Pyrenex asserts its brand identity through a partnership with the Pic du Midi

By Olivier Guyot - February 16, 2022

The Pyrenex marketing team is hard at work this month as they coordinate photographers, make-up artists and technicians for the brand's next home collection's photoshoot. This special occasion will see the Biarritz ballet dancers posing with the quilts and comforters of the French brand amongst the backdrop of the snowy Pyrenean summits.

The brand asserts its French and mountain brand positioning through a collaboration with the Pic du Midi - Pyrenex

After having shot the campaign for its Fall/Winter 2021-22 apparel collection at an altitude of 2,877 meters at the Pic du Midi de Bigorre, Pyrenex returns to the location for its home accessories line. The Saint-Sever-based brand has announced a partnership with the summit, the ideal setting for showcasing its duck and goose feather and down products. For the past few seasons, Pyrenex has been asserting its values a little more clearly by establishing well-chosen partnerships. After having provided the Eiffel Tower personnel in Paris with light down jackets (a partnership with the emblem of France at an international level which makes sense for a brand whose export activity remains important), the brand has equipped the mountain site's employees with its garments, an opportunity to demonstrate the effectiveness of its down jackets in extreme conditions and to assert its local roots.

A true Pyrenean sanctuary of French and international astronomy since the beginning of the 20th century, the Pic du Midi de Bigorre overlooks the Bagnères valley and the ski resort of La Mongie. The mountain range condenses more than a century of scientific adventures and mountaineering. Today the place welcomes scientists who observe the stars and sun thanks to the different telescopes built over the years and tourists, who use the two cable cars to climb more than 1,000 meters in less than 15 minutes from La Mongie since 2005. The Pyrenex products will help visitors and personnel alike face the wind and cold of the terrain, whatever the season.

“We have been collaborating with brands since 2003, notably with Quiksilver and Vertical. But in our business, we...
have different needs between customers that are on the move and those that are static. This is really the first time we have been able to offer products that meet the needs of all groups. Then, in our desire to move upmarket by welcoming visitors who stay overnight on the site, it made sense to integrate the product offering of comforters and pillows. We are listening and are approaching a nearer proximity to these interests. What is exciting is that Pic du Midi and Pyrenex both share a rich history of more than a hundred years."

Pyrenex is increasingly emphasizing its history, its roots in local know-how, and its made in France production. The harvesting of Anatidae feathers dates back to 1859 for the company, when Abel Crabos would make rounds in the farms and markets of the Landes region. The firm remains directly connected with the food industry and the activity of the South-West of France's breeders.

The company was a supplier for clothing and home equipment brands for a long time up until the late 60's and the development of the Pyrenex label, particularly its ski jackets. Today, the company continues to supply partner brands that use its feathers for high-end products, but the majority of its business comes from its own apparel and home accessories products.

After the difficulties the French apparel industry faced in the 1980s, the brand was relaunched in the 2000s. Edouard Crabos, great grandson of the company's founder, decided to revitalize the label. "We invested in reconnecting with this history, but also worked with designers such as Alexis Mabille and Alexandre Vauthier. This gave the brand a breath of fresh air," recalled the company's president, a specialist in the material, who entrusts the operational side of Pyrenex's business to general manager Eric Bacheré.

Living Heritage Company Label

This industrial component remains at the heart of the brand and was further developed in 2020. Beyond the certifications on its excellence concerning the treatment of down and feathers, the company obtained the label "Entreprise du Patrimoine Vivant" for its mastery of an exceptional know-how linked to the specific material. "The quality of the down we have in the South-West is linked to the fact that the animals are raised in the open air and develop an adapted plumage. It is an exceptional characteristic," said Crabos. "The EPV label can provide additional visibility. It is also a recognition of the quality of the teams' work."

Family business, age-old know-how, French materials... The brand ticks several important boxes that seduce customers of premium products.

In addition, a strong trend for home furnishings and decor was reinforced during the Covid 19 pandemic. "Consumers have rethought their approach to furnishing their interiors, with a more selective search for materials and know-how. This has impacted the entire market," analyzed Crabos. Overall, there has been a keen interest in natural materials, which makes it complicated for the consumer to return to using synthetic products.

Double-digit growth in home products and furnishings sales

Pyrenex has seen double-digit growth in sales of its bedroom products and in its apparel line in 2021. "The durability of our products comes into play," said the president who specified that of the €30 million earned by the brand in 2021, after a growth of about 15%, its apparel sales accounted for 55%.

The brand's expertise on the production allows it to survive in the competitive high-end down jacket market, which they produce in Romania and Tunisia and retail for a starting price of €400 for a classic down jacket and €240 for a light down jacket. The company added other strings to its bow through multiple brand collaborations, such as with Agnès B and British brand Universal Works, and by offering garments made out of recycled materials. The brand has also started manufacturing its products in France since 2020. This has allowed it to meet the retailers' demand of expecting a product positioned higher especially against Moncler, Canada Goose, and other competitors in the luxury down jacket category.

"We have set up production in our Saint-Sever workshop, with a limited offer because we have to optimize our production time on these products, but starting with four models. It's an offer that is growing," explained Crabos. "We started with a few hundred pieces at the beginning and are now producing more than 2,000 pieces per year in our workshop. It gives us satisfaction, and we are gradually increasing our growth, which allows us to recruit and
our workshop. It gives us satisfaction, and we are gradually increasing our growth, which allows us to recruit and train people. I want us to master this production”.

The warm, ultralight, and compact down jackets of this line feature the made in France label and are also signed by the craftsmen who worked on them: an offer that although considered high-end, remains below the threshold of €1,000 and set at a price of €750.

This offer represents about 4% of the brand's activity for the moment, but it allows it to position itself and be known as a “Made in France” brand with a material and a production made in Landes. While it still looks for the right strategy for its summer collections, which already offer light down jackets and windbreakers, Pyrenex has built a strong foundation to attract new customers despite rising international transport costs and consumer expectations. Between the desire for meaning, made in France production, and the great outdoors (symbolized by the Pic du Midi) the Landes-based brand is compiling the right points to keep up the momentum in 2022.

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