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Jumeirah Group, UAE

Melodena Stephens Balakrishnan

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Ms Isabelle Estrada, Corporate Communication Manager, Jumeirah Group was wondering how to showcase The Chopard Ladies Floor, Jumeirah Emirates Towers, Dubai. This was an exclusive luxury hotel floor dedicated to women. The concept, which was the first in the Middle East at the time of its launch, was restricted to only one of the potential 60 Jumeirah hotels and resorts and is relatively unknown. Other hotels were introducing ladies only floors and the first mover advantage Jumeirah Emirates Towers had was getting diluted. She has several press briefings scheduled this month. Isabelle wanted to know what communication strategy she should develop for 2010 for generating positive public relations for the floor?

Jumeirah Group

Redefining hospitality

The Jumeirah Group had some of the most luxurious hotels in its portfolio. The company, an indigenous UAE brand, was first formed in 1997 with the explicit aim of becoming a hospitality world leader. In 2002, the Jumeirah Beach Hotel was voted the “Best Foreign Hotel” by readers of the UK national newspaper *The Daily Telegraph*. By then the group had won over 65 awards already. The group had redefined hospitality standards through its innovations. Among its iconic properties was the Burj Al Arab, the world’s most luxurious hotel. Their core essence was to Stay Different™, by delivering exemplary service. In fact, it integrated backward with its own tertiary level academic institution specializing in hospitality tourism, the only one in the region.

In 2004, the Jumeirah Group became a part of Dubai Holding, whose objective was to coordinate strategic growth and development of Dubai’s key companies and projects. Gerald Lawless, CEO, Jumeirah Group said at that time:

We are delighted to be incorporated into Dubai Holding, as this step will offer us new opportunities for growth and development. We look forward to growing our portfolio locally, regionally and internationally. Jumeirah International has already achieved international acclaim and our Hotels have become well recognized symbols of luxury hospitality throughout the whole world [. . .] The Jumeirah brand is now established internationally, and we compete at the very top end of the luxury hospitality market on a global stage. We look forward to taking our management expertise to many of the world’s most important business and leisure destinations.

Jumeirah Group had ambitious plans to expand its current portfolio to 60 properties across the world by 2012.

Stakeholder focus

Jumeirah had been a strong UAE brand contributing to the external face of Dubai. They were proactive in the management of brands and contributed to corporate social responsibility.

Disclaimer. This case is written solely for educational purposes and is not intended to represent successful or unsuccessful managerial decision making. The author/s may have disguised names; financial and other recognizable information to protect confidentiality.

In September 2003, they joined the “Al Tawteen[1]” programme by hiring ten Emiratis as part of the Group’s ongoing commitment to Emiratization in the hospitality and tourism industry. They won numerous awards for service and quality and focused on stakeholder management. In 2006, they invested in a new worldwide payment system to ensure quick processing of travel agent fees. The focus was towards innovations and best practices that add value to their business and key stakeholders.

From the beginning, they always focused on guest relationships. In 2004, they updated their web portal to take into consideration their guest needs and convenience. In 2005, they launched SIRIUS, a guest Recognition and Rewards Programme. That year, they won awards for “New Brand Launch category” for SIRIUS in the 2005 *Gulf Marketing Review – Marketing Effectiveness Awards*. In 2006 they introduced a new podcast called “JCast” to deliver to their guests all around the world the latest news and property videos of Jumeirah. Chief Marketing and Business Innovation Officer of Jumeirah at the time, Bill Walshe stated:

JCasts are part of Jumeirah’s on-going commitment to provide its guests with top quality, cutting-edge service and to provide a creative and convenient way to learn about Dubai. Jumeirah is one of the first luxury groups to introduce this technology into the hospitality industry. We are proud to embrace the latest technology and maintain our core essence to “Stay Different”.

Jumeirah Emirates Towers

A Middle East trend-setter

This hotel, which was launched in 2000, won many awards as Best Business Hotel. At the time of construction, it was the tallest hotel tower in the Middle East, with two towers and 400 rooms. The technology was cutting edge, geared around the business traveller and convenient by being close to the Emirates Tower offices and the Dubai International Financial Centre. Because of the location, higher floors had a spectacular view of the bustling developing city of Dubai. The 51-storey towers, connected by the Emirates Towers Shopping Boulevard, gave a dramatic backdrop to Dubai’s central business district. In 2003 besides other international awards the Jumeirah Emirates Towers won the prestigious Commitment to Quality Award by The Leading Hotels of the World, Ltd, which is only presented to only 11 hotels worldwide. It had occupancy rates of 100 percent especially during peak seasons like the Dubai Shopping Festival, Eid and during international events. Room rates as of January 2010 started from AED 1,475/- for a deluxe king or deluxe twin room.

