

Quality and innovation:

Challenges in the short-life juice industry



“The main challenge affecting the short-life juice industry, is to provide the consumer with a quality product that justifies premium pricing and moves away from the commoditised nature of the category which currently constrains investment in product development and brand support,” says Rob Katzen, MD of The Real Beverage Company, a leading supplier of premium quality short-life fruit juices and ice teas made from a range of delicious fruit pulps and concentrates.

Katzen believes a determined effort by brand owners and retailers to educate the consumer about the product, as well as partnering with major customers to raise the profile and understanding of the category, are the main drivers to grow the industry. However, chilled distribution remains a significant cost component and a major obstacle to developing a national short-life juice franchise.

The focus

The focus for newcomers should be on quality – not price. Maintaining the reputation and image of the product and brand are paramount. In this regard dealing with short-life products and managing expired and short-dated stock, is vital so as not to compromise the consumer’s impression and experience of the product. Customer complaints or queries should be documented and dealt with expediently; a consumer care-line is often the most effective route.

Practical challenges

Another major challenge centres on product labelling, as South Africa adheres to strict legislation. With the demands of a large industry, obtaining labelling approval can sometimes result in delays.

Conforming to the legislation has both cost and timing implications. As a result, some suppliers bypass this process and are therefore able to unfairly position their product at a lower price point.

Securing adequate shelf-space is in itself a challenge. It is often based on sales ratios and new, unknown products receive little support. Moreover – in-store refrigerated space is premium and established products tend to secure this space.

Commenting on the industry in general Katzen concluded: “The short-life fruit juice industry is an exciting and vibrant space to operate in, and is positioned at the centre of the consumer trend towards healthier eating habits. I look forward to the shift from cost-focused beverage alternative to an industry dominated by innovation that is aimed at satisfying customer demand for truly healthier beverages.”



Rob Katzen, MD

Our brands

The Real Beverage Company, which is a market leader in the industry, has the following brands:

- The Real Juice Company
- Quali Juice
- Sir Juice.

These brands are all positioned to service the retail premium, economy and food service industries respectively. The Company believes that innovation is a necessity in the category with the introduction of an extensive range of products, which includes original flavours in the Quali Juice range such as Strawberry and Kiwi/Pine, as well as the continued development of the current range. The latter includes the recent launch of The Real Juice Company’s two new flavours, Ruby Grapefruit and Pomegranate & Blueberry. **M&JR**

