Brand Name: Korean Air

Campaign/Project: *For Life on a Whole New Scale*

Author/Date: Thomas Achilles / 10.17.12

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| What are the communication objectives? | * Emphasize that travelers who fly Korean Air will have the most comfortable experience and attentive service * Raise awareness that they are progressive, offering service to many different countries across the globe * To demonstrate that the viewer can travel the world from a new point of view with Korean Air |
| What are the business objectives? | * To increase profit margins by growing international travel * To increase outbound travel from Korea * To continue its technological and structural developments for Korean Air fleets |
| What metrics will we move? | * Expand awareness of its increasingly global network of destinations through television advertisements * Showcase Korean Air’s dedication to comfort and service through compelling visuals on commercials * Increase operating revenues year-to-year through campaign |
| Who are our audiences (demographics, psychographics)? | * High-paying business travelers who want the luxury of top regional competitors (Yu) * Geodemographics: Three way market segmentation – Global, Asian, European-American * Psychographics: Allocentric – People wanting to make a new discovery and experience different cultures |
| What do they currently think? | * Strong luxury brand that is elegant and chic (2007 campaign) |
| What would we like them to think/why? | * Retain the vision that they are sexy, but apply that to their productive capabilities (2010 campaign) * Because Korean Air wants to showcase their increasing network of destinations while keeping consistent with their previous branding |
| What is our communication style? | * Heavy on visual messaging * Trying to convey a sense of serenity and beauty * Giving viewer the choice to take advantage of what the world has to offer by flying Korean Air |
| Who are our competitors? | * Singapore Airlines * Cathay Pacific |
| How do we differentiate from our competitors? What are the Unique Selling Propositions? | * Advertising is visually stimulating in new creative ways * Making the choice to integrate the campaign globally unlike its competitors |
| What assets are available for use (talent, influencers, images, video, branded media)? | * Channels: Television, print, outdoor, digital * Talent: Thai models for television advertising * Image/video content: Romanticizing city landscapes and playing with their scaling through editing, rendering, and mixing technologies * Diversified production: Seven filming locations, post-production done in three different countries |
| What does success look like? Was it successful? | * 2010: “Asia’s Leading Airline for First Class” – World Travel Awards * 2011: “Best Advertising Campaign among Asian Airlines” – Business Travel Magazine * “Best Airline in Northern Asia” – GT Tested Awards |

One of the most prolific international airlines in terms of advertising as of recent has been Korean Air. Besides being the world’s largest commercial cargo carrier and Asia’s most globally connected airline, it has received a four star rating by Skytrax, an aviation consulting firm that rates the quality of different aircraft carriers (Yu). Within the past decade, Korean Air has devoted itself to becoming more competitive by spending 5.4 billion dollars to improve on its safety features, upgrade its infrastructure, and incorporate new technologies to stay on par with other luxury carriers. In terms of advertising, in 2007, Korean Air launched a global campaign called *The Color of Flight.* Through the use of compelling visuals and high-quality video and audio production, the commercials conveyed a sense of quality. In 2010, Korean Air began phasing out this campaign and introduced a new Transmedia advertising campaign entitled *For Life on a Whole New Scale*. While sticking with their previous visual tactics, the new campaign had a more defined global reach and was integrated across television, print, outdoor, and digital platforms. Moreover, the ad agency HSAd partnered with production companies in Europe, America, and Korea to diversify the marketing approach for the campaign (Global Best Awards).

According to the Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of Korean Air, Cho Yang-Ho, the target audience for the campaign is “high-paying business travelers who want the luxury of top regional competitors” (Yu). This includes consumers who are non-passive “seekers,” who will go out of their way for luxury travel. Also, they typically fall into the category of “entourage” because it targets the business elite. Its main regional competitors that offer luxury travel are Singapore Airlines and Cathay Pacific. Singapore Airlines’ strengths include the fact that it houses a younger fleet and it has strong brand recognition. Cathay Pacific’s strengths play to location because its hubs have great accessibility to China (Yu). To position itself as a superior option, Korean Air outstrips their strengths in two ways. To build brand recognition, Korean Air has made an advertising campaign that is visually compelling in a way that few other airlines are. This strong sense of visual branding differentiates Korean Air from Singapore Airlines. In addition, rather than limiting itself to Asian markets, Korean Air has adjusted its approach to make its campaign global, which exceeds the capacities of Cathay Pacific.

