

Amul starts Epic sales a day before HUL's premium ice-cream brand Magnum launch

By Ratna Bhushan, ET Bureau | 18 Feb, 2015, 05.26AM IST

NEW DELHI: Gujarat Cooperative Milk Marketing Federation (GCMMF) will be hoping that its new ice cream brand 'Epic' leaves a lingering taste among ice cream lovers when Hindustan Unilever BSE 1.50 % officially launches its 'Magnum' brand in the national capital on Wednesday.

This week marks the start of yet another year of battle among ice cream makers in Delhi, one of the top markets for the product in the country.

While HUL BSE 1.50 % has organised a big-bang launch event with actor Kareena Kapoor, GCMMF, according to executives aware of the company's strategy, is banking on the first mover advantage. Epic hits the city's stores on Tuesday.

Although media invites sent out by HUL said the event was to announce the launch of

Magnum ice cream in Delhi on February 18, a spokesperson for the company said in response to an email query, "We wish to clarify that Magnum has already been launched in Delhi and we will be continuing to strengthen our footprint going forward, backed by strong consumer activation."

Executives aware of GCMMF's strategy said Amul advanced the launch of Epic to get an edge over Magnum. RS Sodhi, MD of GCMMF, said: "We are responding to consumer preferences for premium ice cream... as category leader, we need to be present in all segments."

Both brands claim Belgian chocolate is a key ingredient of their premium-segment ice cream. While Magnum is priced at Rs 85 a bar, Amul's Epic will be made available at Rs 35 and Rs 40.

"Similar products sold by certain ice cream or frozen dessert brands are priced significantly higher than Epic; we are selling the same at

Battle Lines Drawn

Amul launches Epic ice cream a day before HUL's Magnum in Delhi

Amul Epic: ₹35 & ₹40

Magnum is the world's biggest stick ice cream brand

Magnum: ₹85

Both brands say Belgian chocolate key ingredient of their premium ice creams

Organised ice cream category size: ₹2,000 crore

Amul claims 40%-plus share of ice cream category

competitive prices," Sodhi added.

Magnum, the world's biggest stick ice cream brand, which contributes close to 2% of the total revenues of Unilever, made its India debut in Chennai two years ago, and was later extended to Mumbai, Hyderabad, Bangalore and Pune.

"This is quite like a cola war... this time the so-called battle is being fought on sticks (ice cream sticks). But it adds up to upping the ante of category awareness and infusing share of space not only among consumers but also at the retail level," said Harish Bijoor, promoter of marketing consultancy firm Harish Bijoor Consults.

Globally, Magnum is represented by leading actresses including Eva Mendes, Eva Longoria and Liv Tyler, and Unilever has positioned the brand as a 'royal'. It is one of the very few brands HUL imports and sells in the country.

Premium brands of ice cream are fast gaining popularity in India, with firms like HUL, Amul, Mother Dairy, Devyani International (sell under brand Cream Bell) and Vadilal fuelling consumer demand with high-margin and high-priced products. The country's organised ice cream segment is estimated at over Rs 2,000 crore, with Amul claiming an over 40% share of the market.