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Dr. Nejat F. Eczacıbaşı,
founder of the Eczacıbaşı Group

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Design and Innovation, Hand in Hand: VitrA

The Brand in Brief

The VitrA brand, within the Eczacıbaşı Building Products Group, was first established under the leadership of Dr. Nejat F. Eczacıbaşı with the inauguration of a ceramic factory in Kartal, İstanbul in 1958. Subsequently, in 1966 the VitrA brand was introduced. The management believed in brand communication wholeheartedly and never ceased to include communication investments in their marketing budgets, supporting the brand with ongoing commitment.

VitrA began exporting in 1983 and from then on, exports accounted for an increasingly large portion of their sales. Beginning exports at such an early stage enabled VitrA to increase its production capacity within a short space of time and quickly reach world standards. By 2000 the Eczacıbaşı Building Products Group had already excelled in product quality, distribution and new foreign market entries, and had the biggest production unit in the world dedicated to producing ceramic sanitary products under one roof on such a large scale. This dominance covered the production of not only washbasins and WC pans but an entire range of bathroom products, which were produced by integrating the design element into the process. This was rare in the world, and VitrA decided to focus more on design in order to sustain its global competitiveness, adding extra value to its brand in foreign markets. This competitive edge, created with the help of design, was transferred to its communications, and VitrA became a key name in "bathroom culture" both in Turkey and worldwide, without ever obscuring its land of origin. Following these developments, the Group took major steps towards making VitrA a world-famous ceramic brand, under the leadership of Bülent Eczacıbaşı, Chairman of the Eczacıbaşı Holding Board of Directors.

First of all the German company Engers Keramik GmbH & Co. KG was bought at the end of 2005. Then the Eczacıbaşı Building Products Group signed a share purchase agreement with Villeroy & Boch AG in March 2007 for 51% of its shares and full management control of the production and marketing activities of V & B Fliesen GmbH, Villeroy & Boch's tile operation. VitrA, while moving steadily to become a world brand, has set as its target "to be within the top three producers of European ceramic sanitaryware by 2010." As the Group's founder, Dr. Nejat F. Eczacıbaşı, stated:

Throughout history, progress and advancement have only been achieved by courageous people who have done things in unprecedented ways. Development and progress have always been the product of those insatiable great minds, who have never remained satisfied with what they have previously seen or accomplished.

(Dr. Nejat F. Eczacıbaşı, Kuşaktan Kuşağa, Dr. Nejat F. Eczacıbaşı Vakfı Yayınları, Toplumsal Belgeler Dizisi, 1982, p. 205)

After observing VitrA's accomplishments up to 2007, it would not be wrong to say that it has become a brand that embraces the characteristics that its founder laid down years ago.

About the Eczacıbaşı Group

The Eczacıbaşı Group was founded by Dr. Nejat F. Eczacıbaşı in 1942. At the end of 2007, the Group comprised 40 institutions, of which 12 had international joint ventures and numerous cooperation agreements with leading international companies, producing a total turnover of 3.2 billion USD with an approximate work force of 9,300 (www.eczacibasi.com.tr/toptuluk, website accessed on 1 May 2007). Eczacıbaşı's core business areas are building products, pharmaceuticals and consumer products. Additionally, the Group has been active in finance, information technology and welding technology. Since its early days, the Group's aim has always been to improve the quality of life of Turkish people. It was the Eczacıbaşı Group that produced the first ready-made pharmaceuticals in Turkey in 1952, the first ceramic sanitaryware in 1958, and the first hygienic paper products in 1970. ("Eczacıbaşı" means "head pharmacist" in Turkish, and was the title given to Dr. Süleyman Ferit, the father of Dr. Nejat F. Eczacıbaşı, in 1909 in honor of his long public service. The family acquired this title as their surname when the 1934 Surname Law was passed as part Mustafa K. Atatürk's reforms after the foundation of the Turkish Republic in 1923.)

The Founding of the Kartal Ceramic Factory

The foundations of the Vitra brand were established with the creation of the Kartal Ceramic Factory. In his memoirs, Dr. Nejat F. Eczacıbaşı mentions the Kartal Ceramic Factory as being the initial foundation of the Group, explaining:

I learned that a man called Pastellas, who owned two shops selling glassware and china in the Pera district of İstanbul, was thinking of producing coffee cups. During the wars, all imports had ceased and we were unable to get any coffee cups. I met with Pastellas and I guess we liked each other right away. The collaboration which began with such warm feelings developed quickly, and our partnership continued until 1951. ▶

(Kuşaktan Kuşağa, p. 82).



The opening ceremony for the Eczacıbaşı Ceramic Factory in 1958. From left to right: Mrs. Beyhan Eczacıbaşı, Dr. Nejat F. Eczacıbaşı, Dr. Süleyman Ferit Eczacıbaşı. In front are Beyhan and Nejat Eczacıbaşı's sons Faruk and Bülent Eczacıbaşı.

From Ceramic Factory to Ceramic Sanitaryware

While the Kartal Ceramic Factory initially produced tableware and ceramic figurines, it later switched to the production of sanitaryware (washbasins and WC pans), in parallel with Turkey's economic development and rapid urbanization rate and the growth of the construction industry. At the end of 1950 there was no ceramic sanitaryware production in Turkey. **VitrA** brand's ceramic products began to be used for the first time in 1966. In 1977 the Eczacıbaşı Building Materials Group opened in Bozüyük, equipped with the latest technology of its time. The Artema brand was born in 1983, and at the end of the 1980s modern sanitary fittings were also introduced into the product portfolio. In the 1990s Eczacıbaşı was already producing a wide range of products, from floor ceramics and wall tiles to accessories and all types of products used in bathrooms. A second production line was introduced at the Bozüyük Building Materials Complex, and the plant was totally renovated in 1995. This mega complex, spreading over an area of 530,000 square meters in 2007, has the distinction of being **the world's largest ceramic sanitaryware production plant under one roof.**



The world's largest ceramic factory under one roof: a bird's-eye view of VitrA's Bozüyük factory

The VitrA Brand Within the Eczacıbaşı Group

At 2007 the VitrA brand was spread across three different companies of the Eczacıbaşı Group. These companies are Eczacıbaşı Building Products, VitrA Tiles, and VitrA Bathtubs.

(1) Eczacıbaşı Building Products

Eczacıbaşı's Building Products Company, founded in 1978, produces VitrA branded ceramic sanitaryware (washbasins, WC pans, bidets, shower trays, urinals, etc.), supplementary products (toilet seats, concealed cisterns, etc.), and bathroom furniture such as washbasins units, cabinets, as well as Artema branded bathroom and kitchen faucets and other bathroom accessories.

