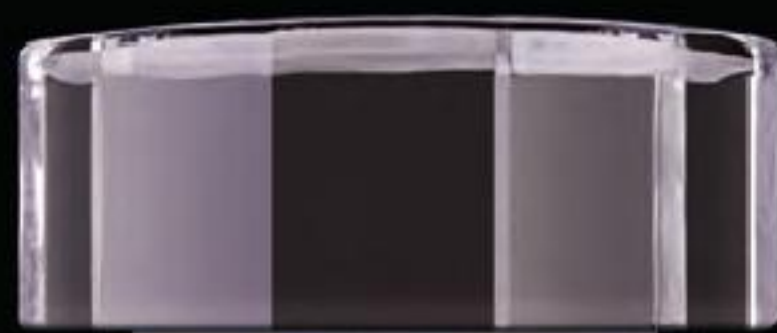
*Number four is a
figment of someone's
overheated imagination.
No such commercial
was ever shot.





Suntory

Overcoming his fellow countrymen's preference for sake and the prevailing wisdom that only Scotland could produce genuine whisky, Suntory founder Shinjiro Torii undoubtedly chose the path less travelled. It has, however, made all the difference. From a range of Scotch me-toos, Suntory's whiskies have developed their own unique taste and a design style that goes with it: elegant, refined and occasionally complex.



HIBIKI
JAPANESE BLENDED WHISKY

御
HIBIKI
JAPANESE BLENDED WHISKY
AGED 12 YEARS
A harmonious blend of handcrafted
selected Japanese whiskies matured in oak barrels
PRODUCED & BOTTLED BY SUNTORY, OSAKA, JAPAN,
ESTABLISHED 1899
ALC43% by VOL 750ml
PRODUCT OF JAPAN



‘Wabi-Sabi’ is the Japanese world view that prizes the beauty of transience and imperfection. It has no direct translation in English, but it connotes ideas of isolation, simplicity, longing and a closeness to the natural world. It explains the Japanese aesthetic: understated, contemplative and elegant. According to Suntory’s chief bartender, Takayuki Suzuki, it also explains his company’s approach to whisky manufacturing.

Suntory has been making whisky in Japan since 1924 when Shinjiro Torii (aka ‘the nose of Osaka’) built the first Japanese whisky distillery outside of Kyoto. Japanese people laughed at his vision to sell Scotch whisky in the domestic market, whilst single malt connoisseurs in the West sniggered into their crystal tumblers. But he persisted and his blended whiskies finally came of age – both in terms of product taste and design aesthetic.

In the Scotch whisky category, there is a set of visual signifiers we intuitively ‘read’ to infer notions of authenticity, heritage, complexity, strength and so on. Hibiki and Yamazaki share none of these established category codes. And yet, we don’t doubt that similar notions are suggested by this very different style of packaging. They feel credible, but they also feel quintessentially Japanese.

The Hibiki bottle design in particular, with its distinctive 24-faceted profile, is inspired by the 24 hours in a day but also the 24 segments in the Japanese lunar calendar. The label is made from traditional hand-crafted paper called *washi*, whilst the name ‘Hibiki’ means ‘resonance’. It’s potent, poetic stuff. And it’s a million miles away from images of highland glens and silhouettes of stag heads.

It wasn’t always like this. When Suntory started out, the company clearly looked to Scotch whisky for inspiration and direction. The original bottle, dating from 1929, apes the conventions of the Scotch whisky category: big label, centred composition, gothic type and quasi-Christian symbolism. But eventually Suntory whisky brands found their voice.

Which just goes to show. If you can’t join ‘em, beat ‘em.

TRADE



MARK

LD

Japanese Whisky

SUNTORY LTD.

Did you know? Pull out the stopper, let's tell a whopper.*

1

2003's *Lost in Translation* stars Bill Murray as ageing actor Bob Harris visiting Japan to promote Suntory's Hibiki 17 whisky. 'Make it Suntory time' – a phrase he uses more than once – has become a catchphrase as a result of the film.

2

Suntory whisky is namechecked in Ian Fleming's novel, *You Only Live Twice*. Bond's Australian ally, Dikko Henderson, suffering from a hangover jumps to the defence of the drink when Bond loftily dismisses all Japanese whisky. 'You're wrong about Suntory,' he retorts. 'It's a good enough brew.'

3

Margaret Thatcher's drink of choice was Suntory Hibiki 12, but this was never made public while she was in office as she did not want to be seen to be disloyal to the Scottish drinks industry.

4

The star of *You Only Live Twice*, Sean Connery (betraying his national roots some might say) featured in an advert for Suntory Crest 12 eerily like the one Bill Murray shoots in *Lost in Translation*.

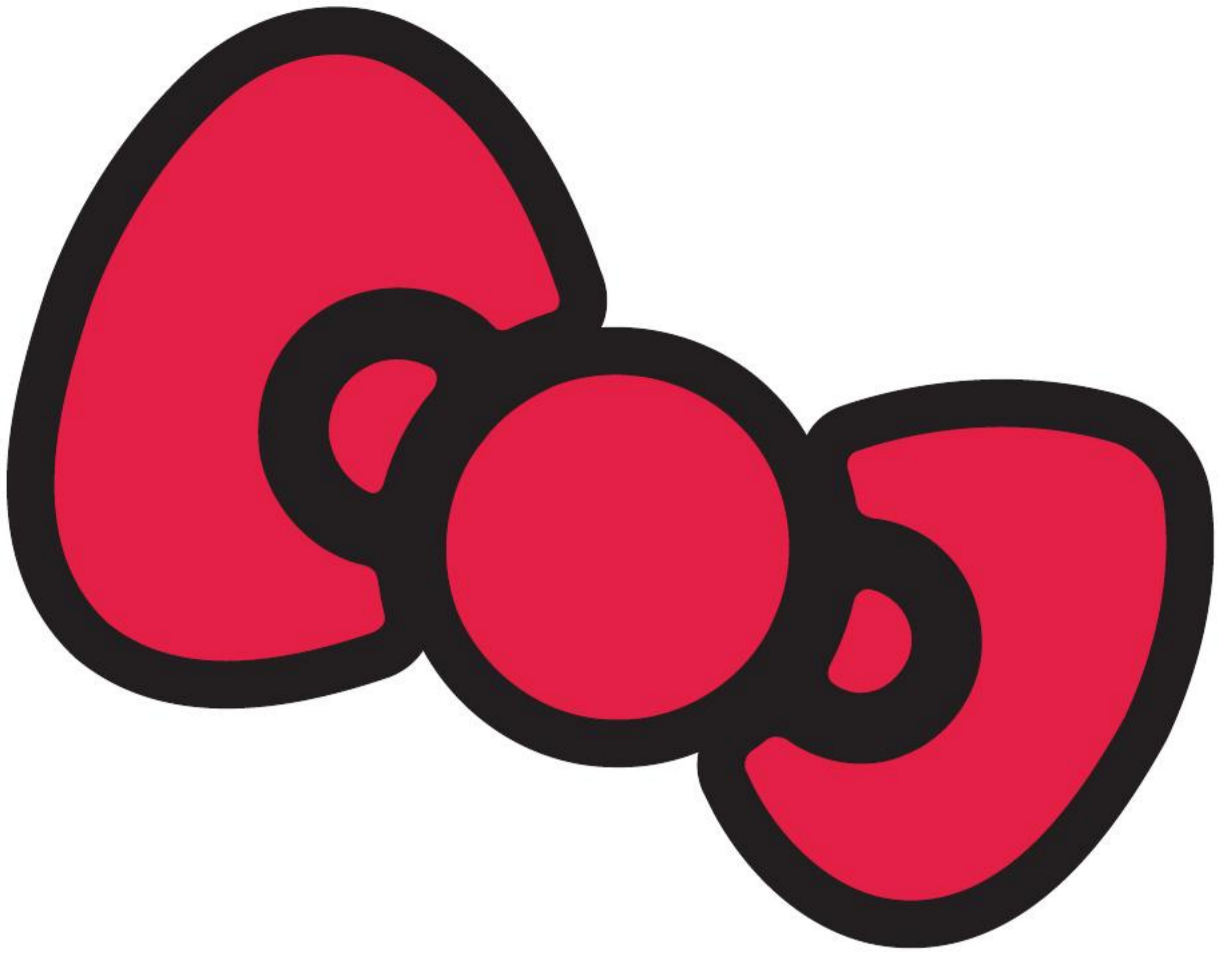
5

In 2013 Suntory Holdings bought US drinks giant, Beam (makers of Jim Beam bourbon) for £9.5billion.

6

Suntory has developed a uniquely direct style of advertising which has also proved popular. 'Friday is a day to buy wine' led to a boom in Japanese wine drinking in the 1970s. Also popular was a whisky advert which ran in the 1960s and declared, 'Let's drink Torys and go to Hawaii!'

