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Budweiser: Taking back the “AmeriCan” summer

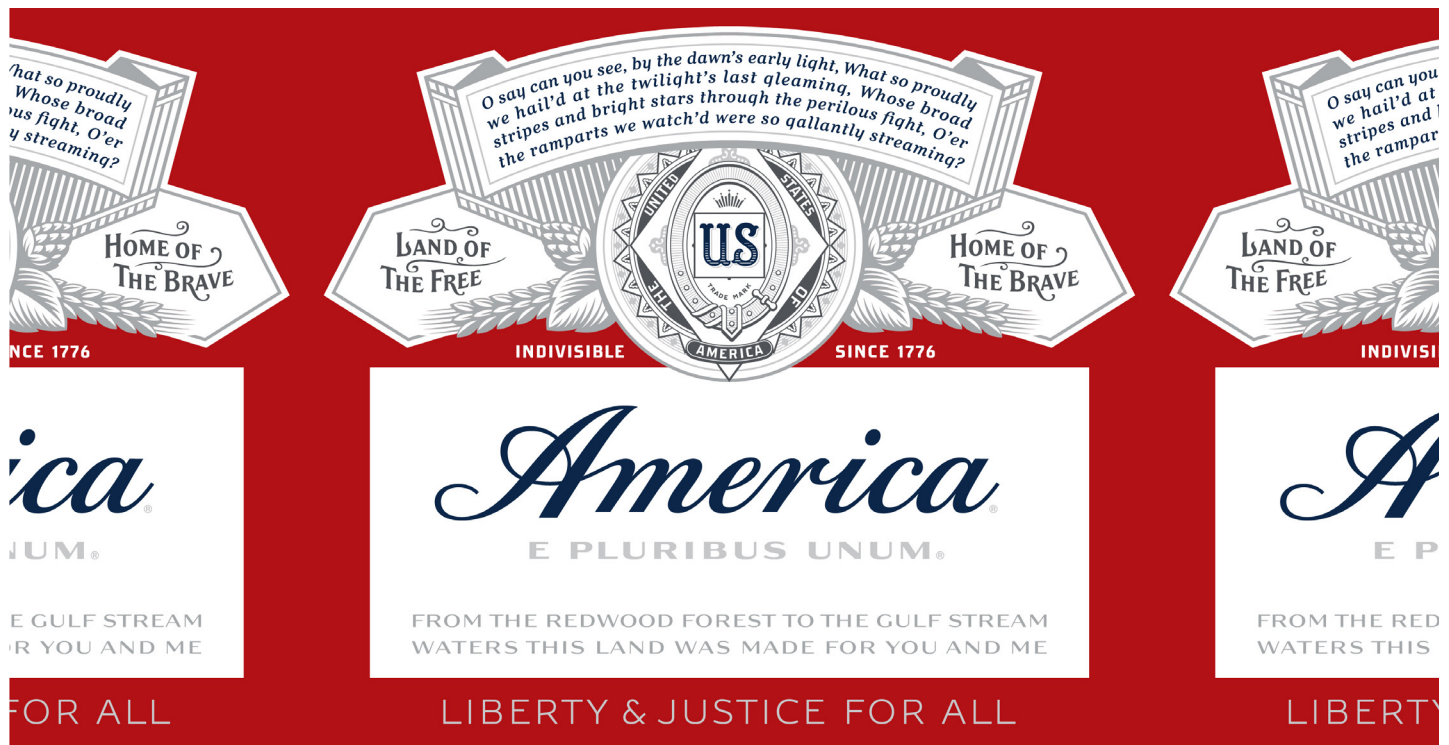
AB InBev

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Executive summary



Taking back the “AmeriCan” summer

Few brands embody an image of Americana quite like Budweiser. A brand steeped in heritage but for the past 27 years, has seen a steady decline in sales in its largest market, the U.S.

Enter Summer in the U.S., historically the season with the biggest sales for the beer category. Summer 2016 was especially interesting - the heated crescendo of a Presidential Election, human achievement re-defined at the Rio Olympics, the U.S. National Soccer Team winning the hearts and minds of the nation at the Copa America Centennial. This was a time when American national identity was debated, re-evaluated, glorified and celebrated.

