



Case Study:

The Coca Cola Company: Topo Chico

Year: 2021



This case study was prepared for the client Topo Chico, Sparkling Mineral Water to further expand this brand love to US Hispanics and mainstream millennials by inviting shoppers to discover Topo Chico's history through a digital activation based on augmented reality. It was developed and designed by Visual Latina. In the Shopper & Experiential Excellence category, it won bronze.

Executive Summary:

2020 was the 125th anniversary for Topo Chico (TC), an imported sparkling mineral water that is bottled at Source in Monterrey, Mexico. There is a cult following of TC in select markets with established distribution and concentration of Hispanic consumers, but this presented an opportunity to drive awareness and trial among a broader consumer through launching a national anniversary campaign. Given its origin, US Hispanics have an emotional connection and familiarity with TC, however the brand wanted to further expand this brand love to mainstream millennials. Brand heritage is extremely important for these consumers, they value brands that have been around for years and want to see the story behind a product⁽¹⁾ They seek products with values like authenticity and local sourcing⁽²⁾

Harnessing this consumer insight, we created an omnichannel strategy that relied on the brand's origin story and communicated how it is "from the source." Knowing the brand was releasing commemorative edition bottle labels, we proposed an AR experience tied to scanning these labels that would achieve the goals of driving brand engagement and sales. 7.2 Million multipacks were produced and sold with the QR experience, resulting in exponential growth and COD in mainstream retailers and Hispanic independents nationwide.

Definition of your Challenge:

One challenge was how to activate an in-and-out brand promotion during the highly active (and competitive) summer retail season. We needed to launch a sales-driving program that appealed to all Millennials - inclusive of US Hispanics - while at the same time not tying our program to proof of purchase and not communicating it through traditional, above the line channels or media. We had to rely solely on in-store activation, very minor brand social media awareness, and word of mouth/buzz.

To meet our challenges, we needed to develop a communications strategy that was culturally relevant, and a digital experience that was user-friendly and boasted content that was interesting enough that retailers would activate and shoppers would participate. We decided to create 5 short video vignettes that showcased the brand's history tied to each vintage bottle label's year. In order to transmit the most authentic version of the brand's history, we personally traveled to Monterrey, MX and visited the Topo Chico Museum and Plant, speaking firsthand to dedicated employees and capturing behind the scenes footage that would fuel our digital video content. We knew the importance of staying true to the brand's essence, *inviting* consumers to learn about TC and not taking a traditional commercial "in your face" marketing approach.

Our defined core target was US Hispanic and mainstream millennials age 18-30 y/o.

We set the following KPIs for our in-store activation: retailer participation in the campaign, increased COD and increased sales during summer activation time period (all vs. YOY). For our digital AR activation: Total visits to experience, conversion rate, % completion of experience.

The Key Insight & Strategy:

The unique aspect of this campaign is that there was not an official client brief: we created a proactive proposal understanding the unique opportunity of activating something special at retail during an anniversary year, and exploiting the commemorative edition labels being produced through a holistic communications and experiential campaign. Based on previous research conducted in the US (including focus groups) we knew that the brand had a dedicated following and deep brand love. They may have been introduced to the brand from a friend, discovered it on their own, or knew of the brand if they were exposed to it in Mexico. Consumers like how transparent the brand has always been and the fact that it is from the source, but may not have been fully aware of the brand's roots and legacy. This campaign gave us the unique opportunity of sharing with these avid brand followers a piece of the history of the brand they love.

We understood by research that connecting through authenticity and storytelling around the brand origin is a big component, which led us to our communications strategy and concept, "true to the source". When users interacted with the bottle labels through our experience, they could literally go back in history, or back to the source. Our campaign is

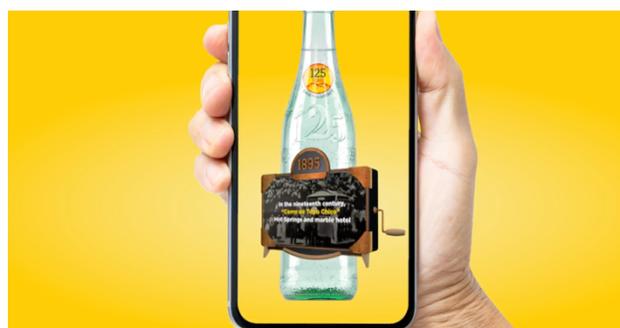
supported by some of these primary consumer insights: *They find a story of a product more impactful than advertising.* ⁽⁴⁾ *They seek immersive, multisensory experiences, and are interested in trying “anything new or different.”* ⁽⁵⁾ Given our activation experience was tied directly to the limited-edition commemorative labels being produced, this was activated primarily at large stores where the 4-pack and 12-pack cases are sold. Retailers included mainstream (i.e. Wal-Mart, Kroger) with a high portion of the activation occurring at regional Hispanic chains and independents (i.e. Lewis Food Town, Fiesta). A larger list can be found in the last question.

