Sanitarium UP&GO, South Pacific Division

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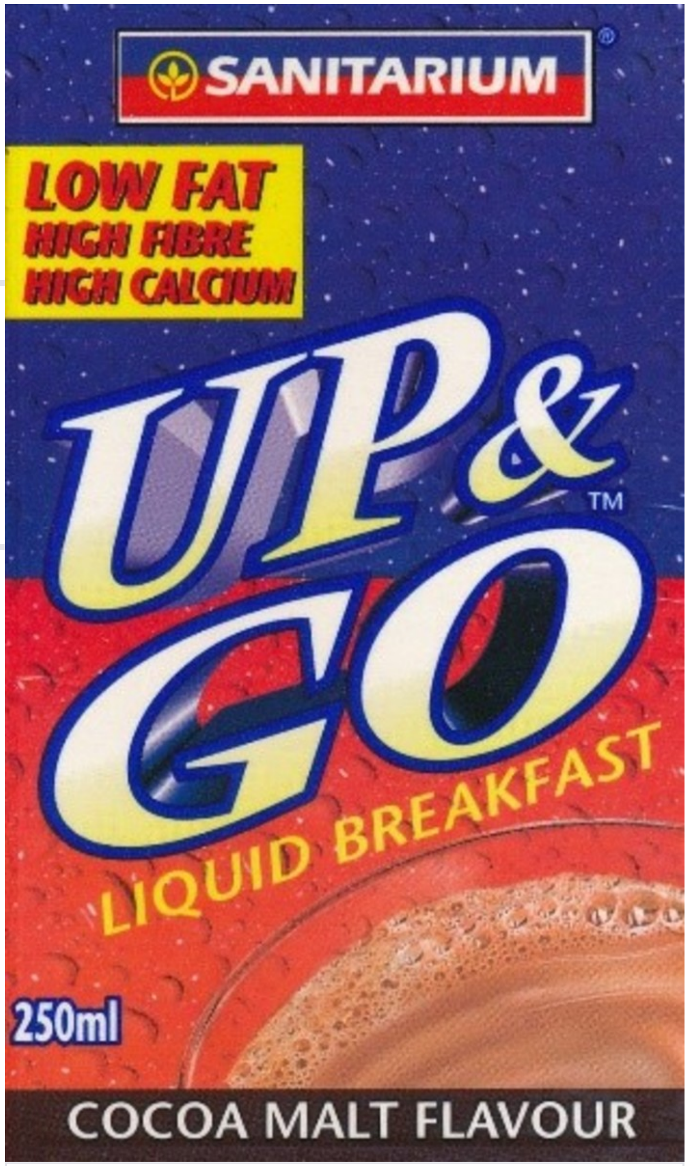
Julie Praestiin (Dip. Management, Newcastle University, Australia) commenced her career in public relations in 1979. In 1983, Julie and her husband Axel commenced working for ADRA in Bolivia and Colombia (SA) until 1992. Julie then joined Sanitarium, leading the corporate communications function from 1995, including the management of the heritage archives. Since 2005, Julie has served ADRA Australia as a board member. In authoring Sanitarium's historical story, Julie's sees God's definitive leadership in the health food business.

In late 1997 Sanitarium created a liquid breakfast it called UP & GO.™ This was a world-first innovation. In 2012 UP&GO became the number one breakfast cereal brand in Australia. In 2020 UP&GO is still the number one brand in the cereal aisle in Australia, both in value and volume, and the number one brand in New Zealand in volume. The combined output of the UP&GO brand across Australia and New Zealand would fill 20 Olympic pools annually.



The pack for the original Up&Go, released in 1998.
Photo courtesy of Sanitarium Health and Well Being.

Introduction

In the mid-1990s Sanitarium Health Food Company personnel became aware of a trend called breakfast skipping.[1] The company's nutritionists and food scientists decided to create a convenient and nutritious breakfast option for busy people, so in late 1997 the company launched UP&GO, creating a liquid breakfast category in a world-first innovation.[2]

Cultural Breakfast Consumption Changes

Regular breakfast consumption has long been associated with better health.[3] In the mid-1990s, as the pace of life became busier, people began skipping breakfast regularly and looking for an on-the-run solution.

