The Grocer

Focus On: Soft Drinks by Rob Brown

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Feature #1

Soft drinks have been making a splash with all sectors in double-digit growth. This boom is largely down to locked-down Brits turning to larger grocery formats to replace unavailable out-of-home refreshment occasions. It's also been driven by canny innovation. However, growth in retail won't have made up for losses in foodservice. So how has the past year left the major players? Have they managed to overcome the closure of pubs and restaurants and the loss of on-the-go sales by driving greater volumes through the supermarkets? Are Brits drinking more pop than before the pandemic and, if so, why? And what's next for the category now that hospitality is set to reopen and what are its main challenges over the next 12 months?

KEY THEMES

In home versus out of home
With hospitality reopening, some of the soft drinks occasions enjoyed at home over the past year will be lost. How is the category gearing up for this?

Formats
With the loss of on the go during the pandemic, how important have multipacks and larger formats been in bolstering the category and how will this play out over the coming year?

Home-working trends
Which types of soft drinks have resonated with consumers working from home? How is this likely to continue once a home/office hybrid work scenario evolves over the coming months?

Diet drinks
When the sugar tax was introduced three years ago, volume sales of diet carbonated drinks rocketed. How are diet lines shaping up and galvanising soft drinks portfolios?

DTC versus online grocery
Online grocery has shot up during the pandemic. So too did DTC. How has this played out across the category and which brands have been cashing in?

Brand power and loyalty
According to Shopper Intelligence 43% of consumers plan to buy a particular soft drink brand before they visit a store, compared with 28% average across all categories. Given that branded lines account for 70% of sales, what are brands doing to build loyalty with shoppers?

Own label
With household budgets under pressure, how could spending habits impact the category? Is there an opportunity for own label to make gains? And how will this dynamic impact brands' pricing and positioning?

Movers and shakers
Soft drinks brand Gunna hit its £500k crowdfunding target and plans to invest in advertising its online store and NPD. And in March healthy drinks brand Moju secured £2.5m in funding with French dairy giant Danone. How are brands bolstering their businesses with investments and partnerships?

Marketing
At the onset of the pandemic last year some brands froze marketing spend. What impact did this have and what's the plan for 2021?

HFSS and instore promos
Around a third of the category's sales in the mults are sold on promotion. But with HFSS threatening to restrict these how will brands and retailers work together? And will such restrictions divide the fortunes of retailers and foodservice?

Formats
How are multipacks and larger formats faring in 2021? And with lockdown lifting, are impulse single formats gearing up to take off again?

DRS
The controversial DRS will roll out in Scotland next year and in England in 2024 at an estimated cost of £2.2bn to install some 30,000 machines across the UK. What opportunities will the scheme offer brands and retailers in terms of sustainability? How are they gearing up for the roll out?

Innovations
We will profile 12 new products or ranges that have ideally not appeared in The Grocer before. We need launch date, rsp, and a hi-res picture of each and to include 4 reformulations or limited editions

Feature #2 Mixers by Daniel Woolfson daniel.woolfson@thegrocer.co.uk

Drinkers have been mixing it up at home. The entire mixers sector was the best performing area of soft drinks, growing 29.6% in value sales, with both branded and own label flying off shelves as house-bound drinkers replicated the experience of going to the pub or bar in their home. Which lines and brands have done well? And what's in store for the sector once pubs reopen?

KEY THEMES

Brands and best sellers
Which brands and types of mixers have performed best and why? How is likely to evolve?

NPD
Which brands are expanding into mixers and giving the bigger players a run for their money?

Winning combinations
According to Kantar, more shoppers are buying spirits than wine for the first time, as shoppers expanded their alcohol repertoires during lockdown. This has been a big boost for mixers. How are mixers and spirits working together to build their profiles and boost sales?

Formats
How are mixers evolving in terms of formats and packaging and what are the driving forces behind this?

Marketing
What tie-ups and partnerships are mixer brands securing to raise their profiles and extend their reach?

Seltzers
The evolution of seltzer - from fizzy water to posh mixers. Who's drinking them and what's next?

Innovations
We will profile 4 new products or ranges that have ideally not appeared in The Grocer before. We need launch date, rsp, and a hi-res picture of each