



BEVERAGES+ALCOHOL:
SILVER WINNER

Canadian Club – Damn Right

The Business Situation and Campaign Objectives

There once was a time when quite a few men drank Canadian Club Whisky. You could find it served in just about every bar in the country. It was the spirit of choice for guys who enjoyed a sophisticated cocktail. In 1985, Canadian Club was one of the top ten spirits in the United States. But after several changes in ownership and decades of neglect, the brand soon found itself on the verge of complete irrelevance. This once-proud brand had entered a long-term sales decline and efforts to turn it around were continuously unsuccessful. By 2007, Canadian Club's sales ranking had fallen to 36th in the spirits category.

What was particularly perplexing for the brand was that, while Canadian Club's sales were shrinking, the rest of the category was growing. As new vodka brands, along with a variety of other spirits flooded the marketplace, the competitive landscape changed...and so did consumers' tastes. The entire cocktail culture had shifted to a martini mindset, and Canadian Club suddenly found itself to be the dusty outsider who wasn't invited to the party. If something dramatic wasn't done, the brand was going to fade away.

In order to ensure Canadian Club's future, our primary objective was clear:

- ❑ **Immediately stem the brand's long-term sales decline.** Canadian Club had suffered through quarterly sales losses for 17 straight years, so the leaking barrel needed to be plugged.

To achieve this, we had to do the following:

- ❑ **Build top-of-mind awareness.** Canadian Club was not high in the consideration set for most male drinkers under the age of 45, so it was critical for us to put the brand back in the minds of our male target (ages 30-40) and make it relevant again. Men knew the brand existed; it just wasn't top of mind.
- ❑ **Increase purchase consideration around bar call.** Historical data suggested that on-premise purchases also translated to off-premise sales. If we could get men to order Canadian Club at the bar, they would be more likely to make additional purchases when they were at liquor stores or supermarkets.

The Research Story

We started our research exploration equipped with a basic understanding of the product. Canadian Club was a quality whisky, but one that was best served mixed. While it could certainly be served straight, Canadian Club—or “C.C.” as it is known—was historically consumed by men as a cocktail. C.C. and Soda. C.C. and Ginger. C.C. and Seven. The Manhattan. Those were the drinks that made Canadian Club popular decades ago. But something happened along the way and fewer men were drinking these types of cocktails. Our research mission was to identify the source of the problem and figure out how we could convince our male target to start drinking Canadian Club again.

Detecting the problem and mining for insights

The first thing we wanted to understand was how men perceived the Canadian Club brand, so we employed a proprietary methodology called **Brand Fitness™**. Brand Fitness is a study that quantitatively assesses brand equity across multiple dimensions of imagery, ranging from product attributes to brand personality, and identifies how consumers think and feel about a brand in comparison to the competition. Using Canadian Club as the subject, we relied on Brand Fitness™ to assess five critical measures of imagery:

1. **Performance Imagery** – The attributes or benefits that the brand was seen as best delivering.
2. **User Imagery** -- The perceived users of the brand and an assessment of whether that user imagery was aspirational or a barrier to brand use.
3. **Personal Drive Imagery** -- The psychological drives that motivate brand choice and the specific drives owned by the brand and its competitors.
4. **Need State Imagery** -- The need states that were most important in the category and the brands which were most associated with them.
5. **Personality Imagery** – The degree to which each brand had a clearly formed personality in the consumer’s mind and the most appealing brand personality traits within the category.

While we garnered numerous insights from the Brand Fitness™ study, a couple key findings emerged. First, we learned that **our target wanted to be seen as sophisticated, masculine, and unpretentious**. That desired self-expressive benefit was a motivator for their drink selections and it was what made whisky appealing. Second, **we learned that Canadian Club was suffering from a serious perception issue: it was seen as something your dad would drink**. Whether it was the user imagery or perceived brand personality, all signs pointed to an unflattering and dusty image that was stuck in the days of dad. So was this the sole reason guys weren’t drinking Canadian Club cocktails? Or was there something more to it?

