

Global Strategy of L'Oréal Professional Products Division

Ing. Ondřej Machek - Ing. Martin Machek
Vysoká škola ekonomická v Praze a L'Oréal ČR
ondrej.machek@vse.cz - mmachek@cz.loreal.com

Introduction

The continuous liberalization of international trade and the elimination of barriers of international business leads to a growing competition in the global market. Internationalization and globalization are phenomena that concern all businesses regardless of their geographical location, size or purchasing power.

The globalization of world economy results in a convergence of consumer needs, which leads to an emergence of large homogeneous segments across the national markets. In this context, we often meet with the term 'global consumer'. The concept of global marketing is based on targeting the global consumer. A uniform marketing strategy and mass production allow global companies to achieve economies of scale and therefore a competitive advantage caused by reduction of costs.

Low costs, strong bargaining power, financial resources and managerial know-how are the main factors that make global companies more successful than those focusing on local brands and local consumers. One of the world's leading companies, whose international marketing is based on a global approach, is the L'Oréal company.

The intention of this article is to analyse the global marketing strategy of the L'Oréal professional products division and its four major brands, Matrix, Redken, L'Oréal Professionnel and Kérastase.

L'Oréal – the leader in the global cosmetics industry

L'Oréal is a global company which is present almost all over the world. Over a hundred years of its existence, the original French cosmetics company called *Société Française des Teintures Inoffensives pour Cheveux* evolved into a multinational corporation, which operates in 130 countries and has more than 68,000 employees. Its global products portfolio is represented by 23 global brands which control 15% of the world market of cosmetics.

The market of cosmetics is evolving continuously and is influenced by new trends, such as growing segment of male cosmetic products, emerging market of nutritional supplements (nutricosmetics), increasing consumer's knowledge and his demand for a natural origin of products, ecology and protection of the environment (biocosmetics).

The success of L'Oréal is caused in particular by a substantial investment in research and development, an excellent exploitation of new trends and a subtle policy of acquisitions by which L'Oréal strengthens its position in

strategic markets. Annually, L'Oréal expends about 3-4% of its total turnover on research and development, which makes this company number one in R&D in the world. The L'Oréal laboratories have developed groundbreaking innovations such as the first shampoo without soap, first quick hair decolorizer, first highlight enhancing shampoo, first hair color without ammonia or an artificial human skin called Episkin.

An important partner of L'Oréal is the Nestlé company, which is also the largest shareholder of L'Oréal. Global partnership between the two companies resulted in the foundation of Galderma Laboratories, which deal with dermatologic research and Innéov Laboratories undergoing development of nutricosmetics products.

Professional products division

Historical developments have led to the creation of a divisional structure of the company. The organizational breakdown is determined by the manner of product distribution. L'Oréal is divided into mass sales division, professional products division, luxury products division and active cosmetics division. The divisions are relatively independent of each other and all have a considerable autonomy.

The highest share of total sales is represented by the division of mass sales (52.6% of total sales in 2009), which focuses on retail stores (eg Tesco) and drugstores such as DM and others. The second largest share on turnover is represented by the division of luxury products (25.1% in 2009), followed by the professional products division (14.7%).¹ Active cosmetics division represented only 7.6% of total sales.

The professional products division originates from the long-standing efforts of L'Oréal to build lasting and mutually beneficial relationship with hairdressing salons since the company's success has always been closely linked with the success of hairdressers. This division distributes its products in the hairdressing salons worldwide. The structure of its brand portfolio tries to meet the needs of all types of hairdressing salons, regardless of their size or purchasing power.

Hairdressing salons market currently represents more than 3.5 million salons worldwide. Annually, more than 800 million customers make use of hairdressing services, making over 6 billion visits of hairdressing salons. Surveys of L'Oréal show that 8 out of 10 women in Europe regularly attend hairdressing salons, visiting the salons seven times per year.² These numbers

¹ L'Oréal Finance [online]. 2010 [cit. 2010-03-21]. Rapport Annuel 2009.

