

Canadian Marketing Profile



Urban Juice and Soda Company

Consumers spend billions of dollars on soft drinks each year in a market that is dominated by industry giants such as Coca-Cola and Pepsi-Cola. Smaller companies hoping to gain a footing in the soft-drink industry must find new and innovative ways of marketing their products.

In 1987, Peter van Stolk decided to take on the giants by starting the Urban Juice and Soda Company. Based in Vancouver, Urban Juice and Soda contracted with beverage manufacturers in the United States, such as Arizona Ice Tea and Just Pik't juice, for the exclusive rights to distribute their products in Western Canada. Urban Juice and Soda's imported soft drinks competed with products such as Snapple and Fruitopia for a portion of the sales in the growing alternative (or new age) segment of the beverage industry. The consumers attracted to these products were health conscious, exercised more, and cared about environmental and social causes.

Based on the success of the products it was importing, Urban Juice and Soda decided to create its own line of alternative beverages, one of which was Jones Soda. In order to compete, the marketers used an alternative distribution strategy. They placed Jones Soda coolers in skating, surfing, and snowboarding shops; in body-piercing and tattoo parlours; and in national retail clothing and music stores. These were not traditional distribution outlets for soft drinks. Typically, beverage companies market their products through convenience stores or supermarkets. By placing the drink where youth tend to shop, the company was better able to reach its target market for Jones Soda: 15- to 25-year-olds.

But the marketers of Jones Soda didn't stop there. They also found other ways to attract the youth market, such as with their packaging. Jones Soda comes in clear, long-necked bottles with labels that feature a changing assortment of images designed to appeal to today's fashion-conscious youth. Jones Soda even invites its customers to submit pictures to be used on the bottles. Not only is the packaging successful at attracting the right target market, but the bottles also become collectors' items because of the unique labels.

Advertising is important to the success of any product, but finding the right kind of advertising for your product can be challenging. The marketers of Jones Soda do not use traditional advertising. Instead, they sponsor athletes who have youth appeal—those who excel in snowboarding, mountain biking, and other extreme sports. Representatives of Jones Soda tour with some of the athletes in a large recreational vehicle painted in bright orange flames and displaying the company logo.

E-commerce (or electronic commerce) also plays a part in the Jones Soda marketing mix. An entertaining, colourful, easy-to-use Web site tells the Jones Soda story and provides information about their products, including how to order custom-made, personalized Jones Soda bottles.



Unique labels, distribution, and promotion all helped to make Jones Soda a success.