At 2007 the annual production capacity of Eczacıbaşı Building Products was 5 million ceramic sanitaryware items; 120,000 bathroom furniture modules; 550,000 toilet seats and 150,000 concealed cisterns; 350,000 bathtubs; 3 million Artema branded bathroom and kitchen faucets; and 2.5 million bathroom accessories. Eczacıbaşı Building Products is present in more than 150 showrooms abroad, and its products are sold all over the world through more than 2,000 sales points.

[2] Vitra Tiles

Vitra Tiles began producing ceramic wall and floor tiles with the Vitra brand in 1991 at the Bozüyük plant, as part of a joint venture with Marazzi of Italy. It had an annual production capacity of 25 million square meters in 2007. Vitra presents a wide choice to consumers, with a full range of tile sizes ranging from 1 x 1 cm up to 60 x 120 cm. Like other Vitra products, the tiles also show innovative functionality and unique design as their two major components. As a reflection of this aspiration, Vitra started producing 2.5 x 2.5 cm mosaic tiles for the first time in Turkey in 2002.



The Eczacıbaşı Group's first international manufacturing investment was accomplished by Vitra Tiles in June 1999, with the opening of its fourth production plant in Arklow, Ireland. This also happened to be the first tile production plant in Ireland. Vitra Ireland mostly supplies the British Isles, Central Europe, North America and Canada, exporting more than 60% of its production. It has showrooms in Atlanta (USA), Dublin and Arklow (Ireland), Moscow (Russia) and Cologne (Germany).

Vitra Tiles took a major step forward in its expansion into international markets on December 28, 2005 when it purchased the German ceramic tile manufacturer Engers Keramik. The company was founded in 1911 and had an annual production capacity of 2.3 million square meters. Yet another vital turning point for Vitra Tiles took place on March 26, 2007, when the Eczacıbaşı Group, committed to strengthening its power and presence in international markets, acquired a 51% share of Villeroy & Boch's tile division. Villeroy and Boch was established in 1748 and is the world's oldest and best-known ceramic brand.

(3) Vitra Bathtubs

Vitra Bathtubs, established in 1991, is a leading producer of acrylic bathtubs, shower trays, whirlpools and shower systems, with an annual production capacity of 350,000 bathtubs. With this investment, Eczacıbaşı became the first national company to manufacture acrylic bathtubs and shower trays in Turkey in 1992. Nearly two-thirds of its production is exported, mainly to Germany, the UK, Italy, the CIS, the Middle East and the Far East.

Within Eczacıbaşı Building Products in Turkey, the Vitra brand name is used for bathroom and coated sanitaryware, the Intema brand for kitchens, and Artema for faucets. In international markets, however, the Vitra brand is used for both ceramic sanitaryware and faucets.

1983-95: Production Leads the Way

Most of the executives we interviewed stated that the most critical elements in Vitra's branding efforts were forming the strategy, upgrading production plants to the required level, obtaining a perfect product quality, and assigning top priority to design. Furthermore, they added that Vitra invested continuously in communication and worked with the right professionals. Early in the 1980s Vitra determined as its main strategy "to become number one in its sector in Turkey and to be known among professionals around the world." Starting in 1983 it updated production plants, using robotics in production lines. The result was a decrease in defects, which led to a significant reduction in production costs. Therefore, during the 1983-95 period, Vitra's top priority was to update its production plants to the required levels with the target of producing perfect products. With this aim in mind they also made immense investments in their workforce. In order to create better harmony among the entire workforce, they required all blue-collar workers to have at least a high school education, and on-the-job training was increased to 60 hours per year. These measures were taken because Vitra management was aware that integrated quality could only be achieved if the whole workforce liked their jobs and

understood the entire production process, as opposed to knowing only their own individual tasks (Meral Tamer, "Rahmi Koç, Eczacıbaşı'na Dargın mı?", www.milliyet.com.tr, 19 November 1998, website accessed on 4 March 2007).

Tayfun İndirkaş began working at the Eczacıbaşı Group in 1980 and undertook different roles, becoming Deputy Coordinator and then Coordinator of Eczacıbaşı Building Products from 1985 until August 2006. He told us that the most critical factors in Vitra's branding efforts were product quality, vision and design. After stating that quality was the most indispensable of these factors, he added that Vitra had set itself the target of becoming an international player when it initiated its first exporting endeavor back in the 1980s.

Communications during this period mainly highlighted different products, product attributes and consumer benefits. The advertising campaigns which are included in the following pages are all very good examples of such product-focused advertisements.

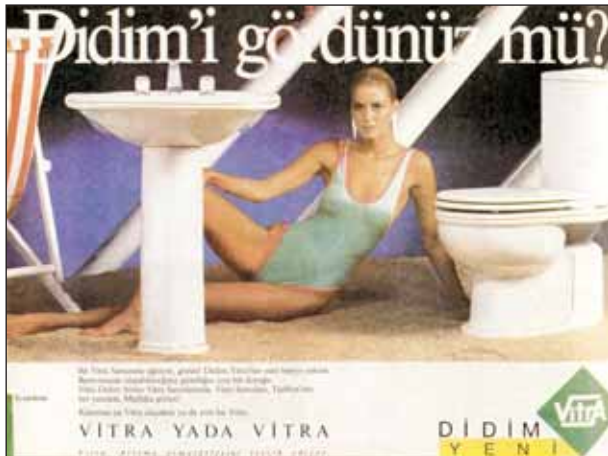
"Have You Seen Didim?"

Bülent Eczacıbaşı started working at Eczacıbaşı in 1974, becoming the Deputy General Manager at Vitra's plant in Kartal during the second half of the 1970s. He met Paul McMillen during this time, while McMillen was Creative Director at Delta Agency. Back in those days Bülent Eczacıbaşı was convinced that advertising could not be done solely by showing the factory; instead, the brand should have something unique to say about itself. With these ideas in mind, they aired a black-and-white TV commercial based on the concept of "cleanliness." McMillen told us that they did not use any copy in the film, instead relying on visual elements such as a wave and a drop. The relationship between McMillen and the Eczacıbaşı family continued and McMillen worked more as the Eczacıbaşı Corporate Advisor. Later, when McMillen founded RPM Agency in 1985, one of his first clients was Vitra. (The agency later became RPM Radar.)

