

INSIDE
THE
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OFFICER



My/Mo Mochi Ice
Cream CMO Talks
Innovations,
Influencers and
'Instagrammable
Moments





By Alexa Comeau | April 22, 2020

From Mike's Hard Lemonade to popchips to Gardein to KeVita, Russell Barnett has always had a penchant for turning novelty snacks into household brands. A [CPG veteran](#) and [L.A. Brand Stars winner](#), Russell joined My/Mo Mochi Ice Cream in 2017 looking forward to the challenge of introducing a new food option to consumers and bringing mochi ice cream to the masses. Today, My/Mo Mochi defines mochi ice cream in the U.S. with over 85% ownership of the category and available across 20,000 retailers. Below, Russell shares how right now, the brand is leaning heavily on its digital roots but not slowing down on product innovations.

Adweek: How has My/Mo Mochi emerged as a challenger?



Russell Barnett:
We took a niche product and made it a household name in the frozen aisle. Mochi ice

"We have given life to a sleepy category and forgotten area of the store."

cream had 25 years of proof of concept, and to be successful, we adjusted the positioning of an item that was very niche into an accessible snack for all to enjoy. We gave people flavors they understood and leaned into the snacking culture, making My/Mo available to buy in both the freezer aisle and the grab-and-go section of the store with our signature My/Mo Mochi Bars. I am also proud of our continued product innovation. We have been able to introduce new flavors, non-dairy and vegan products, and our triple-



layer mochi ice cream. We have given life to a sleepy category and forgotten area of the store.

How have you adapted your marketing strategies amidst the pandemic?

Just like everyone else in the world, we are adapting to this new normal day by day. We adjusted our marketing strategy to reduce our time and resources to the experiential nature of our business. We are a digitally native brand and we are taking this time to go back to the roots of our digital ecosystem, specifically leaning into a variety of social media platforms and [influencer programming](#).

Play is our purpose and we are in the business of bringing fun and weird into people's lives, especially during these times. Content that brings joy is our new currency. Nonsense is the new escape and we look for ways to deliver this to people when they need a smile.

"Content that brings joy is our new currency."



What's new for the brand?

We recently launched two new My/Mo Mochi Ice Cream flavors: Banana Chocolate Cream and Orange Vanilla, and one new non-dairy and vegan flavor, Neapolitan. In addition, this week we are announcing our single-serve packs exclusively for our self-serve Mochi Bars, now rolling into retailers nationally. Our latest innovation offers snack lovers an individually packaged mochi ball to enjoy at its optimal freshness.

With concerns over contamination and food safety more heightened than ever, My/Mo Mochi Ice Cream rolls out new individual servings.



What have been the biggest challenges you've faced in the frozen food category?

We see our competitors as the entire snacking industry at large—we are a snack that happens to be frozen. We tap into on-the-go snacking with our signature self-serve My/Mo Mochi Bar, which is in about 3,000 retailers nationally. This paid sampling mechanism, which has a colorful and vibrant look and style, appeals to the need for creating experiences and sharing 'Instagrammable' moments. Our My/Mo Mochi Bars live in stores but are also portable freezers that are onsite at some of the biggest events of the year like



Coachella and the Sundance Film Festival. Though this growth came with challenges and difficult decisions.

We realized we had to be strategic in thinking about how to get ahead of our business' growth and forecast accurately for our future needs. Early on, we invested in our infrastructure—if we didn't do this then we would have failed. We knew we had a great product and we had to make sure we could make the product at scale prior to getting it on the market. It was a potential risk that took time, effort and money, but overall it was worth it, and it is the reason we were able to scale so quickly and successfully in the past few years.

What skills have helped you evolve as a marketer?

While there have been many skills and traits that have helped me in my career, the one I most believe in is bravery. My career has been in the innovation space and I've gotten really comfortable being uncomfortable. When it's too comfortable, I am not pushing myself hard enough, which means I am not progressing a business or a category.



What I find with marketing, is there is no wrong answer, just various degrees of the right answer. I

"When it's too comfortable, I am not pushing myself hard enough..."

have learned how to say 'no' to opportunities that seem like they are the right fit but, in the end, they may



be mistakes. Some of the best outcomes I have achieved stem from saying no.

Overall, experience drives satisfaction. You make the experience what it is. You can still have a good time if you fail. It is up to you what you take away from an experience. If you spend your life looking for perfection, you will end up with nothing. Ultimately, you have to believe in what you are doing and advocate for your consumers.

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