

German newspaper "Sueddeutsche Zeitung" 2007-04-18

Fighting for the original

Marianne Friese develops a campaign against product piracy

It starts with age: "I am 44 years old, but I tell Chinese people that I am 45", says Marianne Friese. 44 is an unlucky number for the Chinese, as "si", the Chinese word for "four", represents death. Thus, 45 is the lesser of two evils. Having lived in Beijing for many years, Marianne Friese respects Chinese sensibilities of this kind. From there, she has recently developed the "Pro Original" campaign for the German Engineering Federation (Verband Deutscher Maschinen- und Anlagenbauer – VDMA). With this campaign, manufacturers of industrial equipment are taking joint action against counterfeiters. It's about time too – industry losses to counterfeiters are increasing year by year. According to the VDMA, in 2006 alone more than € 5 billion were lost to counterfeiting.

Other industries are far ahead of the machinery industry when it comes to building awareness of originals and fakes. Time and again, manufacturers of originals arrange to publicly destroy mountains of fake products and to have exhibition stands cleared, all in front of the TV cameras. But things are not so easy with capital goods, as a counterfeited machine can be more difficult to recognize than, say, a fake Adidas t-shirt. More often, a machine needs to be opened up in order to find copyright or trademark violations.

With the campaign, Marianne Friese hopes to encourage buyers of originals whilst deterring counterfeiters and she is promoting this at the Hannover Industrial Fair. Originally, the campaign was only targeted at China, as this is where most counterfeiters are located. However, the global nature of product piracy has led the machine manufacturers to spread the message worldwide. Increasingly, even Chinese manufacturers themselves suffer from the production of cheap fakes by their compatriots. This heightens the pressure on the Government to take action.

The logo accompanying the campaign was developed in conjunction with Chinese designers. Comprising of three C's nested into one another, the logo resembles a fingerprint.

Marianne Friese has lived in Beijing for six years. A qualified industrial engineer, she moved there to reorganize and rebuild the Beijing office for the American PR agency Ketchum. Having spent 13 years at Ketchum, seven of which as the managing director of Ketchum's German subsidiary, she resigned. For around two years she devoted herself to her furniture designs, which have their roots in her life in the US in the late 80s, "having not had the means to satisfy her eccentric tastes".

The furniture business has taken a back seat since Marianne Friese became a self-employed consultant in 2004. Although the company is located in Germany, Marianne Friese spends most of her time at her Beijing office. She speaks Chinese and even owns a number of traditional Chinese slitted dresses, or "qipaos". But that is not what it is about; "I know people who speak the language fluently but have never settled in", says Friese. Flexibility is more important than language.

Marianne Friese consults for medium-sized companies who want to gain a foothold in China, even helping them to find a name suitable for the Chinese market. Last year, she created a name for spirits producer Jägermeister. The result was "Ye Ge", which means "wild type". Marianne Friese knows what attributes are needed to make a good name in Chinese: "It needs to be prosaic and meaningful, and phonetically very close to the original".