Available from internet: <http://www.lOréal-finance.com/_docs/fr/rapport-2009/LORÉAL-RA-2009_tome1.pdf>

² Internal material of the L'Oréal company

demonstrate the importance and desirability of building long-term relationships with salons and illustrate the potential of this market.

Hairdressing salon as a distribution channel

In light of the professional products division, a hairdressing salon represents the key partner and client who purchases:

- Technical products like colours, oxidants etc. Oxidation colours are one of the main sources that generate profits of the professional products division. For instance, for Redken, the professional colours represent 40% of total turnover on the Czech market.
- Professional products for home use - hair care and styling products which the clients are offered, such as shampoos and conditioners.

Hairdressing salons are the sole and exclusive place, where these products can be officially purchased. Professional products manufacturers sell their products to the salons for a tariff price. The products are subsequently sold to the customers for a suggested retail price, which is increased by a margin. The amount of margin varies across brands, but generally speaking, the higher the final price, the higher the hairdresser's margin on one product.

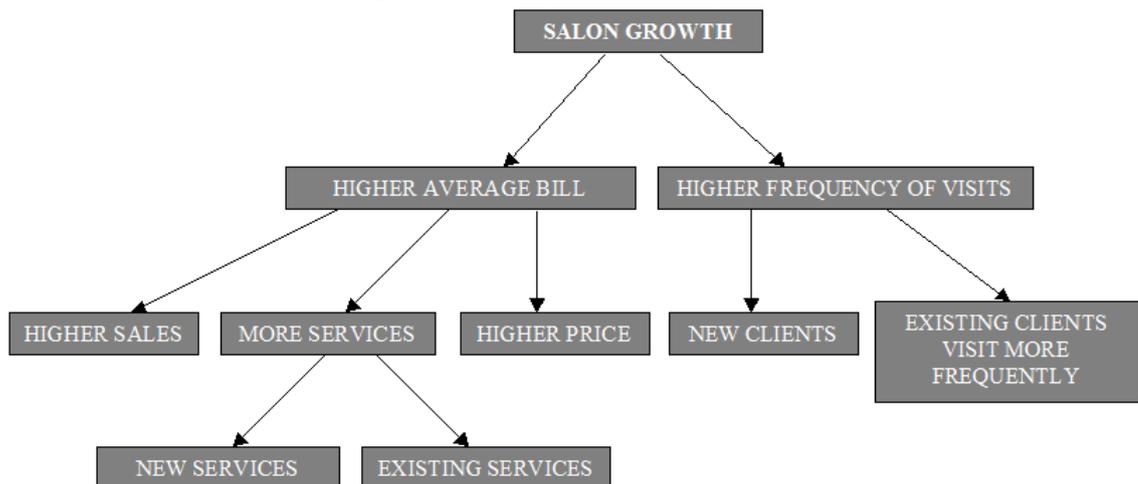
In comparison with products sold in chain stores, the price of professional products is several-fold higher. Professional products are much more advanced in terms of quality and technology and when a new technology is delivered, it is always first offered in hairdressing salons. This leads to a valorisation of research and development.

Another important reason which justifies the higher price of professional products is training and education of hairdressers. Whereas the aim of retail chains is to sell a product, hairdressing salons sell a service, which consists of the product and the expertise and knowledge of the hairdresser. This allows hairdressers to recommend products which meet each customer's specific needs.

The aim of professional products division's brands is to focus on salons which work exclusively with their brand. A good performance of salons is a mutual interest in this case, as the salon's profit generates profits of the manufacturer. Therefore, methods of salon development represent one of the key disciplines that each brand must be able to pass onto its clients.

Generally speaking, the methods of salon development can be described with the following diagram.

