



THE YOUNG & THE TRENDY
Guests at the closed-door Puma Cali party, in the recent Puma Cali campaign, the sportswear brand tied up with South Korean pop star Hyolyn to create content for online and social media platforms, and physical stores

KEEPING UP WITH THE TIMES

Media firm GHY Culture & Media and sportswear brand Puma have seen their consumers and respective industries evolve over the years. GHY is coming up with new ways of creating content and marketing to stay relevant. Puma is not resting on its laurels as an established, global brand but is working with influencers, among other efforts.



BOLDER, SAVVIER TASTES

EVEN though it has been designing, developing, selling and marketing footwear, apparel and accessories for more than 70 years now, Puma still has its work cut out for it in keeping up with consumers' desires, particularly those of the younger generation. The global sportswear brand set up its Singapore office in 2007 in a bid to widen its footprint in South-east Asia and strengthen the relationship with its consumers. It operates out of Mapletree's high-tech industrial cluster, Toa Payoh North 1.

Some of the plans have included establishing a more efficient omni-channel offering and a seamless brand experience for consumers, according to Philippe Le-Bretton, Puma's general manager for South-east Asia. "These can only be done when we understand our customers better by gaining direct insights," says Mr Le-Bretton, who oversees 10 Asean countries, with Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia being the major markets. "By marketing the campaigns directly to the consumers, it gives us better control of the Puma brand's story and gives us the opportunity to grow our local audiences."

These days, the challenge lies in moving in lockstep with the younger generation of consumers who are bolder and savvier in their tastes and preferences, and yet, "exceptionally loyal" when a brand shows understanding of their needs and pursuits, observes Mr Le-Bretton, who worked at fashion and lifestyle brands Longchamp and Lacoste before joining Puma.

For Puma, collaborations with underground designers and celebrity tie-ups are crucial in keeping the brand fresh and relatable. The German brand has, in recent years, worked with underground artists and designers such as Ader Error to create exclusive products. Other collaborators in its star-studded stable have ranged from The Weeknd and Big Sean, to Rihanna. Most recently in July, Puma launched a new collection with Los Angeles cult label Chinatown Market.

In Singapore, Puma has also leaned on its omni-channel approach to engage the younger generation of consumers "at every level – online, social and on the ground", says Mr Le-Bretton. For example, the recent Puma Cali campaign saw the brand tie up with South Korean pop star Hyolyn to create content for online and social media platforms, and physical stores. At the same time, all of Puma and its distributors' stores also featured Cali campaign elements that were linked to the social media campaign.

By Puma's measure, its efforts to engage the younger band of consumers in the region are paying off. Mr Le-Bretton says that the company started the year with the "best-performing quarter it has ever seen in its history, hitting a new record of operating profit". Sales in Asia increased by 28.6 per cent, according to Puma.

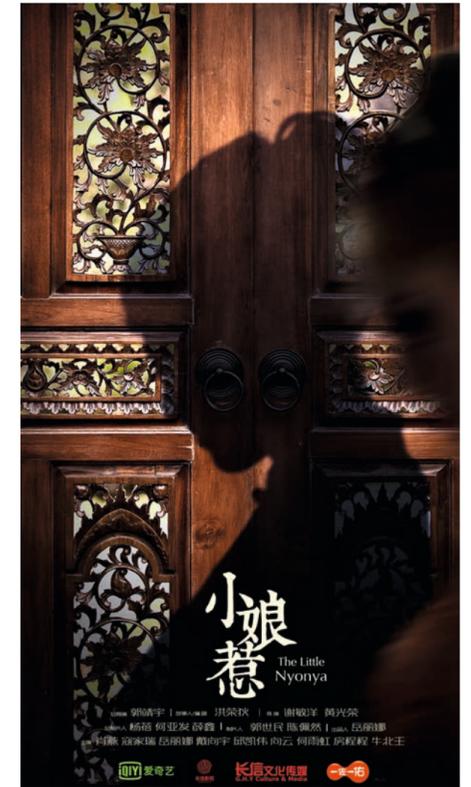
Today, Puma has 10 stores in Singapore. It has also launched an online store locally, and looks to continue seeking opportunities to expand its reach.

