

Coke's Zero's got no chance

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SIR; Coca-Cola has a confusing number of brands under its umbrella. As far as I can gather, there are seven flavours: original, lime, lemon, cherry, black cherry, vanilla and raspberry. There are at least six content variations: classic, caffeine free, light, C2, sugar free, diet and with Splenda. And any combination in a dozen different-sized bottles and cans.

Sugar-free variant Zero, advertising for which kicks off this week ('Coke Zero ads aim clearly at the lads', *The Grocer*, 8 July 2006, p52) is adding to this confusion. At a time when many companies are rationing their portfolios to strengthen key brands, Coca-Cola appears to be doing the reverse. The company is in danger of diluting its core brand as its different variants not only undermine each other but will inevitably cannibalise sales.

Coca-Cola seems to be trying desperately to beat its rival, but it is fighting a losing battle unless it changes its strategy.

It can only rely on its distribution muscle for so long. Coca-Cola's last attempt at a major launch in the UK with Dasani ended in disaster and the likelihood of its success with Zero is zero.