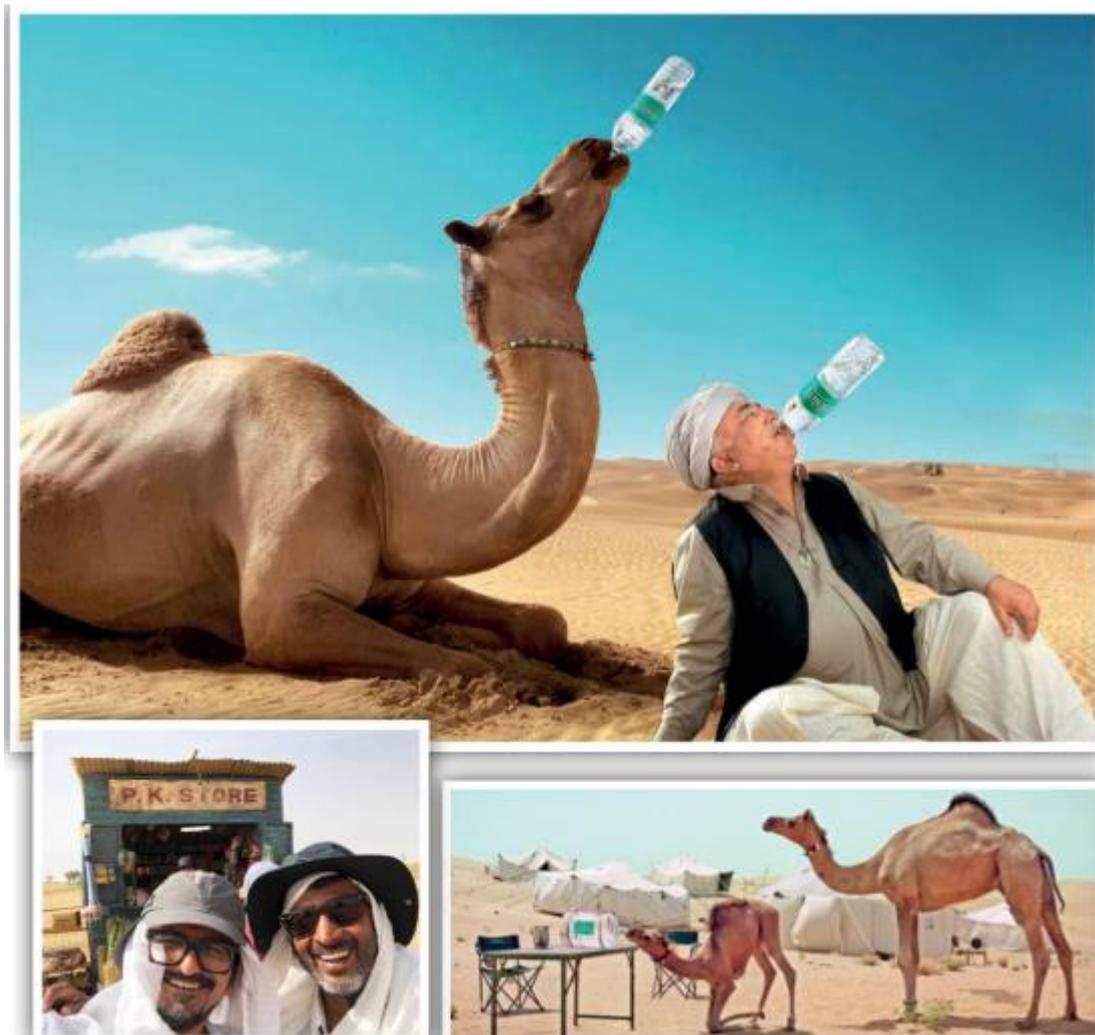


BE exclusive: Look who's talking

Amit Bapna | ETBrandEquity | Updated: October 10, 2018, 16:56 IST



How long does it take to teach a camel how to drink water from a plastic bottle? We'll spare you a drawnout guessing game.

The answer is four weeks. That's how long it took for the crew from [Nirvana Films](#) and [Soho Square](#) to train its lead actors to drink Bisleri water for a new brand campaign. The company is banking on these mammals to do what might seem impossible given Bisleri's ubiquity.

Challenger brands with meagre market shares have to work hard to get noticed in a crowded market. On the other hand, there are category leaders that are challenged because of their category-generic status. As is the case with Bisleri, which sells 1.2 crore water cases per month. [Anjana Ghosh](#), director marketing, [Bisleri International](#), can't help but nod in agreement, as she gets ready to unveil the mega-budget brand campaign today. The paradigm of being identified with the category and whether that works as an advantage or a disadvantage, is a big challenge for us, she tells BE during an exclusive chat.



Anjana Ghosh, director marketing, Bisleri International

As we take a deeper look at the category, her paranoia seems justified. The packaged water category is pegged at around ₹14,000 crore, with a 20% CAGR. Over 65% of the market, though, is a cottage industry of over 3000 labels, co-existing in an environment where most consumers are oblivious to what is inside the bottle.

