My/Mo Mochi Turns Ice Cream From a Dessert Into a Snack

Despite its home in the freezer aisle—and its ice cream center— Russell Barnett, the managing director and CMO of My/Mo Mochi Ice Cream, sees the product not as a dessert, but a snack. “A snack that happens to be frozen,” joked Barnett.

Barnett dove deep into all the ways My/Mo Mochi is taking the niche, sweet rice dough-wrapped treat to the masses with CPG reporter Paul Hiebert at Adweek’s eCommerce, CPG and Retail Performance Marketing Live Virtual Summit. Specifically, he noted, the brand is targeting millennial and Gen Z audiences who snack “more than any other generation.”

Those consumers are also more willing to pick up something they haven’t tried before.

“If you’re not a millennial, you’ve had a 50% chance that you’ve experienced mochi ice cream,” said Barnett, noting that the snack was common in Asian grocery stores and supermarkets. But, “if you’re a millennial or younger, the idea of trying something new… is in your DNA.”

Invented in a Los Angeles bakery in the early ’90s, The Mochi Ice Cream Company was bought in 2017 and relaunched as My/Mo Mochi. With a selection of nonstandard flavors such as black sesame and green tea inside colorful wrapping and emphasizing a playful mood, the brand claimed an 80% market share as of 2019 and is available in more than 30,000 stores including Wegmans, Kroger, Target and even Uniqlo.

Although the pandemic shuttered My/Mo Mochi’s experiential marketing activations—crucial to a self-proclaimed “weird” food brand—more damaging was the loss of the brand’s grab-and-go product, sold in “open bars” without packaging. But since then, about 60% of the product has returned to grocery

shelves, now in an FDA-compliant package. The return of the grab-and-go concept is crucial, as 70% of mochi purchases are impulse buys.

“It’s handheld, naturally portion-controlled,” Barnett said of mochi’s advantages as a snack. “Our job isn’t to calibrate people’s thinking. … We want to give them permission to play, to have fun and to be weird, which we are.”

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