

Bisleri: Quenching thirst with trust

What's the magic recipe of Bisleri that has emerged as the Most Trusted Brand this year? [Amit Bapna](#) | ETBrandEquity | March 13, 2019, 06:00 IST



In an age when most companies opt for getting a celebrity to endorse their brands - [Bisleri](#), the leading packaged water player, did the unthinkable. It recruited a camel – actually many camels, of course post all the mandatory approvals from the wildlife authorities we are told – to communicate its message of “Har Pani ki Bottle Bisleri Nahin”. The idea was to reinstate the trust of the consumers and seal the preference for the brand, informs Anjana Gosh, director marketing, Bisleri International. The high-blitz campaign launched in 2018 was conceptualised by Soho Square, part of the Ogilvy group. (The agency has been rebranded to 82.5 Communications since.) Getting the camels on-board – as the brand ambassador - seems to have paid rich dividends for the brand that turns 50 this year and claims to sell 1.2 crore water cases per month. It has taken the topmost spot in Brand Equity’s annual Most Trusted Brands ranking.

The brand is also the largest player in a category that is pegged at around ₹14,000 crore and is growing in double digits. And yet it has its share of oddities. Shares Ramesh Chauhan, chairman and managing director, Bisleri International, and also the man who created some of the most famous beverage brands of the country, such as Thums Up, Limca, Maaza and Goldspot, in an exclusive chat with Brand Equity: “It’s a very strange category, where all bottles whether well branded, un-branded, or even spurious sell at the same MRP.” It is indeed a bit of an odd-ball category in more ways than one. For

instance, over 65% of the market is a cottage industry of over 3000 labels co-existing with most consumers oblivious to what is inside the bottle. A handful of big brands like Bisleri, PepsiCo's Aquafina, Coca-Cola's Kinley and Parle Agro's Bailey compete with regional brands and also spurious ones. In such a peculiar ecosystem, for a brand to gain and rank so well on something as intangible as trust is indeed creditable.

In an earlier story by Brand Equity, Sumanto Chattopadhyay, chairman and chief creative officer, Soho Square had said, "Bisleri has become like Xerox. We needed "water experts" to reclaim the brand name from its generic status." And the experts were found in India's camel community. Along with the brand campaign, there have been a spate of strategic initiatives that have helped the brand spread its water-muscle from its 135 plants across the country. These include:

Going regional - For the first time, a brand launched packaging labels in multiple regional languages across the country and across all SKUs. "It helped us emotionally connect with consumers who identify themselves with their mother tongue," shares Ghosh.

Size matters - Formats were made across sizes, in order to be present across various consumer usage occasions (250ml, 300ml, 500 ml, 1L, 1.5L 2L, 5L, 10L, 20L). Earlier, Bisleri was the first to introduce a breakaway seal in the country way back in 1997.

Drinking Tech - A centralized consumer care cell run in-house has been launched to handle consumer queries, complaints or feedback from across the country. Plans are afoot to strengthen the direct-to-home channel on digital as an alternate medium for the brand to reach out to consumers.

On his part, Chauhan is very optimistic about the potential for bottled water since the demand for clean water in the country is big and its only growing. Which should be good news for the category and the brand.