

Monarq reports a “super-positive” August as business picks up

Liquor distribution and marketing company Monarq Group recently added three new brands to its portfolio, Managing Director Robert de Monchy told Insider at the ASUTIL Conference in Aruba.

Monarq Group, which distributes spirits, wine and beer in the Caribbean, Latin America and the U.S., added Molinari Sambuca, Cachaca 51 and La Fée Absinthe to a portfolio that already includes Heineken beer, Fallini Lemoncello, plus other spirits and wines.

“We have added recently three new brands to our portfolio. Molinari Sambuca is the largest-selling sambuca in the world. The brand sells almost a million cases worldwide. Duty free is obviously a very important channel for this type of product. It’s the leader, great quality, lovely packaging. It’s a real brand,” said de Monchy, formerly general manager for Latin America and Caribbean with Remy Cointreau.

“Cachaca 51, one of the largest single spirit brands in the world, is the leader in the Cachaca category. We represent Cachaca 51 in the Caribbean domestic and duty free markets, and also in U.S. duty free.

“The third brand is La Fée Absinthe. For us, absinthe is a very interesting category, because it is something new. There is a story behind the whole category that people know. They want to try it. People that drink absinthe are the people who are in the know. I think this is going to trickle down to the rest of the consumer base.”

De Monchy said he is careful about which brands he distributes, making sure that none of his brands compete against each other,

“We have a large portfolio of brands. I would say a wide portfolio, but not a deep portfolio. If we have a lemoncello, that is the lemoncello we have. If we have an absinthe, that is the absinthe,” he said.

“Part of our philosophy is that we don’t only want to distribute established brands, but we also want to bring new things to the region, like La Fée Absinthe for instance.”

De Monchy, who started Monarq in 2006, says that after a slowdown this year the economy might just be picking up again.

“We started in 2006. 2007 was a great year. 2008 was even better, tremendous, huge. 2009 started off and for some of the brands there was a slowdown, not for all of them. It looks to me that since people came back from their summer holidays, they seem to be more positive. We see that in our orders. The last couple of weeks have been huge for us,” he said.

“I think if you compare this August to last year’s August, this August is quite far above August 2008 and August 2008 was probably our best month ever. I’m not sure if this is a sign of recovery, but for my business this is something that is super positive.”

Sobieski keeps on the move in Americas & beyond

Belvédère Group’s international core premium vodka, Poland’s Sobieski Vodka has continued to make important inroads in international and duty free markets over the past year, despite the economic crisis.

“Sobieski’s growth is going against the prevailing trend. Sales and listings are increasing in a declining market, which has demonstrated the brand’s fundamental growth potential,” said Wojtek Wydro, Managing Director, Belvédère Duty Free.

“Sobieski vodka, which has won numerous taste test awards against much higher-priced vodkas, represents an exceptional price-value relationship especially relevant in today’s challenging economic times,” says Chester Brandes, President and

CEO of Imperial Brands, which imports the brand. “Sobieski’s global growth has been impacted by the phenomenal success the brand is experiencing in the U.S. market. Sobieski reached record sales of 280,000 cases in 2008, its first full calendar year. For 2009, Sobieski is on track to reach 550,000 cases, which would break all existing sales records for a new spirit entry in any category,” Brandes adds.

In Europe, Sobieski Vodka has also grown considerably, and is currently listed with key players including Gebr Heinemann, Dufry and Aelia in Duty Free and Travel Retail, says Wydro. “We are now developing Sobieski in global duty free. Belvédère considers Sobieski a core brand in our duty free portfolio.”

Imperial Brands also plans to introduce Sobieski in the duty free segments in Latin America and the Caribbean.

“Following the success we have had in the U.S. domestic market, it won’t be long before the best selling premium vodka in Poland will become a strong player in this region,” said Tito Gonzalez, Area Director for Latin America and the Caribbean for Imperial Brands,

“We embarked on a campaign last year to find the best possible partners for Sobieski in the key vodka markets in the region. Today we are in six markets in the Caribbean: the U.S. Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic, Curaçao and Grand Cayman. In Central America, we are currently being launched in El Salvador, the most important vodka market in that region. We have some very aggressive plans for the brand there in the next year. Already, Sobieski has been listed by all the major chains in the market.”

In an exciting development for Sobieski, Belvédère entered into a multi-year agreement with world famous actor Bruce Willis, who will serve as the spokesperson for its flagship brand Sobieski Vodka in select domestic, duty free and travel retail markets in Europe and Asia.

Belvédère Duty Free will be displaying its full range of products and reveal its new upgraded packaging for Danzka Vodka in Cannes at stand H52 Green Village. Please contact Belvédère Duty Free: Wojtek Wydro at ww@Belvédère.dk or Torben Vedel Andersen at tva@Belvédère.dk for more information.