Execution:

We know that brand authenticity, strong storytelling and personalization are the attributes millennials value most ⁽³⁾. The campaign idea, “True to the Source”, communicated the essence of Topo Chico as being an authentic brand, and being a product made at the source. These were key attributes to communicate to our target consumer, and also differentiated the brand from competitive sparkling water brands with artificial ingredients or not created at source. It was important to connect to the commemorative bottle labels by sharing the brand’s origin and Mexican roots, so we used storytelling through our messaging and the original video content we produced for each AR experience video vignette.

The activation was straightforward: shoppers would scan a QR code on the limited-edition packaging (we designed and wrote a copy for the case and 4-pack), which would open the experience on their phones. They were invited to then scan a commemorative label on the glass bottles inside, which would begin the AR experience and bring the label to life. Shoppers would watch a short video that described the brand’s history from that label’s year and have the opportunity to share – or scan a new label – once finished.

To have a consistent iconic visual identity of the anniversary campaign, we created a “125 year” logo with our core message of “True to the Source” that was used across all creative executions (physical and digital). The omnichannel activation was supported by in-store POS, customized packaging, commemorative bottle label designs, social media posts, brand website page takeover, merchandising display items, dealer loaders and brand swag.



Results:

Commercial results: 6.6 Million 12 packs and 610,000 4 packs were produced with the QR code experience. All products that were produced were sold. The program was originally slated to be activated May – August 2020, however given the rapid sell-out of product and excitement by the system to activate, the program was extended 3 months through November 2020. The following list of retailers are a sample of those that participated, showing a nationwide commitment to the program and allowing Topo Chico to expand its presence beyond Hispanic retailer accounts to major mainstream as well. Retailers saw exponential growth and secured huge footprints allowing for large displays and COD promoting the program beyond the typical 4-week in-and-out period of a standard promotion.

Fiesta, HEB, Kroger, Ralphps, King Soopers, Lewis Food Town, Sellers Brothers, Supermercados Teloloapan, Pete's Market, Wal-Mart, El Sol Supermarket, Farmers market City, Nan Dae Mun, Savers Cost Plus.

This campaign was launched during the COVID-19 Pandemic and brand-wide communications went “dark” on social media. However, with close to zero external promotions or above the line media communications, this program still flourished with major in-store activation and sales lift. TC was able to gain a foothold in new markets and drive awareness to both US Hispanic and total market consumers given the cultural relevance of the communications and the authentic engagement of the digital experience.

Digital experience results:

35,133 total experiences

1.2 average experiences per user

Over 99% conversion rate

47% finished experience

The digital results tell us that users were engaged in the content, given they spent 1 minute 36 seconds on average per experience (meaning they did not drop off after initial scan) and there was repeat participation. The conversion rate at 99% shows us that once users started interacting with the bottle upon first scan, they almost always continued on through the experience.

This was a pilot program for Topo Chico, relying almost exclusively on in-store activation (POS communication) and consumer word of mouth. The brand was able to prove that it could deliver a strong, omnichannel program and both exceed sales and retailer engagement, amidst a global crisis and no media support. Overall, this program was deemed a success for the client and a valuable benchmark for future activations as they continue to communicate their authentic heritage and differentiated proposition of being “from the source” to new markets and consumers across the US, never leaving behind their non-traditional approach or roots.

Industry Impact:

Industry learnings:

Multicultural millennials are craving authentic connections with brands and brand stories. People are willing to engage through technology only when it's worth it for them (i.e. the content must be appealing, incentivizing them to participate and share with others).

We could have run a promotional campaign for the brand to celebrate the 125th anniversary based on transactions, volume and discounts, but instead decided to invest in brand building (which has a longer-term payoff with consumers and fuels brand loyalty/selection.)

Another learning is that it is valuable to take a risk and pilot a non-traditional activation in order to gauge the response with consumers and the salesforce. TC was able to understand what type of activation materials that retailers wanted to

execute, what messaging resonated, and what type of content consumers found engaging enough to interact with in a digital environment.

Understanding of multiculturalism:

The link to heritage and the Mexican origin of this brand played a huge role in this initiative. We can assume that many Hispanic Americans that know the brand from before may have felt proud/nostalgic of seeing the brand celebrated in the US for its 125th anniversary.

For us it was important to use Hispanic retailer accounts as a validation channel for this campaign and brand resonance among US Hispanics, so we ensured the campaign was sold in and activated first in those venues. Multicultural (or Hispanic) consumers are not a “one size fits all” segment and it is important to ensure the communications approach has cultural resonance and inclusivity. We had activated bilingual materials previously to attract Hispanic millennials, but through consumer testing realized that English was actually the preferred method of communication. By relying on consumer research and understanding common insights among our target consumer as the foundation of everything we did, we could build a program that did not alienate but instead invited participation and fueled widespread brand love.