

Drinks giants add to light spirits battle

IDV and J.R. Phillips are both rolling out fruity alcoholic products this summer in an attempt to capitalise on the apparent popularity of light, white spirits among young consumers.

Kontiki, which was test launched in Anglia last year, will be rolled out nationally by J.R. Phillips with a £1m ad campaign, through SSC&B: Lintas. IDV, meanwhile, is distributing Topaz throughout the UK, and backing it with a £250,000 London based ad campaign, through Fletcher Shelton Delaney.

Since IDV's successful launch of Malibu in 1980, a number of drinks companies have attempted to gain a foothold in the specialist soft spirits category, but the failure rate has been high.

IDV itself has recently phased out a banana flavoured liqueur, Slowboat, which was on test in Scotland.

'Serious drinks'

'We have learned a lot about the market,' said Chris Nadin, marketing manager at IDV, 'and recognise the importance of a strong proposition. I would suggest that many products in the field do not have enough alcohol in them to make them serious drinks.'

Topaz, a white rum and passion fruit product, is 28% alcohol by volume, like its sister brand Malibu, while Kontiki is a low strength citrus flavoured drink, containing 19.5% alcohol by volume.

Both companies are pushing the exotic associations and versatility of the drinks, which are designed to appeal to young consumers of both sexes, and defy straight-forward categorisation.

'It has also emerged that the role of the pack is absolutely vital,' said Nadin. Topaz was initially tested under the name Blue Lagoon, in a frosted bottle, but is now packaged in a matt black bottle decorated with striking, brightly coloured graphics.

IDV has learned that in this speciality sector, image and positioning are as crucial to the success of the product as the drink itself.

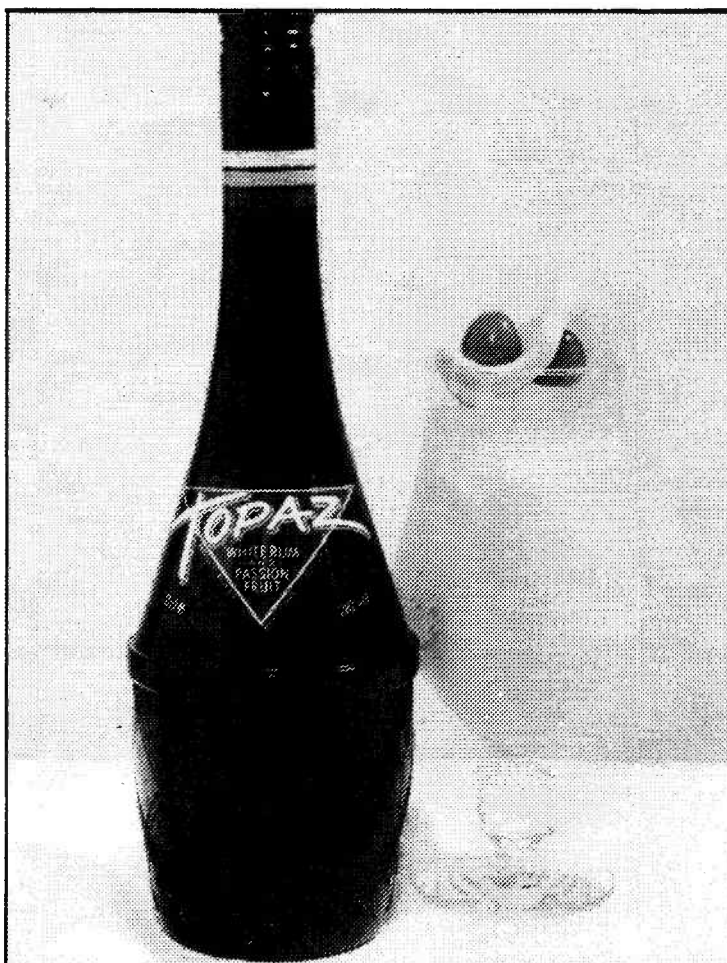
Topaz has already received listings in Sainsbury, Tesco and Sainsbury, a number of cash and carry groups and three of the brewers' off-licence chains.

IDV hopes sales will exceed 12,000 cases in its first year and develop the market over a long-term period. Further entries into the area from other companies are expected shortly.

Rufus Olins



Kontiki: Low strength



Topaz: 28% alcohol

Shell offers 'lucky deal'

Now that the latest round of price cuts by petrol giants is at an end, Shell has launched a new promotional game — Bruce's Lucky Deal.

The promotion, based on a playing card game, is unique in the industry in that, for the first time, every player can win. As long as they select the right sections on each scratch card they can win packs of cards or cash prizes of between £50 and £10,000, plus the chance of a share in a £100,000 jackpot every fortnight.

