2013 Gold Effie Winner

"The Most Interesting Man in the World"

Category: **Sustained Success**
Brand/Client: **Don Equis / Heineken USA**
Lead Agency: **Havas Worldwide New York**
Contributing Agencies: **Mirrorball, G2, Starcom MediaVest Group, Edelman**

State of The Brand's Business

A Small Fish in an Overcrowded Pond:
In 2007 Dos Equis was a little-known beer brand from Mexico with minimal awareness and equally minimal budgets. It played in a crowded and noisy beer category, with 261 advertisers spending a combined $1.2B to compete for consumers' attention (Nielsen Adviews). At shelf, consumers faced with 2,700 different beer brands. Dos Equis' key competitor, Corona, dominated both the Mexican and Import categories in share of voice and share of market. (Nielsen)

2007 also marked the beginning of a shift in beverage category dynamics that would significantly impact the beer category over the next five years. Spirits brands innovated and barmen became mixologists. Wine and spirit brands courted and converted beer drinkers. Craft brewers began an explosion of smaller players. Every trend took momentum and share from mainstream beer brands. Between 2007 and 2012, beer volume sales fell 4.5% in the US (Mintel: The Beer Market Report 2011, Mintel: The Beer Consumer Report 2011).

In that time, the beer market became a good 50% more crowded. By 2012, the number of beer advertisers had grown to 382, and category ad spend increased to $1.8B. A total of 4,300

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brands were available on shelf, further complicating consumers' options (Nielsen, Mintel, The Beer Market Report 2011, Kantar). Within Dos Equis' universe, the game was no easier. Corona continued to be the dominant player in both the Mexican and Import categories while consistently outspending Dos Equis by 3 to 1 (Nielsen, Kantar Media Reporting, 2007-2012).

Strategic Challenge

Initial Communication Challenges:

Breaking out of the Mexican Category

Our initial challenge was to create a positioning for Dos Equis that could elevate it above the Mexican category. Research showed that people had little association with the brand beyond the fact that it was from Mexico, and this association did not evoke quality or status, rather the exact opposite. Furthermore, Corona was king of Mexican beers and we had little to say in the way of product differentiation. It was clear that in order to break out, we would need to find something to say about the brand that didn't rest on its origin.

Standing Out from the Crowd

Given the billion dollars of competitor advertising, it was clear to us that the most effective use of our budget would be to disrupt the category. Category conventions at the time revolved around frat boys, potty humor, frothy glasses and buxom beauties. Beer advertisers treated drinkers like dumb sophomores. Our approach was to look and act completely different from anything else in the category.

Connecting with a Promiscuous Consumer

Our target was a socially active and adventurous guy in his late 20s who was always looking for the next great story to tell. When we initially launched, our target was a promiscuous drinker, rotating an average of 4 different brands in his weekly repertoire (Millward Brown). He was an intelligent consumer who easily saw through marketing shtick, so we were going to have to approach him differently if we want to make it in to his repertoire.

Evolving Communication Challenges:

Growing sophistication among competition

Alcohol brand marketing has evolved since 2007. Our intelligent and aspirational communications were pioneering back then; but other brands have taken notice and have since become more sophisticated themselves (Heineken, Stella Artois) or introduced worldly and storied brand characters (John Jameson, Captain Morgan.)

Continue building connections

Our target hasn't fundamentally changed since 2007, he's just become more savvy than ever. His average repertoire has grown to over 5 different brands a week in 2012, reflecting the shift towards niche craft beers and the effects of competitive advertising (Millward Brown.)

Challenged by our competitors' emulation, and only marginal increases to our marketing budgets, we have had to continue to raise the bar to stand out from the pack.

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Objectives

Initial Launch KPIs:
Sales & Distribution: Double-digit growth, measured in case volume, significantly counter to the declining category trends. We were also focused on growing distribution, given that we were a small regional brand. This would be measured with Nielsen.

Brand Lift: As a new player on the scene, one of the campaign's first goals was to simply drive awareness of the brand, in our core markets. We've used Millward Brown to track this.

