The World According To BrandZ

Contributed by Millward Brown
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Trends and insights from the Top 100 Most Valuable Global Brands Survey 2010.

The BrandZ Top 100 Survey is amongst the most respected annual surveys of the world's most valuable brands. Conducted by Millward Brown, it ranks the top 100 brands globally and measures their brand equity.

Based on interviews of over one million consumers and a robust economic-use methodology, it presents a reliable dashboard of the best and biggest brands.

This year's BrandZ 2010 survey throws up several interesting trends and insights for marketers. But first, here are the top 10 most valuable brands on our planet this year, according to BrandZ.

At the coveted top spot is Google, with an unbelievable brand value of $114 billion. It has also grown its brand value by a handsome 14 per cent over the past year (2010 over 2009).

In second position is IBM, followed by Apple, Microsoft and Coca-Cola. Making up the rest of the top ten are McDonald's, Marlboro, China Mobile, GE and Vodafone.

It is also interesting to note that the combined value of the top 100 brands increased by 4 per cent last year, and surpassed the $2-trillion mark for the first time ever, despite a sharp global recession. Indeed, a tribute to the power and resilience of strong brands.

More interesting than individual ranks and brand values are the big trends the survey threw up. Here is my selection of the eight most relevant and overarching themes impacting the world of brands.

Technology brands win big time
Technology brands feature all over the top 100, and have made the most rapid strides. The top four brands (Google, IBM, Apple, Microsoft) are all from the world of technology.

Blackberry, which did not even feature in the top 100 five years ago, is now ranked at No. 14. Amazon.com has moved up from Rank 78 to 15 during this period, and HP grew its value by an amazing 48 per cent last year to reach Rank 12.

The lesson here: The technology category is getting integrated so deeply into our daily lives that the best technology brands will continue to fly high.

Affordable pleasures' strong appeal
In a world impacted by pay cuts and job losses, affordable pleasures such as burgers and beer scored high on consumers' choices last year.

As a result, brands such as McDonald's, Coca-Cola, Marlboro and Budweiser achieved excellent ranks in the top 100, with many of them showing very good growth in value. On the other hand, luxury brands such as Chanel and Rolex witnessed double-digit value declines.

Here is an insight in two parts: Affordable pleasures grew worldwide, driven by harder times for the mid-market consumer everywhere. However, the demand for luxury abated only in the developed economies where many affluent consumers wanted to avoid appearing insensitive to economic hardship.

On the other hand, the appetite for bling remained strong amongst wealthy consumers in emerging markets such as China and India, who showed no such restraint.

Innovative products trigger quantum shifts in consumer preference
The brand which saw the highest jump in value last year was Samsung, with an amazing brand value growth of 80 per cent. This was driven by the remarkable success it achieved with its innovative mobile phone handsets and new flatscreen television sets using LED technology.

Similarly, Apple with brilliant new iPhones and iPads, grew its brand value by a handsome 32 per cent.

Contrast this with the floundering fortunes of Nokia, whose relative lack of successful new products, particularly in the

smartphone segment, led to a sharp decline of 58 per cent in brand value.

This trend holds an enduring lesson for marketers: Innovative products trigger huge consumer shifts, so never ever take your eye off the new product pipeline, and keep it focused on emerging consumer needs.

(The writer is Chief Operating Officer, Watches, Titan Industries Ltd. These are his personal views.)

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