In order to dig deeper and understand why our target had stopped drinking Canadian Club, we undertook the second phase of our research: an ethnographic exploration of the cocktail culture. Since Canadian Club was a whisky best served mixed, we wanted to better understand our target’s thoughts and feelings concerning cocktails in general. So we went

out to bars and talked to scores of men across multiple states. What we found was revealing. Many men, when asked to describe a cocktail, often unleashed a litany of deprecating terms. At their best, cocktails were pretentious concoctions served in dainty glasses. At their worst, cocktails were pink drinks adorned with umbrellas – something only a girl would consume. These perceptions of femininity and pretentiousness were largely attributable to a single source: “Sex in the City.” With the television show’s constant glorification of Cosmopolitans and other colorful drinks (and the subsequent adoption of those cocktails by trendy women in everyday life), **girly vodka-based drinks managed to take over the cocktail world.** Canadian Club clearly was not benefiting from this trend. Our male target wanted to be perceived as sophisticated, masculine, and unpretentious—modern cocktails seemed to represent the complete opposite.

Despite all of these findings, one question still remained: were guys even willing to drink classic cocktails again or was there no going back? To answer this question, we employed a proprietary qualitative technique called **Culture Lab**. The objective of Culture Lab is to take a hypothesis formed through ethnographic research and test it using conditional exercises in real-life situations. In this case, our going-in hypothesis was that men were not categorically opposed to drinking cocktails; they were merely opposed to drinking cocktails that were perceived to be feminine or pretentious.

To put this thinking to the test, we went into real-world drinking environments and recruited males in their early 30’s. Each respondent sat at the bar as we proceeded to ask questions about personal drinking habits. While the one-on-one conversation was underway, we would order a Cosmopolitan and hand it to our subject. The results were illuminating. The mere sight of a pink drink in a martini glass made many men nervous. Not a single one dared to take a sip. Their first reaction was to put the cocktail on the bar. When we asked them to continue to hold the drink, they would glance in the direction of their friends to see if anyone was watching. A few of the respondents literally started to perspire. Then we took away the drink and ordered a whisky-based cocktail in a rocks glass. The arrival of this amber drink brought palpable relief. Respondents talked confidently with the glass in their hand, with a few even raising their cocktail to toast on-looking friends. Every respondent sampled the drink. When we asked how the cocktail made them feel, the two most common responses were “manly” and “sophisticated.” When we inquired whether the drink made them feel pretentious, respondents quickly dismissed that notion. The going-in hypothesis clearly had been correct. **Our target was quite comfortable drinking classic cocktails; they just weren’t willing to sacrifice their masculine and unpretentious self-image.**

Based on all of our research, it was clear that **our creative campaign had to address both a category issue and a brand issue.** First, we needed to convince our target that there was such a thing as a sophisticated, masculine, and unpretentious cocktail. Second, we needed to lean into the brand’s heritage and turn a negative image into a positive one. We had to create a campaign that would convince guys that the fact that their dad drank Canadian Club was actually a good thing.

The Campaign

In order to redefine the Canadian Club brand and make it relevant again, we redefined the person most associated with it: dad. Our campaign portrayed fathers as the classic

embodiment of unpretentious masculinity. **We challenged guys to see their dads in a new light.** We wanted them to imagine their father when he was their age. Dad was no longer supposed to be seen as the guy who made the rules, but rather one who occasionally broke them. He went out with his buddies. He picked up girls. He knew how to have a good time. Dads were actually very cool.

Our campaign functioned like a provocative scrapbook that allowed our target a glimpse back in time...a time when real guys like dad drank *real* cocktails. These were the days of Frank Sinatra and the Rat Pack. There was none of that pink fruity stuff in a glass; cocktails were sophisticated drinks for men and they were made with Canadian Club Whisky. That's why dad drank it. By associating Canadian Club and its cocktails with this surprising yet compelling image of fathers, we helped our target positively identify with a brand that was previously irrelevant to them.

