



# LYONS TEA

*What a simple little cartoon character can do!*

## ■ INTRODUCTION

This is a case history of one of the most dominant brands in the Irish market - a product which had already been a top seller in its field for over 20 years.

So who needs greater advertising effectiveness in this type of situation?

*Lyons Tea did - and they got it!*

## ■ MARKETING BACKGROUND

In 1995 Lyons had over 60% share of the tea market. The brand was listed in all major multiples and right down the line to every corner grocery shop in the country. Its advertising was handled by one of the country's most respected agencies.

So what was the problem?

The problem was that the brand had reached the point where it had become static and was in danger of losing market share to its rivals. For example, despite its prominent position in the grocery trade and the allocation of substantial budgets to multi-media advertising, the product was failing to provide any discernible level of brand recall by the public.

Against this background, Lyons decided to review their entire marketing and advertising strategy, and four agencies, including the incumbent, were invited to make presentations. The result was the appointment of a new agency - Brindleys - and a total change of direction for the brand.

## ■ MARKETING STRATEGY

Radical change can be a high-risk move for a brand leader, but the Lyons board was so convinced of the potential of the new proposals that it took a bold decision - and went for it!

In retrospect, the new strategy seems almost obvious and logical but, at the time, the merit of reawakening a legend that

hadn't been seen or heard for almost a dozen years wasn't quite so apparent! Yet the proposition that the Lyons Minstrel and his jingle should be made central to future marketing and advertising established an immediate empathy between client and agency.

To put the new strategy in perspective, it's only fair to say that the marketing and advertising for Lyons in the preceding years were of a very professional nature. However, Brindleys felt that something extra was needed, that professionalism wasn't enough, that the brand needed a unique impetus to put it back into the minds and hearts of the Irish public.

The Minstrel was on his way back!

Tea is a unique product in that it commands huge brand loyalty which can only be shifted very gradually. The appeal of the product is to the taste and the heart more than to the mind and reason.

With Lyons, the agency felt that it was very important in planning future strategy, to take full cognisance of the product's history and special position in the public memory.

## ■ ADVERTISING OBJECTIVES

The decision to bring back the Minstrel and his jingle was only the starting point. Infusing these advertising icons with the warmth and soul to win over the public in the nineties was the next major task. If the Minstrel was to be the symbol for the future of Lyons marketing, packaging, merchandising and advertising - he had to be worthy of the role!

In setting targets for the new campaign, it was understood that the level of brand domination that Lyons already enjoyed would make it unrealistic to aim for a significant increase in market share. What was required of the new campaign was to reassert Lyons position against the introduction of new high-profile products

Category 2  
Bronze Award

Brindley  
Advertising

Michael McCabe  
Peter Evans  
Berenice Brindley

*“In all my experience and in the many years of great popularity of the brand this type of reaction was totally unprecedented!”*

*Paddy Duggan,  
Sales Director,  
Lyons*

such as Teteleys, and also improve the public's awareness of the brand.

## ■ EXECUTION

The Minstrel and his jingle had historically played an important role in Lyons advertising but when last used in the early eighties he was still in the form of a black vaudeville dancer hopping about to the well-known jingle!

In the intervening years, advertising for the brand had gone in a totally different direction giving strong, logical reasons for buying the product - quality of leaf selection, expert blending, bigger tea bags, etc. In contrast to this, the objective of the new Minstrel creative concept was to appeal to the heart more than the head!

The Minstrel was redrawn, given a politically-correct profile, a warm friendly face and a happy, benign personality. The music was rewritten to give it an up-to-date 'celtic revival' feeling and the two were put together into a commercial and a campaign which was to have a major advertising impact in 1996.

Of course, the right media mixture was of critical importance in giving the new concept a platform to reach the massive tea-buying audience.

Television provided the ideal medium to bring the new Minstrel into the heart of every Irish home. Lyons had traditionally placed their advertising in high profile TV programmes and this policy was continued. The effect of positioning one of Ireland's leading brands in the leading TV programmes was to have an immediate impact - The Late Late Show, Kenny Live, Glenroe, prestige programmes carrying a prestige brand!

Radio was a less obvious medium for the launch of a new Minstrel figure! Yet the association of Minstrel and music was so quickly established on TV, that by merely playing the music and tapping feet on radio, a mental picture of the Minstrel was immediately conjured up for the listener! The temptation to spread the campaign into other media was resisted on the basis that a big brand should be given big presence wherever it appears.

Lyons media budget in 1996 at just over £530,000 gave them 36% share of advertising voice in the tea market, but this expenditure was still somewhat less than that of their main rival - Barrys.

## ■ RESULTS

The new Lyons campaign broke in January 1996 when the commercial hit the TV screens for the first time. So how did the public respond? Was it a rehash of old hat? How would a generation who'd never seen or heard a Lyons Minstrel advertisement react?