In the workplace, Puma is also stepping up efforts to attract and retain the young talent who dominate its workforce, chief of which is establishing solid employer branding.

Social media is one of the key tools that the company uses to build its employer branding. Mr Le-Bretton shares, as young jobseekers tend to use those platforms as a primary way of gathering information about Puma's business and work culture. He adds: "In today's world, branding is not just reserved for consumer goods and products." ■

MOVIE PARTNERSHIP
The poster (top right) for the remake of Mediacorp's 2008 hit show, *The Little Nyonya*; GHY Culture & Media has teamed up with Baidu-owned online video site iQiyi and Changxin Pictures to produce the remake

PAYING OFF
Mr Le-Bretton (left) says that Puma's efforts to engage the younger band of consumers in the region are paying off as the company has started the year with the best-performing quarter it has ever seen



TURNING DISRUPTION INTO OPPORTUNITY

A GROWING millennial audience and disruptors such as Netflix are some challenges that continue to plague the media industry. But GHY Culture & Media is undaunted, preferring to adapt and turn disruption into opportunity instead.

The company was set up two years ago by a trio of media industry veterans – Chinese director Guo Jingyu; Yang Junrong, who manages Mandopop artist Jay Chou's JVR Music label; and Singaporean music producer John Ho. It produces and distributes Chinese films and drama series; and also organises concerts and dabbles in talent management.

In those years, the arrival of disruptors such as media streaming platform Netflix has abruptly changed the way that audiences consume content. Netflix has also encroached on the territory of production houses by creating its own content.

But GHY's senior director Adeline Low thinks that they are not so much of a challenge than an opportunity, saying: "We're looking at how we can grow together with these new types of media platforms and how they can help us to reach a wider target audience." She adds: "It's not to say that we ignore the traditional platforms of selling our content, but more a question of how we can marry both."

This year, GHY has teamed up with Baidu-owned online video site iQiyi and Changxin Pictures to produce a remake of Mediacorp's 2008 hit show *The Little Nyonya*. The series will air on iQiyi, which claims over 500 million monthly users.

Estimated to cost S\$30 million, the remake will feature



HOME BASE

GHY remains headquartered in Singapore at Mapletree's industrial cluster at Toa Payoh North, but has expanded to Malaysia, China and Australia

actors from Singapore, Taiwan and China, including both new and seasoned faces. “Fresh takes” on iconic scenes will also help the drama stay interesting for younger audiences, Miss Low says.

GHY is also in talks with Netflix and Mediacorp to collaborate in a potentially similar fashion, but the firm is unable to share details of what the partnerships might entail yet.

For the concert business, a younger audience now dominates GHY's customer base, pushing it to also rethink its offerings and marketing approach. “We regularly study and identify what is hot right now,” says Miss Low, citing an example of how GHY is bringing in up-and-coming Chinese singer Li Ronghao for a concert in October.

The company may come up with “different concepts” in future to better cater to its younger segment and older

audience separately, adds Miss Low.

GHY has also switched up the way that it markets concerts to millennials by marrying traditional and social media channels in publicity campaigns. The marketing team found that the younger generation tends to demand more information and wants it delivered fast. Hence, GHY looked at deploying the main campaign messaging across all channels, while using social media to share more supporting information, such behind-the-scenes snippets.

That approach was most recently used in marketing Jay Chou's concert, which will be held next year. Over 50,000 tickets were sold, said Miss Low. It will also be the first time that the singer will be performing on two consecutive nights at the National Stadium.

That is not an easy feat for a company that started out with a team of just 20. GHY remains headquartered in Singapore at Toa Payoh North 1 but has expanded to Malaysia, China and Australia. It now employs 200 full-time staff across the region.

When it comes to producing a drama series, GHY can also command up to 1,000 staff, comprising actors, craftsmen and cameramen. Miss Low says that the company is also firming up plans to set up a permanent film set as well as a visual effects studio that will train aspiring professionals in Singapore. ■

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