



Thinking inside the box

Innovative corrugated solution helps a global beer brand owner to invite the locals to chill out and party. "Development on this new format is part of our on going innovation process and the initial response has been very positive," enthuses Miller Brands director of customer marketing Sam Rhodes.

Miller Brands is the UK and Ireland subsidiary of SABMiller, one of the world's largest brewers whose portfolio includes over 200 different beer brands brewed in over 75 countries. Originally established in South Africa 118 years ago, the group produces over 21 bn litres of large per annum, and last year boosted its overall turnover by around 7.5% to make it the world's number 2 brewery in terms of sales.

A combination of product quality and targeted marketing has enabled Miller Brands to out-perform its competitors by increasing sales against the backdrop of an often challenging European market beer of consumption-valued at around €21 bn/yr in the UK, with large accounting for an estimated 71.5% of all retail sales, and a market within which regional preferences can be a significant driver.

"This is particularly true of Scotland, where the brewery's Miller Genuine Draft (MGD) premium large has recently secured the category's number two slot throughout the off-trade; a status it hopes to improve upon via an extensive TV and printed media campaign aimed directly at the country's growing take home market under the theme : "Tonight it's Miller Time", says director of customer marketing Sam Rhodes.

"Consumers are increasingly visiting convenience

stores to buy 'something for tonight', often consuming their purchase within 4 hours of buying it. Retailers can tap into this and take advantage of the increased exposure Miller Genuine Draft will see over the next months by ensuring their MGD offering is kept chilled, and by stocking up on smaller packs."

Innovative Packaging

Keeping the large chilled is something that consumers are now more than able to do for themselves thanks to an innovative corrugated packaging solution developed for Miller Brands by UK based CRP Print & Packaging.

The "Cooler Box" incorporates a specially developed water-resistant inner lining designed to enable the take home pack to act as alternative to the ice-bucket and that is claimed to be a unique feature in the category. Once the lid has been opened, an integral webbing system enables the sides of the pack to splay out so that ice or water can be added by the consumer. The 'Cooler Box' can be used equally as effectively for both inside and outdoor parties and events, and is reported to have remained 100% fully-functional for periods of time in excess of a during pre-launch trials.

Whilst this is by no means the first corrugated box designed and manufactured to withstand water let

alone ice-Smurfit Kappa produced a moisture-resistant pack for Bacardi's rum-based Breezer alcopop last year, for example- the significant point of different making this a unique concept is the use of a fine E flute interior lining; half the thickness of the heavier B flute customarily used for a standard size beer case made to contain a full complement 275 ml x 18 glass bottles.

Requiring a more robust specification than a standard structure, 175 gsm white-lined Kraft fibre (WLK) was used for the outer line. This provided not only additional strength and water-resistance whilst eliminating any risk of paper slitting that might otherwise have occurred in a format incorporating such a high proportion of creases, but also the optimum surface conditions for such a high quality decorative finish printed in 4 colour offset + aqueous varnish.

Market Impact

In addition to demonstrating the scope for originality of which corrugated is clearly capable, the 'Cooler Box' reflects a number of marketing positives helpful towards enabling the drinks industry projecting a more sustainable image.

The choice of material itself ticks all of the pro-environmental boxes; doubly so in continuing to work for the consumer and supplier alike by eliminating the need for additional packaging pre- and post-sale. It also avoids the disadvantages inherent to most other multi-functional formats at end of life by requiring no pre-recycling treatment or separation.

"By further enhancing Miller Genuine Draft's hallmark clarity and crisp freshness the new pack format also enlivens the home consumption experience", notes Sam Rhodes. "Development on this new format is part of our on going innovation process and the initial response has been very positive, with over 60% of the first production run sold through during the first ten days.

"The pack carries 18 bottles and is designed to perform as a cooler box, which when opened can hold ice to chill the beer, facilitating sharing occasions. The cost of the pack is reflective of the dual purpose technology, and the initial trial has shown that consumers are willing to pay a premium for this superior and enhanced drinking experience."

The development of the new concept has been welcomed by the corrugated industry's UK trade body the Confederation of Paper Industries (CPI), whose director of public affairs Andrew Barnetson commented, "This is a refreshingly new application in every sense of the word, which demonstrates the high level of innovation and functionality that corrugated can offer. The extension of a corrugated box into a chill cabinet demonstrates a breadth of vision that genuinely differentiates the

brand both in-store and at home and looks certain to drive the category forward.

"It's also a classic example of how the substrate's scope for flexibility –and the design and production expertise to harness it-makes it the natural packaging medium through which to explore opportunities which have not previously been considered and which might otherwise never have been attempted."

Designed very much as a global pack, there is every possibility of the 'Cooler Box' being rolled out across other geographical markets subject to an ongoing positive consumer response within the UK.

Information

Cooler Box

- Development of the 'Cooler Box' concept commenced in mid-2012.
- Availability of the pack was initially limited to just 60 Asda outlets in Scotland and N. Ireland.
- To facilitate the splaying effect once the pack has been opened an integral web webbing (also made of corrugated board) was specially developed to be compressed into the case to ensure that nothing detracted from the overall appearance.
- First brewed in the US in 1986, Miller Genuine Draft uses a proprietary unique ceramic cold filtering technology to remove impurities and to accentuate freshness.
- Miller Brands grew its large sales by 4% in volume to year-end 31 March 2013 despite an industry –wide decline in overall beer sales throughout the UK of 5.1 % during the same periode.