Like many other categories, the lastmile truth here, too, is at the retailer level, where the consumer is often given whatever the shop-keeper fancies. Trade margins play a big role in what eventually gets pushed out. Yet, surprisingly, all players - from the Sai Gangas to Bisleri and Pepsi's Aquafina and Coca-Cola's Kinley - operate at the same MRP, that's ₹ 20 for the 1 litre SKU.

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In Action: the full unit, cast and camels on location for the ad-shoot in Jodhpur

A veteran marketer with a multinational cola brand says, “Water is very cheap, low on margins and is thus very tough to make money on.” That’s also the reason why the category has a much lower share of voice than aerated beverages, in spite of a double-digit growth. In such a scenario, the big challenge is “around ‘what’ and ‘how’ do we communicate something as universal as water,” says Bisleri’s Ghosh.

The route the brand has opted for is a quirky one in the integrated brand campaign that goes live today. The campaign has been conceptualised by creative agency Soho Square and directed by [Rajiv Rao](#) of Nirvana Films. Rao is the man behind the famous Pug and Zoozoos of Vodafone, which he created during his long stint at Ogilvy.

Source: <https://www.campaignindia.in/video/bisleri-urges-differentiation-between-mineral-water-brands/448347>



It's a Camel's Life

Ex Ogilvy-man **Rajiv Rao** who is now director at Nirvana Films on working with camels and more



Why Camels?

We've seen many cows and dogs across brands. A camel as a mascot sounded exciting. There's an element of natural humour in their faces. Also, brand fit. We are talking about water, after all. When the agency came to me, the camels were already in the script. The next leap was how to make it work. We thought of everything from animatronics to CG. The end-product is natural and totally 'made in India' – even the bits of CG were done at a studio in Hyderabad.

Casting Ouch

One film features a mother and her calf. Some interesting background information on the species. Camels are very patriarchal. The female is rarely exposed to the world, her job is to breed and bred. So, finding the mother and calf and getting them to perform as per the script was a real task. Since these are talking camels, the voices also had to be pitched just right. The voice-cast includes Ila Arun (the mother), Ranvir Shorey (the dacoit), Rajpal Yadav (the customer) and Ogilvy's chief Piyush Pandey as the gang-leader in the heist film.

Old Ties

Rajiv Rao has got an old connection with Bisleri. In one of his early jobs, at Ambience in the late 90s, he had worked on the brand. One of the campaigns, a print ad, impressed many people including the Bisleri folks. It won him a Gold at the Abbys that year, and got him a job at Ogilvy, where he worked his way up to national creative director.

(with inputs from Anuraag Khandelwal and Samrat Bedi, President (West), Soho Square)

Elaborating on the brand-problem and the creative solution, Sumanto Chattopadhyay, chairman and chief creative officer, Soho Square says, “Bisleri has become like Xerox. We needed “water experts” to reclaim the brand name from its generic status.” The said experts: Camels. The set of three films and all the various iterations of the campaign across media will feature these talking camels. In one, a mother is very picky about the water her calf drinks. The heist film has a bunch of camel-dacoits plotting and then looting a Bisleri truck. The third is about a couple of customers who refuse to buy just any bottled water, despite the shopkeeper’s insistence. Adds [Anuraag Khandelwal](#), ECD and creative head (Mumbai), Soho Square, “Through this campaign we are taking a stand against everything that passes off as clean water, and positioning Bisleri as the only smart choice.”



While Bisleri has done a lot to build demand for the category, including new packaging formats and innovative distribution strategies, the market is getting more cluttered with brands mushrooming in every zip code. Says brand consultant Harish Bijoor, “The brand is stuck in a vortex of its own making - large volumes and water thin margins, escaping this is its task.” In his view Bisleri needs to disrupt itself, not the market, to move ahead.



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Anuraag Khandelwal,
ECD & Creative Head (Mumbai),
Soho Square

Ambi Parameswaran, brand strategist and founder, Brand-Building.com, believes the brand must now tap the opportunity in the premium water space. Something it dabbled in earlier but not with any consistent effort and investment. It's still not too late, feels Parameswaran, for Bisleri to be able to establish its dominance at both ends of the market.

In a category where brand preference is driven by availability rather than loyalty, Ghosh says the problems are many and multi-layered. A richer user experience is one way Bisleri plans to break out. Initiatives include a toll-free number that consumers facing issues of availability can call. A new app, naturally. Improved website, where orders can be pre-booked. Even the 1500 Bisleri outlets across 30 cities are being rebranded to 'My Bisleri' from the rather impersonal 'Bisleri Shoppe'.



The new VO Man

It's hard to miss **Piyush Pandey** and his distinct baritone in one of the new Bisleri films. His other credits include an ad for SBI Life, Asian Paints, Fevicol and Indian Railways.

And, who knows, with the help of its new furry friends, the brand might finally find its thirst for differentiation quenched.