*Whisky and soda was Margaret Thatcher's preferred tipple but her brand of choice was the more frugally-priced Bell's rather than Suntory's Hibiki 12.



Hello Kitty

It's been said that the management of an identity is as important as its creation. It's hard to say how much of Hello Kitty's success is due to the personality manifest in its character, and how much can be attributed to its maniacally active merchandising initiatives. Clearly, to have become so popular it must touch something deep in the human psyche. What that is remains anyone's guess. But what is clear is that this little cat has bewitched millions of normally rational people around the world for generations. Can it keep us under its spell?





This is a brand that deals in superlatives. In 1999, the little white cat appeared on 12,000 different products annually. In 2008 there were over 50,000 Hello Kitty branded products in more than 60 countries (and that's just the licensed ones). By 2008, it accounted for half of Sanrio's \$1billion revenue. Hello Kitty has adorned credit cards, aeroplanes, wines, Swarovski crystal jewellery and Fender Stratocasters. She has her own theme parks, restaurants, hospitals and cafés, as well as films, games and music.

Hello Kitty was created by a young designer called Yuko Shimizu for the Japanese company Sanrio in 1974. She is a *gijinka* (an anthropomorphism) and more specifically, she's *kawaii* – the quality of 'cuteness' so highly prized in Japanese culture. She was originally called 'Hi Kitty' but the story goes that her first name didn't really stick, so she became Hello Kitty (ハローキティ or *Harokiti* in Japanese). Originally targeted at young girls, she caught the imagination of an older audience. Since then, mums have been buying Hello Kitty products for their own daughters, performing the role of brand advocate in a neat little case study of cross-generational marketing.

What's the secret of her appeal? As any *Hello Kittyist* will tell you, part of her charm is that you can project whatever mood or character you want onto her expressionless, mute face. Hello Kitty has no mouth, so she'll never say anything you don't like. Critics say this feature has limited her reach in animated media, but she seems to have weathered the storm so far.

In truth, I can't really figure out why Hello Kitty is as wildly popular as it is or why it's achieved cult status like no other animated character. But I do suspect that the simplicity of its execution – two dots for the eyes, three lines for the whiskers on each side, and a red ribbon – have given it enduring influence. Certainly, the sheer numbers and complexity behind her kitsch kitty empire stand in stark contrast to her quiet, simple design.



B-16333

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民族貿易有限公司
TEL: 2515-58

Did you know?

The cat's out of the bag. One of these Kitty facts is false.*

1

Designer Yuko Shimizu got the name Kitty from Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking-Glass*. An anime short based on *Alice in Wonderland* starring Hello Kitty as Alice was made by Sanrio and released as part of *Hello Kitty & Friends*.

2

In 2014 the world was scandalised when Sanrio allegedly remarked that Hello Kitty is 'not a cat'. They later clarified that all they meant was that she is 'cat-like'. Hello Kitty (full name Kitty White) comes from the suburbs of London, has a twin called Mimmy and her own pet called Charmmy Kitty.

3

All copies of a Hello Kitty dictionary for children had to be pulped when it was discovered that they contained a definition for 'necklace' which referenced it as a means of execution favoured in South Africa involving a burning tyre.

4

In one of her many film iterations, there is a six-inch model of Hello Kitty sporting a mask and straitjacket à la Hannibal Lecter in *The Silence of the Lambs*.

5

Hello Kitty is blood type A, her height is 'five apples', her weight is 'three apples' and she has no mouth because according to a Sanrio spokesman 'she speaks from her heart' and 'is not bound to any particular language'.

6

Hello Kitty is estimated to generate \$107 billion annually in revenue and all of this without any advertising.

*A model of Hello Kitty as Hannibal Lecter does not in fact exist, so number four is not true. However, there is a Robo Kitty model in which she is tricked up like RoboCop.

ONSERVES

QUALITÉ

SOLE IMPORTERS A. CLOU



AYAM BRAND

PETITS





ET & C^o ALIMENTAI



SUPÉRIEURE



GREEN PEAS

S POIS



Ayam Brand

Like a person you trust, brands that resist constant change and remain true to themselves are rewarded with the confidence and faith of those around them. Ayam Brand is one such brand, having retained its distinctive red and yellow cans for over 100 years. And like a person who listens rather than just broadcasts an opinion, Ayam Brand learnt early on how to augment existing trust when it changed its name to reflect public perception.

AYAM BRAND™



SARDINES

IN TOMATO SAUCE

NET WEIGHT 155g



In Malaysia and Singapore, Ayam Brand is as trusted as Campbell's or Heinz is in the West. At nearly 125 years old it's a brand that much of South East Asia has grown up with and regarded fondly as a staple of family mealtimes and family life.

In all this time, Ayam's distinctive visual identity has remained almost entirely unchanged, enduring through a century of remarkable change. 'Iconic' is not a word that should be used lightly these days, but it can surely be applied to Ayam Brand's core sardine packs, with their quirky (if somewhat old fashioned) logo, crowing cockerel icon and bright red and yellow colour split. Ayam Brand is by far the most striking and disruptive home-grown brand on the supermarket shelves, demonstrating how a dedication to the protection of distinctive equities, no matter how odd, can pay dividends in the long term.

Ayam Brand was founded by Frenchman Alfred Clouet in 1892 in Singapore (then British Malaya). His company introduced a cutting edge technology to the region – tinned foods – that must have been something of a godsend in tropical Malaya in the days before refrigeration.

Being French, he chose the Gallic rooster – the unofficial emblem of the French nation – to represent his brand. He called his products 'A. Clouet & Co. Ltd. Singapore'. Thankfully, he ended up with a somewhat snappier name by simply listening to his market. Reading his packs visually, people referred to his products as 'Ayam', which means 'chicken' in Bahasa, the lingua franca of the region. M. Clouet had a new name for his brand. CEO Francois de Moulliac explains that this move meant... 'that it was not a colonial brand anymore – it became a people's brand'. A canny move indeed.

So what next for this South East Asian classic? Everyone in Singapore and Malaysia is a foodie and tastes are becoming ever more international and sophisticated. The humble pack of tinned sardines has a limited shelf life for a new generation of consumers with increasingly discerning palates. By positioning itself as a champion of the region's cuisine, Ayam hopes to be more than just a source of nostalgia. In its efforts to remain relevant, let's hope it never loses sight of what made it successful in the first place – a bold, distinctive and unmistakably quirky identity.



Did you know? One of these facts is a little fishy.*

1

It's said that Ayam founder, Alfred Clouet was on his way with French colonial troops to Indochina when their boat stopped in Singapore. Clouet was so taken with the island that he did not return to ship.

2

As well as operating his sardine cannery, Clouet also traded in perfume under the name of One Rooster Brand. A rival perfumier began selling his products with the label Two Rooster Brand, but Clouet successfully sued him.

3

In Singapore and Malaysia, the game we know as sardines is simply called Ayam.

4

To celebrate the 50th anniversary of Singapore's independence, Ayam Brand is asking for Singaporeans to contribute designs for a new 'limited edition' oval sardine can. One million of these will be produced.

5

Ayam Brand teamed up with American rappers The Fung Bros to release a viral video which praised the company's products. Sample lyric, 'Out in Singapore Out in Malaysia/Ayam Brand got so many flavours/It's tasting so fine /Everything is so good/I really like it.' And 'It's not China despite the faces/It's actually a diverse mix of races.'

6

In Singapore Ayam Brand produces a National Service Survival Camp Kit which includes a tin of sardines, to reinforce its connection to the nation.

*We squeezed a little lie
in at number three. The
game of sardines is
not known as Ayam in
Malaysia and Singapore.



Shang Xia

Understated, authentic, quiet and contemplative – not a set of words you'd normally associate with Chinese luxury. But Shang Xia is exploring what happens when you apply the codes of European prestige to the legacy of Chinese craftsmanship. It's the differences between the two conventions, rather than the similarities, that make this a rich and interesting brand.





How do you launch a luxury brand? Do you need European provenance to play credibly in the fashion sector? Do you need decades, or even centuries, of proven craftsmanship and artisanal traditions? Do you need to focus on one product, like luggage or scarves or pens, until you achieve flawless perfection and fame? Home-grown Chinese luxury brand Shang Xia is challenging those conventions.

Firstly, this is a new brand, launched only in 2008, without any provenance, European credentials or centuries-old artisanal stories. It's also a collaboration (rather than a family-owned business), born out of the shared vision of Chinese designer Jian Qiong Er and French fashion house Hermès.

