

Superbrands

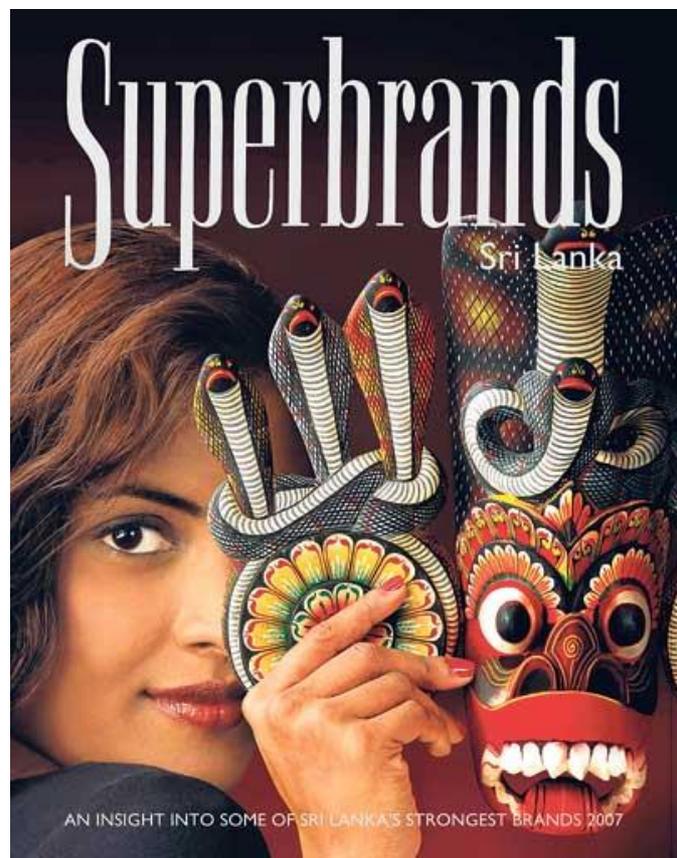
Media Coverage

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| Sri Lanka | 2007 | Press Clippings |

Superbrands Sri Lanka - taking marketing to a new level

By Willie B Weersekera

As one who had been actively involved in marketing in Sri Lanka I looked forward with great interest to the arrival of the first publication of Superbrands in Sri Lanka. Having opened the package and seeing the cover picture alone made me feel so proud of being a Sri Lankan. The description of the cover picture is so apt – “a young Sri Lankan face appears, surprising us from behind a traditional exorcist’s mask... because brands in Sri Lanka are all about the blending and juxtaposing of the contemporary with the traditional; the modern with the ancient; the young, bright, optimistic present day with old customs and beliefs...”



The individual brand histories helped to demonstrate the fact that brand building is not an overnight affair. A careful review of each Superbrand’s history is a learning experience for some marketers’ who expect to build super brands super fast. Overall the publication delivers a worthy tribute to these exceptional brands which have achieved Superbrand status. It is equally a publication that is most relevant to any organizational leadership because the influence of the CEO is the key – in order to set the platform on which brands can be turned into Superbrands. Its value to marketers both practioners and students alike as regards its informational and motivational aspects are noteworthy.

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The supporting articles entitled “The Marketing of a Superbrand” , “ How to Define Your Brand and Determine its Value” and the final article “ Human Insights “ were carefully selected as they support the processes, strategic needs and the consumer understanding all of which are required to go into building Superbrands.

People Power

In featuring the ‘Brand Guardians’, Superbrands Sri Lanka has very rightly highlighted the importance of leadership in the brand building process. As David Taylor emphasis in his discourse on ‘the Brandgym’ “a brand-led business can obviously not succeed without strong leadership”. No matter how strong the insights, vision and strategy are, without motivating and directing the people in the organization it is impossible to deliver the brand promise consistently. I am a firm believer of this concept. In research done by a strategic marketing consulting firm, among leading marketers ‘Aligning the organization behind the brand’ was ranked third and earned twice the score earned for ‘Advertising in mainstream media’.

Challenging Road

The write-up on each individual Superbrand is not only informative, but to one with a long association with the market it brings back nostalgic memories – memories regarding those brands I had been directly associated with and others I have watched grow to be what they are today. I recall not only the key events but also the key individuals who cared for and built these brands. The road they traveled was neither smooth nor easy.

The trials and tribulations these Superbrands at times had to face purely to protect the value of their brand in volatile market conditions would generate valuable case studies. The custodians of these brands at these various stages have all contributed to building the ‘invisible bounty’ through branding. I would now like to reflect on some of those brands where I had personal experiences.

