

Anheuser-Busch



*Anheuser-Busch*

Strategic Communications  
Marketing Plan

Fall 2023

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**BRAND STATEMENT:** “We dream big to create a future with more cheers.”

**TARGET AUDIENCE:**

Anheuser-Busch is a popular parent-company beer brand that is enjoyed by people of all ages 21+. The top of their website reads their slogan of “we dream big to create a future with more cheers.”

Undoubtedly, Anheuser-Busch products are enjoyed by anyone who is 21+. But they sneakily aim to target college aged students whether they are 21 or not. Many of their beer brands socially catering to young and freshly 21-year-old college students, including college students that may not yet be 21. Their social target, and most successfully known customers to their brand are often fraternity brothers involved in Greek life in their campuses’ culture. It has become a staple to achieve the ‘frat boy’ appearance. Countless beer brands within the Anheuser-Busch company allow for an endless number of options when it comes to what they are choosing to enjoy. The variety of different appearances for different types of drinks and appropriately applied drinks for specific social settings appeal to Generation Z immensely, especially in the day of total acceptance of everyone, freedom in people’s expressions, and following trends that appear on social media. Even if the consumer does not care for what the brand is advertising, it is not enough to halt the college student target audience from purchasing and enjoying their favorite beer. In recent events of Anheuser-Busch’s company Bud Light teaming up with transgender TikTok influencer Dylan Mulvaney, sales have proven that many older generations have chosen to boycott not only Bud Light but all companies within the Anheuser-Busch line. Arguably, this does not stop loyal younger customers who continue to enjoy Anheuser-Busch’s products.

**BRAND BACKGROUND:**

Anheuser-Busch was established in St. Louis, MO in 1852. It is the parent company of many mainstream popular beers and canned alcoholic mixed drinks. Another slogan Anheuser-Busch is recognized by is “we’re more than just a beer company.” Anheuser-Busch is the overarching beer company that owns all the beer brands underneath them. They own beer brands such as Budweiser, Bud Light, Kona, Michelob Ultra, and Stella Artois among others.

**SWOT ANALYSIS:**

Every company must eventually deal with the inevitable truth that they will have to face a public crisis over a marketing decision that they have made. Luckily, this does not entirely negate all the smart advertising decisions the company has made over the years. Some strengths of Anheuser-Busch are that their younger customers are unbothered by their most up to date sponsorships and partnerships as it has no bearing to their direct life or change the way they enjoy their beer. They hold loyal customers that they will not lose no matter what. Some of their weakness, especially current weaknesses are their most recent sponsorship with Dylan Mulvaney. Other weaknesses consist of lack of advertisements for the lesser-known brands under the Anheuser-Busch line. Following that, their opportunities become chances to use Anheuser-Busch’s other companies to try and win back the audiences they lost with other specifically designed and dedicated cans for other nationally recognized observations. But this also allows for opportunities to cater to their newfound audience they have gained since the release of the sponsorship with Dylan Mulvaney. This can be done through more specified cans and campaigns or can be executed through their current or new forms of communication and advertisements. Even with that, the threats remain that other beer companies have already shown their appreciation to the American heritage with specially designed cans and bottles to support

serving and retired vets that fought for our country in opposition of what Anheuser-Busch has already released. It is not impossible, but it will be a challenge to regain all the millions of revenues and customers that they lost from this singular marketing event.

## **SITUATION ANALYSIS:**

Anheuser-Busch has been making recent headlines with their marketing decisions and sponsorship agreements. Although Anheuser-Busch is the overarching company of various brands of beer, each individual beer has their own line of advertisements. The problem is reaching all their customers, and further appealing to each individual demographic.

The focus of who Anheuser-Busch is choosing to do business with and publicly displaying their values with on a somewhat 'political' spectrum immediately changes the narrative and shifts the problem into multiple directions. This creates the issues of not only originally appealing to all the customers but being able to demonstrate their support to every and all sides. The issue with remaining neutral translates to ignorance, almost being worse for a company's brand rather than picking one side and standing up for what they believe in. This was evident in the case when a branch of Anheuser-Busch, Bud Light, chose to initiate a public sponsorship with transgender TikTok influencer Dylan Mulvaney. After surpassing social media and later reaching news outlets, it wasn't long before people's own opinions were circulating about the brand. It appears Anheuser-Busch thought they were doing the right thing by becoming fully immersed in the current trends and being inclusive by allowing someone who was transgender to represent the face of the beer of Anheuser-Busch.