Shang Xia, by the way, sells furniture, porcelain, homewares and jewellery that are inspired by traditional Chinese workmanship and culture – all of them beautifully crafted, all richly storied and all with a sense of elegant simplicity. The design aesthetic that runs throughout their work is not a recognisable graphic motif, or signature weave, finish, material or shape like so many European luxury brands: it's a Chinese tea ceremony. Yep, that's right, Shang Xia's creative point of focus is a cultural ritual.

As Jian Qiong Er explained in an interview with luxurysociety.com: 'During the tea ceremony, you need a nice tea set to serve the tea, you need comfortable dress to wear and conformable chairs to sit in. So you see, since Shang Xia's collection flows from Chinese lifestyle, our first collection offers an extended experience of tea.' I think that's delightfully different; this brand is appropriating an entire culture for its brand story, rather than a specific artisan's tale. Time will tell us whether that's a sustainable, defensible strategy.

There's one final point to be made here about a small, but significant part of the brand's DNA: its name. As a colleague gushingly described to me, not only is it 'lilting, lyrical and poetic', but it also has depth. Mandarin is a language rich with nuance and subtlety, and the Chinese seem to delight in brand names that are somehow multi-dimensional, that have layers of meaning and that reward the intelligent reader. Shang Xia (上 下) is one such name, meaning both 'before' and 'next' as well as 'up' and 'down'. In this way, the brand name symbolises 'the continuous flow of energy from past, present and future'.

For a young company needing to sidestep provenance and without a founding dynasty, it's the perfect verbal emblem for a brand at the crossroads of ancient artistic traditions and modern luxury craftsmanship.



Did you know? There's an upmarket untruth on the loose among the following.*

1

When a customer enters a Shang Xia store in China they are given tea in a small, white porcelain cup.

2

Shang Xia founder Jiang Qiong Er comes from a family of creatives. Her grandfather was the artist Jiang Xuanyi, while her architect father Xing Tonghe designed the striking Shanghai Museum. She was working as a window-dresser for Hermès when she met its chief executive, Patrick Thomas, leading to the founding of the company.

3

When Jiang Qiong Er was six and her brother nine, their talent was so precocious that a film-maker shot a documentary about them.

4

When Shang Xia describe their tea sets as being made of 'eggshell thin' porcelain, they're only slightly exaggerating. Their eggshell porcelain is 5mm thick compared with an ostrich eggshell which is normally 2mm.

5

An entire wall of Shang Xia's Paris boutique is made up of birds' beaks.

6

The company is not afraid to charge top prices for its products. In 2010, it sold a rocking chair made from zitan, a rare wood found only in southern China and India and known as 'the Emperor's Wood', for \$130,000 (£79,500). All Shang Xia's zitan wood products are, however, polished by hand for 1000 hours.





Mikimoto

Is nature the ultimate designer? For many centuries in fine jewellery and fashion, that was the prevailing wisdom. Kokichi Mikimoto disagreed. Whilst natural pearls can only be produced by a freakish accident of nature, her artistry can be mimicked. This son of a noodle-maker replicated nature's occasional masterpieces and paired them with exquisite jewellery designs that transformed perceptions of cultured pearls from cheap imitations to the most desirable of gems.



Nothing says old school glamour like a string of pearls. Grace Kelly, Liz Taylor, Jackie Kennedy and Coco Chanel all understood their iridescent, entrancing beauty. Far from being something your mother wears, pearls are back: as objects of timeless beauty, as signifiers of feminine elegance and sophistication, and as gemstones with more subtlety and nuance than diamonds with their brash sparkle.

Perfectly round natural pearls are extremely rare – the product of a billion-to-one chance of a piece of grit rubbing an oyster up the wrong (or right) way. Kokichi Mikimoto couldn't stand to see such absolute beauty left to chance. So he made it his life's work to replicate what nature could not and dedicated himself to perfecting the art of the cultured pearl. 'I would like to adorn the necks of all the women in the world with pearls,' he once said, describing his obsession.

His company styles him as a man with 'the skill of a scientist and the soul of an artist'. It seems an accurate description, with many of his pieces blending a modern design sensibility with Japanese ingenuity.

The 'Sash Clip Yaguruma' (1926) is one such piece. Its ingenious mechanical engineering allows it to be reconfigured into up to 12 different pieces of jewellery including a ring, hair clip, brooch and sash clip. No-one could argue that this kind of design is about mere aesthetics.

After initial public scepticism about the value of cultured pearls, Mikimoto's unswerving dedication to quality, refined design and brave innovation won hearts and minds on the red carpet and beyond. Soon, the brand had become synonymous with Hollywood glamour. Marilyn Monroe was given a 16-pearl string of Mikimoto Akoyo pearls by Joe DiMaggio on their honeymoon. Reportedly, it was her favourite piece of jewellery.

According to the brand's Creative Director Yoshio Sato, Mikimoto's style is exemplified by its blending of European design ideas with a Japanese sense of beauty. Certainly, the brand seems to epitomise a timeless glamour, regardless of origin. Here's hoping Kokichi Mikimoto's dream to dress every woman in his pearls comes true.



Did you know? A word in your shell-like. Not all of these are pearls of wisdom.*

1

Although his name is synonymous with cultured pearls, Kokichi Mikimoto did not invent the process. The technique of inserting an irritant into the oyster to stimulate pearl production had been known in China for centuries. In 1900, Australian William Savile-Kent developed a method and the Japanese pair of Tatsuhei Mise and Tokishi Nishikawa had both filed patents on the process before Mikimoto.

2

In 1957 the then President of Mikimoto Pearls donated the Mikimoto Pearl Crown to be used in the coronation of the National Cherry Blossom Festival Queen in Washington DC. The crown contains more than two pounds of gold and has 1585 pearls.

3

Mikimoto grew up in the seaport of Toba where he saw pearl fishermen bring in their catch, sparking his lifelong passion. In 1892, Mikimoto saw years of hard work ruined when a 'red tide' of toxic plankton wiped out thousands of his oysters.

4

Roxy Music's *Mother of Pearl* features the lines, 'Mikimoto treasure/Vistas of pleasure/Visions of culture/In endless lustre.'

5

A reproduction of Philadelphia's Liberty Bell containing 12,250 Mikimoto pearls and 336 diamonds was considered a sensation when it was exhibited at the New York World Exposition in 1939. Dubbed 'the Million Dollar Bell' it even reproduced the famous crack on the original with the use of blue pearls.

6

In a 1932 PR stunt to emphasise his product's quality, Kokichi Mikimoto shovelled thousands of inferior pearls into a fire in front of the Kobe Chamber of Commerce.

*There's something Ferry
wrong about four:
Mother of Pearl does not
contain this quatrain.





Taj Hotels

If you want to live like a king for a day, then consider a stay at one of the Taj Hotels' restored palaces. This Indian hospitality group has saved some of the country's most beautiful buildings from decay by giving them a second life as luxurious hotels and resorts. For the Taj Group, design isn't just about logotypes and signage – it's about the artistic legacy of a nation.



There are few brands in the global luxury hospitality sector that conjure the same level of opulence, romance and allure as the heritage properties of the Taj Hotel Group. Amongst its diverse portfolio, it is the series of lovingly restored Maharajah's palaces, stately homes and other Indian architectural jewels that have forged this brand's reputation as a leader in the hospitality industry and as an Asian Champion of Design.

Taj authored the type of luxury hospitality experience that celebrates design long before the term 'design hotel' became common currency. With iconic locations including the Rambagh Palace in Jaipur, the Taj Lake Palace in Udaipur and the Taj Mahal Palace in Mumbai, this subsidiary of the Tata Group manages some of the most remarkable and exclusive destinations in Asia. In an age of identikit international hotel blueprints, a stay at a Taj heritage property is a truly one-of-a-kind experience. The group was ahead of its time in predicting the changing face of luxury when it recognised the value of providing unique, un-replicable and richly storied experiences for the kind of guest who has tired of one-dimensional glitz.

The Taj Hotel Group's reputation as a company obsessed with 'authenticity' is well deserved: each building's interior design, materials palette and design detailing are all required to reflect

the cultural and historical context of the specific locale against exacting standards of accuracy. After the Taj Palace Hotel in Mumbai was thrust to the centre-stage of tragic terrorist attacks in 2008, the group spent over US\$50m restoring the hotel and its priceless art collection to its former glory. According to *The New York Times*, 'the company tried to closely replicate period details like railings and mouldings – some done by the craftsmen from the northwestern state of Rajasthan – because it wanted to preserve the hotel's "Tajness".' That kind of dedication to detail and respect for craftsmanship are rare commodities today.

Indeed, the Taj Hotel Group pride themselves on their efforts to help preserve India's legacy of craftsmanship. By insisting on absolute authenticity, countless design details in each property are created with the help of local artisans who have been practising their craft for generations. Where other hotel groups might see value in economies of scale, Taj perceives in the preservation of timeless design traditions a somewhat higher purpose – the preservation of India's heritage for generations to come.