In the 1995 National Nutrition Survey, food consumption patterns showed that nearly one quarter of Australian adults were regularly missing breakfast at least three days per week. The high proportion of adolescents and young adults who were often skipping breakfast was of particular concern. Fifteen percent of 19-to 24-year-olds reporting eating breakfast away from home.[4]

Breakfast Skipping Sparks a New Idea

The idea of a breakfast drink had reportedly first been discussed by several Sanitarium employees at a marketing conference.[5] In March 1994 an initial brief was written on the nutritional requirements of "an egg on toast,"[6] and some concept samples were developed.[7]

At that time supermarkets in Australia were also reporting broadly that the breakfast cereal category was not performing. While it was a popular cereal, Weet-Bix provided only a low margin for retailers, so from a business perspective the Sanitarium breakfast team needed to deliver a new idea with critically higher margins for retailers.[8]

Greg Gates, national sales manager at the time, recalls attending a meeting at which all the breakfast cereal products on the market were mapped out in a big grid on the wall. He realized that innovation was needed.[9] Following that meeting, Sanitarium's marketing manager of Breakfast Foods, Neale Schofield, commissioned research agency Kanora Chhan[10] to quantify the incidence of breakfast skipping, to ascertain whether it was sufficiently high to create a market need worth fulfilling.[11] The research project was designed to look at the market for gaps and products that would meet the needs of consumers,[12] from idea generation to concept screening and testing.[13]

Once the potential market demand had been quantified, further research asked respondents about their preferred portable breakfast options and suggested a number of formats, including a powdered drink, a cereal bar, a cereal ball, or ready-to-drink beverage. The research results showed the ideas of a beverage and a bar were the strongest

To attempt to capture the market opportunity based on these findings, Sanitarium initially researched the concept for a powdered drink, similar to those that existed in Asian markets. Schofield wrote a brief to the Sanitarium Research Laboratories that requested that they make a product that contained "all the goodness of two Weet-Bix and milk" as a guide to what nutritional needs were required. The laboratories drew upon Carnation Instant Breakfast powdered drink in a can, available in the U.S.A., as the stimulus for one of the ideas to meet this need.[14]

Capitalizing on Sanitarium's Capabilities

Sanitarium had the capability to make a success of these portable breakfast ideas, particularly the drink. The company had nearly a century of credibility in manufacturing breakfast cereals, and a decade of expertise in long-life beverages producing So Good nondairy milk.[15] So Good had been introduced in aseptic packaging in 1986, and this proposed new drink would be a continuation of the same technology Sanitarium had been using.[16]

With these proficiencies in mind, Schofield took the idea to Kevin Smith, general manager of the Breakfast Business Unit at the time, who recognized the market potential and supported the investment strategy.[17] Schofield then gave a presentation to the Sanitarium board about the possibilities of the portable breakfast category, illustrating that the concept was a rare opportunity and would be a game-changer for both the breakfast market and a long-term investment in Sanitarium's future. While the research had not been overly positive, Schofield was convinced of the value of the idea based on market intuition developed through knowing Sanitarium's consumers and a decade of work in the cereal market. Schofield's recommendation was for a ten-year investment, not simply to try it for three years and see what happened. He recommended that if the board had the latter view, then they should not launch it. The board agreed.[18] It was a big opportunity, but it would require a long-term vision by management.[19]

Peter Davis was recruited from Sanitarium Health Food New Zealand in December 1995 as new product development manager—cereals, to work specifically on this new "portable breakfast project." The team at Sanitarium then started several projects: Fruity Bix Bars, Brekky Kit, and the liquid breakfast drink that would become UP&GO.[20]

Creating a New Category

These products were pitched to the supermarkets as a new product category, with the aim of creating a new market with high margins for the retailers.[21] The supermarkets saw a win-win situation and jumped at it, which was vital to the success of the strategy. The marketing team thought that Brekky Kit and Fruity-Bix Bars may be phased out in time, but if they could gain the support of the supermarkets and create a new section for these products, then it would allow UP&GO the time it needed to become a long-term success.[22] Within Sanitarium the marketing team also had to convince the sales team that the product represented a new category.[23]

