

# Jeremy Sampson interviews Brenda Koornneef of Tiger Brands

Brenda Koornneef\* is the business executive: group marketing and corporate-strategy at Tiger Brands. Tiger Brands is the dominant food supplier and expanding into home and personal care in South Africa, now spreading its wings in Africa. Household names such as Jungle Oats, Black Cat, Tastic, All Gold and Koo etc are under her portfolio. Koornneef has just stepped down as chairperson of the Marketing Association of South Africa after four years.



## How many brands are you responsible for?

Tiger Brands is the proud owner of more than 40 brands, of which around 20 are what we call "core" brands. It is the Tiger Brands objective to always own No 1 or 2 leading brand in every sector in which we participate.

We are proud to say that we achieve this objective in the majority of categories in which we participate, with iconic heritage brands that have stood the test of time.

## Most people think of Tiger Brands for food, but that has changed of late?

The Tiger portfolio consists mainly of food products, but we have a growing portfolio of Home- and Personal Care products, as well as a baby wellbeing portfolio.

## South African companies are pushing up into Africa and TB is one of those leading the charge?

Tiger Brands is the largest FMCG company in Africa - we have been focusing over the past number of years on expanding our footprint across the rest of Africa. This has been achieved through expanding our core brands into Africa, and we currently market a selected range of our core brands in more than 28 countries. But more than this, we have implemented a focused strategy of establishing an operational presence in selected regions through acquisitions or joint ventures with companies in selected African countries. To date the Tiger Brands companies include HacoTigerBrands in Kenya, Chococam in Cameroon, EATBI in Ethiopia, Deli Foods and UAC in Nigeria and our latest investment is being finalised is Dangote Flour Mills in Nigeria. In addition we acquired last year the Davita company which is a South African company with a strong distribution network across Africa, which further enhanced our capabilities across the continent. Our aim is to achieve a strong presence across Africa in FMCG markets as well as other selected emerging market territories.

## Is marketing to other African countries very different from South Africa?

Marketing in different countries rests on the same best practise methods and approaches - the most important of which is to understand consumer and shopper behaviours and attitudes. The brand expressions however, and the route to market is very different in each country, and we have to ensure that we are sensitive to the preferences and habits of the consumers

in each different country.

## **What are the main metrics you use to measure return on marketing investment (ROMI)?**

In terms of ROMI, ultimately the proof of the pudding is in the profit returns of the company on the investments made. Tiger Brands has an outstanding track record of financial performance, and we are happy that our marketing efforts make a strong contribution to this. Specifically in terms of marketing investment we look at:

- Media effectiveness
- Sales performance against media and shopper spend
- Market share performance
- Brand health - including awareness, trial, loyalty and advocacy

## **What are your views on marketing education?**

We have to acknowledge that the marketing skills in South Africa and the rest of Africa require further development. It is also imperative that we reinforce the importance of the marketing professional in every organisation in terms of contribution to the top and bottom line. Tiger Brands therefore is very committed to training and development, and we have developed a School of Magic which every marketing employee attends, as well as an Academy of Magic for senior marketers. In addition we have developed a new course aimed at the marketing management level which will be administered externally, and includes the CMSA qualification. I believe that the CMSA qualification is a much needed professional standard recognition which should be taken seriously by all marketing companies.

## **How is the explosion of digital affecting Tiger Brands?**

To me digital is about social media. Whilst there is obviously a need for internet or mobile communication, the name of the game is consumer engagement and interaction. This is what the growing social media platform allows marketers to do today.

## **Green and sustainability are growing areas of importance and priority. How is TB addressing this?**

Concern for the environment is a high priority for Tiger Brands. We have committed to a focused program on energy, water and effluent management, together with the necessary targets for reduction of our carbon footprint. Effective utilisation of packaging materials and a close watch on the ingredients in our food products in order to promote healthy eating is a keen area of focus for us.

## **What keeps you awake at night?**

What keeps me awake at night? I have a passion for consumer insight. I am constantly thinking about how our brands are aligned to real consumer understanding - and how we can better satisfy changing consumer needs. I firmly believe that this is Tiger Brands' best strategy to maintain and enhance our market shares and top line sales in this current difficult economic environment.

## **As a marketer, what else provides the current major challenge?**

The other issue that keeps me preoccupied at the moment is how we can assist our consumers within their constrained economic situation at present. How can Tiger Brands make sure that we are offering consumers enhanced value - this has become the absolute "buzz word" and focus for most marketers. It is imperative to make sure that consumers get real value from every brand purchase that they make. A tall order, but one which we believe firmly we can do with the functionally differentiated heritage brands that Tiger Brands owns.

There is no more challenging job in business today than the role of Chief Marketing Officer. The wealth of many companies, especially FMCG, resides in their brands. Staying relevant and resonating with your consumers is paramount. Some still see marketing as a so called 'soft' issue. Wrong! Everything is measurable and sometimes the figures provided may be 'harder' than those provided by finance. Now there is a thought!

*\*Brenda Koornneef was appointed to the group in 2001 as category director for the Main Meal category, and subsequently became managing executive for the Tastic Rice Corporation. She was subsequently appointed as group marketing and corporate strategy executive in 2005. She started her marketing career with Unilever as a trainee graduate, and spent 15 years with the organisation both locally and internationally, progressing to marketing director, Unilever Detergents South Africa. She left Unilever to join the SABC as general manager for SABC2 (formerly TV One), where she spent several years working to successfully commercialise the channel. After leaving the SABC, she was appointed managing director of Games Africa and Moribu Limited - the lottery games Ithuba, Viva and Zama-Zama.*

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