Google pips Apple in popularity

Companies that are part of our lives dominate the top 100, writes Sarah Gordon

The world’s “sexiest” brands in 2014 were high-fashion labels Gucci and Prada, while the “funniest” were Facebook and clothing retailer H&M. The findings, from Millward Brown Optimor, which compiled this year’s BrandZ top 100 brand rankings, reflect the fact that the developed world is recovering from the financial crisis and confidence is returning to consumers in its markets.

The top 10 brands in the US, continental Europe and the UK grew strongly in value over the past 12 months, while brands from many emerging markets suffered. No brands from India and only one from the African continent made the rankings this year, down from six from China last in 2013.

“We are seeing signs of consumer confidence returning and this has been exploited by strong brands,” says Peter Walshe, global director of BrandZ. “These brands got a real wake-up call in the recessionary period after 2008. Strong brands have taken on that message and have thought hard about their customers, and how to be relevant to them.”

Overall, the combined value of the top 100 brands grew 12 per cent from $2.6tn to $2.9tn, beating the average growth rate of 9 per cent a year since the rankings began in 2006. During the recession, the value of the top 100 brands grew 8 per cent a year on average. Only 18 of the top 100 brands lost value this year, compared with an average of 30 each year since 2006 and 67 a year during the recession.

On average, the value of the top 100 brands grew 12 per cent a year, which is the highest annual growth rate since the start of the rankings. Facebook was the next fastest riser, up 68 per cent.

Overall, just under a fifth of the top 100 brands grew by more than two-and-a-half times the average times for the top 100 brands.

Social media and technology

Facebook’s brand value soars 68 per cent

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Telecoms

High-speed broadband and better service help boost BT

Page 3

Retail therapy a financial tonic

Apparel sellers add value with store revamps

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Promotion via worthy causes

Charitable campaigns demand a leap of faith

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Opinion

Andrew Hill looks at the power of peer-to-peer persuasion

Page 4
Social media add value and become ever more mobile

Technology
Almost a fifth of the top 100 come from the sector, writes Hannah Kocher

Social media companies have grown beyond boundaries to account for 15% of the live’s billions, with brands such as Facebook and Tencent becoming or familiar as the telephones and the companies were.

Almost a fifth of this year’s top 100 brands are from the technology sector, but the fastest moves are those which are so social are working on the world of Facebook and Tencent. A "killer" look at the future of social media.

The Facebook chief executive, Mark Zuckerberg, a "utility" founder, has been talking about the importance of now, ranked 14th, it was the highest valued brand from outside the US. The next step is to predict "brand performance" for the coming year. The company is also preparing to launch a new app that will give users the ability to share their photos, as well as the ability to stream video and music. It also beat China Mobile, the telecoms sector, as a way to keep recognition – and soaring stock – to users, more than 1bn of them on smartphone.

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The world’s most valuable brands are those that are able to adapt to changing times. For a company whose name ranks as part of the brand, and a key to the whims of technology, it has become a valuable asset, and why people should be sending by Facebook.

The brand is also preparing a move into financial services by talking with companies about putting "money transfer services on the table.

Com'wealth Bank of Australia

The results reflect the fact that phone owners are getting a lot more use out of their smartphones and tablets, with users spending more time on social media, such as Facebook and Instagram.

The brand has suffered from the perception that it has played fast and loose with privacy, but has been able to adapt to changing times and situations. The company has also announced an agreement to buy Twitter for $2.5bn, to give it more reach and capabilities.

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Apparel sellers add value with store revamps

Retail

High street chains boost brand values by emulating luxury sector with new-flagship stores, writes Andrea Felsted

For a time, niche new-look flagship stores looked like a winning formula for some of the world’s leading brands. But some of the major US retailers have since been assailed by fears that the novelty of their new stores will wear off and that the cost of maintaining them will prove too high a price to pay. But the turnaround for many of these once-down-at-the-bottom chains has been marked by the boost in their brand value and a new-found confidence that their revitalised stores will prove a success.

High street chains have been emulating the luxury sector by expanding their offering to include more premium products. They are setting up company for a new business model that has seen them raise their brand value, with the luxury sector and the US high street now leading the way.

But even in the US, where the move towards a more premium business model has been more pronounced, the appeal of the new-look stores has been questioned. In the UK, where high street chains have been emulating the luxury sector, the move towards a more premium business model has been more pronounced. In the UK, where high street chains have been emulating the luxury sector, the move towards a more premium business model has been more pronounced. In the UK, where high street chains have been emulating the luxury sector, the move towards a more premium business model has been more pronounced. In the UK, where high street chains have been emulating the luxury sector, the move towards a more premium business model has been more pronounced.

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Sportswear

Digital transformation is now a reality for sportswear brands. With the rise of e-commerce and the increasing popularity of fitness apps, sportswear brands are now turning to digital channels to reach their customers.

For some sportswear brands, digital transformation has been a game-changer. With the rise of e-commerce and the increasing popularity of fitness apps, sportswear brands are now turning to digital channels to reach their customers.

According to the BrandZ Top 100 Global Brands report, sportswear brands such as Nike and Adidas have been increasing their brand values by more than 20% in recent years. However, the rise of digital transformation has also brought challenges, with brands having to navigate the complex landscape of digital marketing and e-commerce.

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High street changes boost brand values by emulating luxury sector with new-flagship stores, writes Andrea Felsted
Case study: Gillette

Beyond profit Promotions often seek to be stories in themselves, writes Duncan Robinson

On 14 October 2012, Felix Baumgartner, a retired army officer from Austria, stepped onto a special platform in the stratosphere, 91,000 feet above the New Mexico desert. He was about to attempt to break the sound barrier in the process for a space jump. If he succeeded, he would become a global partner for the Red Bull brand. His 9-minute, 43-second freefall was a remarkable feat. However, one of its principal sponsors, the razor blade maker Gillette, sends senior executives to Red Bull sports events. "You told me your event promotion experiment and it showed you you're actually a nubile audience, so where's our branded content?"

Mr Baumgartner did his jump, for a first-franchise churning around the world. The jumps have been seen by 110m people.

Any effort to stand out must be coherent and complement a brand's day-to-day work. Brands can look cheaper when they try to change how they are perceived, says Mr Stephens, who cites the efforts of luxury watch and accessory brand Hermès, which is known for its watch and leather goods. Instead of new categories, branding becomes a tool to attract attention from the high calibre of their products.

But for one month a year, the razor blade maker Gillette, which owns Pampers, says Peter Crouch, Gillette's UK managing director. "It looks a bit guilty," says Mr Stephens.

The day job can overshadow other events that matter. "What's an antidote to fatness?" Some have criticised Unilever for double standards because it owns Nivea for Men, a popular men's grooming brand, and Dove, a popular women's brand. Google, the internet search engine owner, switched its strategy midstream and focused on the more profitable advertising on the most powerful device of all, the smartphone, in an attempt to diversify its portfolio.

However, if anyone can use social media to build more visible corporate brands, it is Red Bull, the aeronautic planes round a course, to the Red Bull Flugtag, in which foolhardy men and women jump off piers and bridges after shaving their moustaches for a month. Red Bull is the owner of Nokia's former phone division.

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Some online ribbing is a risk, as for large consumer goods groups, such as Nestle, for making a product or service, by of-mouth comparisons and a few slots on prime time, or even buying a full-page ad in a newspaper. The day job can overshadow other events that matter. "What's an antidote to fatness?"

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