



Case Study:

PepsiCo

Year: 2021



This case study was prepared for the client PepsiCo to empower young Latinx to register and “unmute their voice” during a critical voting year for their communities. It was developed and designed by Alma. In the Mainstream Impact category, it won Silver.

Executive Summary:

Young Hispanics care about their communities, but do not think their vote or voice matters. With the “Unmute Your Voice” campaign from Pepsi, we drove Hispanics’ preference for the popular beverage through the marketing trinity: Big in Culture + Big Social Cause + Big Brand Impact. Talking without voting is like speaking on mute. Useless. So, Pepsi flipped the meaning of the unmute button by turning it into a symbol for the power of being heard. In a category where it’s often difficult to stand out, Pepsi did so by choosing to take a secondary role and using their platform to empower young Latinx during a critical voting year for their communities. We launched a call to action to register to vote and “unmute their voice,” a phrase that has become ubiquitous in global vernacular. “Unmute Your Voice” kicked off at the VMAs and inspired young voters through online concerts and first-to-market partnerships. The purpose driven initiative delivered — 91% of everyone exposed to the campaign reported likelihood to register to vote¹ and sales grew 10.8% among Hispanics.

Definition of your challenge:

The pandemic had forced Pepsi to continue with *Taste & Refreshment*, a product-focused campaign that did not resonate well with Hispanics. Because of this, among Hispanics, Pepsi was losing the battle against the leading cola competitor. The brand’s Likeability was 16 points lower, and purchase intent was 12 points lower than theirs. Even worse, brand linkage showed Pepsi’s efforts were promoting the category, NOT Pepsi. At just 35%, linkage was 28 points lower than the category norm and 23 points lower than Coke. It was clear that Pepsi was NOT on track to drive Hispanics’ preference over their rival, and needed to go back to its big-in-culture-through-music ways.

Our audience was young Hispanics who make up 27% of Pepsi’s 18-34 year old consumers, who are essential to their long-term success. These young Hispanics are bilingual, bicultural, and culturally influential. They tend to appreciate when brands play a positive role in their communities, and so we knew they would be “more favorable” to that brand (84%) and “more likely to be a customer” (81%).

The Key Insight & Strategy:

Younger Hispanic voters want change in their communities, but they lack the knowledge of the electoral process, making it difficult for them to participate in democracy. Among other challenges are:

- They feel that their vote won’t make a difference.
- Casting a ballot can be complicated - especially for first timers.
- For young minorities, it’s not a topic discussed at home, which creates additional disengagement.
- Too many forms/deadlines make the process unclear.

Despite gains in 2008, multicultural voting declined in 2016 — Hispanic voter turnout was just 47.6% vs. 65.3% of Non-Ethnic voters. This fact made voter registration in 2020 even more important. Pepsi realized that a nonpartisan message focused on their issues and the importance of voter registration was a perfect aperture to connect with young Latinx. We wanted to develop a brand purpose initiative that was meaningful and timely for young Hispanics, and 2020’s election provided the opportunity to connect with Latinx youth and inspire them to unapologetically unmute their voices. The brand hoped to create behavior change with a voter registration campaign, delivering positive brand sentiment and sales growth.

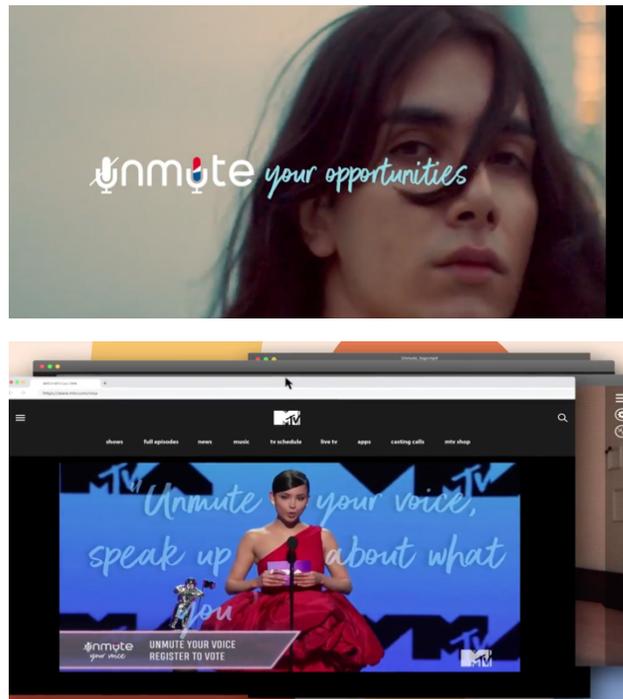
So, we knew our young Latinx audience is passionate about speaking out, but often don’t take the action needed to make the changes they wish to see in the world. We also knew fewer Latinx registered to vote in 2016, despite being

legally able to do so, thus muting their own words through inaction. 2020 was a year in which life itself was muted including family time, school, work, and social moments, nowhere more obvious than with the constant video calls that we all had to endure. This truth became the perfect metaphor for Pepsi to communicate the change it wished to inspire among young Latinx: to have their voices heard by registering to vote.