Everything we did—whether it was print, outdoor, or an online application which allowed guys to insert personal photos into mock ads—was designed to reinforce the scrapbook idea. We featured real pictures of fathers alongside meticulously crafted shots to create a classic and authentic feeling. Our budget wasn't big, but the creative solution was huge. Through the power of images and a thought-provoking campaign, we managed to transport guys back to a time when dad, cocktails, and Canadian Club were masculine, unpretentious, and cool.

"Damn right your dad drank it!"

The Results

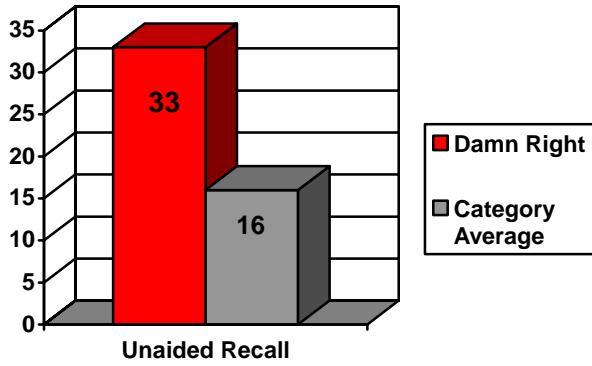
The campaign debuted in the 4th quarter of 2007. **Within four months, with no other changes in pricing, distribution or product offerings, we managed to reverse the 17-year sales decline.**

Specifically, through the first quarter of 2008, sales for Canadian Club rose 4.4%. Advertising Age summed up the results well when they noted: "Case volume of Canadian Club rose 4.4% in the 13 weeks ending March 8, outpacing the category and its dominant brand, Diageo's Crown Royal, during the same stretch, according to AC Nielsen data. Those gains may sound modest, but in the context of Canadian Club's performance over the past two decades, they border on a revelation."
— *Ad Age*, March 31, 2008

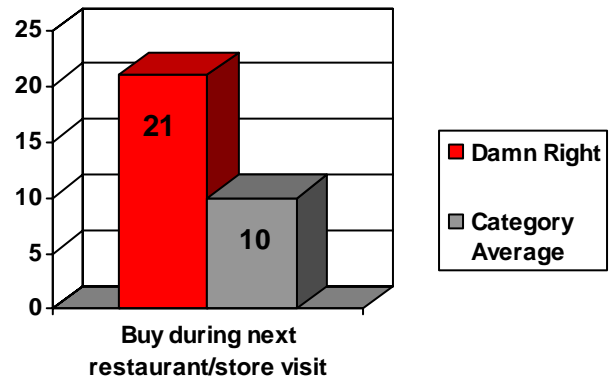
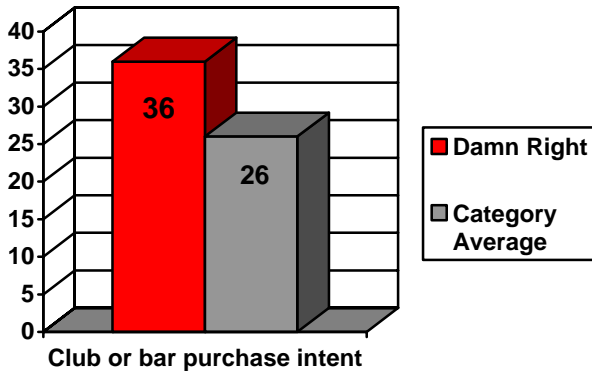
These results were made possible because we successfully built top-of-mind brand awareness and purchase consideration:

Build top-of-mind awareness:

The campaign doubled the category average in unaided recall, ensuring that our message was communicated.



Increase purchase consideration around bar call:
 The campaign again outperformed the category average in driving calls for Canadian Club in restaurants, bars and clubs. In addition, the campaign managed to double the likelihood that consumers would purchase a drink or bottle of Canadian Club during their next visit to a restaurant or store.



Source: Jim Beam Brands Sales Data, OTX Print Research 4/27/08