Fig. 1: Salon growth diagram



Source: Internal materials of the L'Oréal company

Salon growth can be achieved through higher average bill or higher frequency of customer visits. Higher frequency of visits can be achieved by acquiring new customers or making current customers visit more frequently. Higher average bill can be achieved by higher sales volume, by providing more services, or raising prices. More services may be provided by offering new services or increasing the volume of existing services provided.

Differences between mass sales and professional products market

An important difference between the market of professional products and mass distribution market is the difficulty to obtain valid data about the global market. While data about mass distribution market can be obtained with the use of such tools as a panel research, in the case of professional products, companies can efficiently measure the so-called sell-in, i.e. products that are sold in salons. However, it is extremely difficult to measure the sell-out, i.e. products sold to customers in salons. The sell-out is a very important performance indicator since if salons become overstocked, they will not buy new products.

Given the importance of the two sales channels, the marketing of the professional products division focuses on two levels of communication:

1. Towards hairdressers, motivating them to purchase new products - through education and training, distribution of free samples, communication in professional journals, through sales representatives etc.
2. Towards customers, helping hairdressers to sell their products - through sales promotion tools, PR building in lifestyle and fashion magazines, promotional packaging etc.

It is therefore a business-to-business-to-consumer model (B2B2C), whose goal is to convince hairdressers and then their clients.

The main challenge of the professional products division is, through education, to sell a service rather than a product, whereas the main challenge of

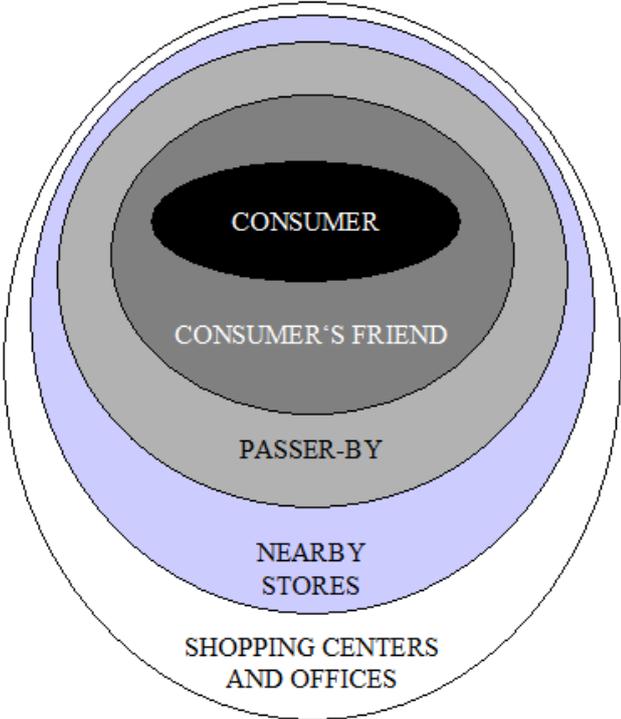
the mass sales division is to differentiate products and to convince consumers at the point of sale. The mass distribution is based upon the fact that up to 70% of purchasing decisions in retail stores are made impulsively.

Core elements of the division’s marketing strategy

A common strategy for all brands is based upon mutual complementarity of products, innovations and training of hairdressers. Sales volume is supported by educational programs for hairdressers and various forms of sales promotion. Marketing communication is focused mainly on hairdressing salons (push strategy), and to a lesser degree (especially through PR) to customers (pull strategy). However, the word-of-mouth (positive references of customers) plays the key role throughout the communication process.

The communication of hairdressing salons with the end-customers can be illustrated by the following figure.

Fig. 2 Scheme of the communication of salons with end-customers



Source: Internal materials of the L'Oréal company

The most important element of the process is the customer at the point of sale. In the premises of salons, the company can communicate with the customer through various forms such as loyalty programs (a shampoo for free etc.) A second important element is a group of the customer's friends. These groups can be targeted by such tools as referral programs. Another participants in the communication process are random passers-by. Their attention may be attracted by outer appearance of salons. Next level of communication takes place in stores in the proximity of salons (e.g. clothes shops). These institutions may cooperate

with salons through cross-marketing. An example might be a discount on products in the hairdressing salon if the consumer purchases shoes in a nearby shoe store. The last level of communication takes place in shopping centers and offices in the catchment area where the company can use various forms of advertising, e.g. promotional leaflets.