When we asked him the secret of having an efficient client-agency relationship for a period of over twenty years, McMillen answered:

We are responsible to our clients' marketing departments. However, our role should not only be restricted to simply delivering what we are asked for. If you are breathing together with marketing departments, and if you are able to forecast their needs beforehand, coming up with solutions to meet the brand's possible requirements in the near future before the client asks for them, then a collaboration such as ours can last longer.

In fall 1986 a campaign began in which different product designs were named after famous sites in Turkey. In this campaign the new products and their product attributes were being communicated to consumers. For instance, a press ad titled "Have You Seen Didim?" (a historical town in western Turkey) urged consumers to drop by a Vitra dealer to see the new bathroom series from Vitra. The slogan used was "Vitra or Vitra," and this was maintained for quite a while. This same communication was also supported by similar TV commercials.



"Have You Seen Didim?" (RPM Radar)

Paul McMillen mentioned that Vitra was able to create a unique brand characteristic and a different style of consumer communication. He also pointed out that although over the years the brand communication followed the evolution of products and product groups, it remained consistent, adding:

You cannot see zigzags in Vitra's communication.

McMillen emphasized that all over the world, communication with end users of ceramic tiles is rarely done, mainly because ceramic sanitary products are renewed infrequently and even then, the decision-makers in brand choices are professionals rather than consumers. Therefore brand communications mostly target professionals.



Ad targeted at professionals titled "Vitra's New Generation Tile - Vitra-Arkitekt." The ad earned RPM Radar a distinction at the 11th Crystal Apple Awards, a Turkish creative advertising contest.

Bathtub Advertising Begins

Bathtub production started in 1992, as a joint venture with American Standard USA for the Ideal Standard brand. As a result, for a while the bathtub brand used in Turkish was "İdeal Standart." During the 1994-96 period, Terra Nova, the advertising agency for bathtubs, believed that using the Vitra brand for bathtubs would be better. Hulusi Derici, one of the founding partners of Terra Nova and its Creative Director from 1996 onwards, highlighted Terra Nova's contributions to the use of the Vitra brand for bathtubs, adding:

Even today, bathtubs also get their share of the impact of Vitra's brand communication.

(Terra Nova was founded in February 1992 by partners Zafer Kakinç, Ali Tanju and Hulusi Derici. The agency ceased operations in 2003.)

Between 1993 and 1994, Terra Nova created a TV campaign called "You Won't Be Able to Get Out" for Vitra Bathtubs. These films earned the agency a Crystal Apple in the Building and Building Products category at the 6th Crystal Apple Awards, a Turkish creative advertising contest held annually since 1989. In one of the films we see a woman taking a bath. The male voice-over asks, "Do you ever go out?" (In Turkish this is a pun: it could either refer to getting out of the bathtub, or be an invitation to a date.) When the woman replies "No," he says, "Right, I wouldn't either." The film ends with the voice-over line "You won't be able to get out." These films had 5" and 10" cuts. In these commercials, the consumer benefits were given quickly and concisely. Vitra continued to stress product characteristics in its communications throughout the 1990s.



Shots from the "You Won't Be Able to Get Out" TV commercial. Terra Nova received a Crystal Apple in the Building and Building Products category at the 6th Crystal Apple Awards for this ad.

The Transition to Design: 1995 and Beyond

Tayfun İndirkaş told us that Vitra began collaborating with a number of national and international designers after 1995, and benefited greatly from this decision. After this date, Vitra made a concerted effort to develop the existing ties between ceramics and art, since it is not possible to detach either art from design, nor ceramics from art (cf. "Vitra's Support for the Ceramic Arts," later in this case). In an interview, Vitra executives voiced their thoughts on design as follows:

- At the mention of design, first comes ergonomics. Then come functionality, environmental concerns and the cost issue, not to mention the emotional dimension. Vitra gives top priority to emotional aspects and how the product interacts with the end user.

(*"Eczacıbaşı Yapı Gereçleri Genel Müdürü Şadi Burat: Avrupa Tamam, Sıra Dünya Liderliğinde"*, www.yapitr.com, 14 January 2005, website accessed on 4 March 2007) This change in Vitra's route was reflected in its communication strategy, and in the advertising campaigns which are described in the following pages, the design element began to dominate the consumer message.

"We Couldn't Have Left Such Beauty Locked Up in a Museum," from Vitra Tiles magazine. This ad, comprising both TV and magazine versions, received a distinction at the 7th Crystal Apple Awards. (Manajans/JWT)

Böyle bir güzelliği...



Kanuni döneminden, Çin etkileri taşıyan mavi-beyaz desenli kenarsız düz tabak. Yaklaşık 1535-45 yılları arasında yapılmış. Londra, Victoria and Albert Museum koleksiyonlarından.

Vitra keeps its cultural heritage alive through the use of 16th- and 17th-century Ottoman tile motifs. As a result, these extraordinary designs of the past take their place in our modern-day environment.

...sadece müzelerde bırakamazdık.



Vitra, geçmişten gelen bu olağanüstü güzelliği bugünün mekânlarına yansıtmak üzere yepyeni bir seri hazırladı: **İznik Çinileri**... 16. ve 17. yüzyıl çinilerinin temel motiflerinden yararlanılarak "yeniden yaratılan" kalyonlar, balıklar, renk renk bulutlar ve yaprak motifleri, şimdi çağdaş mekânlarla bütünleşecek. İznik Çinilerinin o insana yaşama sevinci

veren renkleri sadece müzelerde değil, evlerin, işyerlerinin, otellerin duvarlarında da yaşayacak.

Vitra İznik Çinileri, fonları, bordürleri ve dekorlarıyla tam bir uyum içinde tasarlanmış birçok farklı koleksiyondan oluşuyor. Bu zarif ve benzersiz koleksiyonları mutlaka görmelisiniz.



VitrA Tiles in 1995: Tracing the Past

VitrA worked with Manajans/JWT for its ceramic sanitaryware and ceramic tile brand between 1991 and 1996. The VitrA Tiles commercial brought a distinction to Manajans/JWT in its subcategory at the 1995 Crystal Apple Awards. A 25" TV commercial was aired in addition to magazine advertisements. The commercial begins in a museum. The camera first moves around, showing porcelain plates with a blue and white design, and then focuses on one specific plate with a galleon motif. (This plate was made during the reign of Ottoman Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent between 1535 and 1545, and has a blue and white motif inspired by the Chinese Ming dynasty. It is now part of the collection of London's Victoria and Albert Museum.) In the next frame, with the help of an animation technique, these galleons come to life and we see them racing against each other in rough and stormy waters. We hear the voice of well-known Turkish theatre actor Cüneyt Türel say, "We couldn't have left such beauty locked up in a museum." Suddenly the rough oceans turn into a tile on a bathroom wall, while the voice-over continues: "You have to see VitrA's İznik tile collection. VitrA Tile Ceramics."