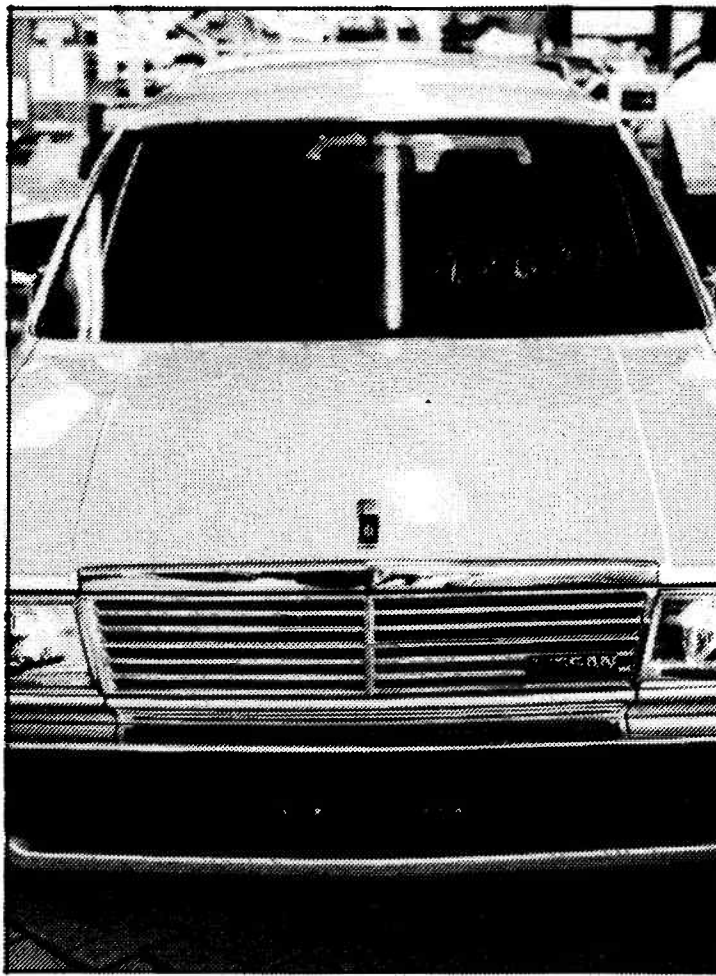
The game marks Shell's fifth involvement with such promotions, and is supported by a £1m TV and

press campaign — featuring Bruce Forsyth — through Ogilvy and Mather.

'Our research has shown that the public wants cut glass and not cut prices,' said Ken Danson, Shell Retail promotions manager.

'The maths behind this game show that there could be 2,000 winners every fortnight,' said John Chambers, managing director of Don Marketing, the games specialist which devised the promotion. He calculates that £4.5m is the maximum amount of prize money to be won.

Louella Miles



Nissan: Sales up 47%

Imported cars hit big three

A number of car importers are currently making sizeable gains in volume sales. This is partly due to the recent relative strength of the pound against other European currencies, which has allowed the importers to pump more money into marketing support.

At the same time, Ford is believed to be about to offer financial support to its dealers.

Importers gave a strong performance in March, and figures for the first 20 days of April show most of them continuing to make substantial inroads.

For instance, compared with the same period last year, Nissan's sales are up 47%, Renault 59%, Fiat 63% and Toyota 15%. Overall, imports accounted for 59.1% of the UK market — up over 8% on the corresponding period in 1984.

Deteriorating profits

Importers' gains have come mainly at the expense of the 'big three' volume manufacturers — Ford, Austin Rover and, to a lesser extent, General Motors. All have scaled down their own levels of marketing activity in the face of deteriorating profits.

For the first 20 days of April, Austin Rover had a 20.5% share; Ford only 21.28%, compared with a target of 30% for 1985; and GM 18.23%.

It seems unlikely that Austin Rover will remain above the all-important 20% market share barrier for the full month, despite a dealer incentive programme.

This will come as a bitter disappointment to the company, which desperately needs a good sales performance to restore government confidence.

However, some in the industry feel that a new incentive war could shortly break out between the 'big three'. In particular, it is thought that Ford may be about to offer its dealers heavy financial support in a bid to increase its dwindling share.

Richard Spandler

SPOT NEWS

Harp restrings image

Harp has announced a facelift for its national on-trade brand as part of a brand development programme. The traditional Harp badge and fount are being replaced by a modern design by Michael Peters which incorporates an inverted triangle. Dorlands and incumbent Allen Brady and Marsh are currently pitching for the £3.5m Harp ad account.

Revamp at RHM Foods

RHM Foods, the grocery products division of Ranks Hovis McDougall, is restructuring its production, marketing and development functions into three commercial groups.

Moonshine also rises

Libby's, Nestlé's drinks division, is following the launch of its Um Bongo fruit drink with another product aimed at children. Moonshine — a mixture of ten berry fruit juices — is getting a £1m national roll-out.

Diners Club PR change

Diners Club has severed connections with Burson-Marsteller, its PR agency, and will in future appoint PR companies to handle specific projects.

Budget outbids Swan

Budget Rent a Car has won a concession to operate in Heathrow Airport's terminal buildings, after outbidding Swan National. Budget previously operated from the airport's perimeter.

Asti splashes out

The first-ever TV advertising for Martini and Rossi's Asti Spumante breaks next week. Worth £3.5m at national equivalent, the McCann-Erickson push will run in the Central and Granada TV areas.

NoW's Express service

The *News of the World* will print its northern edition at Express Newspapers' Manchester plant from January 1986.

Rug Patrol marches in

A.H. Robins, the UK subsidiary of the US pharmaceuticals giant of the same name, is test marketing Sergeant's Rug Patrol — an animal pest product — backed by a Yorkshire TV push.

On the move . . .

Peter Lathrop has been made vice president, marketing, of Samsonite-Europe . . . Alan Waddell becomes director of leisure marketing of American Express Retail UK . . . Harry King has joined Benn Business Information Services as managing director . . . Bert De Vos, chairman of D'Arcy MacManus Masius is the new president of the IPA . . . Peter Smith is to join Reed International as head of corporate relations.