

Lego builds brand to top UK survey

JAMES BOOTH

@jamesdbooth1

DANISH toy maker Lego has been voted the UK's number one consumer brand in a survey of British shoppers.

The toy maker, which is celebrating the 60th anniversary of the Lego brick this year, overhauled airline British Airways to top the so-called super-brand rankings for the first time.

Shaving company Gillette took

second spot on the list, while consumer electronics giant Apple rounded out the top three.

British Airways, which had topped the rankings for the last four years, did not even make the top 20 this year.

Chief executive of The Centre for Brand Analysis (TCBA) Stephen Cheliotis said: "British Airways tumbling from top spot to outside of the top 20 should be a wake-up call for all brands. In a world where customer expecta-

tions have rightfully risen, brands cannot afford to disappoint and need to continually deliver to retain their valuable reputations. No brand, however strong, is immune to changing consumer sentiment."

The rankings are compiled by TCBA and Research Now SSI following votes from 2,500 members of the public.

Household name brands such as Andrex, Coca-Cola and Cadbury retained top 20 places in the 2018 rankings.



The name Lego comes from the Danish phrase leg godt, which means "play well"

Hotels at centre of dispute back on the market

ALYS KEY

@alys_key

TEN HOTELS at the centre of a dispute between Hilton and a property tycoon are to be put up for sale again.

The string of hotels previously owned by Iranian-British entrepreneur Vincent Tchenguiz are poised for new ownership, according to the Sunday Times.

The newspaper reported yesterday that AlixPartners, the administrator for the portfolio, has appointed property agencies to find buyers.

JLL and Savills have been selected to find owners for the sites, which include the flagship Hilton hotel in Kensington. DTZ Investors has been floated as a possible buyer for nine of the properties, all of them in regional UK locations, for around £300m. Meanwhile, the Kensington hotel has a market value of around £260m.

The properties were put up for sale last year for an estimated £600m. It is thought that the initial process attracted bids totalling £510m, which would have paid off the debt. But a sale never took place, prompting lenders to put the hotels into administration.

Tchenguiz has prepared a legal challenge against Hilton, accusing the company of frustrating the sales process in the hope of buying back the sites at a cut price.

Hedge funds Fortress and Hayfin have also become caught up in the dispute, due to Tchenguiz's belief that they provided confidential information about financing arrangements to Hilton.

Many of the sites are believed to have deteriorated, with Tchenguiz previously alleging that Hilton had breached the leases due to the poor condition of the hotels.

Hilton, AlixPartners and Vincent Tchenguiz did not respond to requests for comment.

Think London property. Think KFH.

With more than 1,000 sales and lets agreed every month*, we know the London property market and will achieve the right result for you.

Don't miss the busy spring market. Book a valuation today:

kfh.co.uk/valuation

Kinleigh Folkard & Hayward kfh.co.uk

COMPLETELY LONDON

*Based on average sales and lettings deals agreed between January 2013 and December 2017

Travelodge to roll out 20 new sites in the UK

COURTNEY GOLDSMITH

@courtneysmith

TRAVELODGE yesterday announced a plan to open 20 hotels and create 550 new jobs in 2018 as part of its UK expansion programme, as demand for budget hotels holds up despite industry pressures caused by Brexit.

The new hotels, which are being developed by third-party investors with an equivalent investment value of about £240m, will add more than 1,900 rooms across the UK. Travelodge will also roll out a further 400 premium economy rooms, its so-called SuperRooms, following the successful launch of 1,000 SuperRooms last year. These will be deployed in London hotels as well as regional cities like Bristol, Edinburgh, Manchester and York.

Peter Gowers, the chief executive of Travelodge, said the announcement demonstrates the firm's "continued investment in the UK".

"Despite the uncertainty caused by Brexit and economic pressures, the UK budget hotel market remains attractive, and we are extending our network to put us where our customers want to be, while creating hundreds of new jobs across the country," Gowers said.

Gowers also attributed the company's recent success to its growing appeal to business customers. He said: "Our new hotels increasingly serve business locations and more and more customers are choosing our new SuperRooms. The opening of our largest ever new build hotel this year, in the financial district of the City of London, shows just how far Travelodge has travelled since we opened our first 20-room hotel by the side of the A38 in 1985."

A report last year by PwC said London's hotels would remain resilient throughout 2018 despite challenges in the hospitality market due to the weaker pound driving a tourism boom.



Duncan Bannatyne's health club empire has increased its member numbers

Bannatyne's gyms bulk up with profit rise

ALYS KEY

@alys_key

PROFITS soared at Dragon's Den star Duncan Bannatyne's gym and spa empire last year after an investment programme re-energised the estate.

Bannatyne Group, which operates premium health clubs including 71 gyms, 46 spas and four hotels, said yesterday it had brought in record

turnover of £117.6m, up from £112.2m in 2016.

Profit before tax jumped a whopping 57 per cent to £14.3m.

The company said that 99 per cent of its gyms had now been refurbished, spending £14m on modernisation and £2.4m on maintenance.

Meanwhile, the portfolio has expanded with four acquisitions as

well as nine new spa openings.

The company also grew its workforce to pass the 3,000 mark, up 10 per cent on 2016.

"The Bannatyne Group is seeking to expand further through both organic growth as our current reinvested estate potential is realised and by careful acquisition," commented the group's chief executive Justin Musgrove.

JAMES BOOTH

@jamesdbooth1

DANISH toy maker Lego has been voted the UK's number one consumer brand in a survey of British shoppers.

The toy maker, which is celebrating the 60th anniversary of the Lego brick this year, overhauled airline British Airways to top the so-called super-brand rankings for the first time.

Shaving company Gillette took

second spot on the list, while consumer electronics giant Apple rounded out the top three.

British Airways, which had topped the rankings for the last four years, did not even make the top 20 this year.

Chief executive of The Centre for Brand Analysis (TCBA) Stephen Cheliotis said: "British Airways tumbling from top spot to outside of the top 20 should be a wake-up call for all brands. In a world where customer expecta-

tions have rightfully risen, brands cannot afford to disappoint and need to continually deliver to retain their valuable reputations. No brand, however strong, is immune to changing consumer sentiment."

The rankings are compiled by TCBA and Research Now SSI following votes from 2,500 members of the public.

Household name brands such as Andrex, Coca-Cola and Cadbury retained top 20 places in the 2018 rankings.