In 2005, Jumeirah Emirates Tower launched the first women’s only floor in the Middle East. In 2006 they launched Jumeirah’s first male spa, H2O, in Emirates Tower. Doris Greif, General Manager of Jumeirah Emirates Towers described how this concept was specifically developed and designed for male business travellers. “All over the world there is a new generation of body and health-conscious men” (said Greif):

H2O The Male Spa caters not only to men in general but also to businessmen and frequent travellers. Our decision to introduce this unique concept was influenced by the guest mix at Jumeirah Emirates Towers which reflects more than 80 percent male business travellers. This, in addition to their heightened expectations when it comes to innovative relaxation experiences, creates a very attractive niche for innovative products and experiences.

Chopard Ladies Floor

Women as an emerging market segment

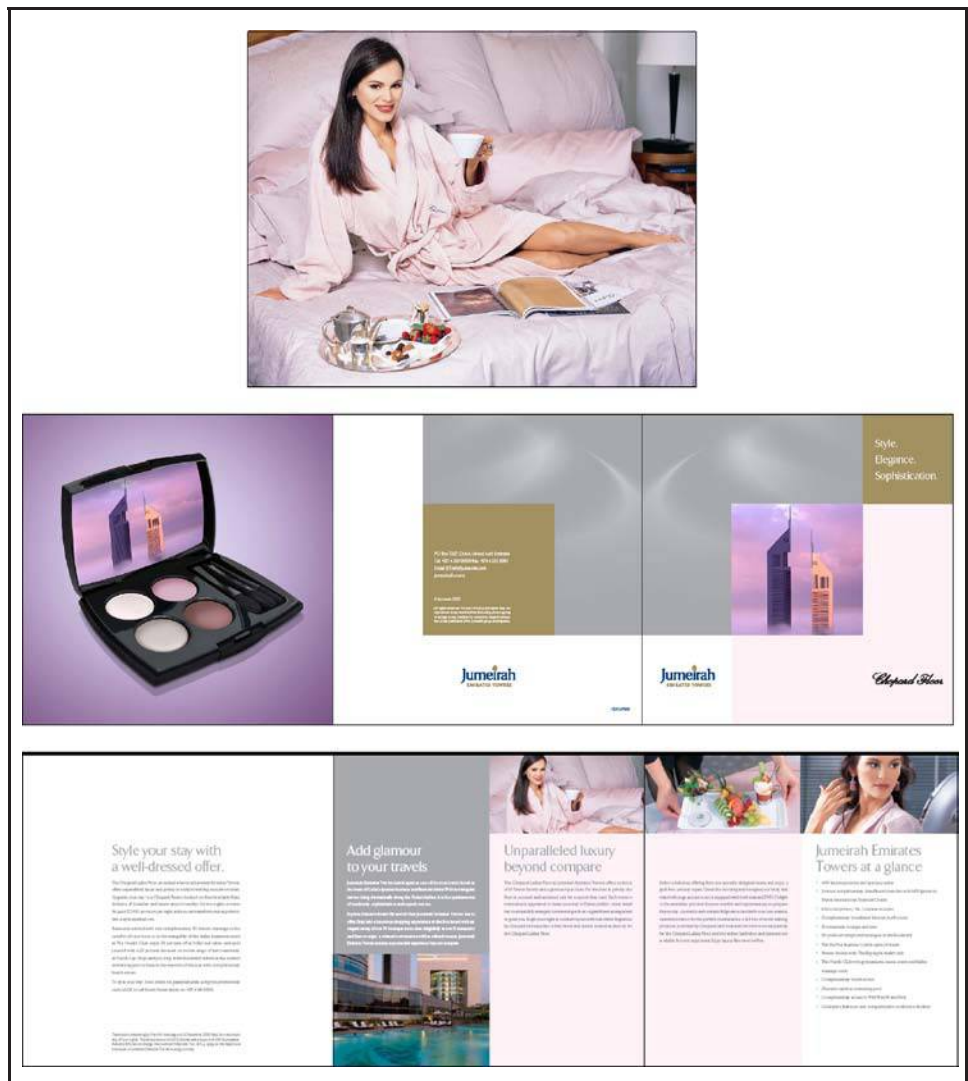
Jumeirah management noticed that there were more women business travellers and that the average spending of women was increasing as per market research statistics. In 2004, Jumeirah trial tested the concept of a ladies floor. In May of 2005, they became the first hotel in the Middle East to officially launch a full floor dedicated to women. This concept was

unique. Only women staff managed this floor. The staff was all female even in traditionally male dominated departments like engineering and security.

