

SUPERBRAND SUPERSTAR

By thinking of themselves not just as air carriers, but as superbrands, airlines can elevate their passenger offer and reap many rewards

Over the past couple of years, we have been talking increasingly about the importance of branding to create consistent, remarkable passenger journeys. European airlines were the first to use design as a differentiation tool, but today these airlines face competition from all corners of the world, especially Asia and the Middle East, where airlines are investing heavily in their cabin experiences. In order to stand out in today's highly competitive market, airlines need to become superbrands.

The concept of a superbrand is something that we see across other industries – automotive in particular – but that has yet to have a noticeable effect on the way the aviation sector operates. Our extensive experience in aviation and diverse portfolio across other industries, including hospitality and transport, has proved a unique tool to enable us to elevate airlines into superbrand territory.

According to Superbrand, a leading organization involved in branding, a superbrand is one that has “established a top reputation in its respective market segment and in the market as a whole. It offers its public substantial tangible or perceived advantages over its competition, which the public (consciously or subconsciously) recognizes and requires.”

That reputation will come from a number of things, including an outstanding



1



Gaining superbrand status reaps rewards in terms of perception and profit

3



4

1. A CLEAN, PRECISE AESTHETIC IN SWISS'S FIRST CLASS SUITES REFLECTS THE AIRLINE'S VALUES

2. EUROPEAN OAK IS USED IN THE PERFORATED PANELS AND SIDE SURFACES OF FIRST CLASS

3. UNITED'S NEW DOMESTIC NARROW-BODY FIRST CLASS SEAT

4. THE UNITED DOMESTIC FIRST CLASS SEAT FEATURES GRANITE COCKTAIL TABLES TO ADD A REAL SENSE OF SOLIDITY AND QUALITY



2

product and unparalleled service. While design today is more readily recognized as a driving force in creating better products, it is also intrinsic to the latter. Design is a tool that, when used from the outset, can enable airlines to deliver a better service.

In recent years PriestmanGoode has established its studio as a center for excellence in aviation design. Based in London, the team includes designers, brand specialists, CMF (color, material and finish) experts and visualizers. To help clients elevate their brands, the studio works in close partnership with their various teams including marketing, engineering, crew and maintenance. Each team has different

needs, but being able to create a product that answers all of them will help the airline deliver a better service and thus establish a top reputation in its market.

On the interiors product front, our dedication to research and development and to creating bespoke products will serve airline clients well. Adopting such products demonstrates to flyers that an airline is willing to continuously invest in order to provide its passengers with the very best experience. Our most recently launched cabin interiors, for instance for Swiss International Airlines (SWISS), Korean Air, Qatar Airways and the new first class seat for United Airlines'

domestic fleet, all include completely bespoke products. Each of these products has been designed to exceed passengers' expectations of their onboard environment, but also to help reflect the airline's own brand and values.

SWISS SUITES

The new first class suites we have designed for SWISS, for instance, include an illuminated Corian cocktail tray. This feature serves a number of purposes. Aesthetically, it adds to the precious feel of the cabin and highlights the attention to detail that embodies the SWISS brand. From a practical point of view, it offers

a place for crew to place drinks for passengers, and that place will be exactly the same each time a drink is served. In business class, water bottle holders and headphone hangers also facilitate a more efficient and consistent service, meaning the crew can always be relied on to deliver outstanding service.

The seat architecture has been designed following a grid-like pattern. The design is inspired by Zurich airport and the flagship SWISS lounge, as well as by Swiss graphic design. Stylistically, the design reinforces the SWISS brand and the country's reputation for order, precision and attention to detail. Importantly, from

a maintenance point of view, the grid-like system enables us to design the seat environment with localized panels, which can be individually removed and replaced if necessary, minimizing time and cost.

UNITED DESIGN

We are also working with United Airlines to overhaul its passenger experience. Interestingly, a recent article on our work in the *Huffington Post* commented on the fact that North American airlines have been slower on the uptake in making design an integral part of their business.

United Airlines stands out as an exception. Over the past couple of years,

Superbrands create a human connection with their customers



5. KOREAN AIR'S B777-300ER FEATURES THE BRAND NEW KOSMO SUITES 2.0

6. THE KOREAN AIR B777-300ER'S STAGGERED BUSINESS SUITES FEATURE 18IN IFE

7. THE PREMIUM LOUNGE ON BOARD QATAR AIRWAYS' A380 IS A REMARKABLE SPACE

we have been working closely with the airline's engineers and marketing experts, looking at their corporate values and then working to integrate them through design solutions to enable them to be seen across every product and service. This means that as well as crew and customer service, which are the most obvious element of brand perception, every single part of traveling with United Airlines – from the seat to the material choices – should reflect the brand's core values.

This means we are able to create consistency across the fleet while optimizing the passenger experience.

NATIONAL CULTURES

As design enables airlines to become superbrands, it is also interesting to note that many reflect not just a corporate culture, but a national one as well. We design for many flag carriers around the world and these airlines offer an opportunity to elevate a country's reputation on the world stage.

Qatar Airways is an outstanding example. Our cabin interiors for the airline's flagship A380 were launched at the end of 2014 and included many industry firsts, both in the materials and the products themselves. This work serves two purposes. On one hand it offers passengers an exceptional onboard experience. Just as importantly, however, it is testament to Qatar Airways' continuous drive to lead the field in innovative cabin interiors. This investment enables the

airline to position itself as forward-thinking and individualistic, both of which are human characteristics that passengers can connect with.

