Smart Coasters Help Oskar Blues Brewery Stand Out in a Crowd

On-premise patrons who discovered Dale's Pale Ale new 16-ounce can through interactive coasters were 4.5 times more engaged than all other users

Challenge

Oskar Blues Brewery has always done things differently. The Colorado-based brewery started the craft-beer-in-a-can craze when it began putting its voluminously hopped Dale's Pale Ale in a can in 2002.

To celebrate its 15th anniversary, the company decided to launch a new 16-ounce Dale's Pal Ale Draft Can—featuring eye-catching artwork by avant-garde illustrator McBess—and sell it exclusively through bars and restaurants.

The trick, however, was getting the target audience to notice. With so much competition, it's tough for a beer brand to stand out in a bar.

IN MAJOR METROPOLITAN AREAS, THE VAST MAJORITY OF BARS OFFER BETWEEN 25 TO 100 DIFFERENT BEER BRANDS AT ANY GIVEN TIME.[1]

The saturated marketplace is only one stumbling block. The other is bar patrons prefer to order beers on tap. In fact, 61% of all on-premise orders are drafts, with craft beer brands seeing even smaller percentages of bottle/can orders.[2]

Never one to follow the pack, Oskar Blues Brewery knew it had to try something new to attract attention.

Solution

Oskar Blues Brewery wanted to deliver an engaging, on-premise experience that would capture attention at a bar or restaurant and prompt them to order the new 16-ounce Dale's Pale Ale Draft Can.

To complement its existing digital advertising campaigns, the brewery partnered with Thinfilm to develop 200,000 "smart coasters." These coasters were embedded with NFC (near-field communication) SpeedTap™ technology and featured matching artwork by McBess.

About Oskar Blues Brewery

Founded by Dale Katechis in 1997 in Longmont, CO.

Two other locations: Brevard, N.C., and Austin, Texas.

Distributes to all 50 states.

Dale's is The Original Craft Beer in a Can

" Oskar Blues was looking to extend engagement of our Dale's Pale Ale 15-year CANniversary campaign beyond packaging and signage. Thinfilm delivered a mobile solution that resonated with the beer drinker and created strong conversion. "

—Chad Melis, Oskar Blues Brewery

When patrons tapped the coaster with their smartphones, a behind-the-scenes video would appear that shared the history of the Dale's Pale Ale brand, the new 16-ounce beer, and the creative process McBess used for the new artwork.

Results

The 200,000 coasters were distributed by 93 Oskar Blues sales reps to all bars and restaurants that offered the new 16-ounce Draft Can. Each sales rep was responsible for a box of 2,100 coasters, which allowed Thinfilm to assess each box individually and analyze variances in individual effectiveness.

Oskar Blues measured the results of the campaign in two ways: engagement and cost effectiveness.

The response, as gauged by website traffic, was highly positive. Participants spent 4.5 times more time on the Oskar Blues website and 60 percent of them made return visits, too.

In fact, smart coaster engagement eclipsed engagement through other social and marketing channels.

Conclusion

While Oskar Blues' primary objective was brand awareness, the high engagement rates generated by Thinfilm smart coasters showed the brewery that it could take advantage of participants' longer attention spans and leverage more in-depth and immersive campaign experiences in the future.

Engagement

1.97% *CTR on average campaign-wide*

66% *of all marketing campaign traffic was generated by smart coaster interaction*

4.5x *more time spent on site than traffic from all other channels*

60% *of participants returned to the Oskar Blues website at least one more time*

% of Traffic by Marketing Channel[3]

Thinfilm	Facebook Mobile	Referrals	Social	Organic

0   20%   40%   60%   80%   100%
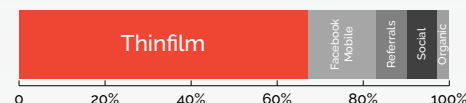
Cost Effectiveness

11.76% *CTR on the best performing box of coasters, netting out to a cost of only $1.25 per new user*

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1. Datascope study, The State of Craft Beer in Chicago, May 21, 2015.
https://datascopeanalytics.com/blog/the-state-of-craft-beer-in-chicago-bars/

2. BevSpot study, Draft vs. Bottle: A Data Breakdown of Beer Ordering Habits. April 26, 2017.
https://www.bevspot.com/2017/04/26/draft-vs-bottle-a-breakdown-of-beer-ordering-habits/

3. Traffic by marketing channel excludes direct traffic source