Champions of Indian art, proud caretakers of a unique architectural heritage, curators of timeless crafts, a brand that's almost symbolic of India itself – you can call the Taj Hotel Group a lot of things, but certainly not just a room for the night.



Did you know? You'd be right to have a reservation about one of the following.*

1

Although the story is possibly apocryphal, it's said that the Taj Mahal Palace in Mumbai was built by Indian industrialist, Jamsetji Tata, after he was refused entry to the nearby Watson's Hotel which operated a whites-only policy.

2

The Taj Lake Palace at Udaipur served as the home of Octopussy (Maud Adams) in the 1983 Bond film of the same name. The following year it featured in the lavish ITV series, *The Jewel in the Crown*.

3

Sitar expert Ravi Shankar taught George Harrison how to play the instrument in Mumbai's Taj Mahal Palace.

4

The Taj Mahal Palace has had some periods of neglect over the course of its 111-year history. In 1966 the president of Hilton Hotels said the Taj would remain standing 'only as long as the termites keep holding hands'.

5

At Christmas 2010, chefs in Bangalore unveiled a giant cake replica of the Taj Mahal Palace which measured 22 feet long by 14 feet wide and used five tons of sugar.

6

All members of Bon Jovi were asked to leave The Taj Rambagh Palace in Jaipur following an incident of 'riotous and lewd behaviour' while the band were enjoying a post-'Tour Without End' wind-down in 1987.

*We are not even half way there to the truth with number six. To the best of our knowledge, no member of Bon Jovi has ever been banned from the Taj Rambagh Palace.



GLOBAL FLAGSHIP STORE
OPENING OCTOBER 14TH

UNIQLO.COM

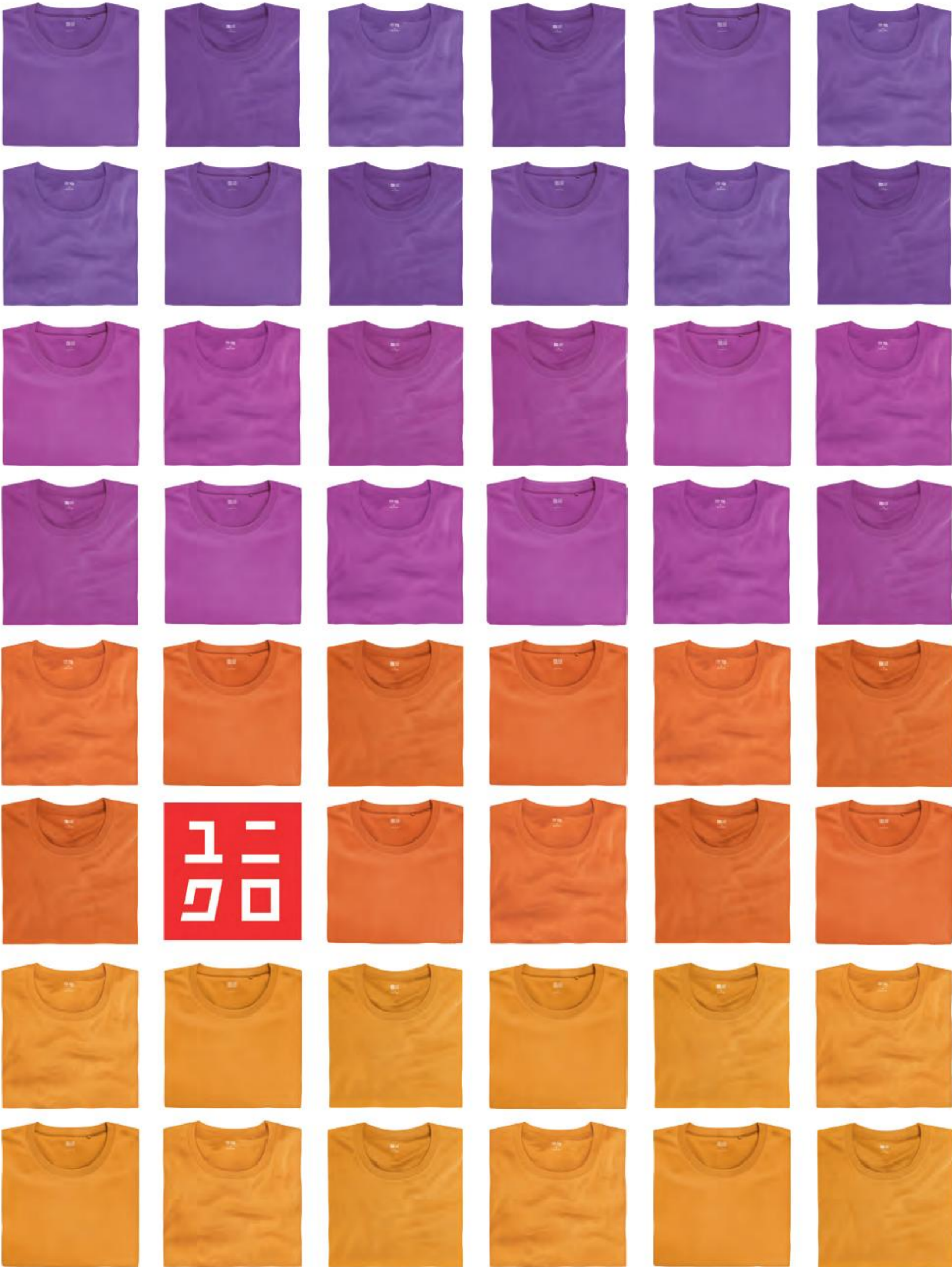


UNI
QLO



Uniqlo

Uniqlo's design language is nothing if not systematic: simple and modular, it is applied to every dimension of the brand experience. Limitless applications and absolute consistency: Uniqlo's look and feel is more than just a logo, yet at the same time, it's all about the logo. But can a system have soul? Yes, but it depends what kind of soul you want. Love it or hate it, this brand's bright, youthful personality is probably launching at a store near you soon.





Uniqlo's formulaic approach to fashion and branding has made it one of Japan's biggest success stories. The brand started life as the Unique Clothing Warehouse in Hiroshima, 1984. Ten years later, 100 stores were operating across Japan. The brand's vision of 'quality basics at an affordable price' has proven to be an irresistible draw for millions. Its design aesthetic has been a key part of its success.

Uniqlo is a young brand and its look and feel reflects that. There's no hint of tradition or old-fashioned Japanese aesthetics in its bright, pop-culture identity, which feels more manga than zen. Yet it still feels recognisably Japanese in its simplicity and in its blend of styling and engineering. Nobuo Domae, the US CEO explains how the brand embraces the Japanese concept of *kino-bi*, which loosely translates as the fusion of function and beauty. 'The clothing is presented in an organised, rational manner and that very organisation and rationality creates an artistic pattern and rhythm. All these qualities reflect the defining characteristics of modern Japanese culture, modern 'Japaneseness'.

Walking into a Uniqlo store is like walking through a computer programme – a bright and cheery computer programme. Everything feels ruthlessly modular.

Everything is systematised, logical and rational. In design terms, the entire experience – both graphic and spatial – is descended from the single building block of the red logo. From the store exterior to the visual merchandising; from the product line-up and shelving displays to the packaging: the Uniqlo squares are everywhere.

The brand's look and feel directly reflects the brand idea, whilst also acting as the visual glue that holds it together. It's absolutely consistent, but it's far from a visual straitjacket. Paradoxically, it's the single-mindedness of the system that permits creativity. It can flex and change across media, allowing the brand to feel fresh yet familiar, constantly reviving itself within predefined parameters.

For the Japanese, form and function are not two opposing forces that need to be balanced – they are simply two sides of the same coin. Perhaps that's why this brand manages to reconcile systematic logic with vibrant creativity. You can have any colour of polo shirt at Uniqlo, as long as it's one of 80 available tones.



ULTRA
LIGHT
DOWN

ULTRA
LIGHT
DOWN

Did you know? Lying? Which of these wardrobe stories is it?*

1

All Uniqlo stores have a poster in the manager's office which reads: 'Always follow company direction. Do not work your own way.'

2

Every Uniqlo shop assistant must memorise six phrases and be ready to recite them to all customers as they meet them in the store. They are: 1. 'Hello, my name is [name], how are you today?' 2. 'Did you find everything you are looking for?' 3. 'Let me know if you need anything. My name is [name]' 4. 'Thank you for waiting.' 5. 'Did you find everything you are looking for?' 6. 'Good-bye. We hope to see you again soon.' The repetition at 2 and 5 is not a mistake. It's supposed to be said twice to every customer.

3

The first US celebrity to endorse Uniqlo products was O. J. Simpson.

