

New Product Launches in the Home Care Market: Q2 2014 Overview

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The second quarter of 2014 has, like the three months before it, seen plenty of product activity in home care as manufacturers seek to continue the momentum in the category. This summary highlights some of the most interesting new product launches and upgrades, with an eye on wider home care trends.

Sniffing out Opportunity in Laundry Care

After an extended period in which format innovation dominated laundry care, fragrance has been steadily returning to the agenda. In the UK, Unilever's Comfort Exhilarations has been re-launched as Comfort Creations, with three new luxury scent variants - Honeysuckle & Sandalwood, Indian Rose & Musk and Snapdragon & Patchouli – while Unilever's Surf has unveiled a new exotic scent variant, Surf Wild Flowers & Morning Dew. Likewise in the US, Procter & Gamble has unveiled Bounce Bursts laundry scent booster, added directly to the wash to give a long-lasting scent.

It was inevitable that the focus on format innovation seen in laundry care over the last couple of years could not be sustained indefinitely and that fragrance would eventually return to the fore as a means of differentiation and adding value for leading brands. With no fresh rival to liquid tablet detergents looking likely anytime soon, it is probable that the rest of 2014 will be seen out with fragrance at the fore.

This quarter has, however, also seen the US launch of Tide Pods Free & Gentle, targeted at people with sensitive skin who want a product free from dyes and perfumes. It follows that the arrival of stronger, more outlandish scents will create a parallel need for fragrance-free products. With liquid tablet detergents priced at around US\$13.00 per litre and standard liquid detergents at around US\$0.80 per litre, and huge numbers of consumers willing to pay the extra for the convenience the format offers, this extension was nigh on inevitable and makes tactical sense for Procter & Gamble.

Green Grows Increasingly Crowded

Much as scent is never far from the laundry care agenda, environmentally-friendly product launches are also to be expected, and primarily from smaller players looking to carve themselves a niche via their eco credentials. This quarter has seen French player Mapa Spontex launch the You cleaning product range in the UK. The range, available in France since 2012, features four trigger spray cleaners, made wholly from plant-based ingredients. Of a similar ilk, UK fairtrade pioneer Traidcraft has launched its Clean & Fair range.

With a steady stream of independent environmentally-friendly ranges arriving on retail shelves, it is difficult to see how any can make significant headway. What is essentially still a niche corner of the market is becoming increasingly crowded and now downright confusing for the consumer. Nevertheless, more launches are likely to follow and it is unlikely each can go the distance.

More importantly, however, Ecover – which has already proven it can go the distance – has revealed plans to launch a new formula detergent using algal oil rather than palm oil. With products expected to hit shelves later in the year, the new formula could drive a category shift away from the use of palm oil, an ingredient which incurs the wrath of environmental campaigners. The development is one to watch as potentially one of the most meaningful innovations seen for a long time in eco cleaning.

Hot New Launches for Summer

With summer almost in full swing, brand extensions with the great outdoors in mind are arriving. In the UK, McBride has launched BBQ Pride, an extension of the Oven Pride cleaner. A scorching summer in 2013 saw barbecue value sales in the UK grow by 5%, the second strongest performance in Western Europe according to Euromonitor International data. Should the British summer sizzle again this year, the product could help McBride's bottom line, particularly given the lack of competition from big name brands. With summer in mind, SC Johnson has reorganised its market leading Raid brand into three complementary –Raid Defense Systems– designed to attack, control or prevent bugs, a savvy way of encouraging multiple product sales.

Finally, Reckitt Benckiser will be hoping that the rest of the year goes with a bang following the UK launch of two new Cillit Bang products - Cillit Bang Drain Unblocker Kit and Cillit Bang Black Mould Remover. Reckitt's consistency in product innovation has always been one of the company's core competencies and despite going head-to-head with the likes of Mr Muscle and Domestos with these task-specific products, existing fans of the Cillit Bang brand may well be convinced to switch.

With the range of product activity across a multitude of home care categories continuing, the remainder of 2014 certainly

looks set to be interesting. Our third quarter round-up is due in September.

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