Trial: Our guy's promiscuous repertoire meant that we couldn't focus on loyalty, but rather overall trial tied to increasing awareness and distribution. Trial was reported through Millward Brown.

KPIs evolved once the campaign went national:
Initial Objectives Remained: Double digit sales growth and increasing distribution continue to be main objectives even after 5 years of the campaign. Awareness and trail also continued to be objectives after going national in 2009.

Cultural: Given that marketing dollars remained limited, we aimed to create buzz whenever possible by infiltrating pop culture and injecting the campaign into our target's vernacular. This will be measured with Google, Lexis Nexis and Cision

Insight

I'd Rather Be Dead Than Dull.
When we looked at beer commercials in 2007, it became painfully apparent that many advertisers believed that images of buxom ladies, frat boys behaving badly, and foaming, frosted glasses were the best way to sell. Brands assumed a fairly low degree of intelligence among their audience.

Our interviews with drinkers revealed that beer marketers underestimated them. They were irked by the clichés and sophomoric humor that were the staples of the category. They felt misrepresented and misunderstood. After spending more time with our audience, we discovered two important truths. What these guys wanted more than anything, more than hot girls and designer toys, was to be seen as interesting. And conversely, they were terrified of being seen as boring. Drinkers under-served by conventional marketing, and driven by the need to be interesting: we saw an opportunity.

The great recession certainly impacted on the lives of our target drinkers. We conducted online diary research with our audience in 2011 to check whether our insights still held. The proposition of more interesting beer for more interesting people was as relevant as ever. Post-recession, our drinkers rejected false bravado and sought real experiences to validate their own interestingness. (Now What? 'Blography' Consumer Research.)

The Big Idea

Be Interesting, not Infantile.

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Bringing the Idea to Life

Building the Legend
In place of Joe Drinker in a polo shirt with an easily relatable lifestyle, we created The Most Interesting Man In The World (the MIM), a storied combination of James Bond and Ernest Hemingway. The campaign put him in exotic and intriguing locales, and told legendary tales of his interesting life.

We began seeding the legend of the MIM utilizing TV spots that featured footage of his extraordinary exploits. The footage was paired with narrative "legend lines" recounting tales of his lore. The spots closed with a line that while seemingly heretical to marketers, resonated with our consumers as honest amidst a sea of hard-selling pitchmen: "I don't always drink beer, but when I do, I prefer Dos Equis." Finally the tagline "Stay Thirsty, My Friends" inspired consumers to join the MIM in living an interesting life. Complemented by radio, OOH and print, the MIM's legend unfolded across channels, surprising and delighting our consumers where ever they encountered it.

Start Small, Build Local Buzz
Our limited budgets and distribution meant that a regional play would create the most impact. While the campaign garnered national buzz almost immediately, it had a very local feel, and so took hold in our brand's core markets.

Expanding our Footprint
We created new radio, TV, and OOH each year to keep consumers thirsty for more of the MIM's legend. After two years activating regionally, we had become the beer of choice for many in those core markets. We knew we had a winning formula, so as distribution and budgets began to increase, we made the decision to go national.

Growing into 360
As we expanded, we also worked to align channels in the interest of amplifying the legend of the MIM through the line. Activations like a search to find an assistant for the MIM, the Most Interesting Academy, and the MIM's Cargo Hunt were designed to encompass all aspects of the brand's marketing plan including PR, social and digital, events, and on/off premise. The campaign was showing up all over, and with increasingly consistent and additive effects.

Making the Campaign Social
From the beginning of the campaign consumers were making and remaking their own versions of the legend. Parody videos, 'I don't always X, but when I do Y' memes, and Legend Lines were popping up all around the internet. We began harnessing this UGC by being one of the first beer brands to activate on Facebook, where fans flocked to our page to share their own original legend lines. Our community grew quickly and we were the first beer brand in the world to hit 1MM FB fans. (Facebook.)