4

In 2009, the company's low-profile owner Tadashi Yanai bought a pair of socks from a Uniqlo store in Tokyo. Later he realised he hadn't been given staff discount as the sales assistant hadn't realised who he was. He called the customer helpline and got his money back.

5

Uniqlo's offshoot brand, G2, allows people to wear the clothes out of their Tokyo store before coming back to buy them.

6

Tadashi Yanai likes to start work at 7am and finish at 4pm in order to see his wife and practise his golf. He has a mini golf range in his Tokyo back garden.

*There's no truth in the juicy gossip at three: O. J. Simpson has had nothing to do with Uniqlo.





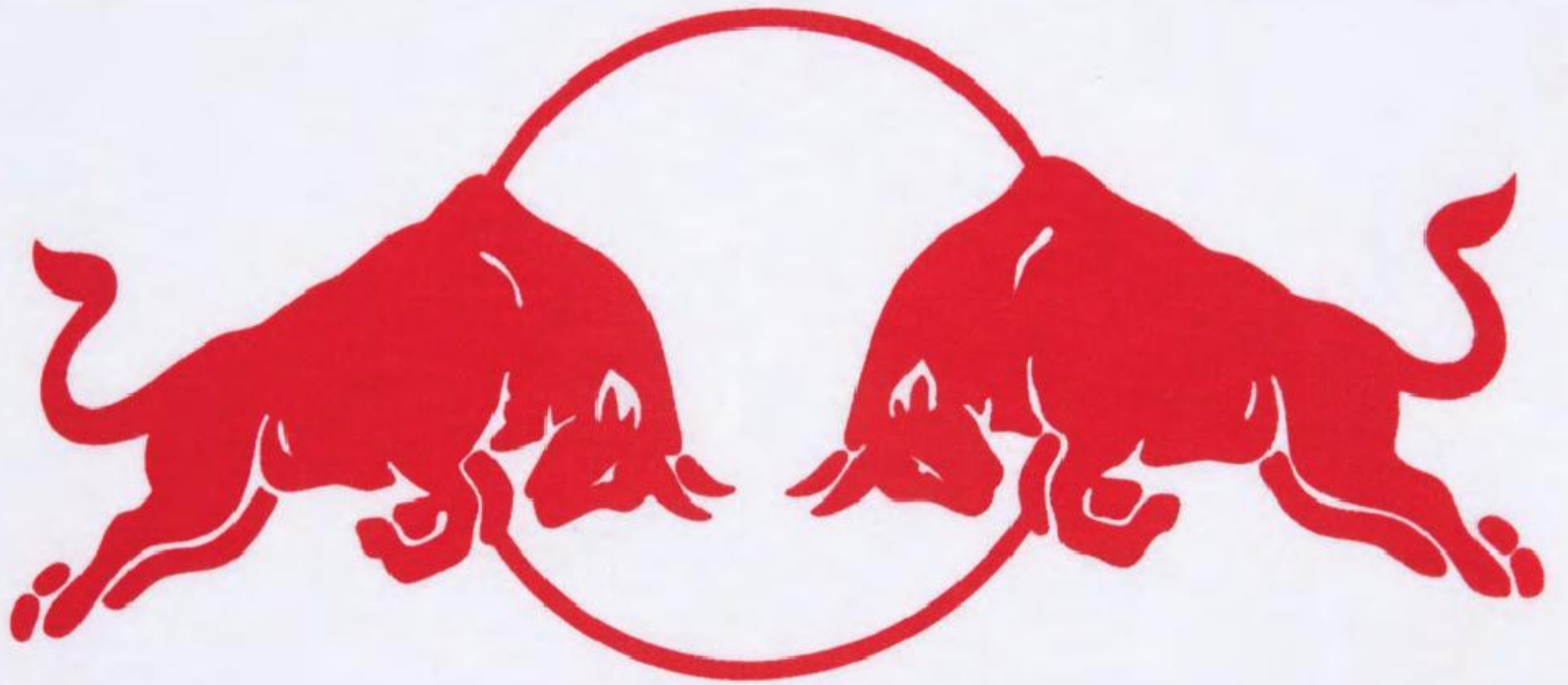
Red Bull

Under the leadership of Austrian brand owner Dietrich Mateschitz, Red Bull's epic forays into art, racing, flying and even space have made the brand a global phenomenon. In terms of experience and communication, Mateschitz's company added incalculable value to the brand. Where they didn't add value was the design of the original Thai energy drink. And that of course, is what has added value. Sometimes, knowing when not to meddle with the magic is the thing that makes the magic itself.

Thailand
S



กรมส่งเสริมการค้าระหว่างประเทศ



กระทรวงพาณิชย์



In the 1970s, Red Bull was being marketed at farmers, construction workers and truck drivers in Thailand. *Krating Daeng* ('Red Bull' in Thai) was a populist drink for the working man: one that allowed you to overcome fatigue, pull a double shift, or drive all night. It formed a long-standing association with *Muay Thai* (Thai kick boxing), which gave it popularity and street cred. With a potent mix of sugar, caffeine and taurine all packed up in a small medicinal brown glass bottle with a bright, colourful label, Red Bull became something of a success amongst its working-class consumer base.

If you'd told one of those truck drivers forty years ago that today his trusted brand of pep-up juice would send a man into space, they'd probably think you'd drunk too much Thai whisky. But that is the remarkable, scarcely believable trajectory of the brand that's gone from making rocket fuel for the working man to sending rockets into space for mankind.

It started with a humdrum business trip to Thailand for Austrian Dietrich Mateschitz. He stumbled across the drink and apparently discovered that it 'cured' his jetlag. In partnership with Thai inventor Chaleo Yoovidhya they launched a version of the Thai drink slightly modified to suit European tastes. The rest, as they say, is history.

Red Bull's evolution from quirky local drink to global mega-brand is a master-class in how to execute a brilliantly joined-up communications idea across big-idea events. But it's also a lesson in the value of restraint and sensitivity. When Mateschitz decided to launch 'Krating Daeng' in Austria, he was careful to retain the iconography of the brand, leaving its charging bulls virtually untouched. He recognised, perhaps, that a sense of the 'foreign', the exotic, the quirky and the doubtless potent would be positive associations for a new energy drink brand. Design icons aren't built overnight, and knowing when not to change them is a valuable skill. So now the world is richer for having two Red Bull brands that are of course, *same same but different*.



Did you know? One of these facts is, well, bull.*

1

Thanks to Red Bull, its co-owner, Dietrich Mateschitz is the richest man in Austria.

2

The company's famous tagline, 'Red Bull gives you wings' was written by Booker Prize-winning author, Hilary Mantel.

3

Red Bull owns four football teams (based in Leipzig, Salzburg, New York and Campinas in Brazil) and two F1 outfits. Its F1 operation is said to cost the company half a billion dollars annually.

4

Red Bull launched Media House in 2007 and has its own record label, magazines and TV shows as well as producing films and a plethora of social media content. Its Media House operation in the US is housed in offices in Santa Monica which are listed as an art installation and contain a giant skate ramp.

5

Red Bull Racing hold the record for the fastest ever pit stop, timed at 1.923 seconds at the Austin GP in 2013.

6

As well as its famous extreme sport sponsorship, the company also promotes a paper airplane tournament called Red Bull Paper Wings.

*Number two is a case of the boy who cried Wolf! Hilary Mantel did not write the Red Bull slogan.



Shiseido

Japan's oldest and largest cosmetics company has weathered wars and depressions with the kind of youthful vitality it encourages in its consumers. Expansion abroad, where its image has long been more exotic than at home, has arguably been key, alongside a long-established belief in the value of beautiful design.



SHISEIDO



In 2012, Shiseido celebrated its 140th anniversary, which makes it one of the oldest cosmetics companies in the world. It's also the fourth largest. The name apparently means 'praise the virtues of the earth which nurtures new life and brings forth significant values'. Fortunately, the design aesthetic is much less complex.

Founded by Arinobu Fukuhara in 1872, it was his photographer son Shinzo who became de facto Creative Director, giving the brand a purpose (champion of art and design) and a visual style (elegant Asian chic) that are still evident today. From 1916, Shinzo collaborated with Japan's most avant-garde and emerging artists, using their work in the brand's advertisements and showcasing exhibitions in a purpose-built gallery on the second floor of their Ginza headquarters.

Shiseido quickly developed a stunning archive of beautiful advertising that blended the art nouveau aesthetic of the time with a Japanese artistic sensibility. The company became well known for its celebration of beauty through its product philosophy and design styling. The distinctive English logotype, with its lilting, elegant 'S' letterforms, seems to reflect the accentuated, languorous curves of the Shiseido women in its advertising and communication.