There has already been a clear effort to reverse and undo what had already been done by them. In rebuttal to themselves, shortly after their sponsorship with Dylan Mulvaney, Anheuser-Busch distributed an ad all about America and what it means to be an American to regain those who they had lost. The loss and boycott were apparent in their sales and no secret to the other competitor beer brands.

Aside from the independent issue of appealing to all audiences, the problem regarding which platforms are going to best reach the correct target audience remains. To stay neutral to an extent but still being involved in the current political climate that is so hard to remain out of in 2023, Anheuser-Busch released a TV commercial ad to try and prove to their more traditional, older demographic that they were still a beer with American values. In other words, releasing ads on different platforms as they did was intentional to include all their customers in their appropriate spaces.

Anheuser-Busch is currently dealing with the problem of advertising and marketing, in the context of who their viewers are and how they drastically differ from platform to platform. Their younger demographic, while automatically thought to be progressive and inclusive, does not always immediately feel connected to a brand just because they include mandatory inclusivity on a publicity scale. On the other hand, their older and more traditional generations do not always approve of the fast-changing times that are so quickly immersed into the lives of society. There is such a large discrepancy between their reach of their customers and their demographics that they are struggling to find a happy medium. This problem remains relevant as long as social media continues to evolve, and the height of the political climate remains elevated.

There is an array of different options that Anheuser-Busch can chose to execute. As the public has already seen, they have tried to reverse their already damaging ad and sponsorship with Dylan Mulvaney by releasing an all-American ad to please their opposing demographics.

There is still more to be done about this issue that will continue to take presidency for Anheuser-Busch as long as they continue to lose revenue and their reputation.

## **COMPETITIVE LANDSCAPE:**

### Competitors:

1. Heineken
2. Molson Coors
3. Diageo

Anheuser-Busch, more recently being coined ABInBev, has lately been struggling to find a centrist point in their marketing. Their most recent sponsorship has led them to the headlines of new stations, but not in an all-positive manner. No brand is complete without its competitors creating its motivation to always come out on top.

Some of the most apparent competitor beer brands throughout the United States are Heineken, Molson Coors, and Diageo. There are about 5,000 brands of alcohol distributed and enjoyed throughout the United States, but these 3 are the top competitors when comparing large, overarching companies and 'parent' companies. Each of these brands is well known for a few of its top rated and most mainstream products. While all these brands are alcohol companies that sell beer products, that is not all that they are known for. By comparison, ABInBev has significantly less diversity in their products and is most recognized for its beer products. Diageo includes liquor products in their line, Molson Coors has recently released a whiskey line, but Heineken remains one of the beer brands to lack in other liquor sales. The good news remains that due to the drastic differences in the companies and their individual brands, it creates gaps in their key demographics. ABInBev caters to freshly 21-years-old and young adults in their 20s. Of course, anyone can enjoy any alcohol of their choosing, depending on which one appeals to them the most. It is obvious that each different brand and their unique marketing strategies



appeal to their very well-known demographic and loyal customers. Heineken aims to target consumers aged 20-35; Molson Coors targets ages 20-30; and Diageo reaches an older age demographic at 36-40. ABInBev as a company spans from 21-54, depending on the brand of the beer.

Each brand's headquarters is also different, changing the key locations of their most successful sales. Heineken headquarters are in Amsterdam, Netherlands; Molson Coors headquarters are in Chicago, Illinois; and Diageo headquarters are in London, England; while ABInBev headquarters are in Leuven, Belgium. Depending on the product, consumers are often picky to their purchases to justify the quality of the product. Heineken's most successful sales area is the Netherlands, but within the USA is Ohio. Some of Molson Coors' most successful sales area in the USA is Kansas and Nevada. Diageo's highest USA sales reside in the middle states of the country such as Oklahoma, Kentucky, Louisiana, and Idaho. ABInBev tops all the ranks with multiple beer companies ranking number one in various states across the continental United States. Each brand utilizes different advertising and marketing tactics based on their customers. Heineken is often seen on television ads and social media platforms of Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube. Molson Coors is often broadcasted on TV commercial ads with a presence on Instagram while Diageo uses Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, and LinkedIn. Often many of the social media platforms desired by the same type of companies overlap. They are often seen using the same current events to capture the attention of the public and appeal to as many people as possible to increase their revenue and boost their loyal customers permanently. Because alcohol and specifically beer are a young demographic, they tailor their ads to what so many Americans look forward to every Fall, both college and professional football. While they do not all use the same platforms, they often repeat similar messages

regarding how drinking and football bring people together, but not in a uniting of the country sense. They want people to associate their beer with positive thoughts and happy gatherings with those that they love.

