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Bratz dolls set to make a strong comeback

Brand new line-up poised to give tough competition to Barbie

By Manoj Nair, Associate Editor

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Alywin Liusie poses with Bratz dolls at Atiq Liusie General Trading in Dubai. He said by the end of 2010, there will be a resurgence of the brand and a considerable demand is expected from the Gulf markets.

Image Credit: Zarina Fernandes/Gulf News

Dubai: Barbie's getting some tough competition... again. Following the resolution of a court case in the US involving its brand ownership, the Bratz dolls are set to make a strong comeback onto the Gulf's retail shelves.

Together with the Moxie Girlz, also owned by the same company, the Bratz dolls are set to give some serious competition to the Barbie marquee. MGA Entertainment, which owns Bratz and Moxie Girlz, together with its local distributor, Atiq Liusie General Trading, are out to get their way.

A brand new line-up of Bratz dolls are to be introduced in the local marketplace in the coming days. "In terms of both pricing strategy and model line-up, we will align with the European market," said Alywin Liusie, CEO at the local firm.

"As for our retail strategy, we will apply locally Bratz's global strategy, ie, being present in

the most important toy stores, adopting a more attractive pricing grid, use visual merchandising tools coupled with marketing activities. Considering the previous high demand, we are confident by the end of 2010, there will be a resurgence of the brand."

It was in 2008 that Bratz had to make an unscheduled exit because of the legal situation in the US. The dispute involved MGA and Mattel, incidentally the name behind Barbie, over ownership of the Bratz identity.

"Bratz was gaining considerable market share both in the Gulf and on the international market scene," Liusie said. "The brand went through rough times in 2008 and 2009."

Now, with a US court ruling in favour of MGA and its paternity over the brand, Liusie is confident a turnaround in the doll's fortunes is just a matter of time, or as soon as the new line-up hits the stores.

"Like in the fashion industry, consumers in the doll industry are always looking for new lines, and with the vacuum created due to the shortage of new and refreshed Bratz lines, we expect huge demand to come through from the market during the holiday season," he said.

But how did the leading toy stores in these markets react to the brand's re-emergence? Liusie said persuasion can work out ways.

"It always requires persuasion and perseverance to convince retailers to get more space onto their prime shelves," Liusie said. "The brand has been very well received due to its equity, earlier performance and high quality."

"A good product with an attractive packaging that addresses the market's needs at the right pricing helps us in getting the space that we require. Today, we have a prominent presence in all key toy stores."

Now, all that's left to do is for the new line-up to actually reach these shores.

Targeting the right group

MGA Entertainment launched Moxie Girlz as a counter to the legal wrangle that Bratz found itself in.

"MGA had adopted a smart strategy during the crisis to offset the loss in sales," said Alywin Liusie of Atiq Liusie General Trading, which holds the rights for all of MGA's brands across the Gulf markets, except for Saudi Arabia. "Moxie Girlz has taken the market by storm with a presence in all key retail outlets, strong sales and by scooping a series of global awards in the toy industry."

To the untrained eye, there may not be much of a difference in appearance between Moxie Girlz and Bratz. But Liusie does not see it that way.

"Moxie Girlz basically targets the slightly younger age group than Bratz," he said. "It inspires creativity through four characters, [while] Bratz are girls with a passion for fashion."