I can recall the little Abans shop in the 1970s, not only because of the many items we purchased from there but more because of the quality of customer service rendered – a bit of a rare commodity at that time (in a sellers market). Being a housewife herself its founder Ms. Aban Pestonjee no doubt understood the

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customer expectations and delivered on it. The brand was built on a sound foundation.

As a brand manager for fats and margarines at Lever Brothers I had the privilege of learning first hand from the late Mr. Hinniappuhamy the founder of the Superbrand Maliban, how a custodian of a brand must protect the consistency in the delivery of the brand promise. Despite the opportunities for large savings we offered to add to his bottom line by substituting locally manufactured fats and margarines for what he was then importing, he had his priorities right. He made even the slightest change to the formulations using the substitute ingredients only after a few years of testing and when he was fully satisfied that the alternative delivered the same quality and taste his brand promise consistently delivered. He valued his longer term brand value more than such a monetary gain.

At times brand owners are even forced to take drastic action to ensure that one does not damage the longer term interest of the brand for short term expediency. I recall the occasion when I was the brand manager for toilet soaps at Lever Brothers when the brand owners of Lux toilet soap instructed that the brand leader in the toilet soap market Lux, be withdrawn.

Due to a total ban on imports of perfume the true brand promise could not be delivered. Thus the brand custodian would rather withdraw the brand from the market rather than damage its value. Its success after the re-launch a few years later and the progress it continues to make speaks for itself.

One of my treasured memories in Sri Lanka marketing was leading the launch of one of today's Superbrands Panadol into the over the counter (OTC) market. It appears that this important milestone in 1984 has been missed out in the recorded history on Panadol in this publication. The brand building process in this market had in fact started by my predecessor who provided the leadership to establish Panadol as the then prescription analgesic of choice in this market.

The success story behind the switch from a prescription to an OTC marketing strategy commenced in 1984. At that time the brand owners were Sterling Health Int. who functioned in this market in collaboration with the local partner Mackwoods Ltd. The ability to take Pandol's market share from a single digit to

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around ninety per cent within four years was a real success story. I identify one of the key drivers behind that success to be that of ‘people power’ where every individual in the organization unified to move towards a clear vision with the utmost dedication. Much has been done for the brand since then. Its continued success is no doubt a reflection of continuous caring for the brand and the outstanding value building that has been consistently followed.

Building Sri Lanka Inc.

An important feature of the very first Sri Lanka Superbrands publication I note is the fact that 33 of the 33 brands featured are home grown and nurtured brands. This is a strong endorsement of not only the marketing skills but importantly the total business skills within Sri Lanka. The fact that a few of them are already regional and international brands again reflects the capabilities within the Sri Lankan business community – a strength no doubt that can and must be exploited further. The presence of the other leading international brands within the Sri Lankan Superbrands portfolio adds to the overall value of Sri Lanka Inc. and helps to reflect the state of development of the market.

The thought provoking article entitled Sri Lanka Inc. by Media Services has added more meaning and depth to this publication. In its very first line it calls for a developer to build a dream in a small tropical island. However, as it rightly continues later on ‘For Sri Lanka, the dream has always been just out of reach; a case of so near, yet so far; of a seemingly unfair number of insurmountable obstacles – some man-made, certainly; but others, like the 2004 tsunami, by the force of incomprehensible nature’. Reading on I was pleased to note that in the very next sentence it brings out another truism when it states ‘but the dream is not an impossible one’. Other nations have broken free of their self-imposed shackles.

The issue is, who will lead the nation to the promised land? It’s time for Sri Lanka Inc., the country’s business community, to raise their hands’ Following that may I ask a question – when could we write a statement similar to the following statement on India?

“The first men and women who went to the United States in the 1980s to get business for their software companies will tell you how difficult it was to sell the idea to US executives who saw India as no more than a poverty-ridden backwater.

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Indians run motels in the United States and curry houses in Britain. Could they manage more complex business process? In those early years, half the marketing presentation was often taken up by the need to sell India. Only then could the nuts and bolts of business proposition be discussed. That has now changed. ... Just about everyone who matters knows about it. Meetings are now about more concrete issues – pricing, technical capability, and deliverables”. (Niranjan Rajadhyaksha on The Rise of India)

Many appear to see strategy as an exercise that has value in its own right, rather than as a means to the end of profitable growth. This leads to many a strategic plans ending up preserved in archives with little or no achievements to talk of. It is my fervent hope that this Superbrands Sri Lanka publication too would not ultimately be used only as display items for teak cabinets in board rooms. Particularly in view of the Sri Lankan scenario I identify a much more important role for this publication. I see it as a valuable vehicle to effectively communicate to prospective target groups outside Sri Lanka.