In negative news, ABInBev has already shown themselves as different due to their apparent and drastic integration of forced diversity on a publicity scale. Inclusion and diversity seem to be second nature to all public companies, but each execution remains different. For each top competitor of ABInBev, they were each strategic in integrating diversity into their workplace and into their company values. On each of their websites, regarding a mission statement, there are stories appealing to people's emotions to help them believe and understand they are accepting and including of people of all backgrounds. ABInBev failed to demonstrate their support and inclusivity in an effort that would appeal to all their demographics and not just one part of it. Their goal would have been successful if their only audience was 21-year-old TikTok users with liberal political views or those that were also a part of the LGBTQIA+ community. After realizing their backfire, they now have learned their lesson the hard way and know to cater to all their audiences and demonstrate their support of as many groups as they can.

ABInBev had previously been known to partner with countless sports companies and teams. More recently, they have no longer been the face of any current big teams that are making headlines. Their only current sponsorship with any sport is pickleball. Their future sponsorships regarding sports teams are the upcoming FIFA World Cup in 2026. Many beer companies believe in partnering up with networks and teams to create a relationship between the companies as well as increase the associations between the brand and the team for their customers. Some of their competitors have already taken advantage of their losses and have tried to cater to the opposing audience that disliked the sponsorship with Dylan Mulvaney by advertising American

values. In a somewhat failed attempt to reverse the damage they had caused; they released an ad all about America. People did not seem to feel connected as it felt too much of a forced effort.

A fresh and new attempt to increase revenue and regain a lost reputation could be encouraged through a new advertisement theme. In opposition of what other brands have not yet done for their companies, a strong new attempt to include all demographics including gender, age, political view, profession, and physical location would strongly benefit ABInBev. An example of this change of inclusion would be to feature a specific topic in each of these categories each month and turn it into a promotion. An example would be every September, teachers and students get a discount with their ID for the back-to-school season. This would create for a supportive, everchanging environment while still staying apparent in the news and catering to their customers on a more personal level. For advertisements as these, it would be beneficial to use as many social media platforms as possible to include all the demographics of the audience that they draw, especially if the demographic is going to be ever changing and more inclusive.

Incorporating this new technique into their marketing could potentially increase their revenue and regain customers that they had lost due to their past sponsorships.

**GOALS:**

Reverse the damage to Anheuser-Busch's reputation and increase lost revenue by appealing to the current audience through easily relatable and enjoyable original content on various social media platforms.

**OBJECTIVES:**

1. Successfully convey the misinterpreted morals of the company and win back the lost customers from the original backlash.
2. Appeal to a potential new target audience at the same time of incorporating newly developed social media campaigns.
3. Find an advertisement execution and theme to appeal to all sides of the current political climate without having to apologize for doing what they thought was right.
4. Create more awareness for the 'parent' company and who is part of the organization.

**STRATEGIES:**

Utilize social media platforms of Twitter, TikTok, and Snapchat to entice and interact with users to help them understand the rebranding of their implemented values by the company and simultaneously create a better image than before.

1. Address the sponsorship with Dylan Mulvaney and why they believed it was the right marketing decision to be made.
2. Create new and improved social media presence to increase interactions and change the way customers feel about Anheuser-Busch.

3. Become aware of the inevitable divide and high tension in society by not staying neutral and ignorant but acknowledging the difference views in society.
4. Increase and include the presence of Anheuser-Busch directly in advertisements instead of only the brands within the company.