The rooms were designed keeping a woman's needs and requirements. The amenities included lavish bathing products, luxurious cosmetics and a cosmetics fridge, extraordinary fragrances, and ladies make-up accessories. The guests to the Chopard Ladies Floor were greeted by original flower arrangements and fragrances such as Casmir, Casran, and Infiniment Chopard. To unwind, the guests were encouraged to use the specialty yoga mat and instructional DVDs available in the rooms, as well as take advantage of the many entertainment DVDs available for viewing. The luxurious bathing experience was enhanced by the Chopard bath line products, the fine quality towels branded by Chopard, and the comfortable terry clothe bathrobe or the classic Jacquard kimono. Even the duvet and bed linens were exclusively woven for the Chopard Ladies Floor at Jumeirah Emirates Towers (Exhibit 1). Mrs. Caroline Gruosi-Scheufele, Co-President of Chopard said:

It is with great pleasure that Chopard is taking part in this "première" of the Chopard Ladies Floor. I think it is important for a woman to take care of herself and her body: wellness can definitely allow you to find that personal and privileged moment.

Exhibit 1 Chopard Ladies Floor brochure picture



She added:

I have to say that the beauty of a jewel or a watch comes also from the person wearing it – we all know that if you feel good about yourself then everything will just look even more beautiful!

At the time of launch, Doris Greif, General Manager of Jumeirah Emirates Towers, was trying to find ways to cater to the needs of the female traveller in a male-dominated Dubai. Greif described how this concept was specifically developed: “Industry reports have shown that the number of female executives travelling alone has increased considerably which creates a very attractive niche for hotels” (said Greif):

We introduced this concept on a trial basis to our guests and the response was tremendous, which certainly indicates there is a need for such a concept within the Middle East.

Our decision to introduce this concept was influenced by the increase in average spending by women travellers on an annual basis, in addition to their heightened expectations when it comes to quality service (added Greif).

Jumeirah has always been committed to high quality service and partnering with a prestigious brand like Chopard is a testament to that standard, as well as an exciting innovation for us.

Historically the women guests of the Chopard Ladies Floor have been from the GCC region or were western business travellers. The occasion for usage was not restricted only for business, but included shopping, “sister outings” and mothers travelling with their children (most of the mother-children segment were from the GCC).

In January of 2010, the room rates for the Chopard Deluxe Kings and Twin rooms matched the regular Deluxe King and Twin room price of AED 1,475. The added advantage was the security (restricted access and staff were all women) and the fact that it was on the 40th floor. The floor was considered popular and the concept gave brand equity in the Middle East where there is a strong cultural emphasis on protecting women. Women guests of the Chopard Ladies Floor favorably commented on the make-up fridge, the yoga mat, the flowers and especially the privacy of the floor.

Communication strategy focus

Traditionally the communication strategy used by the Jumeirah Group and Jumeirah Emirates Towers was to focus on business travellers. There was a shift in 2010 to reposition Jumeirah Emirates Towers as a city hotel because its location gave access to city life, places like the Burj Khalifa, the tallest building in the world and malls like the Dubai Mall, the world’s largest mall. Guests traditionally received communication on Sirius, overall brand messages, promotions and press releases. The Chopard Ladies Floor was not singled out in the any of the recent market communications. Competitive reviews showed that this concept is gaining importance internationally with hotels in GCC, China, Singapore and even western countries in Europe and the USA introducing a ladies’ floor (Exhibit 2). Women were a strong segment, both in potential and for influencing and taking decisions.

Conclusion

Isabelle’s focus

Isabelle wanted to highlight Jumeirah as a trend setter. She wanted to create brand equity among current and potential women guests. This time of the year is very intense and she was running into press meetings every day with local and international journalists. Local journalists tended to focus more on food and beverages and new promotional offers. On the other hand with international and regional journalists, the stories showcasing Jumeirah Emirates Towers are of more interest. For the international press, examples that highlight the distinctiveness of the Middle East seem to get more press response. Isabelle believed that other new hotels were exploiting the Jumeirah ladies floor competitive advantage. She wanted to lay out a broad communication strategy that would extend the Chopard Ladies Floor appeal for 2010. Isabelle wants to know how to approach the local, regional, and international press. She was getting ready to welcome a group of international journalists