Another pillar of the division's marketing strategy is the innovation process. An example might be the ambitious Inoa project launched in the spring of 2010. Inoa is the first permanent hair color that does not contain ammonia, and during the application no unpleasant odor and irritation of the scalp appears. Inoa was first introduced in the L'Oréal Professionnel product assortment.

International brand policy

Four major umbrella brands fall under the professional product division:

- L'Oréal Professionnel, a leading premium brand from France, the vehicle of new technological breakthroughs in the field of hair colouring,
- Kérastase, an exclusive premium brand, the flagship of L'Oréal in the field of hair care. Its image is based on innovation, individualized care and an original three-phase process of application,
- Matrix, an affordable brand designed for the typical consumer, with a strong position in the United States,
- Redken, a premium brand whose image is based upon the country of origin, United States, and New York.

The brand portfolio of L'Oréal professional products division is reinforced by following minor umbrella brands:

- Mizani, an ethnic hair care brand which is designed especially for African-Americans living in the United States, Great Britain, France, Netherlands and South Africa,
- Shu Uemura Art of Hair, a luxury brand with a highly selective distribution, available only in 16 countries in a very limited number of hairdressing salons,
- Pureology, a brand of hair biocosmetics. The company's strategy is to introduce Pureology gradually in Europe under the responsibility of local Redken brand managers (e.g. Finland, Germany, Netherlands etc.)

Due to their French origin, L'Oréal Professionnel and Kérastase dominate the European market (for instance, 20% of the best salons in France use Kérastase products). Kérastase embodies the most recently developed technologies in the field of hair care in Europe. In the field of hair colouring, it is the L'Oréal Professionnel brand which first acquires new technologies.

The product portfolio of the L'Oréal professional products division should meet the needs of all hairdressing salons across the national markets worldwide and cover all market segments. Features of some products, however, slightly overlap and the products compete with each other. This so-called internal competition can become an effective way to achieve a stronger overall position

in relation to external competition.³ The extensive breadth of the portfolio and slight feature overlap also increases the probability that customers who frequently alternate brands (brand-switchers) will remain the company's clients.

All the division's brands are global and therefore there are no specific brand names adaptations as well as no transcription of brand names into other alphabets. Some of the division's minor brands target consumers with certain cultural or ethnic characteristics (Mizani and Shu Uemura Art of Hair).

Each of the brands of professional products division builds its growth on its unique and easy-to-understand identity.

Competition and price positioning

The most important competitors of L'Oréal on the professional products market in the Czech Republic are Wella, Schwarzkopf, Londa and Indola brands. Worldwide, it is especially Schwarzkopf (Henkel) and Wella (Procter&Gamble).

The brands of L'Oréal have the highest price and positioning on the market. Kérastase is positioned as an exclusive brand for the most demanding customers. The second most expensive brand is Redken. Third place is represented by the L'Oréal Professionnel brand. Fourth place belongs to Biolage product line, which, although a part of the portfolio of Matrix, has a different positioning than other products of this umbrella brand. The fifth place is represented by Matrix, an affordable brand for most hairdressing salons.

Matrix

The Matrix brand was founded 1980 by an American hairdresser Arnie Miller. Miller wanted to offer hairdressing salons a clear range of products that would allow them to grow further and, at the same time, express their own talent and creativity. Within a few years, Matrix became the number one brand on the professional hair cosmetics market in the United States and Canada. The brand was overtaken in 1992 by a pharmaceutical company, Bristol-Myers Squibb, from which it was bought by L'Oréal in 2000.

