

J.C. Le Roux's occasion-specific marketing sparkles

 By Leigh Andrews

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J.C. Le Roux was recently hailed in the Ask Afrika Icon Brands Survey, taking home the category win for the sixth time. Jackie Olivier, global marketing manager of sparkling wines at Distell, explains their innovation focus.



Jackie Olivier

It's always a proud moment when your brand comes out on top, especially in awards that are voted for by consumers. That's what happened when the J.C. Le Roux range of sparkling wines was named the only alcoholic beverage and one of just 39 brands to achieve iconic status in the 2016/2017 Ask Afrika Icon Brands consumer survey, which polled over 15,000 consumers countrywide on brands in 163 product categories in total.

More than just 'the country's leading sparkling wine', the title shows the brand's marketing team is effective as it has a loyal customer base across home language, cultural background and even income level. That's all the more impressive when you consider sparkling wine is usually seen as a 'luxury' item, only purchased to celebrate special occasions – you don't exactly drown your sorrows with a solitary glass of bubbly.

Olivier shares how the range of sparkling wines crafted at The House of J.C. Le Roux in the heart of the Stellenbosch Winelands has captured consumer loyalty across South Africa.

1. What does it mean to be named an SA Icon Brand?

Olivier: Being Ask Afrika's Icon in the sparkling wine category reflects the fact that J.C. Le Roux has won the hearts and souls of South African consumers, has become an integral part of their lives and is a brand that they know intimately and trust. It's a great honour, and an achievement for everyone who has worked on the brand, past and present.

2. Indeed, you're clearly doing something right. What does it take to resonate with consumers when they're survey respondents, so there's no direct interaction?

Olivier: There are a number of factors that work in J.C. Le Roux's favour when the brand is not physically on the table in front of the consumer, as it wouldn't have been while Ask Afrika's respondents were being interviewed.

Firstly, there's our heritage. J.C. Le Roux is an established brand with a long and well-known tradition of being there when South Africans celebrate weddings, birthdays, births, promotions, engagements, victories – or even just another beautiful day in the company of friends.



Some of the J.C. Le Roux range...

Then, there's its strong distribution network, ensuring that when South Africans feel the need to pop the proverbial cork, a bottle or two of J.C. Le Roux is never far. It's also the marketing team's continuous efforts to ensure that the brand reaches out to consumers at every possible touchpoint from television advertising to in-store visibility and so on.

Most importantly, it's the fact that our communication resonates with our target market in a way that is innovative and memorable.

3. How do you effectively market an alcohol brand so that it appeals to multiple subsets of consumers?

Olivier: You are quite right. J.C. Le Roux is a brand that is very occasion-specific, and therefore tends to be relevant to a larger number of consumer segments. The obvious action is to constantly reference the occasion when marketing the brand. Our tack has been slightly different and it's one that has relied to a fair degree on innovation, and an appreciation that different people would want a different product, despite the occasion they'd consume that product being the same, or very similar.

For example, we have an alcohol-free J.C. Le Roux for those who want to celebrate with a bubble, but don't consume alcohol. We were also the first to produce a *demi-sec* or off-dry MCC to appeal to those who are not fond of the austere *brut* styles, and then there was our red sparkling wine for the even more adventurous. The key is to provide the consumer with choice, to be accessible but inspirational.

4. How does this title play into your future branding/marketing of J.C. Le Roux?

Olivier: The title is affirmation that what we've been doing on all levels from product innovation to marketing communications is working, that our actions are steadily and relentlessly building the brand. But, it is also a challenge. As the market leader, J.C. Le Roux cannot dwell on its past successes, it must look to the future and create new ways of entertaining and surprising its consumers, keep moving with the times and evolve. So, the title is a catalyst for change, but change that is meaningful and adds to the relationship consumers have with the brand.

Inspirational, to say the least. [Click here](#) for more on the Ask Afrika Icon brands 2016, and visit the J.C. Le Roux [website](#), or keep up with their social media innovation on [Instagram](#), [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

ABOUT LEIGH ANDREWS

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