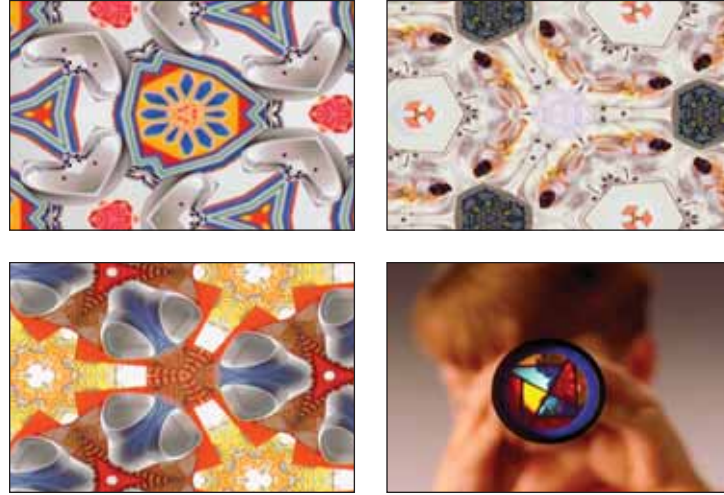
Another VitrA sanitaryware and tile campaign that stressed the design aspect earned Manajans/JWT a distinction at the 7th Crystal Apple Awards in 1995. In this film, a guest invited to a dinner party is very much impressed by her hosts' bathroom. The dolphins on the wall tiles take her into a dream world, and she is only brought back to herself by the knock of another guest wishing to use the bathroom. In this film we also see other VitrA products such as the washbasin and the WC pan. Without stating it directly, VitrA had already started taking the necessary steps towards owning the entire bathroom range. At the end of the film, we once again hear the voice of Cüneyt Türel: "VitrA - for creating a magical atmosphere in your bathroom."



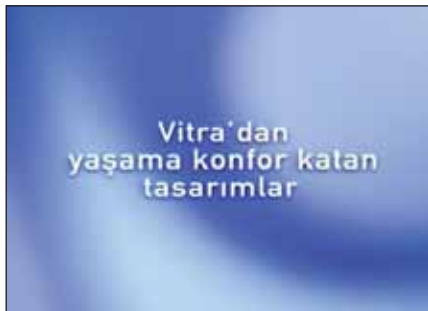
The TV ad "The Dolphin" for VitrA sanitaryware and tiles brought Manajans/JWT another distinction at the 7th Crystal Apple Awards



Design began to be the core concept in Vitra's communication strategy. A 40" TV commercial was created by RPM Radar in 1999 for the Vitra and Artema brands. It began with visuals taken through a kaleidoscope, accompanied by stunning music. The colors and the designs were constantly changing, exhibiting a magnificent dance of vivid colors with intermingling motifs. At the end of the film the voice-over says, "Vitra and Artema offer thousands of ideas and thousands of colors, each with wiser creations." In this film the design element was the only communicated message, and this was only 1999.



The "Kaleidoscope" TVC created for Vitra and Artema, which earned RPM Radar a distinction at the 10th Crystal Apple Awards



Designs from Vitra, delivering extra comfort to life, which earned a distinction at the 12th Crystal Apple Awards. Through such new designs, Vitra began producing toilet flushing systems that helped save water. (RPM Radar)

Taking Eczacıbaşı Building Products into the New Millennium

The Group's target for 2000s is "to be among Europe's top three," as mentioned by Haluk Bayraktar, who started working with Artema brand at Eczacıbaşı Building Products in 1997 and became the Division's General Manager in August 2006. He stated that certain raw materials used in ceramic manufacturing such as clay, kaolin and feldspar came from Turkey. Therefore Vitra's target of becoming a world brand in ceramics was a natural consequence. In addition, one of the reasons that directed the Group towards this goal was its export effort, which began in 1983. This initial window into foreign markets enabled the Group to have a competitive edge internationally, since at that time it was not an easy task to export to Germany, which already had a developed ceramics market. The Eczacıbaşı Group initiated this major step with its Vitra brand back in the 1980s. In order to remain competitive and have a different stand in the marketplace, the brand had to widen its product portfolio. Furthermore, the Group had never considered exporting as simply a short-term solution to sales impediments, and instead built the company's financial structure around an export focus. The total annual worldwide production of ceramic sanitaryware is now 200 million units, of which 50 million are produced by European companies. On the other hand, Turkey, with its annual production of 10 million units, accounts for 20% of Europe's production capacity, and is continually increasing its presence in this sector (Ruhi Sanyer, "Seramiğin 8 Bin Yıllık Öyküsü",

www.radikal.com.tr, 10 June 2002, website accessed on 4 March 2007).

Berna Erbilek, who joined the Eczacıbaşı Group in 1991 and became Marketing Manager of the Eczacıbaşı Building Products Bathroom Group in 1995, stated that Vitra alone accounted for more than half of Turkey's total ceramic exports and that 80% of Vitra's total sales were made in international markets. Although Vitra began by exporting, it soon established its own distribution and sales companies in Western Europe and in the USA. It also started tile production in Ireland. As a result, ties with existing export countries strengthened, leading to partnerships and eventually to foreign direct investments.

Vitra decided to apply Total Quality Management in 1993, and this initiative earned Vitra a KalDer Quality Award in 1998. (KalDer is the Turkish Quality Association, which created the National Quality Award program in Turkey in 1992.) In 2000 Vitra also received an award from EFQM, the European Foundation for Quality Management.

Vitra and International Markets

Eczacıbaşı Building Products accelerated the development of its organizational structure, establishing marketing and sales units in international markets after 1992. Vitra Bad was set up in Germany in 1992 to market products in Central Europe. In the same year, Vitra UK was created for Britain and the British Isles. Furthermore, Vitra USA, established in 1995 for the USA, Canada and South America, and Vitra Bath and Tiles JSC, operating in Russia, are major international marketing and sales companies. As mentioned before, Vitra also had a foreign direct investment in 1999 in Arklow, Ireland, making it Ireland's first tile company.

The Group took a major step on December 28, 2005 in regard to showing its presence in international markets by acquiring the German company Engers Keramik, established in 1911 and with a current annual production capacity of 2.3 million square meters.