The brand's vision is: "The Matrix allows all professional hairdressers to turn a passion for beauty into personal success". The mission states that Matrix is "a leading and iconic brand of professional hair care with a commitment to partnership, innovation and support activities". The fundamental principles of Matrix are simplicity and fun, reliability, trust, and availability only in hairdressing salons.

Matrix products are designed especially for small and medium-sized hairdressing salons that desire to use affordable professional products. An

³ HARISH R. Brand Architecture and its Application in Strategic Marketing: The Example of L'Oréal. The Icfai University Press, 2008.

advantage of the brand is a strong business background and leading position in the U.S., which is a proof of quality and reliability of products.

Product

The number of product lines under the Matrix umbrella brand is quite high. Product lines are designed in a manner that their application is simple and safe, but comprehensive and with immediate results.

Matrix product lines include hair dyes as well as hair care products (shampoos, conditioners) and styling products. The most famous brand products are Socolor.beauty, Amplify, Sleek.look, Curl Life, and Matrix Men. Slightly apart from these product lines stands Biolage, a brand of natural hair care products, which has a different positioning and figures among the more expensive product line.

The packaging is colourful and attractive and is in conformity with the brand's principles - fun and professionalism. The packaging of Biolage products highlights their natural composition.

Price

Lower cost is one of the characteristics of Matrix products. It is the least expensive brand of L'Oréal professional products division. Therefore, Matrix can achieve a wide distribution.

The price is influenced by the price of the competitors (in particular Schwarzkopf, Wella and Londa). The quality and price of Matrix products is higher than those of Italian brands or Schwarzkopf, but lower than Wella or other brands of L'Oréal.

Distribution

The distribution of Matrix is based on its original objective, which is the availability of products for salons of all sizes and purchasing power. Matrix products are sold through well-established hairdressing wholesalers.

Matrix offers its distributors a business model that allows them to be involved and participate in sales. The role of the distributor lies not only in storage, shipment and sale of Matrix products, but also in providing information, organizing training events and gaining new clients through its network of sales representatives, to whom Matrix pays 75-85% of salaries.

Matrix products are intended exclusively for hairdresser. Selling products to final consumers is prohibited, even under the threat of financial sanctions. For this reason, there is no official online sales channel.

Communication

The communication is based on the typical red color which attracts attention. As Matrix products are available in hairdressing salons only, communication takes primarily the form of push strategy and is targeted at hairdressers. Marginally, it is focused on the end-consumers, particularly through PR and advertising campaigns. Advertising takes the form of

advertisements in fashion magazines and journals for professional stylists, such as Us Weekly or InStyle.

PR is built up in life styles magazines as Elle and Cosmopolitan. Matrix emphasizes its leading position on the U.S. market, as well as overall company values such as protection of the environment or diversity.

The sales promotion is focused on merchadising, i.e. direct presentation of goods in premises of wholesales, and on providing samples to hairdressers. Matrix also organizes training programs and events for hairdressers. The biggest event of this kind is the Matrix Global Academy in New York, designed for hairdressers from around the world.

Personal selling through sales representatives plays an irreplaceable role in the communications mix of Matrix. The task of the sales representatives is to present and explain the advantages of Matrix products.

The website of Matrix is aimed at professional hairdressers. Among others, the pages contain offers of training courses and advices about the application of products to various types of hair, about hair colouring and styling, etc. The pages also contain a set of professional hair care and colour videos, Matrix CRAFT TV. Matrix is established in social networks like Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Flickr.

Redken

Redken is a premium and relatively expensive brand of the L'Oréal professional products division. The brand was founded in 1960 by a model Paula Kent and her hairdresser Jheri Redding. The brand name comes from the initials of the two family names (Redding and Kent). Redken builds its image on a scientific approach to beauty and its slogan is "Beauty through science". Redken gradually gained a strong position on the U.S. market and later on in other countries. In 1993 it was bought by L'Oréal. The company has thus extended the portfolio of its professional products division and expanded its scope to the strategic U.S. market.

