



Case Study:

Miller Lite - Es Jose Time

Year: 2023



This case study was prepared for the client Miller Lite for the Es Jose Time campaign to raise the perception and consideration of the Miller Lite brand among Latino light beer drinkers. It was developed and designed by alma DDB. The campaign won gold in the Impact on Innovation category in 2023.

Executive Summary

Miller Lite wanted to break into the Hispanic market by partnering with a reggaeton megastar, J Balvin. Miller Lite sought to maintain the brand's identity of valuing authenticity over pretense. To do this, they came up with the idea of sponsoring Jose Osorio Balvín as a person instead of J Balvin, the star. This meant showing him in his day-to-day life. In *Es Jose Time*, the campaign follows him going to bodegas in a relatable Latino setting. The Miller Lite pints were reinvented to be coveted collectible items. Latino consideration nearly doubled, as did retailer demand, while overall Latino share rose by nearly a full point.

Definition of your challenge

In 2021, Q2 showed Miller Lite dropping a full six points in US Latino consideration after two years of 2.5 average growth. Simultaneously, their 16oz pint was worsening in performance by 7.5% due to the packaging. This caused retailers to refuse giving the product any additional display exposure. To address this issue, Miller Lite sought out to reinvent their pint packaging to give it more exposure and a chance to grow volume in the Hispanic market. To do so, they partnered with J Balvin, arguably 2021's largest Latino celebrity, in order to jumpstart the brand's Latino brand health. There were risks involved with the partnership— J Balvin had other brand partnerships, so differentiation was not a guarantee. In addition, Miller Lite would not be the first beer company to partner beer and reggaeton, as Corona and Michelob had their own campaigns with the theming. With these risks in mind, Miller Lite had to make a memorable collaboration that would stand out while also fitting the tone of the brand. Their objectives for the brand included raising consideration among US Latino drinkers at least 6 points to make up for the drop in 2021, raising market share among Latino light beer drinkers, and improve the overall brand perception among US Latino drinkers as well as perception among Michelob Ultra drinkers, Miller Lite's main competitor. They also sought to increase shelf footprint for 16oz pints using special displays, achieve greater program recall compared to their competitor reggaeton partnerships, and generate at least 500 million impressions.

The Key Insight & Strategy

Latino U.S. drinkers are 63% more likely to consider themselves "adventurous" with their alcohol choices. This meant that "tried and true" brands such as Miller Lite are facing a new threat of being "uncool". To break through this barrier, the goal was to connect with "Duo-Culture Latinos." This group is made up of U.S. Latino beer drinkers that strongly identify with their Latin American heritage and non-Latino "American" culture. They have a desire to help their community, and reward brands that pitch in. More than half (67%) are either Spanish Dominant or Bilingual. Within this group, the campaign targeted the typical Miller Lite age of 25 - 49 with 30 as the target age. Among the audience, 66% had an opinion of J Balvin that was either "very good" or "among my favorite [celebrities]." This was ideal for the brand, but there have been many different Balvin collaborations. In fact, he ranks among the top 5 celebrities with the most brand deals. Additionally, celebrity partnerships did not align with Miller Lite's "no-BS" authentic brand. Other celebrity partnerships presented celebrities as otherworldly and distant, which made them feel self-aggrandizing. This insight led to the idea: Miller Lite needs a celebrity partnership that contradicts celebrity culture. Many brands partnered with J Balvin, but Miller Lite was the only one to partner with Jose. This partnership celebrated the normal people behind the celebrities.

Execution

The brand's tagline, "It's Miller Time" was turned into "Es Jose Time" to leverage brand equity while promising the real Jose. The campaign started with Jose surprising customers as a bodega clerk, including a bodega-inspired merch launch and a Closed for Miller Time community-help effort where Jose bought bodegas' Miller Lite stock so owners could celebrate NYE. The campaign focused on showing Jose's hangouts as normal Miller Time and not exclusive celebrity events. The new Miller Lite packaging used Balvin's famous vis-ID to attract shoppers, and the media was geared toward branding the new partnership and inviting people to have Miller Time with their friends like real people, the same way Jose does. The launch used the element of surprise when unsuspecting customers met Jose as a bodega clerk, and peoples' shocked reactions made for entertaining viral content. The partnership was intentionally anchored by noteworthy moments that created interesting stories. The Closed for Miller Time act involved buying out bodega's Miller Lite so that they could take the night off. Merch generated donations to the Acción Opportunity Fund that supports Latino small businesses. These moments made for feel-good press stories that supported Latino communities, which hit on a key Latino consideration driver. Digital tactics also added experiences and community support as incentives, while posts promoting the partnership and special pints led to a sweepstakes for J Balvin tickets.

Results

As a result of *Es Jose Time*, Latino consideration for Miller Lite nearly doubled to a 20% peak (from 11.9% in Q2 2021) after it launched, stabilizing to 19% over the next two quarters. Miller Lite's overall Latino share increased almost a percentage point, at

.76%— a bump that roughly represents an additional \$2 million per year from the Latino market. Retailer 16oz pint display orders almost doubled, increasing by 88.5%, while pint volume year-over-year increased by 2.9%. The new packaging also achieved twice the average consideration lift of Miller Lite’s retail efforts among the general U.S. drinker population, making the pint one of the brand’s most successful consideration efforts in recent memory. The J Balvin partnership vastly surpassed main competitors’ reggaeton partnership awareness. The 28% partnership awareness among Latinos doubled that of Michelob x Maluma (14%) and approached Bad Bunny x Corona despite the latter’s larger media presence. 72% of Latinos reported an improved opinion of Miller Lite after the campaign, with increased Michelob drinkers among them rating it “High Quality” (+15%) and “a brand I’d share” (+9%). The effort also generated 1.8 billion impressions, three times over the original benchmark.

Industry Impact

Brands are often quick to use celebrity partnership, yet fail to authentically connect to their audience in a way that resonates with them. However, this campaign managed to develop a partnership that stood out from competitors by targeting a key Latino insight: supporting their community. This insight was the driving purpose for the J Balvin partnership and fit the tone for Miller Lite’s authentic, honest brand. Es Jose Time is an example of a campaign where every act within the campaign could be tied back to this insight— uplifting the community, enjoying time with those with whom they can be their true selves around. This allowed Miller Lite to create new products like the redesigned pint and the streetwear merchandise that felt correct and authentic to the brand and its values. Using the connection of a real person instead of a celebrity persona was the partnership that reignited the relationship between United States Latinos and Miller Lite.