



Weathering the storm

TAKING CLASSICAL ITALIAN ICE CREAM WORLDWIDE, **ZAZÀ** HAS PLACED ITSELF FIRMLY ON THE GLOBAL EXPANSION TRAIL. RLI TALKS TO IVAN BORRIELLO, CEO OF PARENT COMPANY COMPAGNIA DEL FREDDO, ABOUT THE BRAND'S STRATEGY LOOKING FORWARD AND THE IMPORTANCE OF QUALITY ABOVE ALL THINGS

Renowned for the supreme quality of its product, Zazà offers authentic Italian-style ice cream 'gelato', made from natural ingredients and without artificial flavours, preservatives or colours. With over 60 fruit and cream flavours, there really is something to suit every taste; from the traditional to the latest flavour trends, ice-cream is served by the scoop, in indulgent almond biscuit cones or cups. The company also offers healthy lunch alternatives including milkshakes, smoothies, granola, fruit cups topped with ice-cream and other delicious snacks, all served in practical take-away packages.

And now Zazà has placed itself firmly on the global expansion trail.

Formed five years ago and currently operating in Italy, Spain and the UK, the brand is expanding primarily through franchising, looking for suitable opportunities around the world.

Under the umbrella of its holding company, Compagnia del Freddo, Zazà has two 'sister' companies in Materia Prima, a patented ready mix ice cream company, and Soff-Ice, primarily supplying customers that prefer softer ice cream.

The name Zazà was inspired by the

famous Neapolitan song 'Dove sta Zazà?' ('Where is Zazà?') So where exactly is Zazà?

"Zazà is at the heart of sweetness, where ice-cream becomes something special, and where creaminess and artisan processing are the rule. We took that song and the tradition behind it as a way to

establish a perception of the Italian roots and footprint behind our company," says Borriello.

"Our plan is to open a further ten stores in 2009, primarily through franchising though we will have a store solely

owned and operated by Zazà. Of course we operate in countries such as the UK, France and Spain, where we have either our own brand stores, as in London, or again franchisee-operated outlets."

With an expansion strategy that relies upon massive franchising, the company has been looking for partners in each particular region; there are no constraints, such as royalties or entry fees, though it does exclusively supply all products and machinery.

Ideal locations include shopping



IVAN BORRIELLO

centres, airports and railway stations, says Borriello, anywhere where people feel inclined to buy something cold!

"That said, we also like high streets," he continues. "Ice cream is typically a seasonal product, so we have widened our range to include winter products whilst still retaining our core product."

Given the different situations, Zazà is therefore suited to everything from own-stores to kiosks and concessions; something that is very popular in many of the emerging markets.

"Absolutely," says Borriello, "the so-called BRIC countries are our current priority, whilst we also have contacts with several very well-established companies in the Middle East that are interested in opening a number of new Zazà stores in premier mall in the Emirates; we are in advanced talks with one of these organisations."

In fact, most of the interest shown in the brand has come from Middle Eastern operators, who seem to love Italian ice cream and the offer that it presents. It is the economics behind this offer that is clearly the brand's key USP; it makes its ice cream in the very same shop from which it is bought, not only guaranteeing the very highest quality, but also incurring low costs and high margins.

Longer term, Zaza plans to reach a target of 100 stores over the next three years. This may at first appear to be an optimistic goal until one considers the ease and speed with which the brand can sign and open an outlet.

"It is a shame that we missed Westfield London," says Borriello. "That would have been fantastic. Of course there is still that possibility! Westfield, Cabots Circus, Liverpool One - these are the type of shopping centres that excite us."

"We are looking forward to very quick growth, provided that we have the right partners in place."

On the design and fit-out side, one partner that has proved invaluable is Design International; whilst it did not originate the Zazà 'look', it has certainly added value in evolving the design whilst opening stores all around the world.

The advantage that Zaza has is that its product is counter-cyclical, says Borriello. "I am not particularly concerned about the global economic situation; the real challenge for us lies in gaining fast access to the right franchisees and of course to the finance required to allow us to grow so rapidly. We are extremely confident looking forward." 