



It's a cruel summer and ice cream brands are in an aggressive mode with their marketing plans

BY SHAMBHAVI ANAND

IT'S REVENGE spending — of the cooler kind. Ice cream consumption is on a five-year high. As consumers take to ice creams with a vengeance after two dull years of the pandemic, brands are rushing to keep up with the pace of marketing and advertising.

In the summers of 2020 and 2021, consumers were a little wary of having cold desserts, owing to the Covid-19 scare. This year, however, the demand for ice cream is massive, especially with most of the country sweltering under heat waves. Brands have seen the opportunity and are increasing their marketing spends.

Gujarat Cooperative Milk Marketing Federation (GCMMF) managing director **RS Sodhi** says, "The four months of summer are the peak season for ice cream consumption, and so, for advertising and promotions too."

SPENDING HIGH

This year, sales of ice creams have increased up to 50% compared to 2020 figures, said a study by Snapbizz which assists retailers and mom-and-pop stores with technology solutions.

To match up, companies are spending anywhere between 10-15% more on advertising this year, albeit on a lower base. GCMMF has been spending more on the overall building of its brand Amul.

Milind Pingle, chief executive of Allana Consumer Products which distributes the premium London Dairy ice cream in India, says the company is running attractive consumer offers like 125 ml free with a 500-ml tub and 250 ml on a 1-litre pack of London Dairy. It has also launched a range of new flavours like pina colada, peach apricot, pink guava and blueberry.

"Separately, we are running a digital campaign 'My Summer Flavourite' to promote the flavours and to gain top of mind recall. We also stay invested in performance marketing and social media promotions to build our followership on digital platforms such as Spotify, Hotstar, YouTube etc," Pingle adds.

STOCKING UP

This year, summer arrived 25 days earlier.

Also, the push-cart workforce, which had left for their villages the past two years, returned in 2022. That's helping mobilise sales. There have been minimal price increases in ice cream compared to other FMCG products.

"One needs to start getting the pushcarts and stocking the retail stores as early as February-end.

We were emboldened by the pick-up in at-home consumption," says **Manish Bandlish**, managing director, Mother Dairy Fruit & Vegetable, which is focusing on a mix of digital and television campaigns as it wants to capitalise on the strong distribution network it has expanded on recently. It has Ogilvy as its agency to handle creatives, with an aggressive plan for this summer. The campaign's theme is that Mother Dairy ice creams melt away distances between family members, making every moment enjoyable.

For an impulse product like ice cream, advertising at the point-of-sale is key. "We do a lot of point-of-sale advertising at each of our stores," adds Bandlish.

FLAVOUR UP

Siddhant Kamath, director, Kamaths Ourtimes Icecreams, owner of the Naturals brand, said the company promotes seasonal flavours in their campaigns. "Sales are already high, consumers are already buying. So we talk about flavours during our campaign. In April, we introduce mango; in May, we have *kala jamun* and litchi," he says.

The company also likes to keep the buzz in its stores alive. Every Friday, it introduces a new flavour which lasts for two weeks. It is also high on digital and social media campaigns, with Drink Water Design as its creative agency for eight years.

HUL, which has several ice cream brands including Kwality Wall's, Cornetto and Magnum, says sales have now crossed pre-Covid levels. "This year, we launched a new campaign with Alia Bhatt for Cornetto on Valentine's Day. Kwality Wall's has trending flavours such as trixy blueberry cheesecake, cornetto royal kulfi, black forest feast and cassata cake," says an HUL spokesperson.

Lloyd Mathias, business strategist, says that the summer months are an ideal period to grow the segment. "There is a huge opportunity for manufacturers. With people going out, it's a good time to bring new users into the fold," he adds.

shambhavi.anand@timesgroup.com