Furthermore, March 26, 2007 can be noted as yet another important date in Vitra's history, when the Eczacıbaşı Group purchased 51% of the tile division of Villeroy & Boch with the aim of increasing the Group's power and presence in international markets. (Born in 1748, Villeroy and Boch is the world's oldest known ceramic brand.) With this share agreement, Eczacıbaşı increased its annual tile production capacity to 35 million square meters, raising its market share to 10% in Germany and 5% in Central Europe within the ceramic sanitaryware market. With the new additions, Eczacıbaşı's total number of tile production units reached 8, the workforce rose to 2,500, and net sales reached 300 million Euros.

With these numbers, Eczacıbaşı became Germany's number two in the ceramic tile market. **Bülent Eczacıbaşı**, Chairman of the Board of Directors at Eczacıbaşı Holding since 1995, stated their aim in this partnership at the exchange of contracts ceremony held in İstanbul on March 26, 2007 as follows:

- Considering that Villeroy & Boch has 259 years of experience behind it and is a internationally known brand in the building sector, I believe that this move is the best indicator of how far we have come in international competition, and also of how far we can go from here. ▶

("Eczacıbaşı-Villeroy&Boch Görüşmesi, Evlilikle Noktalandı", www.eczacibasi.com.tr/basinodasi, 21 April 2007, website accessed on 5 May 2007) With this agreement, İntema also undertook the distribution of exported Villeroy & Boch porcelain tableware.

The Road to Becoming a World Brand

In 2000, Vitra set itself the target of becoming an international brand. Although it had marketing and sales forces spread out in many countries around the world, its activities had mostly been sales dominated. This was mainly because having uninterrupted distribution to consumers by using the right distribution chain was of utmost importance in those days. This could only be achieved with the help of long-lasting and sustainable partnerships. Although Vitra's accomplishments in international markets up until 2000 were impressive, they were not sufficient to make it an international brand.

With these thoughts in mind, Vitra's marketing team decided that first and foremost, their business was the bathroom. They took the decision to add the design element to all their existing products and brand attributes. Although Vitra had paid special attention to the issue of original design since 1992, design was positioned right at the core of their business in 2000, when they began collaborating with world-famous national and international designers such as Defne Koz, Ross Lovegrove, NOA, İnci Mutlu, Catherine Delcourt Beaudry, Pilot's Design, Dante Donegani, Giovanni Lauda, Refik Tiniş and Aziz Sarıyer. These designers created special collections exclusively for Vitra under their own names. **Paul McMillen** summarized the Eczacıbaşı Group's role in regard to design as follows:

- Most well-known Turkish designers had some sort of contact with the Group. If you look at the history of Turkish designers with an international reputation, you will see that their paths have intersected with Vitra at some point. ▶

He added that Vitra, with its new and expanding projects, will continue to support national designers and national design.



Some of Vitra's designers. From left to right: Matteo Thun, Ross Lovegrove, İnci Mutlu, Defne Koz, NOA.

"Owning the Entire Bathroom Range"

In addition to trying to strengthen its position in the international arena with new and original designs, Vitra also felt the need to update its communication strategy. When doing this, it did not want to disguise the fact that Vitra was born in Turkey. This decision reflected an element of pride in one's country and its achievements. The fact that ceramics originated 8,000 years ago in Anatolia, and that bathroom culture has evolved from Ottoman palaces to the current day, also coincided very well with Vitra's existing brand values. Furthermore, Turkey held the number one position in the world's ceramic sanitaryware production capacity. Vitra accounted for 50% of that total capacity just by itself. Vitra was actually producing more ceramics, for instance, than the individual productions of France, the UK and Germany. **Berna Erbilek** stated,

☞ Hence we decided to own the entire bathroom range, rather than restricting ourselves to washbasins or WC pans, and to start using the concept of 'bathroom culture' in our communications. ☞

Actually all the numbers justified an ambitious tone in the advertising.

For this campaign specifically, the Ottoman bathroom and hamam (Turkish bath) culture was investigated. It was discovered that a visit to the hamam actually included a series of rituals extending over quite a long period of time during the day. (This may be why there are even special expressions in Turkish such as "hamam recreation.") The ritual begins with getting prepared to go to the hamam, continues with resting on a "göbektaş" (a warm marble platform on which one rests before the bath) for an exfoliating scrub and massage and then resting in lukewarm water, and finally ends with a meal after the bath. In a way, going to the hamam was equivalent to socializing in those days. Furthermore, the bath is a sanctuary where the spirit and the body are united and where the individual is alone by himself or herself, resting and gathering his or her thoughts.

Therefore the Vitra marketing team decided to carry the traditional Turkish bath customs into the present day by supporting traditional bathroom culture with the modern design element. The bathroom was no longer only seen as simply a place to take a shower, but was turned into a more functional living space, answering the changing needs of consumers, with the help of Vitra products. For instance, radio and TV sets were incorporated into the shower, a seating area was included where people could use various cosmetic products after taking a bath, and a small fridge was incorporated in the bathroom area for snacks and drinks. In this new bathroom culture, the bathroom and the home become one and the boundaries between different living areas are blurred.

"Bathroom Culture" and Innovation, Hand in Hand

Haluk Bayraktar, once again stressing the importance of innovation in both product and design, told us,

☞ Our products are seen as innovative, due to their consumer added value, ease of use and environmental friendliness. ☞

For instance, VitraClean technology developed by Vitra enables easy cleaning, while VitraHygiene technology, which can be easily applied to acrylic bathtubs, shower trays, floors and wall tiles, prevents bacteria formation. VitraOxygen eliminates toilet odors from where they originate, before they spread to the bathroom, and also restores hygiene and refreshes the smell of the bathroom. Furthermore, WC pans that flush with just 4.5 litres of water and Aquaseat toilet seats with different functions both help to save water and improve hygiene. Finally, Eczacıbaşı has introduced a number of solutions for the elderly and the physically disabled that make bathing and personal hygiene easier, without sacrificing the aesthetic elements of these products.



At May 2007 the Vitra brand owned 21 patents worldwide, and if patents are counted separately in each country, this number rises to 230. The odorless toilet seat, for example, is patented in 45 countries. Since 2000, within the Eczacıbaşı Group, a series of meetings have been organized every year with the theme of "Creativity and Innovation." This alone signifies the importance assigned to the issue by the corporation. Also, the message that these issues were of utmost importance to the Group was transmitted both to internal and external customers, emphasizing the innovative side of Vitra.

"VitrA, from Turkey"

Bathroom culture was introduced to consumers with the help of Vitra's new and original products (such as the odorless WC pan) and unique design. As Haluk Bayraktar told us:

“We were especially careful to stay away from orientalism. Although orientalism is well liked by international market consumers, it actually does not add any value to the brand. Therefore we focused on the traditional bath culture, carefully demonstrating how we have brought these traditional values into the present day.”