The business community is no doubt aware of the fact that after any presentation many forget what you said but they will never forget how you made them feel. Used strategically this is a vehicle that you could make them feel positively about Sri Lanka. Superbrands Sri Lanka is a mirror that could convincingly reflect to prospective investors, the state of development and the lifestyle of the people of Sri Lanka. This is reflected through the range of successful brands within important categories, from finance, fast moving consumer goods, pharmaceuticals, beverages, retailing, motor vehicles, telecommunications, white goods, not forgetting Sri Lanka Cricket and many others.

That there is a thriving market for all these, as testified through an internationally recognized process, is a reflection of the lifestyles and business opportunities. Equally, it reflects the state of development of business skills and the capacity for professionalism in diverse fields of business management.

Superbrands Sri Lanka is truly an effective tool not only to enhance and improve the professionalism in brand value building in Sri Lanka but also for marketing Sri Lanka. Superbrands International with its local collaborators has no doubt taken

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Sri Lanka Marketing as well as Sri Lanka Inc. to a higher plane within the global community.

<http://www.sundaytimes.lk/070401/FinancialTimes/ft328.html>

Fifty brands awarded ‘Superbrand’ status

by Apeksha Senadheera

The Superbrands Council identified fifty super brands in the country and bestowed on them the appellation ‘Superbrand’ in the Superbrand event 2007. The Council is recognised as having credentials to assess brands in Sri Lanka.

The fifty super brands recently awarded the title of ‘Superbrand’ title in 2007 were Abans, Anton, Baby Chermay, Barefoot, Clogard, Caltex, Ceylinco Homes, Coca-Cola, Dankotuwa, DHL, Dilmah, DCSL, Divaina, Elephant House ice cream, Elephant soft drinks, Hameedia, Heritance Kandalama, Hattion National Bank, Holcim, Jinasena, Kandos, Laxpray, Land Rover, Link Samahan, Lion, LMD, Lanka Orix Leasing Comapany, Lanka Walltiles, Maliban, Mlesna, Munchee, Nissan, Odel, Panadol, Rupavahini, Sampath Bank, SeylanBank, Siddhalepa, Singer, Singer Mega, Sisil, Sony, Sri Lanka Cricket, Sri Lanka Insurance, Stone N String, Sunlight, Suntel, Sunday Times, Tipi Tip and Triumphs.

Superbrands, which is an independent authority on branding, promotes discipline in branding and pays tribute to exceptional brands considered deserving the award by independent and honorary councils, according to Superbrand Council Chief Executive Officer Ruchi Gunawardena. Only brands that score highly, qualify and are nominated for the event.

In addition to this, the organisation’s tribute events have been recognised by members of the marketing industry, the media and the brands themselves as leading to the premier event in the industry’s calendar.

According to Gunawardena, beginning from the major business to consumer brands, 600 were shortlisted and sent to the independent and eminent honorary council comprising eminent individuals and opinion leaders who were well qualified to judge the nationstrongest brands.

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The council had shortlisted the candidates further based on their opinion of the brands strength. The scores that the council allocate were then tabulated as the most highly rated brands for consideration of Superbrand status. The Council members do not give points or marks to any brand with which they are currently involved, directly or indirectly.

"By acquiring information of the experts' perceptions on the shortlisted brands, we were able to create a robust picture of different brands considering their strengths in the historical, current and projected planes," stated Superbrand sources.

The Superbrands Council Chairman Eardley Perera has stated in the Superbrand volume (I) that good branding is essential to the development of an organisation "the growth of its customer base, its product offtake and its corporate sustenance. As a concept, Superbrands recognise such organisational commitment to branding and benchmarks and showcases there for the greater benefit of all concerned."

The inaugural edition of Superbrands investigates some of the strongest brands in Sri Lanka today and establishes how they have managed to achieve such phenomenal success. The book expresses the history, development and achievements of the brands providing precious insights into their branding and the resulting work.

Speeches were done by the Managing Director of Alok Nanda and Co., India Alok Nanda on 'Creating value through brand strategies' and Brand Finance plc Chief Executive Officer David Haigh on 'Creating value through value based marketing' at the event in order to educate the business community.

The Superbrand programme operates in over 50 countries.

