

Moet & Chandon in the 21st Century

An Article by Liam Tait

The responsibility of power

It was Winston Churchill who in 1943 stood before academics at Harvard and spoke the words " the price of greatness is responsibility " He was of course referring to the United States but these words can be applied to many different scenarios. Churchill was essentially saying that great power brings with it the burden of responsibility.

Moet et Chandon is the most recognised and biggest of the great Champagne houses and it has a market presence in over 120 countries worldwide in outlets that range from traditional wine merchants and supermarkets to corner shops. Moet et Chandons basic cuvee Brut Imperial is the worlds best selling Champagne and quite easily the most widely available Champagne on the market. This breadth of availability combined with the massive production of Brut Imperial means that for many consumers in the world that are just looking for a bottle of Champagne, Brut Imperial is the Champagne of choice.

Having the worlds bes selling and most widely available Champagne in their portfolio certainly gives Moet et Chandon power in the market yet in line with the words of Churchill this power also breeds a level of responsibility, but to who? The credibility of Champagne is key to it's continues success as the world's favourite premium alcoholic beverage. Champagne is seen by many as being a luxury item and a product that conveys a certain perception of ones lifestyle and status, it is also seen as an example of supreme quality and a measure of the highest standard of wine production. In order to keep this reputation it is key that all Champagne is of a certain standard, however, it is massively important that the worlds best selling Champagne conveys this message to the Champagne buying public.

Brut Imperial over the years has become an absolute benchmark of how to showcase the quality and image of Champagne to the world. This role has been carried out in several different spheres but most importantly in two vital areas that ensure that the credibility of Champagne is upheld, marketing and consistency of quality.

Imperial ambition

Champagne is classed by many as being a luxury product and is certainly one of the leading aspirational products available on the market today. Many consumers aspire to a lifestyle that includes the drinking of Champagne as this conveys a perceived social status and a possible measure of success of ones life or career. The marketing of Brut Imperial through advertising and the sponsorship of events certainly exploits the aspirational nature of the product. Advertisements for Brut Imperial have recently shown young fashionable people enjoying Brut Imperial in

a fashionable environment that appears almost exclusive. The message of such advertisements is simple, it positions Brut Imperial as a door into this lifestyle. The lifestyle, no matter how exclusive it may seem is made accessible by Brut Imperial which of course is widely available, in other words this is exclusivity for everyone, by purchasing this Champagne you can be part of this scene.

Moët is also the main sponsor of London fashion week and the fashion business is an area seen by many as one that conveys a certain status and level of success. This association between Champagne and high fashion acts to further increase the status of Champagne as an aspirational product. Other brands that are aspirational include such products as Rolex watches, Aston Martin cars and John Woo shoes, Moët differs from these products in that despite its aspirational status it has more accessibility than these other products offering normal people a taste of this lifestyle at a price that is not so high to be a barrier to most people.

This marketing of Brut Imperial in a fashion that allows people a route into a somewhat exclusive lifestyle also acts to cement the status of Champagne as a luxury product. This is important for Champagne as a whole as it facilitates the association between Champagne and luxury.

On the straight and narrow

The quality of Champagne is certainly one reason behind the price that it demands in the market, but quality must relate to value in order for this price and status to continue. Quality is one thing but consistency is another, this expected level of quality must be sustained to ensure the continued success of Champagne. Moët is a modicum of consistency producing its style of Champagne consistently year after year. This is very important as the consumers of Moët expect and demand a certain level of quality every time they purchase Moët, any deviation from this level would have an adverse affect upon Moët as a company and Brut Imperial as a brand. Brut Imperial itself is made in a style which I would say delivers the expected taste of Champagne in a fashion that is accessible to many people, a slightly cruder term would be that it is a crowd pleaser. Brut Imperial is produced in a light, elegant fashion that is easy to enjoy and appreciate. Although to some people this may not sound like such a great attribute it is this fact that has helped Brut Imperial gain its wide appeal. It can be said that the consumers of Moët know what they are going to get when they purchase a bottle, this consistency of style and quality is a huge positive for the overall reputation of Champagne as a wine region that is able to deliver on quality in a consistent fashion.

The consistency of Moët combined with its appeal as an aspirational product is what over the years has established Brut Imperial as a brand that can be trusted and depended upon.

Beyond Imperial

Brut Imperial can in a sense be seen as the Champagne of choice for those

people who simply want a bottle of Champagne or for those who for a short time want to experience a taste of a lifestyle usually beyond their reach. However it would be wrong to then assume this is all Moët is about, the range of Champagne produced beyond Imperial represent a leap in quality and could be said to be Champagnes for seasoned Champagne drinkers.

For those seeking extra depth and class in their Champagnes there is Moët's range of vintage Champagnes. Both the brut vintage and vintage rose are champagnes of high quality. It is important that Moët produce such Champagnes as they open up a new market for the house. These Champagnes also provide a route for those people who drink Brut Imperial a safe way to expand their experience of Champagne. The brand Moët provides what could be described as a safety net to those people who wish to move beyond Brut Imperial. By the provision of consistency in taste, value and style brands are able to build confidence into the minds of consumers which act to encourage people to expand their horizons and take a leap of faith within the safety net of a brand.

Imperial Vintage displays a balance of depth and richness with all the classic traits of quality champagne, whilst the Rose Vintage has an accentuated red fruit character and full body. These are serious champagnes and a massive step up from Brut Imperial that offer assurance to those who have traded up from Brut Imperial and to those more regular Champagne consumers that are put off by the lightness of touch offered by Brut Imperial.

Pride and prestige

The crowning glory of Moët et Chandon is of course Dom Pérignon, a Champagne that to aspirationalists stands alongside Cristal and to Champagne enthusiasts is an iconic example of the potential of Champagne. Dom Pérignon is the original prestige cuvee and perhaps the most widely recognised despite the challenge faced from the bling effect of Cristal and its association with celebrity. The three most commonly known prestige cuvee champagnes are Dom Pérignon, Krug and Cristal, of these three Dom Pérignon is by far the most accessible simply due to the size of its production. This large production allows Dom Pérignon to be the most widely available prestige cuvee in the same sense that Brut Imperial is the most widely available non vintage cuvee. This of course allows for a huge market presence. The marketing for Dom Pérignon may on the face of it seem a little strange in that in one sense it is like Brut Imperial associated with high fashion and with people of status and success yet on the other hand it is presented in a bottle that echoes the traditional bottle styles of the past. This dual marketing is quite clever as its appeal crosses generations in the market appealing to the new fashionable market dominated by young professionals and also the more traditional market occupied by Champagne aficionados and traditional purists.

Dom Pérignon is certainly one of the highest quality champagnes available on the market, it is undeniably one of the great champagnes. The cuvee is the ultimate display of the pedigree of Moët et Chandon, the fact that a Champagne

house can produce a Champagne of such superior quality in such large amounts is an a tribute to the house itself.

The giant of all giants

Moet in the 21st century is a Champagne house that can be truly said to cover all the facets of the Champagne market. There are of course other houses who also have representation in all sectors of the market, including Veuve Clicquot and Laurent Perrier yet none are comparable to the scale at which Moet achieve this.

This is a champagne house that has mastered both the bottom and top sectors of the Champagne market along with everything in between. This vast array of success and quality on a scale that no other Champagne house can touch is truly staggering and deserving of great credit. Moet has of course got its detractors but so has every other house, the fact remains that Moet is well regarded and respected by many people operating as retailers or consumers in every area of the Champagne market, certainly a giant amongst giants.