In early 1997 Sanitarium released Brekky Kit, which included one of a variety of Sanitarium cereals (Weet-Bix, Light 'n' Tasty or Skippy Corn Flakes) with a UHT 4.25-ounce (125-milliliter) Devondale milk, a small packet of sultanas, and a small spoon. These kits were handmade at the Cooranbong factory, but proved expensive both to produce and for the consumer, so were soon deleted from the range.[24] This was an insight that people wanted portable options, not simply convenience.[25]

Initial Product Development

During this time the product development team worked for nearly two years to bring UP&GO to market.[26] The concept brief of a breakfast drink was first presented to the Sanitarium Development & Innovation team in 1994 after some initial discussions with Kanora Chhan. The first recipe and factory trial was based largely on flavored So Good, using the same minerals and recipe. The brief changed between 1994 and 1996 following the market research,[27] specifically to incorporate greater cereal content than soy protein content and for the flavor profile to be changed from soy to a more milky taste.[28]

There were also regulatory considerations. As UP&GO was a new category, it would need to be launched under two food standard codes for fortification. The soy beverage code required 3 percent protein from a legume source, and the breakfast food code allowed higher vitamin and mineral fortification than allowed under soy beverages.[29] Furthermore, there was the cost of an 11-cent milk levy to factor in at the time.[30]

Full-cream powdered milk was used initially, then the formula was modified to use skim milk powder. Soy components were included to provide protein and fiber in line with the nutritional requirements.[31] The product had multiple reformulations before it was ready to launch, because of initial problems with flavor, texture, sterilization, and crystallization.[32] The team had to ensure the product did not have any settling problems with sedimentation, so significant time was also taken in assuring that the product remained stable over a reasonably long shelf life before it was put into full production.[33]

Flavors Original Malt, Choc Malt, and Banana were created for the production launch in September 1997. Despite the almost two years of development, there was still much to be learned in creating such a unique product. Some tasters reported an "old" taste as the product aged, and the thickness, gluggy consistency and sedimentation issues were still issues over the 24 weeks of shelf life.[34]

Early Marketing and Retailer Ranging

The final piece of research and preparation was the name for the new liquid breakfast product. Sanitarium engaged with four different pack designers before a suitable packaging design was produced. A creative agency from Sydney developed the name, but another designer from New Zealand produced the winning artwork, and Sanitarium combined the two.[35]

UP&GO was officially launched in January 1998,[36] pioneering the liquid breakfast and dubbing it "the future of breakfast."[37] The sales team worked very hard to have the products located in the cereal aisle, as initially most retailers thought the product was best suited to the UHT milk category, based on its UHT look and feel.[38] Greg Gates recalls a difficult conversation with one of the major retailers to convince them that UP&GO needed to be in with hard-box cereals, as that's where the consumers were.[39]

Sanitarium committed to call out the location "available in the breakfast cereal aisle" in all of the product communications. Originally the brand was located next to Weet-Bix and Fruity Bix, but over time it was moved to the end of the aisle and formed a subcategory of its own.[40] At one stage the sales representatives even rolled it on a trolley into the men's shaving aisle, because that's where the male customers were.[41]

Creating a new category was the reason the UP&GO products were displayed in supermarket cereal aisles and not in the drinks aisles. Although Fruity Bix bars and Brekky Kit did not last, UP&GO eventually prospered, and that was the key to the success of this new category.[42]

The first television commercial (TVC) featured a bowl of corn flakes and milk floating inside a spaceship, with the corn flakes spilling everywhere and a cat licking the escaped droplets of milk. The astronauts drinking UP&GO emphasized the drink's convenience compared to a bowl of corn flakes. A real cat had been placed on a gymnasium horse with a green screen behind to create the effect.[43]

