

The Grocer

Focus On Dairy Drinks

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Ask anyone about defining trends in dairy drinks and they'll say the same thing: protein content and functional health have been key. But that's not the whole story. Sales of indulgent RTD milkshakes are also booming, according to latest sales figures from NIQ, and growing numbers of retailers are giving up floor space for self-serve milkshake machines. What's driving all this? Which flavours and formats are hot right now? And to what extent are indulgent brands trying to cross over into functional health, and vice versa?

Commercial considerations: It looks like the inflation that has defined dairy drinks for some time is now at an end, with average price remaining more or less flat over the past year (some drinks have been selling for less than they did the previous year). What impact is this having on demand? How are suppliers investing as margins recover?

Brands v own-label: One factor that's driven the easing of inflation at category level is double digit growth in cheaper own-label RTD dairy drinks. Which retailers have been pushing own label products the most in the past year and how are brands fighting back? How do they compare on price, product quality and the like?

In-store machines: This feature will explore why growing numbers of retailers are installing chilled self-serve milkshake machines in their stores. What are the opportunities and challenges of going down this route? How much do such systems cost? What are the returns?

Marketing: We will also be looking at how the big brands are using their marketing budgets to convince shoppers to continue putting dairy drinks in their baskets. How reliant are they on celebrity endorsements, primetime TV ads and digital? And how can challengers with shallower pockets cut through the noise?

Retail share: This feature will explore how different retailers are managing the category in terms of ranging, promotions and balancing brands and own label product assortments. How are brands working with retailers to create excitement in the fixture? Which retailers are in strongest growth and why?

Hot chocolate: Several players are predicting big things for hot chocolate sales in the UK. So how much potential is there for RTD hot chocolate drinks in the UK? What can other markets tell us about this potential?

Innovation: The past year has seen plenty of innovation in dairy drinks. This feature will explore the latest trends in dairy drinks and how this is playing out in terms of product innovation. We will profile eight new products or ranges, ideally ones that have not appeared in The Grocer before. We need launch date, rsp, and a hi-res picture of each.