When releasing its campaign advertising through the channel of television, Korean Air used a differentiated marketing strategy by releasing different versions of the commercial to different regions. They created a unified global version, one that would air for the Asian markets, and one for the European and American segments. The global commercial had a more universal appeal because there was no text present in the visuals, removing language barriers from the equation (<http://tinyurl.com/2ahkm6y>). The version that aired in Asian markets included visuals of New York City, Brazil, Paris, London, Los Angeles, Seoul, and New Zealand (<http://tinyurl.com/8sokaz9>). The version that aired for the European-American markets featured visuals of Australia, Vietnam, India, Shanghai, Hong Kong, Seoul, and New Zealand (<http://tinyurl.com/24eawrc>). Thus, the contrast of locations shown between the Asian and European-American markets had the goal of promoting more global tourism. Rather than traveling to places within their immediate region or continent, the target audiences saw promoted locations that are far from their homes. While Korean Air segmented their audiences in terms of Geodemographics, the campaign still had undifferentiated elements. For example, the evocative imagery of flight attendants walking down a runway, a man and a woman flying through clouds on the wings of an aircraft, and the showcasing of Seoul, Korea and Incheon International Airport as the flagship hub location created continuity within their advertising.

The main conduit for Korean Air’s advertising campaign was television. Korean Air’s communication objectives for its television advertising stem from a couple of places. First, Korean Air wanted to emphasize their dedication to “providing travelers the most comfortable environment and attentive service” (Korean Air). This is conveyed through the gorgeous visuals and artistic imagery that permeate the commercials. There is a sense of beauty and serenity in the design that helps create an emotional experience for the viewer. Rather than focusing on the tedious details of upgrading, the ad creates a reality where the viewer gets a taste for the brand and is seduced with opportunities for a cathartic experience. Korean Air has also been improving its safety features and structural design for the benefit of the consumer.

John Jackson, Korean Air’s VP of Marketing for the Americas said that the ad campaign also “reflects the stellar and progressive nature of our services. We offer unparalleled service into Asia from the Americas and our advertising reflects this unique purpose” (Korean Air). This is very evident in the television advertising because they showcase the vast network of service that Korean Air provides. Moreover, its global appeal is fully integrated into the campaigns production. The ad was filmed in seven countries, it features Thai models, was edited in Germany, rendered in Los Angeles, and the sound was mixed in South Africa (Korean Air launches). Because the messaging present in the commercials is mirrored in all of the production aspects, it clearly communicates and authenticates Korean Air’s approach that they are becoming more diverse and globally integrated.

Thirdly the title of the campaign, *For Life on a Whole New Scale*,encapsulated their ultimate objective that the customer can experience all the world has to offer by flying Korean Air. The commercials literally manipulate the scaling of the people compared to the well-known landmarks, making the people seem like giants in comparison. This visual messaging embodies the campaign title *For Life on a Whole New Scale* in communicating that humans have the freedom to travel a world they may not have recognized as having such striking beauty. This plays into their Allocentric approach to psychographics because it urges the viewer to discover something new and to experience different cultures. Ultimately, the theme of giving consumers control of their own choices, while tempting them with sexy imagery plays into the convergence of the television commercials.