When it came to the advertising, Sanitarium did not want to compromise on nutrition credibility,[44] but the nutritional positioning of "the goodness of two Weet-Bix and milk" proposed in the product development brief[45] was problematic. The team did not want to use Weet-Bix as a comparison, so used Kellogg's Corn Flakes, the number-two cereal at the time.[46]

Initially UP&GO was a hard sell in its Combibloc-boxed aseptic packaging, otherwise known as a "popper" or "juice box," because people associated it with cheap and unhealthy juice and flavored milk. They also needed convincing on its satiety.[47] The original research had illustrated that people were predominantly looking for three things in a portable breakfast product: convenience, taste, and nutrition. Originally UP&GO ticked the box of convenience, but the team needed to address the nutrition profile and the taste, which was found lacking. There was pressure to fine-tune the formula and the marketing message, given it had already gone to market.[48]

Reformulations Lead to Improved Product

Between November 1998 and 2004 the base product was reformulated three times, each time to improve both the nutritional value as well as the product taste.[49] Trials were conducted using pure milk, variations with soy proteins, and a mix of milk powder and soy proteins. Many taste testings were held to gain insight from consumers about the flavor and texture.[50]

In December 1998 a number of changes were made to improve the product taste and stability. This was instigated by the level of complaints and the fact that at the time, only one in three customers repurchased.[51] In response to the advertising campaigns, consumers would buy this new product on the basis of convenience and sales would spike, quickly followed by a period of stagnation as repeat buys dropped.[52]

Originally the repeat rates of the first formulation launch were only 28 percent, where 45 percent would normally equal baseline success.[53] The soy component proved less palatable, so the formula was changed to include more milk proteins, which had a better mouth feel and flavor. Hardly any milk fat was used, so this change from soy protein did not significantly impact the overall fat content.[54]

After Sanitarium reformulated the base, repeat rates increased to more than 60 percent, on par with what was expected of a new product.[55] At this stage the reformulated product was launched in four flavors: Cocoa Malt, Banana, Strawberry, and Original Malt.[56] Previously caramel, chocolate, and malt flavors had worked better to mask the taste of soy proteins, but fruit flavors were possible once the formula was based more on milk.[57]

A new standard in the food code that better suited such products as UP&GO became available in January 2001. Within this new "formulated supplementary food" code, a product was required to contain at least eight grams of protein per serving and provide at least 110 calories (550 kilojoules) per serving—both of which were easily met by

UP&GO.[58]

Another breakfast drink variation, Fastbreak, was developed in 2000 and launched in 2001 with two flavors, Berry and Banana Honey, along with UP&GO Coffee, which was withdrawn soon afterward because of milk crystallization, generally a noticeable defect for consumers.[59] In early 2002, as a result of product improvement, the shelf life was increased from six to seven months, which assisted with production planning and distribution.[60]

Some of Fastbreak's development work flowed through to the next round of improvements to UP&GO, aimed at improving sensory scores, which intensified in August 2002. Three new bases were developed and tested along with the current product, all on UP&GO Chocolate. Testing with new technology was also carried out to see if this improved the product. This major reformulation work significantly improved the product stability and shelf life, and led to all flavors being changed to the new base from May 2003. To improve consumer appeal, Original Malt was replaced by a vanilla flavor called Vanilla Ice, and Cocoa Malt to the better-tasting Choc Ice. Former senior product manager Daniel Derrick recalls that one of the radio advertisements at the time played the famous "Ice, Ice Baby" line sung by the rapper Vanilla Ice.[61]

During these early years UP&GO was continually improved, which was a key part of its successful growth.[62] The development team, led by Bruce Thompson, focused on improving the taste, texture, product stability, and nutrition, which involved numerous factory trials, dozens of formulation changes, testing hundreds of raw materials and countless pilot plant trials. All showed significant improvement from the initially launched products.[63]

UP&GO—The New "Breakfast of Champions"