HUMAN TOUCH

Superbrands successfully embody a lifestyle and are effective because they create a human connection with their customers. They understand that they live to serve the consumer. Their role is to demonstrate to passengers that they are a people-centric company, that passengers' needs are continuously being evaluated and products refined to better suit current and future demands. Those that succeed in this area are handsomely rewarded, in no small part thanks to what are often referred to as 'superconsumers'. A recent article in the *Harvard Business Review* talked about the importance of focusing on this group. Airlines must find ways to get customers not just to buy, but to buy into their offer. By appealing to superconsumers, airlines can grow a network of spokespeople for their brand, helping them along the way to becoming a superbrand.

As more airlines invest in their cabin experiences, passengers are looking for something personal. It is no longer just about price, as many consumers will pay a premium if they buy into a company's values. In today's market, design offers the means by which airlines can position themselves ahead of the competition. ✕

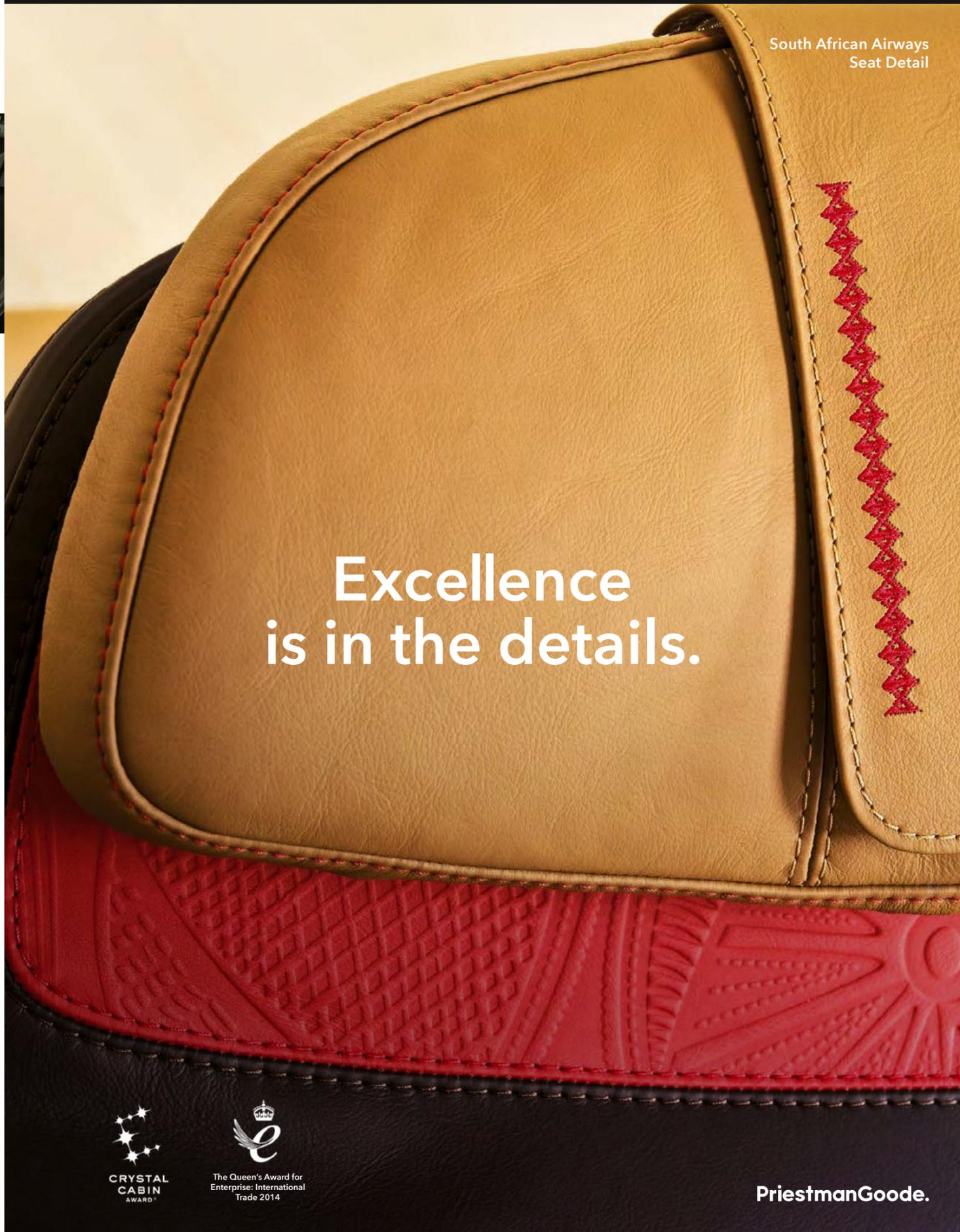
ASIAN CARRIERS

Among Asian airlines, Korean Air is at the forefront of a passenger-centric approach. Over the past year a number of our first and business class cabins have been launched, each of which has been specifically designed for a particular aircraft type. Rather than adapt one design to several aircraft, we have instead designed a family of products, each specifically suited to claiming maximum passenger space for that aircraft type.



FREE READER INQUIRY SERVICE
To request more details from PriestmanGoode, visit www.ukipme.com/info/aim

South African Airways Seat Detail



Excellence is in the details.



PriestmanGoode.