There was a lot of noise to cut through. Budweiser needed a strong point of view.

The mission?

Make a bold statement.

Regain relevance.

Reverse the sales slump.

Steal the conversation.

With a limited edition packaging design in-hand, Budweiser dominated the discussion when the AmeriCan design went public in early May. Coverage hit 1.6 billion total earned impressions worldwide. But it was more than talk value. The AmeriCan halted and reversed Budweiser's sales decline.

“We rebranded Budweiser, America, because there is only one beer brand in this world that can represent the past values of the U.S. We got 1.6 billion impressions around the world, not just in the U.S., but around the world, and that tells you that you have a very provocative idea.”

Jorn Socquet
VP Marketing, Global,
AB InBev

Project overview

Outline of project brief

Many brands activate limited edition Summer packaging in the U.S. to capitalise on Memorial Day, BBQs, July 4th and every pool party in-between.

Our task was to develop a packaging design that would allow Budweiser to rise above the competition while utilising an activation so newsworthy, it would spark conversation and demand a second-look for those who hadn't considered the brand.

Business objectives

Steal the conversation: Create an idea that would instantly generate vast amounts of buzz and mentions on media channels globally.

Be big, be bold: Cut through the clutter of noise from both the presidential election and the summer Olympic games by embracing the brand's true ethos and achieving an emotional connection with new and old consumers.

Reverse the decline: Sparking conversation wasn't the only goal. The AmeriCan needed to stop the sales decline – and reverse it.



Description

Budweiser is a filtered pale lager produced by Anheuser-Busch, part of the multinational corporation Anheuser-Busch InBev. The brand was launched in 1876 by Carl Conrad & Co. of St. Louis, Missouri and it has grown to become one of the highest selling beers in the U.S., available in over 80 markets globally.

Launch date:
May 2016

The AmeriCan was a summer limited edition campaign that was in market for five months.

Market overview

Founded in 1872 in St. Louis, Missouri, Budweiser has enjoyed over 140 years of being America's beer. But in the past few decades, factors within the alcoholic beverage marketplace have challenged Budweiser's share-of-throat.

1. Macro vs Micro

The beer category is experiencing a dramatic shift in product offerings and young drinkers are taking note. No longer were big brands like Budweiser and Bud Light the kings. Their position is being challenged by smaller, craft beers. Niche breweries specialising in unique flavours and infusions bursting with personality came on the scene, the highest number of craft brewers since the 1880s.* And Millennial consumers, craving unique experiences and personalised craft, leapt at the chance to drink the peach-pumpkin-ales and the hoppy, caramel infused-mocha-IPAs. The novelty of it all was too much to resist and Budweiser is fighting the battle against these smaller, more nimble and unique breweries.

* (Source, CNBC; "It's official: Craft brewers are now beating big beer" Chris Morris, Sunday, 2 Mar 2014)

2. Share-of-Throat Against Wine and Spirits

Craft brewers are not the only entity threatening the macro breweries. Changing consumer tastes are shifting dollars away from beer and into the hands of wine and spirits. According to the Distilled Spirits Council of the United States, the spirits industry set a record year of growth in 2016 with supplier sales up 4.5 percent to \$25.2 billion. Wine's market share has held consistent over the years. Meanwhile beer is losing its footing as America's favourite alcoholic beverage, losing 3.5% of its market share in 2016. Budweiser needed to convince consumers that it was the perfect drink of choice for Summer 2016.

