

Baskin-Robbins - Remaining Relevant

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Sixty-year-old Baskin-Robbins is now competing in a market where super-premium ice cream is attracting all the attention. In response, the chain has a new look, new menu, and new strategy. Brand manager Ken Kimmel elaborates.

How has Baskin Robbins's brand mission changed over the past 60 years?

When Jon Luther came onboard [as CEO] three years ago, he encouraged us to identify the 'brand heartbeat.' We identified our brand heartbeat as being 'irresistible treats, smile, and fun.'

Over the past 60 years, I don't think the brand's heartbeat has changed at all. What changes over time is how that heartbeat has maintained its relevance to consumers.

How has the entrance of players like Cold Stone and Marble Slab affected the frozen treat business?

Competition tends to help build business within any category. It helps keep us on our toes; it makes us look very carefully at our consumers. But, fundamentally, I think we're in a different business.

Elaborate.

Our competitors are pushing this mix-in experience, a higher-price theater experience. Baskin-Robbins is focused on delivering innovation, high-quality ice cream flavors, and a great value for our consumers in an accessible kind of environment.

While 31 flavors was a big idea 60 years ago, it is seen as a cost of entry today. We've been focusing on products as opposed to the theater of the business.

Our Cappuccino Blast was the first frozen coffee beverage in the market. Starbucks gets credit for building the frozen coffee business, but we introduced the Cappuccino Blast ahead of not only other ice cream competitors but also our coffee competitors. Bold Breezes, which we introduced last year, is a product platform based on fruit-based beverages with a real powerful flavor profile. It's relevant to younger consumers. And our upcoming introduction of frozen custard is really our way of saying, 'How do we do something different?'

These are product platforms that are unique, as opposed to the process and theater some of our competitors use as a differentiating point.

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