



**TOTAL INNOVATION: THE FUTURE IN A CAN**

**A WHITE PAPER**

## **Introduction**

The beverage can has come a long way in its 75+ years, and slowing down is simply not an option for one of the world's most in demand drinks containers. Can manufacturers have always innovated to bring consumers and industry more choice. This paper delves into recent developments, looking at the innovations that keep the beverage can at the cutting edge of drinks packaging.

## **The market**

Every day some 25 million beverage cans are enjoyed in the UK – that's around 9 billion a year. A large part of the beverage can's success is down to being finely tuned to the needs and desires of its market. The canned drink is a cross-generational product, appealing to diverse age groups.

## **Packaging innovation**

We have already seen so much innovation from the can over the years, from changing shapes to different openings and iconic brand marketing. As the following pages show, there's more to come. Here are some of the innovations launched or officially in the pipeline.

### **Resealable cans**



Making its entrance to the UK market in early 2010, the resealable can has so far been used for a number of energy drinks including No Fear, Monster and Burn. This innovation has been driven by convenience, allowing consumers to enjoy a drink on the move and be able to save some for later - a market so far dominated by PET bottles. It is believed that energy drinks currently lead the resealable can market because they are responding to the desires of their predominantly young

consumer group, as a recent Packaging Machinery Manufacturers Institute (PMMI) report on the beverage packaging market found: “Energy drink manufacturers see their corner of the beverage industry as a hyper competitive market driven by a young consumer group on an endless quest for something different.”

### **‘Grippy’ cans for a multi-sensorial experience**

Innovations in can design mean that not only do beverage cans look good and their contents taste good, the packaging can also feel good. This is thanks to printing and embossing technology and the developments of special inks for a ‘tactile’ finish.

Embossing has mainly been used so far to bring out certain elements of the can’s design, for example, to give the logo more of a 3D feel in the hand. Now we are increasingly seeing embossing that covers the entire surface of the can, giving it a 360-degree tactile feel and giving the brand instant differentiation on the shelves.



An example is Heineken’s launch of a tactile can designed to ‘mimic’ condensation through the use of embossed green dots on the can’s surface. Similarly, a manufacturer of a fruit drink may wish to use the can’s surface to communicate the feel of the fruit contents by giving the packaging the same touch as fruit peel. The possibilities are very exciting and mean that brands are able to put their own unique stamp on products.

### **Thermochromic inks for larger surfaces**

The industry has already seen the introduction of thermochromic inks that allow small parts of the can to change colour, indicating to the consumer that the beverage is at its optimum temperature for drinking. As of 2010, thermochromic inks are able to cover much larger surfaces, giving consumers that little bit extra convenience and brand owners an increased point of difference. Molson Coors has been using thermochromic inks as part of its marketing strategy for brands including Caffreys and Carling, and in 2010 it introduced larger surface inks for its Coors Light brand. The ‘cold activated can’ now



changes the entire Rockies Mountain image on the Coors Light logo from white to blue when the optimum temperature is reached. Additionally, the industry is now overseeing the introduction of different colours and temperatures which brands can choose from heightening the fun and useful consumer experience.

### **The can exuding aromatic scents**

We have covered look, taste and feel, but how about smell? The aromatic can is in development. Imagine walking down a supermarket aisle and being able to smell the aroma of blackberry or lime, or being in the wine aisle and picking up on a bouquet of aromas before you have even picked up the can – it is this potential the industry is working on. Packaging Europe says: “The first consumer tests carried out...at the end of 2009 showed that consumers feel the scent aromas to be a fun, new element that enriches the enjoyable out-of-the-can experience with the addition of an exciting detail.” Watch this space...



### **Cans in the shape of bottles**

When the aluminium bottle in went into production in early 2010, it signalled the start of a completely new design and drinking experience for consumers. The bottle has everything the can has – a fantastic sustainability record, shatterproof, skill at keeping drinks chilled and fresh, - but its shape means it is opening up new markets for can technology. The elegant bottle is ideal for clubs and bars and entertaining in the home.

### **Full-aperture ends**

SABMiller was the first to use the full-aperture end in time to be enjoyed by spectators at the 2010 World Cup and brought another exciting dimension to the can as fans in the stadium were able to remove the lid completely and treat the can like a cup or glass. This

product is ideal for outdoor events because it removes the need for caterers to source, collect and clean drinking glasses and it also means they don't need to install draught drinks pumps. SABMiller says of the now award-winning can: "The new can was devised to reduce queues at bars around the event, with a quicker serving time, without compromising on the drinking experience." Expect to see more full-aperture ends in the coming years.



### **The communicating can**

We have seen how tactile finishes and thermochromic inks allow the can to communicate to consumers and the all-texting can might not be the stuff of distant dreams. The can will, with the aid of loadable items and mobile phones, be able to identify the consumer passing the supermarket shelf. The text "Good day John Q. Public - please buy me!" will then appear on the can wall. How soon this technology will come to market remains to be seen, but with marketers ever focused on catching the consumer's eye and turning interest into transactions, the can's surface serves as the ideal billboard for such interactions.

### **Limited edition and special event cans**

Digital printing has come into its own, and smaller batches of cans such as limited edition cans and those promoting films are now able to be printed with their own unique designs going straight from computer to can without the need to make up a printing plate. This reduces the time taken to print cans and it means the technology is ideal for small runs where standout graphics and uniqueness are key. Beverage Daily says: "In the future, this could see people designing their own cans on the internet. A whole new level of individualisation could become a reality."



### **Uniqueness from bottom to top**

The top of the can is becoming an increasingly important surface for brands. As well as printing logos and competitions on can tops to attract customers' attention, the

industry is starting to see brands make greater use of ring pulls, not just for under-tab and coloured tab printing for competitions, but in styling ring pulls to match brand identity. An example is the Bacardi ring pull with a cut-out shaped like a bat, taking the Bacardi bat logo right to the top of the can and creating a memorable experience for the consumer.

## **Sustainability**

Innovation is central to the beverage can, but this does not stop at packaging. The can already has an exemplar sustainability record as an infinitely recyclable container, but the industry is working hard to improve this even more in the years to come. Investments have been made in energy efficiency programmes that will see:

- the use of natural gas in manufacturing decreased even further
- electricity use decreased even further
- even greater investment in modernising production systems to significantly reduce energy consumption
- greater modernisation of air compressors to use even less energy.

The industry has already seen a good decline in energy usage over the past few years, but it is only fitting that the world's most recycled drinks pack leads from the front in achieving sustainable excellence.

## **The importance of innovation**

It is clear that innovation will continue to be an essential part of the beverage can industry. Ideas are encouraged as the lifeblood of innovation. The industry's commitment to fresh ideas that really offer something new, an excellent innovation track record and some very exciting developments in the works all go to show that the beverage can *can*.