Perceptions Of Chocolate



By Mamduh Waheed

For many if not most Sri Lankans, at one time chocolate could only be in the form of a slab. Although chocolate has been manufactured internationally in different shapes and varieties including coated biscuits, coated wafers, chocolate coated beans and balls, its only very recently that Sri Lankan brands have forayed into producing chocolate in other varieties than in slabs.

Chocolate was also not marketed for the masses and available only selected groceries. Consumption was infrequent in addition to being mainly consumed

indoors and often shared with family members.

Ceylon Biscuits (CBL) established the Ritzbury brand to launch their range of chocolates in the early ‘90s. Making several observations about the existing market, Ritzbury made various strategic moves that have today given them the largest market share for chocolates in the country.

Unlike many other countries, there are few products in Sri Lanka where a local brand has always led the market despite important brands being available. Chocolate is one such product – biscuits and ice cream being the others.

Although in 2000 when Ritzbury made a renewed effort to gain market share, competitors held over 80 percent of the market amongst them. However, the chocolates that were available in the market were all slabs at the time. By choosing to be innovative, instead of competing with another slab, Ritzbury introduced several new chocolate products in to the market and helped the overall market to grow. The company managed to understand the changing needs of the emerging consumer. For instance, as consumers were getting more and more individualistic and more females joining the work force and spending more time out of home including for educational purposes, Ritzbury introduced products such as Chit Chat which was small enough to carry around as a snack to be used either at home or at work.

Additional unique inventions followed, including creative and improved packaging and the strategic display of products at sales outlets. The total impact of all this is that Ritzbury’s total share of the market has grown to 55 percent.

Once the company gained enough market share, Ritzbury also introduced their new brand Revello, produced from 100 percent cocoa butter. And within two years the company has achieved their targets for the brand.

Initially introducing various products that helped the overall growth of the market, Ritzbury introduced chocolate coated biscuits, coated wafers and several other

products. But choosing a strategy to avoid direct competition with the market leaders, they were primarily unnoticed until the brand chose to come into direct competition with competitors with the introduction of chocolate slabs.

“Ritzbury has been a mass market brand in the past, but with the introduction of Revello we have been able to change the perceptions and win the hearts of the top end Sri Lankan consumer,” stated Nilupul De Silva, Marketing Manager – CBL Foods International, that oversees the production and marketing of Revello as well as Ritzbury brands.

Revello produces 17 different varieties of chocolate, three different sizes of slab and three varieties of chocolate bars. Already a hit in the country, the brand is also making a mark in how the range is marketed with slick and well thought-out advertising campaigns placed strategically.