After an earthquake in 1994, the seat of Redken has moved from Los Angeles to its original location on Fifth Avenue in New York, which is sometimes presented as a part of the brand's name (Redken 5th Avenue NYC).

The fundamental values of Redken are fashion, science and inspiration. Its mission is to help hairdressers to "learn better, earn better and live better".

Product

Redken offers a comprehensive portfolio of hair care products. It contains hair colouring products such as Color Fusion or Shades EQ and decolourizers Up to 7 and Lift 5/15. Hair care products line covers the needs of all types of hair. "Prescribing" by the hair stylist is based on a diagnosis of hair. For instance, All Soft products are designed for dry/brittle hair, Color Extend is designed for coloured hair, Extreme for hair spoiled due to excessive lightening,

waving or mechanical damage as a result of brushing. Intensive care treatment Redken Chemistry is a specific feature and competitive advantage of the brand. Redken responds to the growing segment of men's cosmetics and offers a line of professional hair care products for men called Redken For Men. The portfolio of Redken also contains styling products such as Rewind 06, Quick Dry 18, 10 and Gutsy Rough Paste 12 (world's best-selling product of Redken).

Redken products are built on three fundamental principles: acidic pH, protein and water. They have a high-tech positioning.

Hair care products are delivered in coloured packages with a typical shape. Colour coding allows an easier understanding and recognition of product lines. Packaging design of styling products (hair sprays, gels, etc.) is silver. Silver color should give these products an industrial tinge, the large numbers on the packaging shall reflect the energy and rhythm of New York and also indicate the degree of fixation that each product provides. Packaging of Redken for Men has a different shape and is decorated in dark gray, while individual products are distinguished by particular color headline. The packaging therefore primarily points out that it is a product for men.

Price

Redken is a high-tech brand and therefore has a premium positioning and the prices are relatively high. Technologically advanced products have a higher price, while basic hair care products (shampoos, conditioners) are more affordable.

Pricing strategy is not completely standardized. For example, in the Czech Republic, Redken has been implementing the price skimming strategy, but along with the development of Internet and growing consumer awareness, it is not maintainable in long term. For this reason, Redken has - particularly within the European Union - a problem of parallel imports. For example, the price of some products in Germany, Austria and especially in the U.S., is lower than in the Czech Republic, resulting in the so-called gray import of these products to the Czech Republic.

Distribution

Redken products are intended solely for hairdressing salons. Its world-wide distribution is based on sales representatives, which is the same case as for L'Oréal Professionnel and Kérastase brands. In some countries, such as the Czech Republic, however, Redken does not use agents. The reason is that L'Oréal took over Redken from a local distributor, which operated on a different principle. There is no official online sales of Redken products.

Distribution of Redken is presented as a rather selective one. In addition to hairdressing salons which are using multiple brands, there are also special salons using only Redken hair care products, which bear the name "5th Avenue". The number of these salons is not high. There is also a special kind of hairdressing salons which are called Redken Loft and cooperate with Redken at

the highest possible level. Loft is a modern concept of salon that fully integrates the core values of Redken. Redken Lofts occur worldwide.

Communication

Redken is trying to build a worldwide image of an exceptional and innovative urban brand which creates new trends and connects top fashion with business. The characteristic color of Redken is black combined with white and various tones of gray.

Redken's communication campaign is strictly global. In case of hairdressing salons, Redken uses the slogan "Get Inspired. Be part of it". This slogan is not translated to national languages as the translation could be rather detrimental. In case of end-customers, Redken uses the slogan "Get Inspired. See your stylist". Contrarily, this phrase is translated into national languages. The brand builds its image on the U.S. origin and the affiliation to L'Oréal is not mentioned.

A strength of Redken on the American market is a close cooperation with fashion magazines (advertising and creation of new collections). Redken also actively participates in New York Fashion Week. The communication is especially targeted at hairdressers, but its purpose is also to maintain brand awareness.

