

Baskin Robbins is most popularly known for its ice cream parlours, enjoying an 80 to 85 per cent share of the market worldwide



method ensures the product's freshness because ice cream is produced right where it is consumed," says Mehta.

Unlike other internationally affiliated ice cream companies, Galadari imports its product from Canada and does it as a conscious effort. Loya maintains that it rids him the hassles of worrying about production and can focus more on managing the franchise.

He adds that being HACCP-certified requires the company to comply with strict quality procedures which means that not even a tiny lapse in the cool chain is defensible.

"We transport and store the ice cream in a temperature-controlled environment," he says. There is no shortchanging the cool chain as damage to the product would be too obvious.

Also, the technology used in Baskin Robbins allows its ice cream to have extended shelf life – a reason why adhering to proper execution of logistics is never much of an issue for the company.

The region's biggest market for ice cream, Saudi Arabia, was worth about SR1 billion (US\$266 million) in 2005, according to a UK-based research agency.

While this is true, an official of Jeddah-based manufacturer Sadafco thinks the market continues to have enormous potential, with Bahrain and Qatar as the next best consumers of ice cream. He considers UAE to be a relatively small market compared to the "three giants."

Nevertheless, a UAE-based ice cream expert believes that the presence of multinational companies in the region can improve the supply chain by setting new standards, which will push competitors to level with them.

According to him, people have always chosen good quality products rather than large servings, as shown by the recent shift towards healthy products, such as low fat and low sugar ice creams.

Natural Ice Cream General Trading, makers of local premium brand Tru

Frut, has its business strategy geared towards this trend. The company sells the brand as natural ice cream, with all ingredients obtained from natural sources.

It offers a total of about 18 flavours, ranging from fruit such as chicoo, mango and strawberry to commercial ones such as chocolate and vanilla.

Rakesh Chopra, General Manager, defines 'natural ice-cream' as an ice-cream manufactured with emphasis on natural ingredients and with no synthetic colours or flavours added.

The company might be facing giant companies vying for control of the premium ice cream category, but he believes Tru Frut has its distinctive characteristics, and therefore has plenty of room to carve out its own niche.

"Tru Frut is a non-conventional brand – unique for being the only 'all-natural ice-cream' in the GCC today," says the general manager. The company imports fresh fruit ingredients from around the globe, with the large