<http://www.island.lk/2007/03/22/business21.html>

Singer appointed distributor for Samsung in Sri Lanka

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The internationally renowned Business Week ranked Samsung as the No.1 electronics company among the world's top 100 companies last year.

Thus, when Samsung had to choose a distributor for Sri Lanka, it naturally turned to Singer, Sri Lanka's No.1 retailer, with 350 outlets, 175 service points and over 2500 service personnel, serving more than 3 million customers annually. Further factors in Singer Sri Lanka's favour were its 130-year history in the island and its winning of the coveted "No.1 Power Brand" for the second consecutive year awarded by Brand Finance League "POP Brand of the Year" awarded by AC Nielson as well as "Superbrand" status awarded by Superbrands Lanka (Pvt) Ltd, the local counter part of Superbrands Organisation, that is claimed as being an independent authority and arbiter of branding excellence worldwide.

This distributorship further strengthens Singer's position as Sri Lanka's foremost destination offering the widest range of home appliances – catering to a broad cross-section of socio-economic groups.

Beginning with the sewing machine, the Singer product portfolio has now diversified to encompass a highly successful multi-brand strategy combining products of top world marques with the company's own products across a range of household, industrial and financial categories.

For Samsung joining hands with Singer becomes a strategic partnership to notch a prominent position in the Sri Lankan market.

<http://www.island.lk/2007/02/23/business5.html>

Superbrand

PRESS RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
20th March 2007

IN RECOGNITION OF ITS BRAND POWER, BAREFOOT GAINS 'SUPERBRAND' STATUS

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21st March 2007. COLOMBO. Sri Lanka's iconic store, 'Barefoot', was awarded the SUPERBRAND status at an awards ceremony held in Colombo yesterday. Superbrand is an independent organization that bestows the status of 'Superbrand' on brands worldwide after a stringent sifting and analysis process. This status is granted only to exceptional brands around the world that have forged the finest reputation in their field in a bid to promote good branding practices globally.

Barefoot joined the SUPERBRANDS membership from 55 countries as recognition of its superior brand equity. Established by Barbara Sansoni – artist, designer, entrepreneur and woman par extraordinaire – the store has steadily built up a decades-long reputation for quality design and product that have carved a special niche in the psyche of Sri Lankans and foreign visitors.

Barefoot was born out of Barbara Sansoni's dream to celebrate the best of local design and open the eyes of the world to what this little island had to offer. Today, the Superbrand award stands as a testimony to what Barefoot has achieved. Located in the heart of Colombo, the venue, with its secret garden filled with trees, has become a destination in itself. Barefoot stocks its handmade, hand-woven cotton in vibrant and striking colors designed by Barbara Sansoni and her team of designers: Marie Gnanaraj, Preethi Hapuwatta and Niloufer Victoria. Apart from the fabric, simple clothing, sarongs, a home linen section, handmade soft toys and furniture, the store displays an eclectic mix of gifts that have excited the imagination of all those who step into its interior.

All fabric at Barefoot is 100% hand woven at its weaving centres across the island, providing valuable employment to rural womenfolk who have elevated their economic status by mastering the weaving techniques laid down by Barefoot. The company has carved out an enviable track record exporting its own brand to many countries. Barefoot has succeeded in adding value to the brand of Sri Lanka itself – creating a rising demand for high profile buyers in countries increasingly searching for well designed fabric and accessories consistently manufactured to a very high quality.

The store's legacy is continued by photographer Dominic Sansoni, who functions as the Managing Director, and his wife, Nazreen. Their vision for the store has inspired them to create in Barefoot an enjoyable and fun oasis in Colombo. They have succeeded in extending the core values of the store to now include an art gallery, book shop, café and venue for theatre, music and dance. Barefoot is today a rendezvous for artists, actors, musicians and travelers.

Barefoot has retained its charm perhaps because it is a professionally managed business that counts a dynamic and dedicated team of designers, managers, and skilled workers as part of its extended family. Their commitment to maintain the high standards is what has made Barefoot achieve the success it has today. Having been bestowed the Superbrand status is true recognition of their indomitable and selfless team spirit.

Barefoot has succeeded in creating a strong bond with people who step through its doors. While the venue has become a destination for travellers to the country, Barefoot values most of all the support it continues to enjoy from a loyal local customer base.

The Superbrand status granted to Barefoot proves Sri Lanka's potential to the world. 100% Sri Lankan products designed and made in Sri Lanka.

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<https://nazreen.wordpress.com/2007/03/20/superbrand/>