

Regional News

Sanfaustino's Skeleton Crew Set to Take On U.S. Waters

Italian brand touts calcium content in low-budget Arena Partners effort

BY DEANNA ZAMMIT

NEW YORK Riding the wave of calcium consciousness in America, an Italian version of the world's most basic beverage aims to infiltrate U.S. gym bags with a print effort by Arena Partners fronted by a skeletal spokesman dubbed "Bones."

Sanfaustino, a 110-year-old Italian mineral water that hit U.S. natural-foods stores, gourmet markets and supermarkets in April, will launch a \$500,000 campaign next month that takes on a market dominated by Coca-Cola's Dasani and Pepsico's Aquafina.

Print ads from Arena Partners, a three-person independent whose principals work out of New York, Wayneville, N.C., and Los Angeles, will break in the October issue of *Self* and run through February. Using the character Bones, who appears as a realistic-looking skeleton, the ads tout the brand's high calcium content, showing Sanfaustino's distinctive green bottle against a white background.

In one ad, copy reads, "Now you won't have to bend over backwards to get more calcium." Copy explains that eight glasses of Sanfaustino provide 80 percent of the recommended daily allowance of calcium for adults. The target: so-called "healthy hydrators," or people who believe getting enough water is essential to one's well-being—a group that also made *Self* a logical media choice, said Peter DePasquale, a principal with Arena.

"This product is right at the intersection of those two trends—water for health and calcium," DePasquale said. *Self* will participate in promotional placements of the water in doctors' offices, as well as include the brand in its upcoming 25th anniversary celebration in New York.

"We want to change the way Americans think of bottled water," said Sanfaustino evp of marketing and sales Bill Sipper, a former marketing exec for Nantucket Nec-

tars, Fresh Samantha and Naked Juice. "In Europe, consumers buy the water for what is in it. In America, we drink bottled water for what is not in it."

Arena worked with Sipper when he was at Naked Juice, leading to the assignment for Sanfaustino, Sipper said.

Worldwide, Sanfaustino sells roughly 60 million liters per year, said Al Gever, CEO of CCW Holdings, the company that is distributing the water in the U.S. After four years in the U.S. market, the company hopes that figure will increase to 175 million liters worldwide, Gever said.

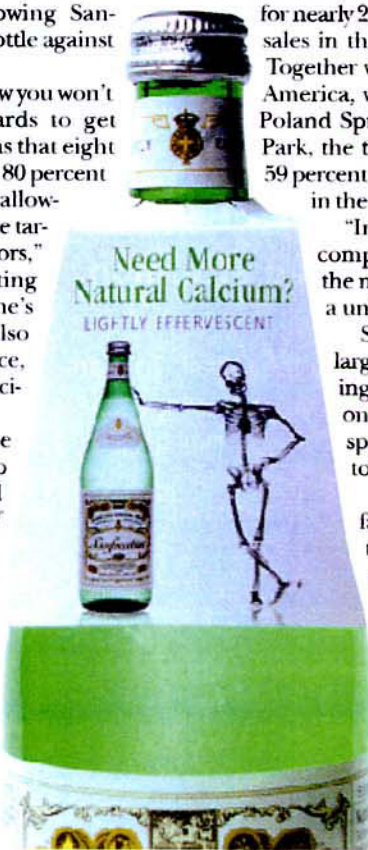
The proposition is an ambitious one, said Gary Hemphill, svp at Beverage Marketing Corp., a New York-based consultancy. While water sales are growing at a brisk pace—bottled water now ranks as the second-largest commercial beverage in the country, behind soda but surpassing beer, coffee and milk—the category remains highly competitive and consolidated among a few companies, he said.

Two brands, Dasani and Aquafina, account for nearly 20 percent of all bottled-water sales in the U.S., according to BMC. Together with Nestlé Waters of North America, which owns brands such as Poland Spring, Arrowhead and Deer Park, the three entities control about 59 percent of total wholesale water sales in the country, according to BMC.

"In order to be successful, a company does have to bring to the market a point of difference, a uniqueness," Hemphill said.

Sanfaustino lags behind its largest competitors in ad spending. Dasani spent \$20 million on ads in 2003, while Aquafina spent \$25 million, according to Nielsen Monitor-Plus.

DePasquale said Sanfaustino fills a niche between those brands and vitamin-enhanced products like Glacéau Vitamin Water and Pepsi's Propel. "Aquafina and Dasani are selling the category—they can do that heavy lifting," he said. "On the flip side, brands like Vitamin Water say drink better water but don't show efficacious amounts of anything."



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