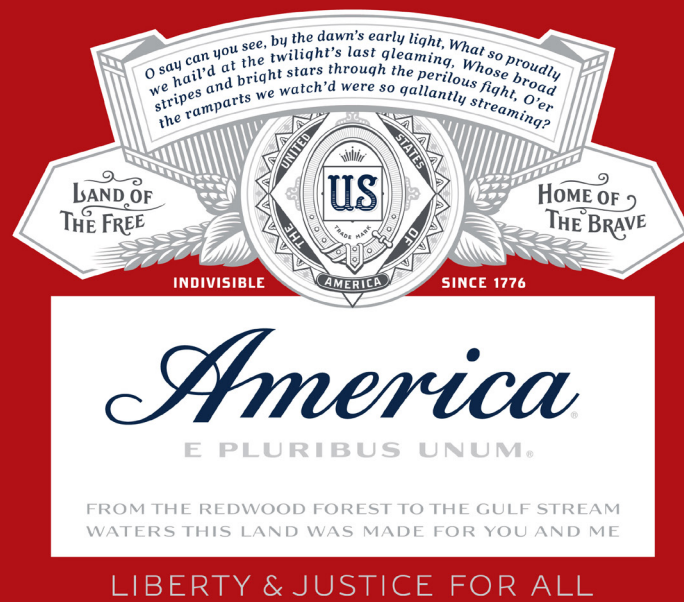
(Source, Fox News; "Spirits industry taking market share from beer for 7th straight year, data shows," Sunday, 8 Feb 2017)

Ultimately, the AmeriCan packaging was about making an impossible-to-ignore statement about Budweiser and about America: Budweiser is America. America is Budweiser. What better way to commemorate the ‘most American Summer ever’ than to literally hold America in your hand?

Replacing Budweiser’s brand name on the primary packaging with America was a bold statement. But the packaging didn’t stop there. Throughout the can’s design, Budweiser changed its dress to signal an unwavering ode to the country. America is in your hands. This Bud’s For You.



Outline of design solution



The design solution of the primary packaging was carefully considered from the largest change to the smallest detail:

“Budweiser” to “America”

Removing the name of our brand was a bold move... hence, the replacement needed to make a bold statement about who Budweiser is as a brand. America was the answer. Summer 2016 is all about America... a celebration of the most American Summer ever and a chance to decide who we want to be as a nation.

“King of Beers” to “E Pluribus Unum”

On the core Budweiser label, King of Beers qualifies Budweiser as the best, the king. We needed an equally bold qualifier for “America.” We chose E Pluribus Unum “Out of many, one”, a nod to the many states that come together to make our great nation. Additionally, a subtle commentary on our competitors; there are many beers out there... but only one Budweiser.

“AB” to “US”

A simple change to bring the point home in a small space. US worked perfectly.

“Africa, Australia, Europe, Asia, America” to “The United States of America”

This area of the label speaks to Budweiser’s geographical reach as a global brand. We wanted to mimic this geographical commentary but focus on the U.S. specifically.

“This is the famous Budweiser beer...” to lyrics from the Star Spangled Banner

The Star Spangled Banner is a classic American song and an ode to our flag. The intent of using the song was two-fold: to pay homage to a classic piece of Americana and to nod to our stars and stripes, that when brought together form our flag

– the same way our secondary packaging comes together in-store to form an abstract flag.

“Brewed by our original process...” to lyrics from Woody Guthrie’s “This Land is Your Land”

This area of the core Budweiser label communicates quality by listing all of the ingredients that make Budweiser great. It’s proof of quality. In that same vein, Woody Guthrie’s song is a celebration of all the things that make America great. It’s the ingredients that come together to form the fabric of our country.

“Trademark” to “Indivisible” & “Registered” changed to “Since 1776”

Trademark and Registered speaks to Budweiser’s commercial credentials. We replaced that with something that speaks to America’s credentials as a nation. Indivisible speaks to the unity of the states and 1776 is the year we were established as a nation.

“Anheuser-Busch, Inc.” to “Liberty & Justice For All”

AB, Inc. is our signoff. It’s where Budweiser came from and a stamp of ownership and pride. In relation, we wanted to sign-off our America label with the ending from the Pledge of Allegiance; the belief on which our nation was founded.

“The World Renowned” to “Land of the Free” & “Budweiser Lager Beer” changed to “Home of the Brave”

The World Renowned Budweiser Lager Beer, complete one thought. We emulated this connection with the new copy using “home of the free” and “land of the brave” works perfectly as the two are commonly presented together.