The iconic "the goodness and fiber of two Weet-Bix and milk" tagline was first used in a TVC in 1998 and was a consistent part of the marketing in the early years.[64] As part of the strategy to leverage nutrition, the marketing team, along with Star Advertising in Australia and New Zealand, launched a TVC showing two Weet-Bix in a bowl morphing into a blue UP&GO box with a straw, a key communication that was vital in getting the nutritional message through to consumers.[65] This comparison with Weet-Bix proved a much stronger message than the comparison to corn flakes, as Weet-Bix held a unique market position, which helped consumers believe the nutritional value of UP&GO.[66]

The important next step to the consumer education message involved conveying texture. The analogy of two Weet-Bix and milk conveyed the idea of those ingredients actually combined into the drink together,[67] so a subsequent TVC filmed in April 1999[68] showed UP&GO being poured smoothly into a milkshake glass, to demonstrate it was not full of chunks of Weet-Bix as many consumers believed.[69]

Initially there were concerns that the nutritional claim around the "two Weet-Bix and milk" would not be credible. However, both the product and its marketing were based on containing the same quantities of key nutrients (such as protein and fiber), rather than claiming that Weet-Bix was actually in the beverage.[70]

Meanwhile, in New Zealand the product had been rebranded with new "bluer" packaging to coincide with the launch of the strawberry flavor. Imagery included a surfer drinking UP&GO and a simple strawberry milkshake. Considerable sampling was conducted at the time, through radio stations and sampling teams. Led by Jeremy Dixon and Colin Langhein, these campaigns were so successful that New Zealand sales reached close to 50 percent of Australian sales, despite the much smaller population.[71]

Product Range and Sales Grow

Sales in 1998 were approximately A$3.6 million, but despite Sanitarium investing almost the same amount in marketing, sales were stagnating.[72] By the third year sales had made a positive contribution, but were not expected to pay back for their history until year seven, because of the heavy investment and low sales up-front.[73] However, the investment continued, because every time UP&GO was advertised, the brand saw a boost in sales from consumers trying it and then an increase in the baseline sales from those who stayed with the brand.[74]

By April 1999 UP&GO showed very strong growth, fueled by the launch of the strawberry three-pack and the introduction of single variants,[75] in Original Malt, Cocoa Malt, and Banana.[76] The ranging of the single packs was seen as key to increasing the user base.[77] In fact, there was such a rapid increase in sales that more bay space was needed for the convenience category to reduce the out-of-stocks that began to hinder sales.[78]

In 1999, the convenience category grew at 25.4 percent, twice that of the Ready to Eat category, with breakfast bars and liquid making up 54 percent of convenience sales.[79] In 2000 UP&GO 8.5-ounce (250-milliliter) single packs were attached to packets of 13-ounce (375-gram) Weet-Bix as a bonus offer to inform more consumers about the product.[80] The same year, after creating new communications, the marketing team, led by Daniel Derrick, decided to take a radical approach to the media spend and diverted the entire television advertising budget to morning radio instead. This was a successful strategy, as demand quickly outstripped supply, which kickstarted the growth curve UP&GO has enjoyed since.[81]

Up to 2001 UP&GO had been typically a grocery-bought item.[82] Sanitarium had a strength in grocery but weak representation in convenience, so when the sales representatives appeared with UP&GO the buyers brushed them off. Recognizing they needed to make a statement with the product, Sanitarium bought five PT Cruisers and strapped surfboards to the roof. At the time, the PT Cruisers were unusual in Australia, so many people would come to look when they arrived at the stores. The team began sampling in locations for a week at a time. Customers, recognizing the product and associated marketing, began to buy UP&GO, and the units per store took off.[83] Sales of UP&GO expanded into the top ten of the breakfast category in 2003, less than six years after the product's inception.[84]

It was only in the sixth financial year, ending June 2004, that UP&GO broke even,[85] because of the net investment in marketing. Over time the product had reached the point where it paid for itself and its history. Owing directly to the long-term vision of management, Sanitarium saw a cumulative return, where many companies would have cut the product much earlier. The senior leaders of Sanitarium had demonstrated foresight, patience, and perseverance to keep marketing the product year on year despite not receiving the returns until then.[86]

