

Press Clip

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The Devil leaves Onida, neighbours green-eyed no more

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After more than two decades, electronics and home appliances maker Onida has decided to do away with the Devil as its mascot. The iconic tagline, 'Neighbour's envy, owner's pride', will also be dropped.

Sriram Krishnamurthy, vice-president, marketing and services, Onida, tells afaqs!, "We've had the Devil for years now. It personified the concept of envy. However, consumers no longer benchmark their neighbours with their choice of appliances. There is a level of individualism that has crept in."

With the Indian markets opening up and numerous players in the home appliances space (particularly television sets), owning a television is no longer a thing of envy, thus making the concept of envy, and the 'Devil', dated.

The history of the 'Devil'



Onida Devil

The 'Devil' and the tagline were conceptualised by Advertising Avenues, with Gopi Kukde handling art and Ashok Roy and Goutam Rakshit on copy and marketing, respectively.

David Whitbread, a model co-ordinator and stylist of the 1980s, played the first Onida Devil, while freelancing for various advertising agencies in Mumbai. Thereafter, actors such as Rajesh Khera, Ashish

Chaudhary and Amir Bashir have played the part.

The Onida account also has seen frequent change of hands. From Advertising Avenues, it moved to Ogilvy, then to Rediffusion and now, McCann Erickson handles the creative duties for the brand.

When contacted, Kukde expresses his disappointment with the development.

"I disagree with Onida. Owning the best will still be an object of envy. Every Tom, Dick and Harry now owns a TV set, but owning the best set is still a big deal. Why does a person show off a Nike or a Ferrari? It is unfortunate because a good insight has been lost," Kukde says.

A nostalgic Kukde adds that in the market then, brands were talking technicalities that people could make little sense of. Onida, in collaboration with JVC, brought a TV set that was actually being sold in Japan and was the best technology at that time.

"We thought that with 'envy', we could reach out to the emotions of people. We wanted the consumer to feel that this is something he should own that would invoke jealousy in the envious neighbour next door. That is how envy was born. The Devil added the third dimension to the idea," says Kukde.

On the choice of Whitbread, he says, "We did not want the Devil to be grotesque but cute and lovable – someone people could take home with them. David had an unusual face and laughter, and added to the madness."

Kukde, after taking a sabbatical from advertising for a decade from 1990-2000, is an advertising consultant now.

The road ahead

The new campaign will be unveiled on September 15, just ahead of Navratri and the festive season, which is usually the time when consumer durable brands step up their advertising campaigns.



Sriram Krishnamurthy

The campaign will not feature a new mascot but a protagonist whose life and appliances choice will be followed, Krishnamurthy says.

"We will refocus on television. We were losing out on brand image to Korean players. The new campaign will also be in the area of all Onida's products being designed for today's India, catering to contemporary consumers," Krishnamurthy adds.

The brand image will be revamped across all appliances such as air conditioners, microwave ovens and washing machines for consumers who associated Onida with only TV.

The media mix used will involve television extensively, along with print and outdoor media. Onida spent Rs 45-50 crore on advertising last year and pegs its ad spends at Rs 80 crore for the current year. Mindshare will handle the media duties for Onida.

The argument continues...

With the Devil becoming almost synonymous with Onida, the disassociation was bound to spark off a debate. Brand consultants had mixed opinions when contacted by afaqs!.

Nabankur Gupta, founder and chief executive officer, Nobby Brand Architects and Strategic Marketing, agrees with Krishnamurthy on the concept of envy no longer being valid.



Nabankur Gupta

"Onida should have given up the Devil a long time ago. The platform of envy does not apply to owning a TV anymore. I would say it is five-six years too late," he says.

A more stoical view is expressed by Jayanta Sengupta, director, Skills Bridge Consultants. Sengupta says, "The Devil has outlived its usefulness. Any property created by an advertiser is for a purpose. The day any such device outlives its competitive advantage, one must let go of it."



Jayanta Sengupta

On the other hand, much like Kukde, a section still does not subscribe to the redundancy of the Devil.

Jagdeep Kapoor, chairperson and managing director, Samsika Marketing Consultants is of the view that the mascot and the brand were so integrated that it could have been used for much longer.



Jagdeep Kapoor

"Onida, when using the Devil, was a very good property but creating and sustaining a concept are two different things," says Kapoor.

With so many agencies developing the Devil over time, the passion behind the concept has disappeared, he says.

"There was no need to tamper with it but they should have pampered it," Kapoor quips.

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