Paul McMillen also stated that ceramics have been an important part of Turkey's history since Çatalhöyük, adding:

“We decided not to pretend that we were a local brand in every market, and instead to say without hesitation, 'VitrA comes from Turkey.' This is mainly because what makes us different is bathroom culture and the Turkish bath. Therefore we accepted the past and combined it with the future.”

Shots from
the TV
commercial
"Hamam"
(Turkish
bath), also
called "A
Different
World"
[RPM Radar]



This communication idea led to the 2005 film "Hamam," which opens with light diffusing through a hamam's dome. We see a woman sitting by herself. She turns her head back to look directly at the camera. At that moment, the environment is transformed into a very modern large bathroom, with a mini pool, bathtub, shower tray, and massage and rest areas. In the last frame we see a modern woman listening to music with headphones on after taking a bath. The words "bathroom culture" are superimposed on the image, followed by a list of the countries where Vitra is sold. This film had no voice-over and was aired in eight different countries. The original music was created by Burhan Öçal.

For this film's music Burhan Öçal made use of "kurna" (bathing basins), water, "takunya" (wooden slippers used in the hamam), and water bowl sounds that are often heard in a Turkish bath. The film's mixing was later done in Switzerland. The aim was to convey the image of "bathroom culture" to consumers with the help of music, recreating the original atmosphere of a Turkish bath.

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A New Logo, a New Positioning

The Eczacıbaşı Group updated its logo in April 2005, replacing the previous one which had been used since 1993. The new logo features a three-dimensional "e" and uses orange and warm gray colors. It was designed by Landor, with the help of modern digital technology.

Eczacıbaşı Group logos. From left to right: the first logo, used in the 1950s; the second logo (1993); the current "three-dimensional" logo (2005).



Berna Erbilek stated that 2006 marked an important turning point for Vitra, as it was the year that Vitra updated its logo in line with the new targets it had set for international markets. The new logo, created by Iain and Andrew Foxhall over a period of six months, was designed to exhibit Vitra's superiority in aesthetics and in technology. RPM and Paul McMillen acted as Vitra's design consultants. The new logo was first used in April 2006 at the launch of Ross Lovegrove's İstanbul Collection. New brand logos followed the updated Group logo, indicating the change and dynamism that was to come.

Vitra logos. From left to right: first logo (1966-79); second logo (1979-90); third logo (1990-2002); fourth logo (2002-2006); current logo.



The Birth of the İstanbul Collection

Alongside its new communication strategy, Vitra further emphasized the importance it gave to design when it started collaborating with world-famous British designer Ross Lovegrove in December 2004. Lovegrove makes use of flowing forms and the latest technology to satisfy the customer, together with a wide range of colors and different materials. His inspiration mainly comes from organic forms and structures, new production techniques, and the customer's emotional response to the products. Haluk Bayraktar mentioned that the design world knew Ross Lovegrove's name very well, and therefore the Lovegrove-Eczacıbaşı cooperation had an extra meaning for the Vitra brand as it got ready to open up to international markets. Different projects that Lovegrove had undertaken and prizes he had won since 2004 were covered in over 200 newspaper and magazine articles, both in Turkey and abroad.



2007 article from Time magazine which mentions the Vitra-Lovegrove cooperation



Press advertisement announcing Ross Lovegrove's İstanbul Collection with its unified design style covering 175 products (RPM Radar)

In the words of **Berna Erbilek**:

- ◊ The timing of our cooperation with Ross Lovegrove was ideal. As Lovegrove had not done any bathroom design prior to our cooperation, he was free to pour all his creativity into the Vitra brand. ◊

This boundless creativity was successfully transformed into production with the expert craftsmanship and professional engineering ability of the Eczacıbaşı Group: producing the blueprints of new designs and then producing them at an industrial scale required a totally different type of expertise.

Lovegrove's İstanbul Collection, comprising more than 100 new pieces, was introduced to sector professionals and the press in London in September 2005. **The collection was presented in Turkey at a later date. Its primary target was to show products which are in total harmony with each other, and which can also offer flexibility according to individual customer needs.** A separate advertising campaign was aired both nationally and internationally, specifically targeted at professionals in the sector.

When we look closely at the Istanbul Collection, we see that the main sources of inspiration are the flow of water, liquidity, the water drop, and the emotional properties of water. With the help of design, one actually feels as if the entire bathroom is unified as one seamless, single wet space. For this collection, Lovegrove studied Ottoman geometries and calligraphy, which are graphic and yet also liquid and organic. He transformed these two-dimensional applications and others that create a sense of flow into surface patterns for printed products. The production of these designs used the slip-cast technique and the unique organic forms that typify Lovegrove's work. Hence the "bathroom culture" theme used by the Vitra brand and its cultural heritage merged with modern bathroom design.



An example of nature-inspired designs created by Ross Lovegrove

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MOD KOLEKSİYONU, DOĞAL OLARAK ROSS LOVEGROVE İMZALI...

Ross Lovegrove sadece banyonuzu değil, dünyanızı doğal kaynaklarımızı da değiştirmek için bir seri yarattı: MOD Koleksiyonu. Sadece gerektiği kadar hammadda ve enerji kullanarak felsefesiyle yaratılan bu seri Vitra'dan doğaya küçük bir teşekkür...

Vitra

Eczacıbaşı

Beyond the İstanbul Collection

Various PR activities were organized at international exhibitions such as the Frankfurt ISH Exhibition, held in March 2007. The events presented Ross Lovegrove's İstanbul Collection together with the new MOD Collection. "MOD" was used as an abbreviation of the word "modest," as MOD minimized the use of materials, reduced water consumption, and used minimalist lines.

In the MOD collection, bathtubs are 12 cm shallower and washbasins are flat and shallow, rather than concave. The result is that to avoid water splashes, users turn on the faucets as little as possible. By forcing consumers to turn down the faucets, the design supports global water conservation efforts (Vahap Munyar, "Jelle Temizlenen, Su İstemeyen Klozetler Geliyor", www.hurriyetemlak.com, 15 March 2007, website accessed on 1 April 2007). MOD was introduced to the market in March 2008.

Pieces in
the MOD
Collection



An example
from the
"Water
Jewels"
Collection
by Matteo
Thun



Similarly another collection, "Water Jewels" by designer Matteo Thun, was also introduced at the ISH in Frankfurt in March 2007. With this collection, Vitra combined its innovative understanding of technology with different materials such as ceramic, wood, marble, solid and glass.