The results of the advertising campaign overall were noticeably positive. In 2010, the operating revenue at the end of the second quarter was at a record high for Korean Air, totaling 2,836.4 KRW. This also translated to a 36.7% revenue increase from the year before (Korean Air achieves). In addition, Korean Air was recognized as “Asia’s Leading Airline for First Class” at the World Travel Awards (Korean Air receives). Thus, the immediate effects of the campaign were reflected in the increases in revenue. However by the end of 2011, Korean Air was experiencing revenue losses due to rising oil and jet fuel prices. Although these losses were endured, it is less of a statement about the campaign and more of a testament to the state of the economy. In fact in 2011, Korean Air was ranked by *Business Travel Magazine* as having the best advertising campaign among Asian airlines (Losses mount). Moreover, *Global Traveler Magazine* named Korean Air the “Best Airline in Northern Asia” at its GT Tested Awards (Losses mount). Overall, the bulk of the revenue produced by the campaign was due to increases in international travel and outbound cargo, making it a success financially. The awards Korean Air received for its advertising campaign confirm that it penetrated the market in a new, interesting way that increased brand recognition and associations.

In my opinion, the advertising campaign’s strengths included the distinct imagery that differentiated it from its competition, its globally integrated approach and execution, and the fact that Korean Air continues to change and upgrade its services. While its competitors in the luxury airline industry did have strong branding, Korean Air took a risk and committed to distinctly compelling visuals. The fact that the media was visually captivating and the messaging was progressive and new, set itself apart from the competition and strengthened its brand awareness and associations. Korean Air also made the strong choice to go global and increase its reach, providing service to 105 cities in 35 different countries (Yu). The commercials featured a diverse range of cities that Korean Air operates within, which highlighted its growing global stance. Furthermore, the fact that they integrated their global approach within their advertising *and* their production channels fully solidified the campaign. Simultaneously, while the advertising campaign was attracting the viewers’ attention, Korean Air was putting into action new upgrades for its aircrafts and developing more service options. This commitment to the idea of renewal and renovation is a strength that will keep Korean Air relevant heading into the future.

In my opinion, the advertising campaign encountered the majority of its difficulties due to the depressed economic system that Korea was facing during its time of activation. Moreover, because it took a global stance immediately, the amount of jet fuel and oil needed to run its operations necessarily increased while the prices also increased. Thus, there was an overall net loss in revenue by the end of 2011, but much of this was due to the rising prices of necessary fuels. With an economy in decline and the domestic dollar weakening, even an appealing advertising campaign had difficulty increasing outbound tourism from Korea because few viewers could justify spending money on a trip at that time; and even if the economy was in an upswing, since Korea is a small country with a large airline carrier market, the overall net revenue for outbound tourism would take time to show distinct growth.

One clear misstep that the campaign did have was a messaging error that linked to the promotion of a newly added destination in Nairobi, Kenya. In an online ad promoting the new destination, Korean Air described Kenyans as “indigenous people full of primitive energy,” which immediately sparked controversy on social media sites (Mutzabaugh). While Korean Air was quick to apologize, this choice of words could have hurt its reputation as a global airline that respects the beauty and nature of the world.

If I were to make any suggestions for improvement to the campaign, it would include changing the activation period and time of launch, creating three more versions of the television advertisement to further segment audiences, and to have a stronger social media presence. When Korean Air launched its campaign in 2011, the country was experiencing economic struggles. However, in 2012, the country saw an increase in operating revenue and a general upswing in the economy. Thus, I would have suggested waiting until the economic turmoil subsided to activate the campaign. This way, it could have been more profitable in the long run with more citizens having money for luxury travel upon activation. Furthermore, while the way in which Korean Air broke down its audience by Asian and European-American markets helped to codify messaging, I believe it could have been more specifically targeted. By creating versions aimed solely at American, European, Asian, African, South American, and Australian markets, the campaign strategy would not only become more globally defined, but would appeal to cultural aspects more specifically. Finally, I believe that the advertising campaign could have benefited from a stronger social media presence. While the main channel they used to distribute the advertising was through television, diversifying the amount of platforms could have increased its reach further. By creating buzz on Twitter and Facebook, a bigger portion of the population would be exposed to the advertising, rather than simply relying on catching the eyes of people already watching television or reading print. Thus, by promoting it across more platforms, the campaign would have had better exposure and could have experienced more success.

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