Rex Sheehy, then marketing manager of Breakfast Foods, recalls: "It was exciting times with the support of the whole company—we were constantly running out of capacity because of its rapid growth and struggled to believe this growth would keep going. Constant improvement and keeping the brand relevant were very important. Pushing into convenience store channels was a challenge, but the commitment was there once again from the team to make this work."[87]

As demand grew, a new challenge arose: scaling up supply to meet that demand. Newer and faster machinery was implemented, but would only just be operational in the factory, and the team would need yet more capacity. The growth of the product was constrained by capacity to keep up with demand.[88]

By June 2003, sales of UP&GO were outstripping production capacity at Berkeley Vale, so a black box formulation (Banana) was developed to be used with comanufacturers. This allowed Sanitarium to use Classic Foods to produce UP&GO, while still protecting the hard-won intellectual property contained in the product recipe. The black box formulation was also used by Bokomo in South Africa at its Ceres production facility.[89]

In 2004 larger bundle packs of six were launched as a "buy five, get one free" offer[90] and a one-quart (one-liter) UHT pack in Choc Ice was also trialed.[91] UP&GO Caramel was developed and tested, which was a fashionable flavor at the time, had good shelf life and flavor. [92] It was decided to use this flavor for Energize, as it would complement a higher protein drink.[93]

Coffee-flavored milks are very popular in the Australian market, and the desire to compete against them was strong. The restriction to use only decaffeinated coffee made achieving a credible rich coffee flavor very challenging, and initial attempts were unsuccessful. Improvements were made from the initial launch in 2005, and a decaffeinated, coffee-flavored product remains on the market to this day.[94]

UP&GO Energize

In 2005 a 12-ounce (350-millilter) pack for the adult market was launched in Chocolate and Caramelflavors, with the addition of extra protein from soy, whey isolates, and skim milk powder.[95] This development signaled the beginning of the Energize subbrand.[96] At the time, very high protein drinks for males were being developed and marketed by companies like Musachi and Protein Revival.[97] Sanitarium's marketing team wanted to own the emotional territory owned by the leading brands in cereals, including Weet-Bix, Nutri-Grain, and Special K. The consumer insights highlighted Weet-Bix as the highest in "goodness and nutrition," Nutri-Grain number one for "energy/fuel for growing bodies," and Special K ranked first for "looking and feeling great."[98]

In response, Sanitarium developed Energize for the "energy" space and then a product called BFast for the "looking and feeling great" space, targeting women. The team ran out of capacity, so pulled back on BFast and focused on supporting UP&GO and Energize.[99] Sheehy, by then marketing manager Australia, recalls a deep discussion as to whether to call this subbrand UP&GO Energize or simply Energize, but the team decided on the former for credibility and investment efficiency. Growth was not as rapid as UP&GO, but the team recognised it had potential with the increased protein claim, and it also blocked this area from competitors.[100]

As the 12-ounce (350-millilter) size proved popular in the market, UP&GO Energize was packed in both the 12-ounce (350-millilter) and the standard 8.5-ounce (250-millilter) pack sizes. Energize Vanilla was launched in 2006, when Caramel was removed. Energize Mocha with cocoa and flavors was added to the product range in 2008.[101]

UP&GO Becomes Number-One Brand

During the 2007/2008 financial year, Sanitarium invested further in convenience store channels, particularly service stations, to grow sales.[102] Sales of the whole UP&GO brand continued to grow exponentially, reaching $100 million in retail sales in 2011.[103] UP&GO overtook Kellogg's Nutri-Grain and Weet-Bix "blue box" value sales in 2010, then overtook total Weet-Bix value sales in 2012,[104] propelling UP&GO to become the number-one breakfast brand.[105]

During the 2010/2011 financial year Sanitarium's trade spend on the UP&GO portfolio more than doubled.[106] Internal research showed that Sanitarium had been underinvesting in price promotions, which was hampering further sales growth. Once this was addressed, there was a clear correlation between increase in trade spend and exponential increase in revenue.[107]