The logo has hardly changed since its original creation in the early part of the twentieth century – only subtly redrawn and refreshed to keep pace with the times. A secondary branding element, the camellia flower, has also been consistently preserved by the company. It is now used as a subtle motif, inspiration for packaging forms and most recently as an exquisite limited edition camellia compact blusher. The flower comes with a lovely backstory too – the upward pointing petals of the flower represent aspiration, the downwards represent modesty – together they grow into genuine beauty.

Today, Shiseido sells their distinctive brand of cosmopolitan Asian elegance from department store beauty floors across the world. The modest art gallery in Ginza has been replaced by the Taniguchi Yoshio-designed Shiseido Art House, which showcases work by Japanese and international artists and sculptors. Constructed with geometric forms put together to form an undulating 'S' shape, this is Shiseido's architectural ode to beauty, and a testament to the brand's commitment to celebrating creativity. It is in the most accurate sense a true Asian Champion of Design.

Did you know? One of the following facts is plainly made-up.*

1

Shiseido founder Arinobu Fukuhara was also responsible for introducing ice cream to Japan. Following a trip to the US, in 1902 he installed a soda fountain into his Shiseido pharmacy. He then imported authentic materials from the USA to make ice cream which proved extremely popular, leading to the creation of the Shiseido Ice Cream Parlour in 1928.

2

Shiseido's strong aesthetic sense owes much to its founder's third son, Shinzo Fukuhara who became the company's first president in 1927. He had originally wanted to be an artist, but went into the business following the death of one of his older brothers and illness of the other.

3

In 1924, the company introduced *Shiseido Geppo*, a monthly magazine for customers. Its first issue contained articles entitled, 'How to keep fit to maintain health and youthfulness,' and 'How to pour coffee.'

4

A key factor in Shiseido's expansion into international markets in the 1980s was the hiring of legendary perfumier, Serge Lutens. He created *Nombre Noir* for the company, described by famous nose Luca Turin as 'one of the five great perfumes of the world'.

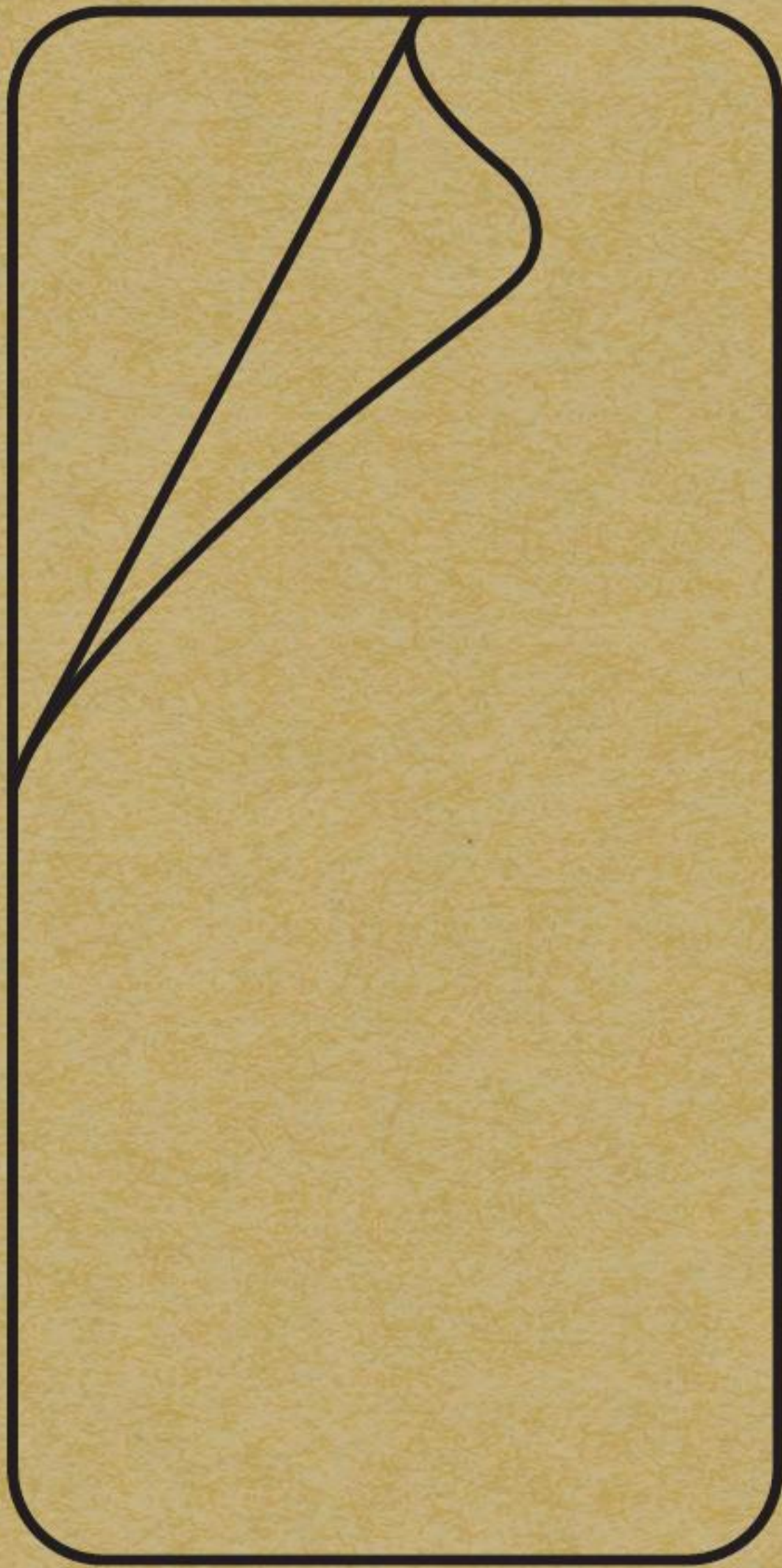
5

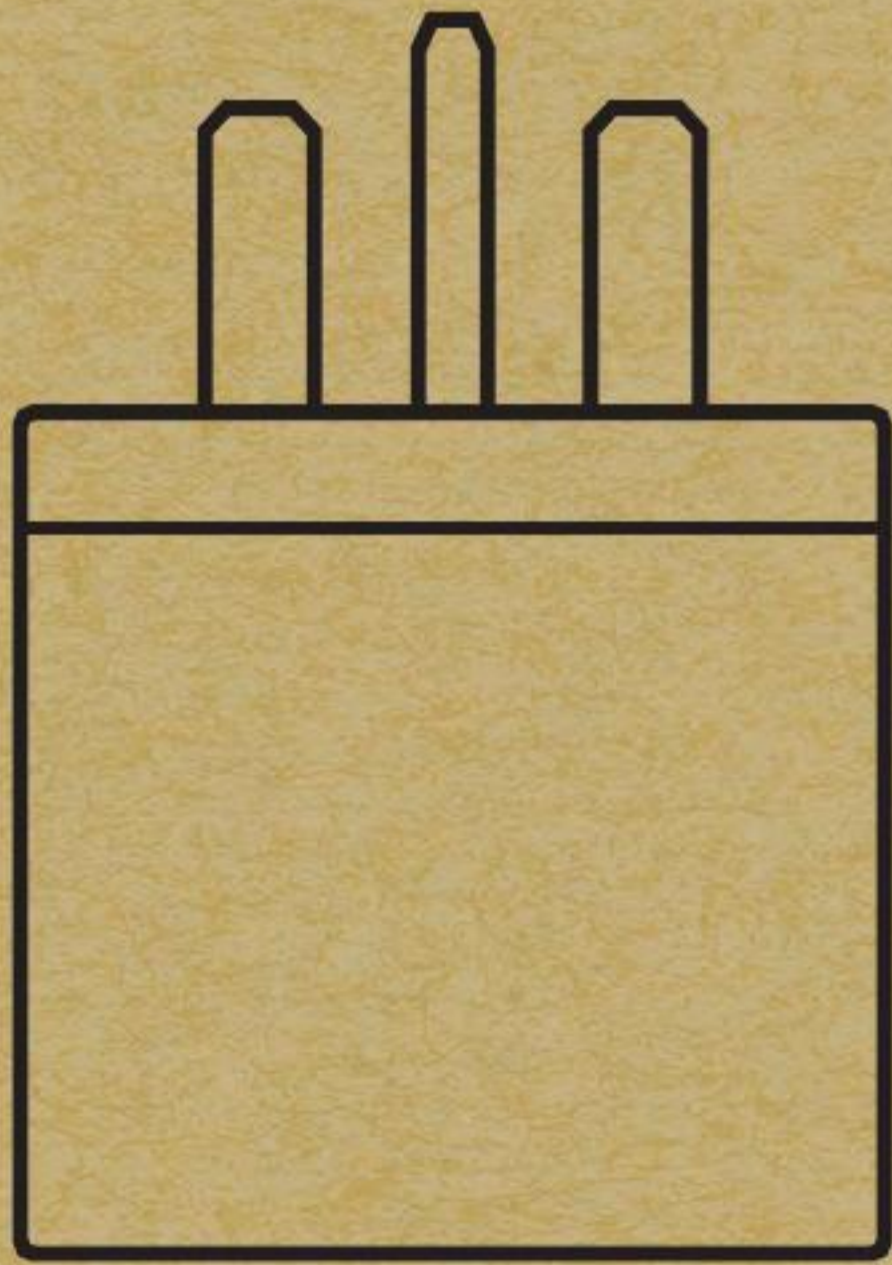
In 2012 Shiseido introduced a face cream, *La Crème* which sold for £8,440, making it the most expensive in the world. The company only made three pots of it and planned to hold a draw if it received more than three offers. It worked out at £169 per gramme, at the time about five times more expensive than gold.