Execution:

We turned the unmute button into a symbol that shows the power of being heard and inspired voter registration. We leveraged Pepsi's rich history in music and entertainment to connect with our audience across media touch points. Knowing our target lives with phone in hand, we took the campaign to the platforms they love most: Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat and Pandora, spreading our message and getting them pumped for what we did next. We took over the most iconic night in music: the MTV Video Music Awards. And our Latinx target was there for it, along an entire generation waiting to be empowered to be the change they wanted to see in their communities. The creative ran in the show and across digital channels. During the show, Sofia Carson presented the artist, H.E.R., with the Video for Good Award for her song "I Can't Breathe." To demonstrate the power of using one's voice, Pepsi donated \$100,000 to H.E.R.'s chosen organization, the NAACP Legal Defense Fund. Following H.E.R.'s acceptance speech, Sofia Carson went on to encourage viewers to hit the polls in the upcoming elections: *"Make a difference in your community's future, in our country's future, unmute your voice, and speak up about what you believe in. Register to vote because your vote is your voice."*

As voter registration deadlines were approaching across the country, Pepsi and Rock the Vote brought together Demi Lovato, Chance the Rapper, Chloe x Halle, Saint JHN, Brett Young and Ava Max to encourage their fans to make their voices heard on popular music platforms Triller, YouTube, and Twitch. Pitbull even got into the action and encouraged more fans to vote with a concert on LiveXLive. As part of these concerts, each artist would "unmute" their voice during the performances and encourage music fans to unmute their voices by registering to vote. Beyond the concerts, Pepsi also leveraged the edutainment storytelling of LatinXNow to cover the latest topics relevant to Hispanics leading into the 2020 Election.



Results:

Post exposure tracking was clear: 91% of our audience reported being more likely to register to vote. That's a whole lot of Latinx voters unmuting their voices by taking action to affect change. Not only did we persuade them to register to vote, the VMAs initiative delivered 87% positive sentiment for Pepsi.

Even better? Our business metrics were remarkable too. The creative reversed the low brand linkage and category misattribution by nearly doubling our brand linkage and purchase interest. This, despite minimal branding in the work, goes to show that the right message will resonate without making the logo bigger.

Unmute Your Voice also outperformed SLTV Norms, as the Pepsi brand resonated with viewers, leading to a purchase intent 19 points higher than the norm. With minimal branding and no drinking cues, Unmute Your Voice achieved brand linkage five points higher than the category norms. This further proves that when a brand has the right message, younger generations will pay attention even when your brand has taken a secondary role.

Hispanic Penetration also increased +1.1% versus the prior three months, leading to a share increase of 0.2% (MILLIONS in sales.) We also delivered 1.5x the goal, overdelivering by 20M engagements and becoming the #1 stream in the music category on Triller. Although sales were not a main objective for this campaign, being a brand that supports young Hispanics proved to be successful in driving them. Pepsi saw dollar sales increase by double digits (10.8%) versus the same time YAGO. Finally, there is pride in having encouraged young Latinx to have their voices be heard through voting. Youth turnout in 2020 increased vs. 2016 and Latinx represented 22% of Gen Z and 17% of Millennial voters.

Industry Impact:

It's no longer about what a brand is doing, rather what a brand is doing for us: The success of Unmute Your Voice proved that consumers have evolved in terms of evaluating what a product and a brand are worth. It is no longer about quality and price, instead its social values, status and influence tend to also be evaluated before a final choice is made. At this moment in time, social values and influence are likely the most important for consumers, given the context we are living in today as a society. As Pepsi took a secondary position, consumers carefully took notice of it, leading to great results in branding, impact on culture and even sales!

Leading with multicultural vs othering multicultural marketing: Unmute your voice also proved the need to stop "othering" multicultural marketing. As we continue to see the growth of minorities, it is important that brands reflect the realities of consumers, while accounting for the realities of these communities and how they intersect each other. In the case of Unmute, an opportunity that began as Hispanic was quickly transformed to speak to an entire generation as similar tensions lived across an entire generation of consumers.

Multicultural marketing is key in connecting with consumers today: As we look into the future, consumers are becoming more ethnically and racially diverse. As they mature into adulthood, maturing into adulthood and forming loyalties with brands that can either make or break a brand. The success of Unmute in reaching younger consumers gives us a peek into what consumers are expecting from brands.