In 2012 a fridge pack (12-pack) was launched to into the grocery market to increase household consumption, with research showing that if the product was in the home, it would be consumed. At the same time, supermarket chain Woolworths opened up a large bay to give UP&GO devoted shelf space for the fridge packs. The larger in-store presence had a significant marketing impact and the size and prominence of the fridge packs led to another sales growth spurt.[108]

With such success, it was inevitable that competition would arise. During the first twenty years of UP&GO, there were 19 competitive entrants into the market looking for a share of the success that Sanitarium was driving in Australia and New Zealand.[109]

In 2013, during a monthlong feasibility project, a small team of Sanitarium marketers worked out of the Florida Hospital in Orlando to explore a commercial opportunity to launch UP&GO in the USA.[110]

At that time the team noticed USA brand Quaker launch an oats-based liquid breakfast called the “Quaker Breakfast Shake” and experience early success. This was the first example of a healthy breakfast cereal brand copying the morning liquid nutrition promise that Sanitarium had been extolling. Quaker then quickly launched in the UK and the global threat of an oats-based liquid breakfast seemed imminent.[111]

Sanitarium rapidly developed an oats-based liquid breakfast, calling it Oats 2 Go.[112] Another major Australian food manufacturer, Dairy Farmers, launched Oats Express in June 2014.[113]

Kellogg’s had also entered the liquid breakfast market with liquid Coco Pops and Nutri-Grain in 2013, followed closely by dairy company Devondale[114] and Freedom Foods under its Australia’s Own brand.[115] These breakfast aisle competitors recognised the threat of UP&GO, which during 15 years had taken 30 percent of consumers in the space “from breakfast to beverage.”[116]

During this intensely competitive period, UP&GO fought the battle with significant advertising investment and in-store promotional activity, alongside brand loyalty and the low-cost advantage of the shelf-dominant fridge pack.[117]

These new players impacted somewhat on UP&GO sales, but eventually most products dropped away, as they did not have the production capabilities and experience Sanitarium’s head start had afforded.[118] While not ideal, it gave Sanitarium the ability to stabilize the supply of its UP&GO operations.[119]

Ultimately, the proposition of a liquid breakfast with the inclusion of oats did not survive, and all competitive attempts to dent UP&GO exited the market by the summer of 2015/2016.[120]

In 2016, 17-ounce (500-millilter) bottles were introduced, capitalizing on the lead format in the convenience channel and giving adults a more satiating way to consume the product.[121] This UP&GO bottle design was also recognized as a winner in the Product Innovation category of the Australian Brand Awards in 2017.[122]

Expanding and Improving the UP&GO Family

In response to changing consumer demands and dietary requirements, the UP&GO brand has evolved to include a number of new varieties along its journey. Studies had found that UP&GO was mostly consumed by males, so a drink targeted at females was developed in 2005. Light ’n’ Tasty drink in Berry and Apricot flavors was marketed as the equivalent to a serve of Sanitarium Light ’n’ Tasty cereal. It was first launched in New Zealand and then Australia and it contained 10 percent fruit juice. At this time, Light ’n’ Tasty was not well known in the market, and this product did not sell as expected.[123]

This concept of a “female drink” was revisited when UP&GO VIVE Berry and UP&GO VIVE Banana were launched in February 2009,[124] in a marketing campaign fronted by world champion surfer Stephanie Gilmore.[125] With the energy, protein, and fiber of two Weet-Bix and lite milk, both these products contained some real cereal in the form of oats and barley Balance, a source of barley beta glucan. The sugar was less than original UP&GO, and in later formulations the level of sugar was reduced further, when corn syrup solids were removed.[126]

In 2007 UP&GO Banana and Honey and UP&GO Mango Peach were launched, adding real fruit to the product. UP&GO Yogurt Raspberry was also developed but not launched, as this proved too expensive.[127]

Following the success of Gluten-free Weet-Bix the previous year,[128] Gluten-free UP&GO was launched in August 2015.[129]