PR of Redken is built through sponsorship of some fashion events and cooperation with world leading designers in fashion shows and presentations of new collections.

Sales promotion of Redken includes a sophisticated merchandising. Redken offers hairdressers a modern promotional equipment, such as special stands, banners and lighting systems. Much attention is devoted to the development of selling skills of hairdressers. Redken offers a range of specialized workshops and e-learning sessions. Hairdressers are given advices about how to distribute promotional materials and products in the hairdressing salon, so that their profits are maximized. Other promotional materials are business cards, postcards, posters, graphic templates of gift vouchers, loyalty cards and e-mails.

Redken's global website is of high quality and contains useful information for both end-users and for hairdressers and stylists. Redken achieves excellent results in terms of web visibility through cooperation with the world's largest search engines.

L'Oréal Professionnel

Along with L'Oréal Paris, L'Oréal Professionnel is one out of the two global brands of L'Oréal which contain the name of the company in their name. Unlike Redken, L'Oréal Professionnel emphasizes the name of parent company and of the home country. L'Oréal Professionnel is a strategic and dominant

brand of the professional products division, dedicated to large salons, a vehicle of technological progress and innovation is the field of hair colouring.

L'Oréal Professionnel builds its image on Paris and everything that it symbolizes - haute couture, emergence of fashion trends, French elegance and style. The brand is based on a continuous collaboration between scientists from the laboratories of L'Oréal, who have expert knowledge, and hairdressers, who are familiar with art, creativity and hair techniques. L'Oréal Professionnel combines technology with fashion.

The basic principles of the brand L'Oréal Professionnel are "creativity, innovation and partnership."

Product

L'Oréal Professionnel products range is very wide and includes all types of hair care and colouring products. L'Oréal Professionnel is trying to completely cover the target segment. As mentioned before, most recent technological innovations in the field of hair colouring are first introduced to the products of L'Oréal Professionnel brand.

The best-known hair colouring products are Majirel, Richesse, Luocolor and Color Supreme. Among hair styling products, we can mention Tecni.art. Hair care products portfolio includes such brands as X-Tense for smooth long hair or Dulcie for long-term shape and volume.

Price

L'Oréal Professionnel has a premium brand positioning and its price is above the market average. In comparison with Kérastase and Redken, it is an affordable brand. Like Redken, L'Oréal Professionnel is confronted with the problems of parallel imports in the Czech republic because of price differentiation on different national markets.

Distribution

Unlike Matrix, L'Oréal Professionnel does not use any system of distributors. However, sales representatives play a key role in its distribution. They are the intermediaries between salons and L'Oréal Professionnel marketing departments. It is necessary to train the representatives and motivate them to be able to deal with the owner of salons in the same spirit. The information flow continues to individual hairdressers who communicate with end-consumers. Consumers can then transmit the information to each other via the aforementioned word-of-mouth.

Like other brands, L'Oréal Professionnel focuses on salons that sell only products of L'Oréal Professionnel. In the case of Redken, these salons were labeled with "5th Avenue", in the case of L'Oréal Professionnel, they carry the name "Expert".

Communication

L'Oréal Professionnel is seeking to gradually build its long-term PR and to occur near fashion centers. Twice a year, L'Oréal Professionnel introduces Color Collections, a collection of fashionable hairstyles and colors, which presents a combination of global fashion trends and technological knowledge. L'Oréal Professionnel also organizes L'Oréal Color Trophy, a public hairdressing contest of talents. New trends of L'Oréal Professionnel are presented in French Inspiration Show, a fashion show which is broadcasted live on the Internet.

The Internet is becoming an increasingly important way of brand communication with hairdressers and end-consumers. L'Oréal Professionnel web pages have a uniform global design and are focused primarily on image building. For this reason, do not contain too many details.

