Successful Branding: Imabari Towel

Extract from presentation by
Imabari Towel Industrial Association

TSUDA Shingo
Deputy Director
International Cooperation Division
Japan Patent Office (JPO)
Imabari Towel

Photo: Imabari Towel Industrial Association
Motifs from Nature

Colors symbolizing Imabari Towel: “Red” ❙ “Blue” ❙ “White”
Designed by a famed Creative Director

Mr. SATO Kashiwa
Imabari City

- "City of Towel and Shipbuilding"
- Population: 161,000 (2018)
- Area: 419 km²

- Total shipment value of manufactured goods: 857,200 million yen (2016)
  - Transport equipment industry: 294,800 million yen
  - Textile industry: 47,800 million yen

Source: Census of manufactures (2017)
Imabari City

- Imabari City is a grand center of towel production of near 200 factories.

- Its towel industry has a long history of 120 years.

- Surrounded by a beautiful nature of Seto Inland Sea, the warm climate and the abundant water resources nurtured the towel industry.

- Abundant underground water of Sojagawa River is soft water suitable for towel-making.
Imabari Towel Industrial Association

- Founded in 1952
- Annual revenue 678 million yen (2018)
- Member companies 104 (2019)
- Number of employees 2,543 (2019)
- Annual production 10,768 tons (2019)

- Education about towel-making
- Collection and dissemination of information about towel-making
- Survey and research about towel-making
- Joint procurement
- Promotion of Imabari Towel Brand
In the 90s and 2000s, Imabari’s towel industry was threatened by an upsurge in imported towels.

In 1976, the domestic market share of imported towels was mere 6.4%. It was still 13.4% in 1991. By 2006, it soared up to 79.4%.

Imabari Towel was revitalized as a regional brand by Imabari Towel Recovery Project. The project started in 2006.

The project was led by Imabari Towel Industrial Association and guided by a famed creative director Mr. SATO Kashiwa.
Outcomes of branding

n 28% increase of annual production (2016 in comparison with 2009)
   (Domestic market share increased from 9% to 12%: 3% increase from the bottom.)

n Distinguished from imported towels (elevated price range)

n Increased price negotiation capability

n Improved recruitment

n Increased corporate value -> mergers and acquisitions

n Active capital investment

n Recovery of the whole production region (active capital investment and restored profitability)
Fundamental policy of branding Imabari Towel

n Share the sense of crisis and unite as one.

n Clarify the intrinsic value of Imabari Towel and define it precisely.

n Build a mechanism for communicating the value of Imabari Towel to a wider audience.

n Develop business of the association that yields profits by leveraging the brand strength and conduct promotional activities continuously.
The intrinsic value of Imabari Towel is “safe, secure, and high quality” comfort of use.

Definition of Imabari Towel Brand Product

- Manufactured by a member company
- Weaved and dyed in Imabari production region
- Towel products sewn / processed in Japan
- Passed the association’s own quality standards test including excellent water absorbance (*five-second rule)

* Five-second rule tests whether a towel sinks under the water within 5 seconds when placed on the water surface.
Strategic control of the brand image

- Logo is essential as an “icon” necessary for communication
- Brand manual
- “White towel” as the key product - simple communication strategy
- Promotion by an advertising company
- TV coverage
- Official shop in Tokyo allowing the brand to interact with customers
- Participation in international trade fairs
Continuous promotional activities

- Develop business of the association that yields profits by leveraging the brand strength and conduct promotional activities continuously.

- Joint procurement of tags

- Sales commission for the official shop
Imabari Towel has become well-known in Japan.

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<th>2012</th>
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Regional Collective Trademark “Imabari Towel”

Reg. No. 5060813
Date of registration: July 6, 2007

Brand Logo

Reg. No. 5064795
Date of registration: July 20, 2007

Reg. No. 5341974
Date of registration: July 30, 2010