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Profit from it

How a New Vodka Brand Set a Sales Milestone

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It's what marketers strive for: to have their message fit the times.

Long before the first economists began forecasting a recession, and the markets spiraled downward, [Sobieski Vodka](#) launched their "Truth in Vodka" campaign, with the pitch that consumers don't have to pay a "king's ransom" to drink a quality vodka.



The message apparently has struck a chord.

According to Impact, a spirits trade magazine, Sobieski has hit the 255,000-case sales milestone faster than any other newly introduced spirits brand.

Industry trends continue to be favorable for Sobieski. Recent figures from industry trade group the Distilled Spirits Council have shown that sales of super-premium vodkas are slipping, while premium-priced vodka sales continue to rise.

"I think that consumers are trading some of that image-badge mentality with the reality that their wallets may not be in the same shape," says Chester Brandes, president and chief executive of Imperial Brands, the Belvedere unit that imports of Sobieski vodka from Poland.

"By accident, we've caught a wave," Brandes says of the company's advertising.

Brandes says consumers are trading down, but doing it with care. He notes, for example, that consumers aren't simply selecting the vodkas at the lowest price point. Growth at the low end was marginal.

"I think that's somewhat telling....Consumers are not prepared to overspend," he says.

Still, he doesn't expect to see consumers skimp on certain luxuries.

"I think alcohol is one of the last luxuries consumers are going to give up," Brandes says.

Brandes expects to see a continuation of consumers doing more home entertaining rather than going out to bars and restaurants. Vodka is a spirit that lends itself to a variety of simple cocktails, and the brand has focused on building its consumer base off premise.

Sobieski is made from rye, just like rival Polish vodka Belvedere, but its price is significantly lower than both Belvedere and Chopin, another well-known Polish vodka. In fact, Sobieski costs about 65 percent less than Chopin.

Consumers should look for new iterations of the "Truth" campaign, which is known for its tongue-in-cheek one-liners, this spring.