Exhibit 2 A snapshot of competitive scenario

Hotel	Location	Competitive advantage	Target
Lady's First design hotel ^a	Zurich, Switzerland	28 bedrooms – boutique hotel. Opened in 2001	By 2003, opened its doors to men too. Only 4th floor is reserved for women as of 2006.
London Hilton in Park Lane ^a	London, UK	Opened in 2003	Sees 10,000 female guest and grows by 5 percent. ladies room is not specified on 2010 communication
Emirates Towers ^b	Dubai, UAE	40th floor, 10 rooms + 1 Apex suite; Chopard Ladies Floor with amenities by Chopard (opening 2005)	Business women
Grand Hotel ^c	Oslo, Norway	13 rooms named and styled after prominent historic women – first in Europe (opened in 2007)	Business women
JW Marriot Tower, Grand Rapids ^d	Michigan, USA	19th floor (opened 2007); five of the 40 suites	Focusing on Saudi women who are worth an estimated SR27 billion and holding up to 35 percent of the Kingdom's bank accounts
Rosewood Corniche in Jeddah ^e	KSA	Opened in 2007 – no current mention on the web site	Business women plus shopping/holiday from Europe, Australia Indonesia and Hong Kong
Naumi Hotel ^f	Singapore	Luxury Boutique hotel, sixth floor with additional security, location (2008)	Shopping/leisure, no mention of the ladies floor in official web site.
The Lotte Seoul ^g	Seoul, South Korea	22nd floor, 21 deluxe rooms + 1 suite, library, duty free coupons (opened 2009)	Business women
Royal Gardenia ^h	Bangalore, India	In 2010, Eva floor with six rooms out of 300 rooms (opened 2010)	
Premier Hotel, Times Square ⁱ	New York, USA	Featured in <i>Oprah's Magazine</i> O., location	Tourism, culture

Notes: According to the 2009 MasterCard Worldwide Index of Women's Advancement which measures the socioeconomic level of women in relation to men, in the Gulf region Kuwait had the highest index score (112.2), followed by Qatar (104.3); and UAE (93.3). Compare this is the Asia/Pacific scores where Australia had the highest index score (96.1), then Thailand (91.5) and New Zealand (90.5). In the Middle East, Lebanon had more women per 100 men perceiving themselves as managers (75), followed by the UAE (74) and Saudi Arabia (64). Another MasterCard survey in 2009, showed the male to female ratio of travellers in the Asia-Pacific region has shifted from 90:10 (men to women) 30 years ago, to around 60:40 (men to women) today moving towards 50:50^k

Sources: ^awww.hotelmanagement-network.com/features/feature420/; ^bwww.ameinfo.com/59369.html; ^cwww.grans.no/en/Hotelrooms-Suites/Ladies-floor; ^d[www.abcnews.go.com/GMA/WomensHealth/story?id=3187958](http://abcnews.go.com/GMA/WomensHealth/story?id=3187958); ^ewww.khaleejtimes.com/DisplayArticleNew.asp?xfile=data/business/2008/January/business_January37.xml§ion=business&col=1; ^fwww.theaustralian.com.au/travel/world/sorry-fellas-this-ones-for-the-ladies/story-fn30266j-1111117443111; ^gwww.4hotellers.com/4hot_nshw.php?mwi=5457; ^hbusiness-standard.com/india/news/itcpercent5Cs-new-hotel-to-have-ladies-only-floor/371995; ⁱwww.millenniumhotelnyc.com/premier-hotel/women-friendly-hotel-rooms.php; ^jwww.ameinfo.com/193075.html; ^kwww.travelweeklyweb.com/article/watch_women_travellers_the_fastest_growing_affluent_segment.html

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Branding,
Consumer behaviour,
Competitive analysis

coming to visit Dubai. They were arriving next week on Sunday[2] at 10.00 am. In fact the whole week would be followed by a series of other press briefings.

Notes

1. "Al Tatween" means nationalization.
2. Weekdays in UAE are from Sunday to Thursday. Weekends are Friday and Saturday.

About the author

Melodena Stephens Balakrishnan is an Associate Professor (Marketing) in the Faculty of Business and Management, University of Wollongong in Dubai. She has lived in India, Taiwan, the USA, and Dubai. She has over six years of corporate experience in marketing prior to her career in academics. Her corporate experience spanned from product management, setting up a new product group, facilitating joint ventures and organizational training. Her areas of research are branding, crisis management, service marketing, and customer relationship management. Her paper on managing brands in crisis won the Best Paper award for the Round Table session at the recent Reputation Institute Annual Conference in 2010. She is the Founder and Chair of the Academy of International Business – Middle East North Africa Chapter. She is a Regional Editor for Emerald's Emerging Markets Case Study Collection. Melodena Stephens Balakrishnan can be contacted at: melodena.balakrishnan@uowdubai.ac.ae