

Cold Stone Creamery puts the heat on ice cream segment competition with integrated campaign

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By Gregg Cebryzinski

Cold Stone Creamery's Birthday Cake Remix

SCOTTSDALE, ARIZ.—The summer forecast is out, and the ice cream segment is expected to be hot.

Cold Stone Creamery is raising the competitive temperature with the launch of its first national integrated campaign since the chain was founded in 1988, following moves by rivals Baskin-Robbins and Dairy Queen to increase their market shares as the peak ice-cream-eating season begins.

The "Love It Love It" campaign for 1,400-unit Cold Stone Creamery includes three TV spots, a microsite bearing the name of the campaign theme, and online, radio and print advertising.

The \$10 million campaign targets the "true, unapologetic ice cream lover who will go extra miles for the ultimate ice cream experience," said Kevin Meyers, Cold Stone's vice president of sales and marketing.

In the past, the chain, which is known for premium-priced ice cream treats that are customized with mixed-in confections, relied on word-of-mouth and public relations at the local level. But a national marketing plan was needed now because "as we grow, some people don't know about us," Meyers said.

Because consumers certainly know about Baskin-Robbins and Dairy Queen and about such regional chains as Maggie Moo's, Friendly's Ice Cream and Marble Slab Creamery, Cold Stone Creamery is under pressure to "make sure everyone knows the difference" between its brand and the others, Meyers said.

The U.S. ice cream industry generates more than \$21 billion in annual sales, according to the International Dairy Foods Association, and the major ice cream chains are trying to differentiate themselves from competitors to snag a larger share of those sales. Cold Stone's share in 2006 was nearly \$500 million.

Baskin-Robbins recently broke its first TV campaign in two years to reinvigorate the 61-year-old brand and position itself as a marketer of innovative, premium ice cream products, said Scott Colwell, B-R's vice president of marketing.

Dairy Queen has taken the new product route to achieve higher sales by introducing baked waffle bowls and cones and the supporting the launch with national TV spots and an online contest.

But Cold Stone, which recently merged with multiconcept franchiser Kahala Corp., is banking on its campaign to position itself as "an oasis, a place where true love of ice cream can exist," Meyers said.

Each of the three TV spots, created by Saatchi & Saatchi of New York, uses humor and drama in setting up obstacles in the form of arch-nemeses to test customer's desire for Cold Stone treats. In "Kid," a boy approaches a Cold Stone Creamery. He stands apprehensively at the front door, studying the arch-nemeses that await him. A voice-over says: "Inside he sees the bogeyman, the monster in his closet, the monster under his bed, and broccoli. Will the insatiable draw of Birthday Cake Remix give him the strength to open the door?"

The spot then cuts to a product shot and a title card that says, "Do you love it?" and then quickly to another: "Or do you love it love it?"



"Will the insatiable draw of Birthday Cake Remix give him the strength to open the door?"

A second spot features Bigfoot having to get past a hunter, a “Sasquatch enthusiast” and a Brazilian-bikini waxer. “Heiress” features a Paris Hilton look-alike who has to get past an IQ test, and “a prettier, skinnier, wealthier heiress.”

The spots seem ripe for spoofing by employees and customers, which is exactly what Meyers hopes will happen after they go to the www.Loveit-Loveit.com microsite, created by TargetScope of Plano, Texas. Visitors can suggest what arch-nemesis they would face to get their favorite treat and can forward the spots to friends to generate a viral campaign.

The commercials are like mini-movie trailers, Meyers said, designed that way to give them a long life on the Internet.

“That was crucial to getting behind this campaign,” Meyers said. “If you develop creative only for TV or print it will only [last] for six months. This will last three to five years.”