The Istanbul Collection was also introduced in the international press. This press ad, published in France in 2007, announces that Lovegrove has received the red dot prize.

Vitra Communications in 2007 and After

Ross Lovegrove's İstanbul Collection reached 175 pieces in 2007, and its name was being cited among global bathroom collections. Therefore Vitra decided to continue investing in bathrooms and the Turkish bath culture while approaching the issue from a futuristic perspective, by taking traditional values, Ottoman customs and traditions into the future. Vitra planned to continue with the same theme in international markets, following a similar route to the one taken for the İstanbul Collection. The İstanbul Collection was also very well received in countries such as Spain, Japan and the UK.



In line with these targets, Vitra aired the "Lake House" TV commercial in spring 2007. The film introduced the look of a futuristic bathroom in a lake house made of glass. The music was once again composed by Burhan Öçal. As in previous Vitra commercials, visual elements dominated the commercial and there was no copy. The whole aim of the film was to give people the feel of the bathroom of the future.

Shots from
the "Lake
House" TV
commercial
(RPM Radar)



VitrA's Support for the Ceramic Arts

The VitrA Ceramic Arts Studio was established under the leadership of Dr. Nejat F. Eczacıbaşı as early as 1957, with the goal of encouraging ceramic artists. Over the years the studio has welcomed a large number of young and talented Turkish ceramic artists such as Alev Ebüzziya, Candeğer Furtun, Nasip İyem and Füreya Koral. Although the workshop lost its initial dynamism for a short period of time, it was revitalized in 1998. It became a member of the International Academy of Ceramics (IAC) in 2002. The studio has contributed to the development of ceramic arts in Turkey by organizing public exhibitions and hosting master classes, conferences, slide shows and workshops on ceramic art.

Furthermore, in 2000, in line with its goal of supporting ceramic art and enhancing the public's awareness and appreciation of this art form, the VitrA Ceramic Arts Studio developed a series of exhibitions that combined ceramic art with other disciplines. The first exhibition of this series was called "From Canvas to Clay," and aimed to bring ceramics together with painting. This same idea was repeated in 2003 with the "Cartoon Characters on the Streets" exhibition. In this exhibition, different generations of Turkish cartoon characters came to life in the streets of İstanbul, through large-scale ceramic lookalikes. These characters, from Turkish cartoonists Turhan Selçuk, Oğuz Aral, Semih Balcıoğlu, Selçuk Erdem, Latif Demirci and Piyale Madra, surprised pedestrians in İstanbul. At the end of the exhibition, VitrA sold the ceramic works at an auction and the total amount of money raised was donated by VitrA to the Educational Volunteers Foundation of Turkey (TEGV) and the İstanbul Foundation for Culture and Arts (İKSV).

The series continued, and in 2006 the works of writers and ceramic artists came together in an exhibition titled "From the Printed Word to Ceramic." The exhibition featured three-dimensional works inspired by the best-known books of Turkish writers such as Adalet Ağaoğlu, Ayşe Kulin, Nazlı Eray, Orhan Pamuk and Yaşar Kemal, which were exhibited at selected locations in İstanbul. The whole aim was to establish a new link between ceramics and different branches of art, enabling consumers to come across ceramics in a totally different environment.



Yaşar Kemal's "Sultan of the Elephants," Nazlı Eray's "Orpheus" and Orhan Pamuk's "My Name is Red," recreated in ceramic for the "From the Printed Word to Ceramic" exhibition



Ceramic artists working together in the early days of the Vitra Ceramic Arts Studio



The meeting of society and the arts has always been an important issue for the Eczacıbaşı Group. The Group is among the founders of the İstanbul Foundation for Culture and Arts, and is the initiator of the İstanbul Museum of Modern Art. Similar to other Group brands, Vitra, as a brand with close ties to the arts, has always supported cultural and arts activities with its social responsibility. This in itself has played a crucial role in intensifying its brand-individual bond.

The Eczacıbaşı Group is continually adding new projects to the existing social responsibility campaigns that it has undertaken. For instance, the Hygiene Project for Primary Boarding Schools campaign was started in November 2007, in collaboration with the Association in Support of Contemporary Living (ÇYDD), one of Turkey's leading educational NGOs. The campaign aims to improve the physical conditions of state-run boarding schools for primary school children, enabling them to have better and healthier living standards. These schools give primary education to 113,000 students from large families living in the rural parts of Turkey who would otherwise be deprived of any education. As part of the hygiene project, the Eczacıbaşı Group will design 30 new bathrooms for primary boarding schools in eastern Turkey and equipped them with Vitra and Artema products. This project will be carried out in 11 cities in the east of Turkey, including Artvin, Bitlis, Hakkari, Muş and Van. Its target is to continue until 2010 with an increasing number of schools.



Before and after images of a bathroom in a state-run boarding school which was improved with support from the Eczacıbaşı Group



Campaign poster for the Hygiene Project for Primary Boarding Schools, which was launched in November 2007

"Those Who Strive for a Cause Over a Lifetime..."

The founder of the Eczacıbaşı Group, Dr. Nejat F. Eczacıbaşı, stated in his memoirs that throughout his life he was always impressed by individuals who did not change their route in spite of the obstacles and hindrances they encountered, and who continued on their set path with determination and courage. In his words:

Throughout history, progress and advancement have only been achieved by courageous people who have done things in unprecedented ways. Development and progress have always been the product of those insatiable great minds, who have never remained satisfied with what they have previously seen or accomplished."...Usually we see very few people who continue to fight for their ideals in spite of the obstacles that they face. ▶

(Kuşaktan Kuşağa, p. 205).

At 2007, Vitra was actually a living example of what its founder is pointing out in the above paragraph. When we analyze the numerical evidence regarding Vitra's market success, we see that in 2006 its domestic sales reached 42 million Euros, which represents an 11% increase from 2005, and its international sales increased by 4%, reaching 101 million Euros. Eczacıbaşı Building Products has an annual production capacity of 5 million units in ceramic sanitaryware, which is larger than the individual production capacities of Germany, France and the UK. However, production capacity is not the only strength of the Vitra brand: it is this capacity combined with its competence in design that has carried the brand to its current value in today's increasingly competitive environment.

