The Grocer

Focus On: Juices & Smoothies by Carina Perkins (carina.perkins@thegrocer.co.uk)

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The Story

What a comeback! After years of decline driven by sugar's catastrophic fall from fashion, the fruit juice and smoothies market is recovering. Granted, overall sales are still down, but there's plenty of cause for optimism: value sales of smoothies have surged by nearly a fifth; not from concentrate juice is in growth for the first time in years; and freshly squeezed is up by more than 10%. This is all the more impressive, given that the sector's biggest brand ran a campaign telling people to limit the amount of juice they drink. So what's going on? What's driven this turnaround? Is the backlash against sugar ending?

Key themes:

'Healthier' juices & smoothies: The sugar debate has fuelled the development of juice drinks sweetened with ingredients such as stevia and monk fruit, in order to lower sugar content, and juices and smoothies containing functional ingredients such as chia seeds, vegetables and coconut. How well are such products doing? How much of the market do they account for? How much potential do they have?

Retailers: This feature will pay close attention to how different retailers are approaching the category – in terms of branded and own label ranging, price and promotions, merchandising, health and wellbeing and so on – and how this affecting their sales performance. Specifically, how have the retailers who have launched lower sugar options and rationalised branded ranges performed?

Price and promotions: This feature will also pay close attention to how prices have changed in the past year, and how they are likely to change in the coming year, particularly in light of the weakened pound following the Brexit vote. Also, how is the development of cold pressed products and juices & smoothies containing functional 'superfoods' affecting average prices paid? What's happening in terms of promotions?

Juice drinks: This sector is the worst performing in the market. This feature will explore in detail which factors – for example, the health agenda, NPD, marketing and advertising, price and promotions – have driven this performance and investigate how players are looking to turn things around over the coming year. Particular attention will be paid to the impact of multiple delistings of added sugar lines.

Smoothies: This sector is by far the strongest performer of the year, a huge turnaround on last year's story. Why? Which players are driving this and how? Who's being left behind? What are the sector's major players looking to do to sustain grow in 2017?

Not from concentrate: This sector has seen volumes fall on value sales up significantly over the past year. This feature will explore the reasons for this and investigate what the coming year is likely to hold. How is the dynamic between own label and brands playing out?

From concentrate: Sales of from concentrate juice have continued to decline over the past year. Is this a doomed sub category or do brands and own label players have some tricks up their sleeve to rekindle interest – and sales – in this sector?

Own label: Own label is winning share from brands in this sector. This feature will explore the factors that are leading to this and investigate how retailers' own label ranges are evolving.

Innovation: This will be key to this feature. We will be investigating how new product development has shaped the category over the past year and what is in store for shoppers in 2017. We will be profiling four of the most interesting launches in a separate innovation panel. This feature will include box outs on the development of new, weird and wonderful flavoured juices and smoothies and kids drinks.

Key questions the feature is likely to address:

- What consumer trends have impacted the category over the past year?
- How have promotional strategies (both in terms of price and marketing) evolved?
- How have individual retailers' strategies impacted the market?
- How has merchandising changed in the market?
- What impact has own-label had on branded players?
- What's next for the category?