

“Slow growth is alien to a whole generation of managers in China”

● Miles Young on the economic slowdown, page 20

# ANALYSIS 3

## Spend lags rhetoric in drive for CSR

Nike's CSR pitch illustrates challenges that exist for agencies and clients, writes Arun Sudhaman

### LIVE ISSUE

It is, perhaps, difficult to believe that until just a few years ago the standard response for global brands was simply to deny responsibility for some of the appalling workplace practices that had become routine at their Asian production factories.

Thanks to a vociferous anti-sweatshop movement, coupled with rising consumer activism, however, that kind of strategy now looks refreshingly prehistoric. No company embodies this shift better than Nike which, for 15 years, has been pummeled by attacks on labour policies that one PR executive described as “brutal”.

In 2005, Nike demonstrated the shift in thinking that had already been embraced by the likes of adidas, Levi's, H&M and Gap. Rather than simply insisting that suppliers adhere to a code of conduct, the sports brand published details of the 700 factories that made its goods — admitting that a quarter were not meeting minimum standards. Earlier this year, a specific China report revealed that workplace abuses remained rife. Now Nike is attempting to engage more effectively with NGOs and local governments, pitching a communications assignment to monitor and respond to CSR issues across China and Southeast Asia.

Nike's decision may appear like simple communications common



Nike... published details of standards in the 700 factories that make its goods

**“A lot of clients do not have clear narratives about what they are doing and why they are doing it”**

sense, in the face of rising consumer and NGO activism in Asia.

But the brand's CSR pitch remains the exception to the rule in this region. While most brands source the majority of their products in Asia, CSR spend remains disproportionately focused on their home countries.

“From a communications point of view, most companies haven't woken up to this,” says Stephen Frost, executive director at think-tank CSR Asia.

“There are a range of stakeholders in this region, including workers, who are beginning to get hold of information that can hold big companies accountable.”

Then again, it is not as if Asia is awash with agencies poised to unleash sophisticated CSR strategies at a moment's notice. “There is ex-

traordinarily limited CSR expertise in advertising and PR agencies in Asia,” says Frost. “Unfortunately, what we are getting is a lot of PR agencies espousing their expertise on CSR and reducing it to a PR message. That's an issue we see as quite troubling.”

The blame for this could be laid at the door of thrifty clients. “It's still a very small percentage of our business,” admits Edelman Asia-Pacific president Alan VanderMolen. “The market is just trying to sort out what clients are buying. Overall, clients are not engaging aggressively enough in creating dialogues and a lot of them do not have clear narratives about what they are doing and why they are doing it.”

Coca-Cola group communications director Kenth Kaerhoeg agrees, noting that companies that have issued China-specific CSR reports, as his own company recently has, remain few and far between. “It's a new area, so the bench strength when it comes to CSR at agencies is limited.”

It seems unlikely that this state of affairs will remain tenable indefinitely. “A lot of companies do have the CSR without the communications,” says Frost. “But if we're talking about multinational companies, there needs to be a much deeper understanding of what CSR is about and that the message promoted is about what's happening in the company.”

“If your aim is to make yourself look good, eventually you will come to a dead end.”

## Singapore's Cheesy Extreme is just no fun

### IN MY VIEW



I have chosen Starzbites Cheesy Extreme to review, partly because Pizza Hut is a popular choice in our office when we're working late, but mainly because it's one of the few on the list I've actually seen.

I think the idea of food being fun has lots of potential, even though my mum always used to tell me not to play with my food.

But sadly, for whatever reason, this ad isn't very much fun at all.

It looks like a series of checkpoints have been ticked off. Kids? Singles? Dinks? Check, check, check.

It's such a shame. It could have really made a lot of the theme ‘Fun with a twist’. But if it's not fun, is it effective? I asked around the office and most people had seen this ad, but only one person out of 30 had actually tried Starzbites Cheesy Extreme (they said it was OK).

James Mortimer-Roberts, senior creative, Crush, Singapore

## ADWATCH

The fortnightly analysis of advertisement recall

Q: Which of the following TV commercials do you remember seeing recently?

Last ranking	Brand	Agency/TV buyer	%
1	(7) Tiger Beer	Saatchi & Saatchi/MindShare	69
2	(4) Pizza Hut	BBDO/MindShare	65
3=	(11) Carlsberg Beer	In-house/Carat	63
3=	(2) Kentucky Fried Chicken	McCann Erickson/MindShare	63
5	(-) SingTel Generation Mio TV	BBDO/MEC	60
6	(-) SK Jewellery	O2 Advertising/Ace Daytons	58
7	(-) Lee Hwa Jewellery	MediaCorp/ZenithOptimedia	56
8=	(-) MediaCorp Online Broadband TV	In-house/In-house	55
8=	(8) MediaCorp Radio	DDB/McCann Erickson/M&C Saatchi/Ikon/In-house	55
10	(-) UOB Credit Cards	Saatchi & Saatchi/Universal McCann	53
11	(-) Sunsilk Shampoo (Range)	JWT/MindShare	52
12	(-) Cadbury Dairy Milk Chocolate	Publicis/MindShare	51



Adwatch research was conducted in the last month as part of AsiaBUS, a monthly omnibus survey of 1,000 adults by Synovate — Gigi Chan: 852-2837-8254. OMD provided the list of television commercials for the research — Gavin Gibson: 852-2911-1658.



### 24 HOURS WITH...



**Name** Antony Spanbrook  
**Job** Founder and managing director, Luminous EMC  
**Professional mission** To bring brands to life through live experiences  
**Personal mantra** It's all about the moment

- 5.30am** Stumble out of bed, drive in (from the 'dark side').
- 6.30am** Come up with my best creative on the treadmill.
- 8am** Driver takes me and my business partner Dave to work. It's the only uninterrupted time we get.
- 8.30am** The lull before the rest of team gets in. I go over my emails while spilling cereal.
- 9am** First meeting of the day. If it's with creatives, they will be late.
- 9.20am** Get interrupted by a phone call and leave meeting early, yelling some directions as I run down the corridor. Shortened meetings enable me to do more in a day and empower whoever is left in the boardroom to take control.
- 9.40am** The interruption phone call comes to an end and I think I have found a way for my client to convince her boss that he is wrong and we should not change the whole reveal moment to include four more government officials. More emails and a latte prepared by one of the most important people in my life — Rebecca.
- 10am** Brainstorm meeting for a large investor conference closing bash. This is the bit I live for.
- 10.20am** By now my A-type personality is showing and I am getting a little impatient with the blue sky process.
- 10.30am** I cannot hold back any more and leap up to present my 'treadmill' idea to a room of people with their mouths open.
- 11am** They are all on board!
- 12.30pm** Peter drives me to lunch; 20 minutes BlackBerry time.
- 1.30pm** Lunch at Tivo with a great executive producer who I am trying to convince that the excitement of Hong Kong far outweighs the clean air of Sydney.
- 5pm** Begin a fast-paced volley of meetings with producers.
- 6.30pm** I need energy and grab handfuls of almonds. My next meeting is in the pantry after convincing Beatrice to drink with me.
- 7.30pm** First attempt to leave...
- 8pm** Second attempt and actually make it to the door. One last catch-up with Elna who sits near the door.
- 8.30pm** And I'm out.
- 9pm** Home for dinner. Tonight there will be no bands to check out, shows to see, friends to drink with, or conference calls with French Canadian clients.