6

Nicolas Cage and Patricia Arquette marked their engagement by having matching tattoos of the Shiseido logo. Cage later had his removed after the pair divorced.

*Nicolas Cage does, to his enormous credit, sport a tattoo of a monitor lizard wearing a top hat, but sadly neither he nor Patricia have inked Shiseido on their bodies. Six is therefore bereft of truth.





Xiaomi

There's a deep-seated preconception in the West that anything short of a category-defining breakthrough is not real innovation. In some Asian cultures, however, that word is not so easily defined.

People do not treat 'the big idea' with the same reverence. Instead the mood, the context and the details are what brands can be built on. Xiaomi is one of those brands whose quiet style of innovating is propelling it to global fame.



Xiaomi is the home-grown Chinese brand that knocked Samsung off its post this year to become China's top-selling smart phone. The company sells hand-sets for less than \$200, versus more than \$500 for a comparable Samsung product. It has grown quickly through its low price, high functionality model (from 5% market share to 14% in a year). It's bright, it's friendly and it's accessible in every sense of the word. The brand has an endearing name – '*xiao*' means 'little' in Chinese while '*mi*' is an acronym for 'mobile internet'. The original Mandarin 小米科技 means 'little rice tech company' and the company's brand mascot – the mi bunny – has a furry Russian hat and Young Pioneers red scarf that blends cuteness with communism. In short, cheery little Xiaomi has more charisma than Samsung, Nokia, Sony and Blackberry put together.

The other thing Xiaomi is famous for is its alleged aping of Apple. It's certainly true that when Apple showed the world that human technology sells technology to humans, Xiaomi were listening. But the company has also been accused of copying everything from handset design to management style (its CEO Lei Jun favours jeans and a black t-shirt too). In short, they are usually referred to as 'The Chinese Apple', an opportunist *shanzai* (counterfeit) company taking the established Apple model and giving it a Chinese twist.

In China, as Tom Doctoroff explains, 'Innovation is always incremental or feature-driven, never a breakthrough.' Perhaps Chinese innovation is better at sweating the small stuff. But is it really small stuff? Scratch the surface and you'll find that Xiaomi is actually a very different idea indeed.

Specifically, Xiaomi has no stores and sells everything online, meticulously analysing user feedback to improve both software and hardware in the next small batch of around 100,000 phones that's released *every Tuesday*. Their mission is to 'change hardware like it's software' with every release 'incrementally better'. Users (called 'mi fans') can modify the handset, the OS (Miui) and pretty much everything else. Where Apple is a testament to the power of top-down, brand-out marketing, Xiaomi is experimenting with true user-centricity. It's not 'designed in California'. It's designed by ordinary people everywhere, everyday. Xiaomi is perhaps the closest we've come to a crowd-sourced brand. It's nothing short of a *xiao* revolution.

When all's said and done, design is not just about aesthetics. As Steve Jobs once explained: 'In most people's vocabularies, design means veneer... but to me, nothing could be further from the meaning of design.'



Did you know? A bug of deceit lurks in the operating system of one of the following.*

1

In the inner quadrangle of Xiaomi's Beijing HQ stands a 330-foot model of the company's first smartphone, the Mi1.

2

Xiaomi keep its prices down (it sells many of its high-spec smartphones virtually at cost) by limiting its advertising and having no shops. They rely on social media sites like Weibo and word-of-mouth to promote their products and make their profit on selling additional mobile services.

3

The company doesn't just make smartphones. In 2014, it launched an Android-powered Tegra K1 tablet. Perhaps inevitably, given the frequent comparisons to Apple, it's more simply known as a MiPad.

4

One of Lei Jun's nicknames is Lei Bu Si, a play on Steve Jobs' Chinese name, the phonetically translated Si Di Fu Qiao Bu Si.

5

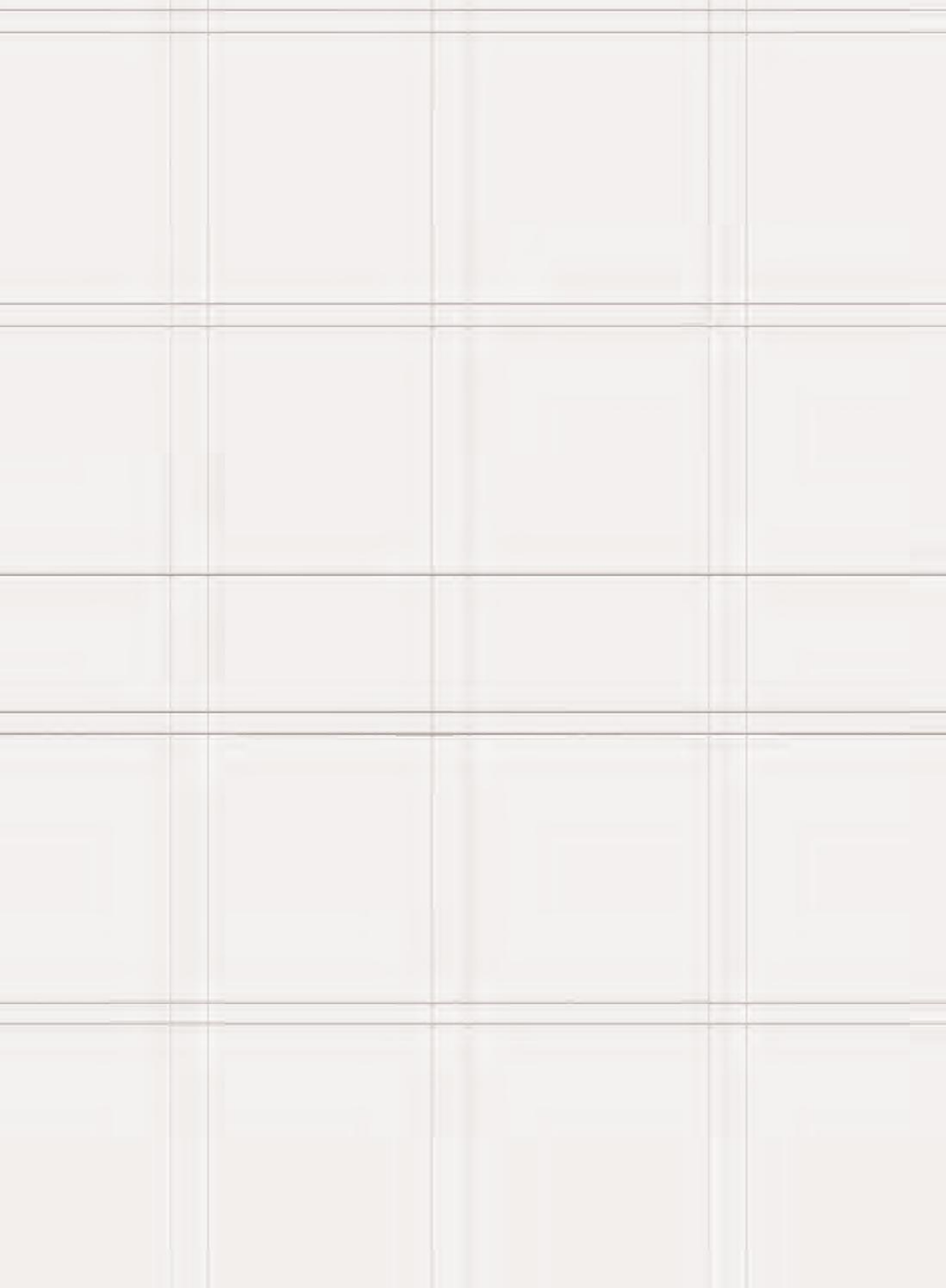
Xiaomi is one of the biggest Chinese brands to have been publicly criticised by Chinese state television (CCTV). The broadcaster, which has also criticised Starbucks for being too expensive, attacked the quality of Xiaomi's charging units, claiming they worked only half as well as advertised. Xiaomi refuted the accusation, saying the broadcaster hadn't used an authentic charger.