By 2012 social media ran through everything we did. From Facebook calls to action at the end of every TV spot, to Twitter CTAs in the on/off premise, to signs encouraging photo hashtags on Instagram at events, and content from all of the above filling channels online, the campaign has truly grown to fit the times and stay as innovative as it was five years ago.

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Give the People What They Want
If we've learned anything over the last five years, it's that our consumers have taken ownership of the MIM and are very protective of the sort of things he should and shouldn't do. Our consumers appreciate that consistency. Focus group after focus group have played back the campaign 'rules' to us, keeping the idea true to our audience's ideals.

We have closely monitored signs of wearout with the character, message, and devices that have been in market. So far, there hasn't been a single sign of fatigue, and we still hear that focus group respondents can't wait for the next installment of the campaign. This has assured us that despite a changing economy and category, our core campaign still resonates.

Owned Media Sponsorship

Owned Media: We've cultivated a footprint for Dos Equis and the Most Interesting Man across the digital space. The first brand to hit 1MM Facebook fans, our community there has led the charge in giving our fans a place to rally around the legend. We provide a repository of our fans' most loved content on our YouTube page, and keep them up to date on brand news and original 'Interesting' pieces of content on our twitter handle. Instagram gives them a behind the scenes look at what's going on in the world of Dos Equis, and our .com is constantly updated with new promotions.

Sponsorships/Activations: We cultivate real world expressions of our Stay Thirsty philosophy so that our consumers can, through the brand, participate in living a most interesting life. Our main sponsorship has been with Tough Mudder. An embodiment of pushing the boundaries and living life to the fullest, we've built a great connection between an Interesting experience like running Tough Mudder and celebrating that accomplishment with a cold Dos Equis. Most recently we've created an activation called the Most Interesting Academy, which consists of a myriad of activities for our consumers to up their interesting quotient.

How do you know it worked?

Sales & Distribution: We achieved double-digit volume growth year over year all five years of the campaign, achieving +111% volume growth from 2007-2012. What's more, our average 16.5% year-over-year volume growth makes us the fastest growing brand in the Import category. We also drove significant gains in distribution, increasing overall distribution for Dos Equis Lager +47% since 2007 (Nielsen volume data 2007-2012.)

Brand Lift: The campaign has driven a +47% increase in total Brand Awareness and a 254% lift in Communication Awareness in our core markets since the 2007 launch (MB Q3'07 – Q3'11.) Since the 2009 national launch, total Brand Awareness has risen +8%, and total communication awareness is +13% (MB 09-11 national data).

Cultural: The Dos Equis brand and its MIMisms have become cultural vernacular. A search of The Most Interesting Man In The World on Google Images yields 1.75B results, while memegenerator.net counts the MIM meme among its top 6 most popular memes of all time and houses him in a section of the site called "God Tier Characters." Fans have produced millions of

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user generated legend lines and parodies have appeared on Saturday Night Live, The Daily Show and Real Time With Bill Maher. In the first year we went national the brand earned the equivalent of 600 million additional ad impressions and $38 million worth of free media exposure from parodies alone. (*Cision* lexis nexis) For a brand that started with basically no awareness, our limited budget produced awareness and affinity beyond anything imaginable.

A Campaign That Truly Worked: Most Importantly, the MIM drove a sales lift that followed lock step with the campaign. People don't just love the MIM, that love translates to Dos Equis sales (Nielsen; Google Trends)

Success Against All Odds: These consistent gains are even more impressive against the backdrop of a category that has declined -4.5% since our 2007 launch, and a consumer that is increasingly sharing consumption with wine, spirits, and craft beer. In an evermore cluttered category Dos Equis continues to buck the trend. The brand is no longer an unknown Mexican beer, but a brand that firmly thrives in popular culture.

Anything else going on that might have helped drive results?

Distribution rose by 47% during the life of the campaign. Distributor reaction to the campaign was extremely favorable and resulted in local distributors funding incremental network cable TV buys for first time in the brand's history. Tim Campion, Marketing VP of GLI Distributors in San Antonio, claimed it was *"the strongest work seen in the industry."*

This suggests that increased distribution was a function of the campaign's strength.

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