All L'Oréal brands are also trying to exploit the phenomenon of social networks such as Facebook, Twitter and Youtube. The strongest brand in this regard is Redken, which is due to socio-cultural reasons which arise from its American origin. Maintaining brand awareness is also done through the press. Articles about L'Oréal Professionnel appear in magazines like Elle, Vogue, Harpers Bazaar, Dolce Vita, etc.

Kérastase

Kérastase was founded in 1964 by the CEO of L'Oréal, François Dalle. The brand's name comes from a combination of the words Kératine (keratin protein) and Extase (Ecstasy). Kérastase has always been presented as a highly technologically advanced brand that brings hair perfection and splendour. Core values of the brand are top technology, hairdressing expertise and individual care of customers. Kérastase reflects the latest research of L'Oréal laboratories in the field of hair care. An excellent expertise of hairdressers who work with Kérastase products is guaranteed by severe criteria of selection. Kérastase hair care is based on a fully individual approach to every customer. Kérastase products have an excellent reputation and belong to the category of luxury products.

Product

Product policy of Kérastase is based upon the fact that salons do not only sell products themselves, but especially the rituals associated with their application. The application process consists of diagnosis, determination of the most appropriate care, and application through a hair massage. This is an important distinguishing factor and a strength of Kérastase.

Kérastase products fall uniquely under the field of hair care. Throughout the world, a partnership with L'Oréal Professionnel is maintained. L'Oréal Professionnel provides Kérastase salons hair coloring and other services.

Kérastase brand includes eight core product lines. It is Nutritive for dry and sensitized hair, Reflection for protection and long lasting shine, Specifique for special scalp problems, Soleil for hair exposed to sunlight, Noctogenist for tired hair, Nutrients, a supplemental nutrition of hair, Résistance for weakened or damaged hair and Biotic for protection of natural hair.

Price

Kérastase is a luxury brand with a very high positioning, so the price of products is very high. It is the most expensive brand of the professional products division, and one of the most expensive brands at all. For instance, on the Czech market there is only one more expensive brand of hair care, Alterna. High cost is currently one of the possible weaknesses and competitive disadvantages of the brand, as cheaper brands represent a potential threat.

Distribution

The distribution of Kérastase products is highly selective. Kérastase can be distributed only in salons that use L'Oréal Professionnel hair-colouring products (i.e. in the salons "Expert"). Education and training of hairdressers is a crucial aspect, since the hair care is prescribed to customers completely individually. A bad hairdresser could easily damage the reputation the brand, therefore the selection criteria are very strict. Kérastase also uses a network of sales representatives to communicate with the management of hairdressing salons.

The highest level of cooperation with hairdressing salons is represented by the concept of "Kérastase Institute" salons. These are very luxury salons which embody Kérastase core values and positioning.

Communication

Kérastase has a very good image, which is one of the strengths of the brand. As in the case of other brands, the word-of-mouth plays a crucial role. Therefore, Kérastase focuses on merchandising techniques at the point of sale. It provides salons with posters, leaflets and booklets, special racks and wall decorations. Promotional materials use scientific symbols such as molecules. An interesting promotional tool is a special standardized form for hairdressers, on which they establish diagnosis for their customers.

Articles about Kérastase appear in fashion magazines like Marie Claire, Harpers Bazaar, Elle and InStyle. Kérastase also uses opinion leaders such as celebrities and famous hairdressers.

Kérastase website is aimed at both hairdressers and end-consumers. They are visually uniform and translated into many languages, including Czech. However, the quantity of information varies considerably. In the area of Internet communication, there is also the use of several blogs and social networks.

Conclusion

This article deals with the international marketing strategy of L'Oréal professional products division. The authors focused on specificities of the professional products market (B2B2C) and key characteristics of the marketing strategy which a company has to take into account when operating on this market. Subsequently, an analyse of the division's four major brands (Matrix, Redken, L'Oréal Professionnel and Kérastase) marketing mix was carried out.

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