6

Lei Jun grew up in a small city called Xiantao in the east of Hubei province, where his hobby as a child was building radios. Xiantao remains best-known not for internet entrepreneurs, but rather its knack for spawning top-class gymnasts such as Li Xiaoshuang, Li Dashuang and Yang Wei, who between them have won five Olympic gold medals.

*There's no giant model of a smartphone at Xiaomi HQ, nor even a quadrangle. Number one is a fib.

JIMMY CHOO



Jimmy Choo

If you're looking for an Asian tale of rags to riches, then you can't do much better than the story Jimmy Choo; poor cobbler's son from Penang, Malaysia and shoemaker to the stars. It's also a story about how an eye for beauty, a flexible design aesthetic and a relentless pursuit of perfection created one of the world's most iconic fashion brands.





Jimmy Choo sits in illustrious company alongside Manolo Blahnik and Christian Louboutin to form the holy trinity of designer footwear, creating beautiful, elegant and (apparently, I wouldn't know) comfortable shoes – what *Vanity Fair* referred to as 'every woman's favourite phallic symbol'.

Jimmy Choo was born Choo Yeang Keat into a family of shoemaking immigrants from China. He apprenticed as a shoemaker at the age of 9 and made his first pair of shoes by 11, each one sewn by hand. So how did this quiet, modest man become an icon of fashion design, and what is it about his style that has made his shoes such icons of female elegance, and such objects of desire?

Devotees speak about their beauty, workmanship and feminine elegance. Jimmy Choo's shoes are understated, but unmistakable. They're timeless, they're exquisitely crafted – they aren't trashy or gauche or try-hard. As *The New York Times* says 'They're not gimmicky or overly trendy; a thrill of added elegance and sexiness is what they offer the wearer. She knows she's wearing the shoes, and not the other way around.' So how did Jimmy Choo find his niche in this accomplished milieu?

Firstly, he was passionate about his craft. Every pair of shoes was made by him,

and every pair made by hand, a mere handful every week. That's some old school stuff. He built a very small, discerning and loyal consumer base of trend-setters and influencers. Princess Diana was one of them.

Secondly, he was passionate about his craft. He focused on small orders for high-profile clients and fashion titles. He offered Hollywood stars the shoes to match their gowns. His shoes got papped on red carpets. He got seen in the right places. He built exclusivity and devotion.

Thirdly, he was passionate about his craft. *Vogue* ran an eight page special on his shoes. Carrie Bradshaw named him as her favourite shoe designer in *Sex and the City*. He partnered with it-girl and biz-whizz Tamara Mellon, and his talented Central St Martin's-trained niece Sandra Choi. Jimmy Choo the designer shoe label was born.

His weakness (if you can call it that)? He was passionate about his craft. To grow, the business needed to outsource its workmanship, but he couldn't reconcile quantity with quality. He failed to adapt and ultimately left the business, leaving Tamara and Sandra to turn it into the global brand we know today.

Perhaps the final lesson here is that passion is not the same quality as vision; and that empires are built by partnerships, not by individuals.

JIMMY CHOO
LONDON

JIMMY CHOO
LONDON

Did you know? Chooos to believe what you will – one of these is a fib.*

1

The Malaysian-born designer's work ethic is legendary. In preparation for a Katherine Hamnett show, Choo once worked for three days and nights sewing beads onto shoes.

2

When Jimmy Choo first moved to London, he set up a studio in Hackney and one of his neighbours was an up-and-coming designer named Alexander McQueen.

3

Tamara Mellon's father was a stunt double for Hollywood actor Rock Hudson.

4

The brand became a household name in the US after the third series of *Sex and the City* when Carrie Bradshaw (Sarah Jessica Parker) slipped out of her feather sandal while running to catch the Staten Island ferry and lamented, 'I've lost my Choo.'

5

Since her daughter Lourdes reached the age of five, Madonna has marked every birthday by buying her seven pairs of Jimmy Choos.

6

While Choo himself and co-founder Tamara Mellon have both now left the company, Sandra Choi, the niece of Choo's wife Rebecca, has remained as Creative Director throughout. She was born on the Isle of Wight but sent to live with her grandparents in Hong Kong as a baby so her parents could run their restaurant. She returned to England aged 13.

*The story of
Madonna's multiple
Choo purchases at five
is, as her ex-husband
Guy Ritchie might say,
total cobbler's.





Singapore Airlines

While most in-flight service ranges from the perfunctory to the surly, Singapore Airlines has built its reputation on the ‘Singapore Girl’ – a symbol of Asian hospitality, feminine grace and the romance of travel. The idea of the Singapore Girl might seem a bit 1970s, but the service certainly isn’t. It can’t be complete coincidence that the airline has never yet experienced a case of air rage.





Can people be part of a brand's visual identity? The Singapore Girl, brand icon of Singapore Airlines since 1972, would suggest they can.

Part of great branding is defining a unique and ownable visual asset, then celebrating it consistently. Singapore Airlines has done so for over four decades, showing unswerving faith in the immensely powerful and almost mythical allure of their brand emblem.

The Singapore Girl, created by local Singapore ad agency Batey in the 1960s, isn't just part of the brand – she *is* the brand. Through accusations of sexism, she has nevertheless endured for decades as a representation not just of the airline, but of Singapore itself.

Singapore Girls, with their distinctive 'sarong kabaya' uniform (inspired by traditional Indonesian batik and styled by Pierre Balmain) look pretty much the same as they did in the 1960s. Compared to major competitors, whose cabin crew regularly sport freshly redesigned uniforms that are updated to reflect the sensibilities of a particular era, the sarong kabaya seems timeless. In fact, timelessness is one of the things this brand does best. When the Head of Marketing at Singapore Airlines was asked in an interview about plans to update the Singapore Girl, his response was this: 'What's there to update? She's eternal.'

Singapore Airlines isn't just about pretty girls who follow the regulations on lipstick tone, however. The airline has substance as well as style: the first to fly the A380, the widest seats in business class, for years the only airline to offer double beds in its 'above first class' suites. The brand looks not within its own industry for inspiration but beyond – at the hospitality sector, at leading resorts and spas, at destinations. Singapore Airlines consulted with a luxury yacht designer to create their Suites concept, proving that a little lateral thinking can create something truly unique.

But perhaps the biggest lesson we can take from the success of this Asian giant is in the power of emotional branding. Singapore Airlines might have the biggest seats and the most luxurious cabins, but that's not what they sell their brand on. This airline was a pioneer in elevating magic above logic and has continued to champion an emotional bond with its consumers in a market where the convention is to sell on price or on aircraft features. The Singapore Girl, symbol of gentle Asian hospitality, promises a return to the romance of travel that we lost long ago.



Did you know? A lie more twisted than a complementary pretzel is hidden below.*

1

In a 2013 report by Airlineratings.com, Singapore Airlines (SIA) was one of only 11 airlines to receive top marks for both safety and service. Virgin Atlantic was the only UK carrier to be named in the list, which did not feature a single US airline.

2

A SIA cleaner tidying up on a return flight which had just landed from Brunei found \$100,000 stuffed in a lavatory towel dispenser. The cleaner reported the money, but no-one came forward to claim it.

3

The first-class Skysuite service on SIA flights features seats which fold out into full-size beds, complete with linen, duvets and complementary pyjamas by Givenchy.

4

In 2013, Singapore Airlines stopped running what had been until then the longest non-stop commercial flight. The rising cost of fuel and the introduction of the more fuel-efficient Airbus A380 superjumbos (unsuitable for flying such distances) rendered the 9,529 mile, 19-hour journey from Singapore to New York (Newark) no longer commercially viable.

5

Flight attendants on Singapore Airlines can only wear blue or brown eyeshadow, must dye their hair dark brown or black and can only use a few prescribed shades of bright red lipstick. Their training includes learning how to use the emergency life raft's fishing kit and singing the company song, 'Let's step into the future, let's do it all in style/We're proud to be a part of that Singapore Girl smile!'

6

SIA was the first airline to offer free headsets, free drinks and a choice of meals in economy.

Acknowledgements

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Want to read more?

Our past five publications can be downloaded at the Kindle store.

1. Is Brad Pitt a Fishfinger?
2. The Blue Lady's New Look and Other Curiosities
3. Champions of Design 1
4. Champions of Design 2
5. Champions of Design 3

Which product is a Lady Gaga backstage must-have?

Which brand has been replicated using five tons of sugar?

Which family favourite is part of Singapore's National Service Survival Camp Kit?

Which brand name means 'flying forward' in Mandarin?

...and what makes an Asian Champion of Design?

This book celebrates twenty great works of Asian design, the people who created them and the clients who bought them.

campaign
Asia-Pacific



brand first books