Summary of results



Steal the conversation

Our first objective was to spark conversation and make an unforgettable statement. With a packaging design in-hand, Budweiser ultimately succeeded in dominating the discussion when the can went public in early May. Following the packaging's launch, Budweiser became the focus of 2,600+ unique stories in media outlets such as The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, BBC, Conan, The Today Show, and BroBible.com. All of that coverage resulted in 1.6 billion total earned impressions worldwide—more impressions than both of Budweiser's Super Bowl 50 TV spots COMBINED.



Reverse the decline

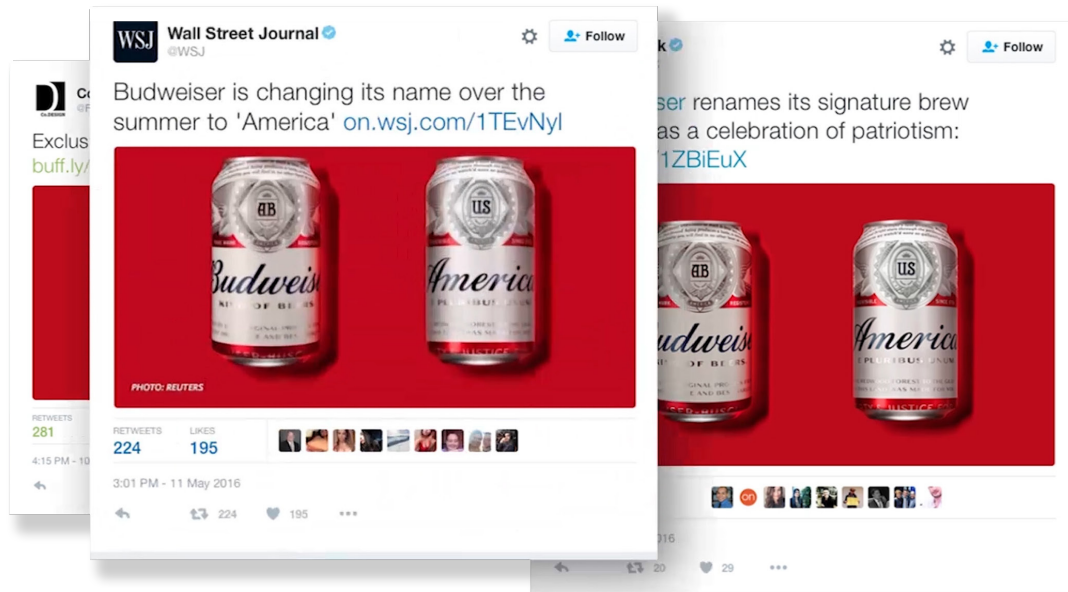
For the month of June, Budweiser grew sales-to-retailer volume YOY. This marks the first month Budweiser has grown volume YTD and the first time since September 2015.

The trend was national, with Budweiser volume growing in five of seven regions for the month and two regions gaining share, further extending the brand's best trends in over a decade, all with the America packaging as the catalyst.

Consumer reactions

We didn't just steal the conversation. We overcame the relevance issue and changed consumer perceptions. Favourability ratings among Beer Drinkers were positive, with 57% viewing Budweiser more favourably. Reasons cited were mentions of patriotism and the appropriateness of the packaging during a very prideful summer.

Summary of results



**SEEN BY MORE PEOPLE
THAN THE 2015 AND 2016
SUPERBOWLS COMBINED**



**“Budweiser has a new name
and that name is America”**



**“Budweiser has finally become
the most American thing ever”**



Other influencing factors

For a brand to be big, it needs to be brave.

For a brand to be relevant in this day and age, they must break through the clutter. But for a brand to regain relevance, they must truly break the internet.

The core of the campaign idea was the name change from Budweiser to America, which drove the execution of everything above-the-line and below-the-line. Communications launched a week after the packaging was released; the initial buzz was generated primarily by the pack change itself – supported with PR and subsequently consumers sharing on their social media channels.

