
Valentín Martínez Gama

Naturalia



“ I saw an opportunity to create a unique and health-oriented beverage brand. ”

COUNTRY	Mexico
INDUSTRY	Consumer Goods & Services
EMPLOYEES	5
YEAR SELECTED	2003
WEBSITE	www.naturalia.com.mx/

COMPANY SNAPSHOT

Valentín Martínez Gama, together with his brother Pablo founded Naturalia in 2000, after several years of working in the beverage industry, where they identified this new market opportunity. **Their primary product, the Naturalia health drink, combines 100% natural active ingredients in response to an increasing demand in the market for healthy products.** Naturalia created a new niche in Mexico currently stands as the market leader.

The entrepreneurs previously worked for several years at Sabormex, a consumer products company with several leading consumer brands (coffee, canned beans, energy drinks) that was partially owned by the Martínez Gama family. **The brothers were involved in the development of a sports drink called Enerplex, then a new category in the Mexican market, which quickly became one of the leading sports drinks in Mexico.** Pablo was in charge of setting up and operating a bottling facility for Enerplex, and Valentín was responsible for the marketing and distribution of the beverage. Both of them gained extensive experience in these two areas and realized that there was an interesting business opportunity in the beverage industry. Sabormex's success led to its acquisition by La Costeña in the year 2000, at which point Valentín and Pablo decided to take advantage of their experience and start out on the entrepreneurial path.

Aware of consumers' international beverage trends and in particular of the acceptance of functional drinks, **they developed a beverage that took advantage of the following two characteristics of the Mexican consumer: the fondness of bottled beverages such as fruit juices and the tradition of Mexican herbal remedies.** This led to the founding of Naturalia in 2000 and to the launch of the Naturalia drink, a functional drink formulated with natural ingredients that provide solutions to ailments related to urban life such as stress and obesity.

Health drinks is one of the fastest growing segments in the international beverage industry. The Mexican Health Ministry requires that consumer products that contain substances with "proven medical properties" be subject to different regulations. **Naturalia is labeled as a "food supplement" and thereby must adhere to corresponding legal requirements,** including special labeling with nutritional information and certain slogan and font restrictions, **lending Naturalia great credibility among increasingly health-conscious consumers.**

Since its inception, the company was conceived as a "knowledge-based consumer products company" – Pablo and Valentín are owners of the brand's intellectual property, while production and distribution are completely outsourced. The concentrates are manufactured by an independent laboratory following Naturalia's specifications, while bottling is provided by a former Sabormex supplier. Naturalia's first products, Naturalia Embellece, Naturalia Preserva, Naturalia Sensibiliza, and Naturalia Agiliza were initially distributed by Nutrisa, a well-known health retail chain in Mexico. Today Naturalia's distributors include Krispy Kreme, City Café, and Nutrisa, and has launched two more Naturalia drinks and a line of energizing tea infused with fruit. Mexicans drink over 300 million liters per year in terms of health drinks, and this number is expected to rise annually. The first brand of its kind to cater to this new niche, Naturalia is well positioned to maintain its dominant market share in coming years.

ENDEAVOR AND NATURALIA

The Entrepreneurs have benefited from local mentors and an advisory board; specific support has included legal advice, key strategic contacts for the creation of new distribution channels, and assistance developing a communications strategy. They also benefited from the eMBA program, which advised on an expansion strategy. Most recently, the Entrepreneurs gained assistance in the area of new product development.