

A thirst for cocktail culture: Blue Caterpillar on brand discovery and the RTP space



A snap of Blue Caterpillar's exhibition space at this year's Summit of the Americas

Although premiumization and the desire for exclusivity continue to top the list of trends in the spirits category within travel retail, [Blue Caterpillar](#) is well-positioned to capitalize on this want, along with others on the list. The leading distributor of spirits and liqueurs is at the forefront of category innovation and the growing new world whiskey segment. It was announced at the end of last year that Blue Caterpillar signed a distribution agreement with [Loch Lomond Group](#). The deal covers travel retail Americas, as well as Latin America and Caribbean domestic markets. As reported at the time, because of this move Blue Caterpillar is poised to leverage the expanding whiskey segment by introducing Loch Lomond Group's distinguished whiskey brands to a wider audience, capitalizing on the segment's increasing popularity and consumer demand.

When asked how Blue Caterpillar is continuing to tap into the emergence of non-traditional segments such as new world whiskey and mezcal, Michael Gebrael, Co-founder and CEO at Blue Caterpillar, said the company has been very intentional in regards to the architectural design of its brand portfolio, both in terms of taste profile and price point. The company continues to see strong momentum in the new world whiskey and agave space. In addition to signing contracts with whiskey brands from across the globe in 2023, Blue Caterpillar was named the exclusive travel retail

distributor for Mijenta Tequila in the Americas.

Since South America provides the opportunity to establish new styles, flavors and traditions in whiskey, the region has the potential to become of greater interest among world whiskey fans. According to Gebrael, Latin America has historically been a blended scotch market and the sheer volume of this specific taste profile leads the category.

“While there are markets within the region that have shown an accelerated adoption rate, consumers are becoming more interested in the world of single malts, as their knowledge of the category continues to expand. This urge from consumers to learn more about whiskey is the keystone to a full emergence of new world whiskey. Brand owners, distributors and retailers must continue working together, in particular for the education piece,” he says.



[L-R]: Michael Gebrael, Co-founder and CEO at Blue Caterpillar and Christoph Henkel Co-founder and COO at Blue Caterpillar at the trade show in West Palm Beach, Florida

Brand discovery and cocktail culture

Ready-to-pour drinks have been called a cocktail gamechanger. With this in mind, Blue Caterpillar is working to become a trendsetter in the pre-made beverage space. Gebrael believes that while there will always be a sizeable market for at-home consumption, the shift to this style of drinking will not become permanent. Because humans are, and always will be social creatures, he has a difficult time imagining a world where social interaction does not exist. “The process of discovering new brands and trends happens on-premise and that takes place while socially interacting,” says Gebrael. “At

Blue Caterpillar, we invest with the intention to drive discovery, liquid to lips and education.”

Self-described as bullish about the ready-to-pour space, Blue Caterpillar says cocktail culture is not stalling anytime soon and convenience is an attribute that has proven to rank high among consumers over time. Speaking about the company’s outlook on cocktail culture and the no- and low-alcohol category, Gebrael comments, “As far as non-alcoholic drinks, we see strong potential for the category domestically; however, when it comes to travel retail, we are staying on the sidelines. We want to see how it evolves before making up our mind about entering the category.”

On the ready-to-pour side, Blue Caterpillar showcased a diverse portfolio with various drink options at Summit of the Americas. Among others these included mojito, espresso and daquiri; plus, Anora Group-owned Koskenkorva Vodka as a stand out brand.

A look at the future

On a separate note, gin and rum experienced triple-digit volume increases in 2023. Blue Caterpillar saw impressive results for both; however, meteoric growth was slower on the gin side. Looking ahead, Gebrael points out when it comes to driving value growth, for example in rum, ideas have not been executed at scale and the category should anticipate that brands will move in this direction. “Gin, on the other hand, continues to have opportunities for innovation beyond traditional methods, which in turn should create further room for value growth,” he explains.