According to a brand awareness and image study undertaken by GfK in 2006 which was conducted among 118 end-users and professionals, Vitra was the "first recalled brand" with a 44% share, ahead of all other ceramic sanitaryware brands. Vitra came first in regard to brand image in 21 attributes out of the 22 statements. Vitra's scores were statistically significant compared to its nearest competitor in attributes such as "presents aesthetic products", "offers a wide range of products", "offers products for the total bathroom", "is an international brand", "assigns a high importance to advertising", "is modern", "values customer satisfaction" and "provides technological products."

Furthermore, Vitra's market share, which was 25% in ceramic sanitaryware in May 2007, rises to as much as 55% among middle and upper segments (Berna Erbilek, "Tasarım ve Markalaşma", paper presented at Brand 2005 Conference, İstanbul, 2005). While Vitra is the leading brand nationwide with these market share values in ceramic sanitaryware, its success in international markets should not be underestimated either. Vitra controls 13% of the ceramic sanitaryware market in Germany, 10% in Australia and New Zealand, 8% in Scandinavia and Israel, 6% in the UK, 3% in the USA and France, and 2% in Italy, all as a result of consistent and stable communication efforts in these markets.

The first awards won by the Vitra brand were for quality. After it decided to switch to Integrated Quality Management at the beginning of the 1990s, as mentioned above, it obtained the KalDer Quality Award in 1988 in the Large Scale Enterprises category. In 2000 it received a Distinction from EFQM (the European Federation of Quality Management) in the Large Scale Enterprises category.

The awards continued to keep coming for Vitra, but switched to design awards. Lovegrove's İstanbul Collection and Defne Koz's İznik Series Tiles were honored by two different awards at the red dot-one of the world's few prestigious design awards. The red dot's main criteria is to be able to merge quality with design, and in 2006 a total of 2,068 applications poured in from 42 different countries. In addition, the İstanbul Collection received the Best Bathroom Award from Wallpaper magazine in 2006, and Lovegrove, as the creator of Vitra MOD Collection, appeared in Time magazine's list of the Best 100 Designers in 2007 ("Vitra Tasarımcısı Time'in 'En İyi 100' Listesinde", Hürriyet, 23 May 2007, p. 19).

It is well known that brands enhance a country's image in international markets. Therefore it is of utmost importance to be able to have brands which make their nationals proud. The fact that Vitra products were used in locations such as the third terminal at Munich Airport, which was opened in 2003; the swimming pools of the Queen Mary II, the world's largest cruise ship; the wet surfaces of Wembley Stadium in the UK; the Hilton Hotel in Paris; and the Arc de Triomphe reinforce this view.

Dr. Nejat F. Eczacıbaşı, addressed the Eczacıbaşı Group's workforce in his memoirs as follows:

“You are a manager in an institution where being honest and honorable are highly valued characteristics. These values are being handed over to you. It will be up to you to take this institution further by being honest, respecting talent, valuing education, considering work as a form of religious practice, and having sound personal relationships. No one should doubt that their personal advancement, both careerwise and financially, will be parallel to the advancement of our institution. Watch out for people who want to advance their careers, who are looking for new areas to work in, who are inclined to business by nature, and consider honesty as a form of self-respect.”

(Kuşaktan Kuşağa, p. 242).

Dr. Erdal Karamercan CEO of the Eczacıbaşı Group, listed Vitra's accomplishments at the ISH Frankfurt Exhibition in 2007:

“We have increased our sales by 40% to 833 million USD over the last two years. Following that important growth, we have continued making investments in our brand on a global scale. We have increased our tile production capacity to 25 million square meters by acquiring the German ceramic producer Engers. We have begun investments in a new factory in Russia. This factory, which will start production in 2008, will enable us to become one of the biggest ceramic producers in the world.”

Similarly, Erdal Karamercan explained in a press conference held in 2007 that the turnover of Eczacıbaşı Building Products Group exceeded that of Eczacıbaşı Pharmaceutical Products and that they have allocated a 450 million USD new investment budget for 2007

(“833 milyon Dolardayız, Yapı Grubu Villeroy & Boch'la Dünya Devi Olacak”, Hürriyet, 9 March 2007, p. 11; Vahap Munyar, “Esdeğer İlaçtaki Büyük Satışa Eczacıbaşı'ndan Karikatürlü Yanıt Geldi”, Hürriyet, 9 March 2007, p. 8; “Villeroy & Boch: ‘Eczacıbaşı'ndan Sağlık Alalım’ Derken, Karoda Çoğunluğu Verdik”, Hürriyet, 27 March 2007, p. 8; Müge Akgün, “Eczacıbaşı'nın Küresel Pazarda Yeni Lokomotifi: Yapı Grubu”, www.referansgazetesi.com.tr, 9 March 2007, website accessed on 1 April 2007).

It is clear that Eczacıbaşı Building Products will lead the way for the Eczacıbaşı Group in its internationalization efforts in 2007.

Haluk Bayraktar, expressed that they, as Eczacıbaşı Building Products, aim to strengthen their position in the Turkish market and continue their leadership in bathroom products. Furthermore, he stressed that Turkey's status as an EU membership candidate will also help the business environment in transparency issues, adding:

“Increased transparency in business and the economy will also attract new international investors to the country. I believe Vitra can only benefit from such an increasingly competitive environment. Our target is to be within the top three companies in our business in Europe, and we see becoming Europe's number one in the not-too-distant future as perfectly possible.”

(While Vitra's turnover was 833 million USD, Europe's number one had a total turnover of 1.5 billion USD.) Vitra's 2007 results placed it as the world's seventh largest company in ceramic sanitaryware. Those who establish the brand, as well as those who make it grow, play a crucial role in the brand's life cycle. All managers, their predecessors and successors who have taken care of the brand over the years in a consistent and continuous way have made Vitra strive for success. Vitra is heading for much greater ideals in the 2000s, after having fulfilled the hopes and aspirations that its founder foresaw and dreamed of for the brand years ago.

June 2007
Updated March 2008

Ceramic Bathroom Products

- washbasins
- undercounter washbasins
- countertop washbasins
- vanity basins
- sinks
- WC pans and bidets
- urinals and separators
- shower trays

Complementary Products

- toilet seats & covers
- concealed cisterns
- flushing systems
- plastic cisterns
- cistern parts
- products for the elderly and the physically disabled

Bathroom Furniture

- washbasin units
- counters
- tall units
- mobile units
- mirrored cupboards
- mirrors

Acrylic Bathroom Products

- bathtubs
- shower trays
- compact systems
- shower systems with massage units
- compact shower units

Tile Products

- ceramic wall tiles
- ceramic floor tiles
- porcelain tiles
- mosaic tiles (porcelain and glass)
- pool tiles
- raised flooring systems
- tiles for outdoor surfaces

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