In developing the UP&GO range of products, Sanitarium’s aim has always been to keep the total sugar levels as close to natural sugar levels that would be found in dairy milk.[130] UP&GO has always had lower sugar than most flavored milks and many breakfast cereals. It was one of the early products to display the Australian government-endorsed Health Star rating, which helps guide consumers toward healthier options, achieving between 4.5 and 5 stars out of 5.[131]

In recent years there has been more emphasis on reducing added sugar content, as the products have been reformulated.[132] For more than a decade, anti-sugar campaigners such as David Gillespie (Sweet Poison), Sarah Wilson (iQuitSugar), Damon Gameau (That Sugar Film),[133] and Choice Magazine[134] have been raising public awareness of the health implications of high-sugar diets.[135] Updated World Health Organization guidelines[136] and talk of sugar taxes in Australia and New Zealand[137] have further led to increased scrutiny of food labels and changing consumer tastes.[138] UP&GO has often been targeted in related media reports, particularly in relation to criticism of the Health Star rating system, and regularly lumped in with other sweet beverages such as Nestle’s Milo, flavored milk, and soft drinks.[139]

In January 2015 UP&GO Reduced Sugar was launched with a third less sugar than regular UP&GO and has less overall sugar than a glass of milk,[140] recognizing the increasing consumer demand for food and beverages with lower sugar. A no-added-sugar variety, UP&GO Blends, was launched in early 2018 after 18 months in development. It is based on fruit, milk, nuts, and oats.[141]

The idea of making a convenient liquid breakfast targeting adults came from the marketing intelligence that while UP&GO has good use among families, the brand was underindexing in adult consumers. Through market research, Sanitarium's Insights team was able to define key attributes of a product to appeal to this segment: a product that had no added sugar; had simple and recognizable ingredients; was satiating; and tasted great.[142] Another motivating factor for this addition to the UP&GO family was to anticipate the threat of competitor activity that would directly compete with UP&GO and Energize.[143]

During 2018/2019 Sanitarium's food scientists reformulated the UP&GO range, reducing added sugars in the products without reducing the nutrition and taste profiles. This gradual process resulted in 550 tons of added sugar being removed from the product range based on sales in 2019.[144]

UP&GO's latest development is a licensing arrangement with Australian-owned Jalna, to produce and launch the first five-star health rated yogurt in the Australian marketplace. An UP&GO yogurt concept was originally explored in 2012, but was unsuccessful at that time. Available in Vanilla, Chocolate, Strawberry and Banana flavors, the product is already experiencing strong results since its launch in late 2019.[145]

UP&GO in 2020

In 2020 UP&GO is the number-one brand in the cereal aisle in Australia, both in value and volume,[146] and the number-one brand in New Zealand in volume.[147] The combined output of the UP&GO brand across Australia and New Zealand would fill 20 Olympic pools annually.[148]

UP&GO launched into the UK in 2015 to positive consumer response, delivering the fastest share and market growth in the breakfast drinks category. It is now stocked in all major retailers in the UK, with more than 3.5 million servings enjoyed in 2018. UP&GO was introduced in the rest of Europe in 2017.[149] Although UP&GO currently is very new to most of Sanitarium's international markets, it is now exported to 26 countries[150] and is showing particularly strong growth in New Caledonia, French Polynesia, Fiji, Malaysia, and Indonesia.[151]

In January 2020 a new product called UP&GO No Added Sugar was launched in response to consumer demand, replacing UP&GO Reduced Sugar. Available in Choc Ice and Vanilla Ice flavors, its plant-based sweeteners provide up to 30 percent fewer calories than the original UP&GO range.[152] The key to success for this brand has been continual investment in improving and innovating the formulation, which has transformed UP&GO from an average product at its inception into an extraordinary product. It is a testament to Sanitarium's willingness and capability to experiment with all the dynamics, from research and development to marketing to category. Many individuals within Sanitarium had the intuition and tenacity to persevere, building considerable intellectual property into UP&GO and ensuring long-term success.[153]

The development of UP&GO occurred when an innovative idea coincided with a timely opportunity,[154] and a unique set of circumstances let to its success.[155] Such long-term visions would be unlikely to be supported by the supermarkets in Australia and New Zealand today.[156]

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