The first positive indicators were spontaneous phone calls and letters from the public to Lyons offering congratulations on the new commercial. As Paddy Duggan, Sales Director of Lyons pointed out "in all my experience and in the many years of great popularity of the brand this type of reaction was totally unprecedented!" A groundswell of public response also emerged in other areas with listeners commenting on the Pat Kenny radio show and favourable mention on the 'Late Late'.

These first positive indicators were to prove accurate. 'Adwatch' - the industry's monitor of public recall of advertising - became aware last February of something unique happening in their research. A new commercial from a home company was pushing the multi-national brands out of the top spots in the recall charts! Neil Douglas of Lansdowne Market Research, who compile and co-ordinate the Adwatch information confessed "We asked our field researchers to go and recheck their figures - the response for Lyons was simply too dramatic to accept without query".

The figures were correct. In its first month of transmission, the new Lyons commercial had leapfrogged over all the top ten regulars - the soaps and detergents; chocolates and confectionery; cough medicines and syrups - right up into second place, giving way only to Guinness, whose TV exposure is obviously supported by massive funding!

The Lyons commercial maintained its



second spot in the recall ranks right up to the end of the first phase of the campaign in April. This extraordinary response is all the more remarkable when considered against the fact that even as a brand leader and multi media advertiser, the last time Lyons made it into the recall charts was in 1993 - and that was in tenth spot.

The prime objectives of the campaign were to reassert the brand's market position and increase active public awareness of it. These were achieved - and in spectacular fashion! The question of increasing market share beyond the existing dominance was seen as an impossibility and yet Lyons Green Label - their main brand - increased by 5% to 66%!

It should be remembered that these results were achieved against a background of increasing competition from home competitors, such as Barrys, Bewleys, etc but also against the launch of Tetleys on the Irish market for the first time!

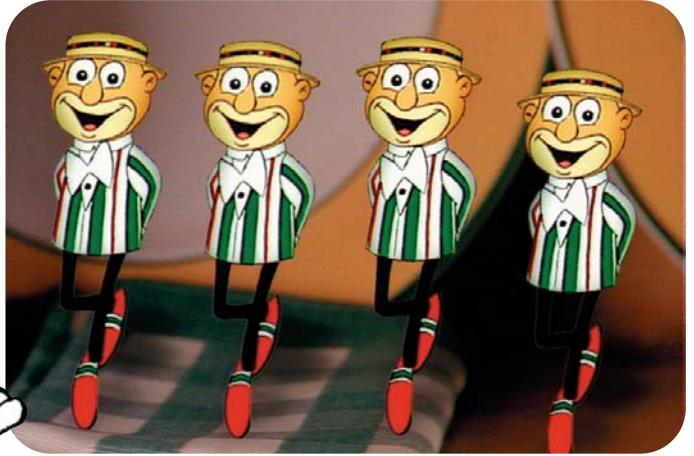
## ■ CONCLUSION

What made the difference for Lyons Tea?

It wasn't a change of products or pricing. It wasn't an increase in retail listing. It wasn't even a different media approach. So what was it?

*Yes - a simple little cartoon character!*

Put together in a commercial that didn't attempt to hardsell, or browbeat, or even explain the logical reasons for buying tea, it simply entertained and charmed the whole country - and established a unique identity and personality for Lyons Tea. In doing this, it achieved increased sales and awareness, created an enormous level of public empathy and established a positive base for the future development of the brand.



# ADWATCH



## JANUARY 1996

POSITION		(PREVIOUS MONTH)
1	Guinness	(=)
2	Lyons Tea	(-)
=3	Coke/Daz	(2/3)
5	Levis	(=)
6	Persil	(8)
7	KitKat	(-)
=8	Ariel/Carlsberg	(-/10)
10	Surf	(9)

## Lyons Minstrels are back on the box

Its not often you see the mega brands being dislodged by home grown advertising (with the exception of Guinness), but this month sees the dramatic appearance of Lyons Tea at No.2. Their recent campaign has been developed by new agency on the brand, Brindley, and has clearly struck a cord with consumers.

The TV advert features the old favourite, The Dancing Black and White Minstrel. This little animation (now politically correct) jumps out of a cup and dances, with his troop, to traditional Irish Music. Mum is there too, serene in her Habitat kitchen with its wooden dresser, copper kettle, fresh tomatoes and smiling daughter. There is also an obvious reference to Riverdance as the camera pans longingly over the Minstrels' dancing feet. Flatly where are ya? (Oh yeah, Mitchelstown)

According to Michael McCabe, of Brindley Advertising, their intention from the word go was to build on historical brand "material". This

appears to have paid off in terms of consumer recall as shown here and apparently the telephone lines have been humming over in Lyons with 'grateful consumers' ever since. I'm told one even wrote into Joe Duffy with a personal endorsement for the ad.

It seems there are some brand envoys that never die. They have a relevance and meaning all of their own. Who would deny the Cookstown sizzle, Fido, Danny Baker or Lyons Minstrels from a place in our hearts?



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