

## Marketing Excellence

### >> Evian

Evian is one of the most famous mineral water brands owned by the French food-products group Danone. Each year, approximately 1.5 billion bottles are sold in more than 140 countries across the world. According to the market research company Millward Brown, the Evian brand can be valued at \$1,027 million. The success of the brand is a result of continuous innovation and powerful and original communication.

At the end of the 19th century, Evian water, which was sourced from a natural spring, became known for its "miraculous" healing properties and was being sold in pharmacies. By mid-1930s, Evian was recommended as the perfect water for babies. Campaigns designed to target mothers, midwives, and doctors were developed consequently. In the 1950s, Evian was still catering to this segment but its communication added a new reference to health, and the theme of the Alps was introduced.

In the 1980s, the brand decided to go in a different direction and the concept of equilibrium ("the force of balance") was dropped. The theme of purity was chosen to differentiate the brand from competitors and enable high-end positioning of the product. The company adopted a new slogan to reflect this change—"the water you drink is as important as the air you breathe."

In 1998, Evian in association with its advertiser BETC Paris launched the hugely successful ad campaign "Water Babies" that had babies swimming in synchronicity, a metaphor through which the brand evoked youth. In France, the approval rating for this ad was 94 percent and the recognition score was 91 percent. This television commercial had a very strong impact on the collective conscious of people.

Globally, the brand focused on purity and used the slogan, "the Original." Press advertisements portrayed, for example, a beautiful black angel lying on a white cloud who brought down rain with a bottle of Evian, or a mermaid quenching her thirst with Evian water. Despite the differences in product-positioning based on markets, the brand has always been conscious of its upscale image.

The economic crisis of 2007–2009 had a negative effect on the market for mineral water. Sales

dropped as more and more consumers turned to less expensive water. During this time, the brand went through a restructure to keep from losing its market share. As a result, Evian has a premium and popular positioning in France, Switzerland, the UK, and Belgium, while it is a luxury brand in almost all the other countries. This is due to the fact that in Europe, the brand is sold in every supermarket, whereas in many other countries across the world, the brand is sold only in urban centers. Evian generates 50 percent of its sales outside of France.

A bottle of Evian can reach three times the price of a regular soft drink. The brand caters to a very narrow urban market, and it therefore felt the need to unify its brand communication in favor of something more global. It is in this regard that Evian and BETC decided to pick up from where the water babies left off and launched the "Roller Babies" campaign. Health and purity of the Alps were abandoned in favor of a single message, "Live young." This advertisement was broadcast around the world and went on to become one of the most-watched ads ever on YouTube with 254 million views, and held the Guinness world record in this category at one point. It was the advert of the year for *Time Magazine*, *Wall Street Journal*, and *The Guardian*. It was also the 20 percent most effective ad ever (source: GfK France, Belgium, and Germany).

In Asia, however, consumers did not understand quite well the relationship between Evian, seen as the pinnacle of luxury, and babies on rollers dancing to hip-hop music. BETC, then, had the idea of creating T-shirts with images of baby bodies and launched a campaign showing people of all ages dressed in these tees. With this, the advertisers wanted to represent their brand as one that keeps adults young at heart. The T-shirts were a huge success globally and created the desired brand awareness.

In 2013, Evian launched "Baby & Me," its third major campaign with BETC since 1998. This commercial used a baby-and-adult mirrored-dancing concept to highlight their "Live Young" slogan. The idea behind this video was to allow consumers to reconnect with their inner child, in line with the brand promise.

Since 2009, Evian's global brand communication strategy has been focused on both digital and traditional media. With the Web, Evian can target precisely and reach masses easily, and is one of the

top brands viewed online. The brand has also always cultivated a strong presence outside the Internet. Since 2007, it has carried out several promotional operations with limited edition glass bottles signed by major designers, such as Paul Smith in 2009, Issey Miyake in 2010, and Kenzo in 2014. Evian has also been credited with creating the first Women's Golf Open Championship. Today, it is considered to be one of the major tournaments in Europe and is broadcast live on television in 167 countries. Evian is the official water brand for the Wimbledon tennis tournament. The brand is also a sponsor for the Paris fashion shows. In addition to this, Evian supports a variety of causes linked to its brand territory. It is committed to the protection of the environment through creation of schools of water to help populations manage their water resources in an autonomous and sustainable way. It has developed partnerships with the Red Cross, and offers fellowships in

pediatrics, thereby affirming its positioning on health and children.

### Questions

1. Evian is a global mineral water brand that is sold to millions of people across the world. Analyze the reasons for its success.
2. What will be the strategic evolution of the brand's communication?
3. Can any other mineral water brand ever take over Evian's market share?

**Sources:** Natalie Zmuda, "Evian Seeking Return to Relevance, New Head Marketer," *Advertising Age*, August 7, 2013; "Saga Evian," *Prodimarques*, January, 2002; "Evian: le marketing comme élixir de jeunesse," *Dynamique-Mag*, October 19, 2012; Alexandre Debouté, "Les bébés d'Évian font un carton sur Internet," *Le Figaro*, September 5, 2013; Lauren Johnson, "Evian's Real-Time Marketing Reaps Big Social Stats: Targets New Yorkers with Twitter-enabled service," *Adweek*, September 5, 2014; Effie France, [www.effie.fr](http://www.effie.fr).