**TIMELINE, BUDGET, MEASUREMENT:****TACTICS:**

<p>Timeline: Immediately following approval of the budget October - November 2023</p> <p>Budget:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Advertisement for TikTok: \$500</li> <li>- External Software Hootsuite: 249/month= ~\$3,000 for the year</li> <li>- Misc.: \$150</li> <li>- SUBTOTAL: \$3,650</li> </ul> <p>Measurement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Download &amp; purchase software (Hootsuite recommended) to measure all social media platforms together in one place.</li> <li>- Special attention to initial changes and holiday season.</li> <li>- Measure immediate interactions after direct changes on all platforms; increase or decrease?</li> </ul>	<p>Immediately rebrand not only the company but the social media presence that will represent Anheuser-Busch, while reinforcing that this will represent all brands within the Anheuser-Busch company and not only one specified company.</p> <p>(2a) Ensure all usernames, handles, and hashtags are the same on each platform to maintain consistency and reinforcement of the focus on Anheuser-Busch.</p> <p>(2c) Link new and improved website to every social media platform to represent the curtesy and effort that the company has taken to undo their wrongfully interpreted actions.</p> <p>(3a) Remain active daily on all social media with intermediate statements regarding all necessary, large current events.</p>
<p>Timeline: December 2023- February 2024</p> <p>Budget:</p> <p>ADVERTISEMENT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Advertisement on Instagram (image): \$365 (\$1/ day for the year)</li> <li>- Advertisement on Twitter: \$1,000/month= \$12,000 for the year</li> <li>- Advertisement on Snapchat: \$40/day=~\$14,600</li> <li>- Advertisement on TikTok: \$500</li> </ul> <p>COMMERCIAL (distributed with \$15,000)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Equipment (cameras, lights, space):</li> <li>- Actors</li> <li>- Crew</li> </ul>	<p>(1a) Create an initial TikTok video to explain rebranding strategy to customers and viewers as a talking representative is more personable, relatable, and compassionate than words on a screen for a starting point.</p> <p>(1c) Host events and increase customer interactions on Twitter by allowing likes, comments, retweets, and other actions to respond to Anheuser-Busch's strategies and receive real time feedback.</p> <p>(2b) Increase advertisements on social media to be promoted higher appearing in feed.</p> <p>(4c) Implement commercials about Anheuser-Busch as a parent-company directly in response to Bud Light controversy.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Food</li> <li>- Products and props</li> <li>- Hair, makeup, wardrobe</li> <li>- Airing of the commercial on selected stations: \$10,000</li> <li>- Misc.: \$1,000</li> </ul> <p>SUBTOTAL: \$53,465</p> <p>Measurement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Monitor TikTok interactions (views, likes, comments, shares).</li> <li>- Monitor Twitter interactions (reaches, likes, comments, retweets).</li> <li>- Monitor Snapchat interactions (views, clicks, shares).</li> <li>- Monitor Instagram interactions (likes, comments, shares).</li> <li>- Monitor Google searches through Google Analytics.</li> <li>- Special attention to holiday season sales.</li> <li>- Introduce real employees to initiate intimacy and monitor their personal social media accounts.</li> <li>- Notice the likelihood of each outlet's willingness to report on Anheuser-Busch.</li> <li>- If and/or when they agree, monitor the clicks, shares, tags, and posts from that platform.</li> <li>- Special attention to Super Bowl sales.</li> </ul>	<p>(4a) Create a focus on Anheuser-Busch's policies, beliefs, employees, and entirety of brands to accurately represent all brands and views instead of individually.</p> <p>(3b) Reach press and reconnect with any previous media contacts to re circulate into press media and non-controversial news stories about the rebrand.</p>
<p>Timeline: March - April 2024</p> <p>Budget:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- New, unique designs for promotions: \$100,000</li> <li>- Increase product inventory: average at continued rate.</li> </ul> <p>SUBTOTAL: \$100,000</p> <p>Measurement:</p>	<p>(3c) Engage in real world current events and incorporate personalized cans, colors, and relations to make all audience of customers feel seen.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Before committing to a singular current event to mirror in content, recall the responses of the event and the tone of what happened.</li> <li>- Manually compare appropriate time of year and monthly promotions.</li> </ul>	
<p>Timeline: May – August 2024</p> <p>Budget:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Sponsors: (NFL) 233,000/year</li> <li>- Bud Light Instagram: \$365</li> <li>- Bud Light Snapchat: \$12,000</li> </ul> <p>SUBTOTAL: \$245,365</p> <p>Measurement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Monitor the new sponsorship/celebrity’s social media (followers, likes, comments, trends).</li> <li>- Monitor Bud Lights’ independent social media statistics.</li> <li>- Monitor Snapchat interactions</li> <li>- Compare sales from year to year during the same time of the year (12-month period).</li> <li>- Special attention to summer sales.</li> </ul>	<p>(1b) Slowly implement and integrate new sponsorships and partnerships on all platforms as they are agreed upon.</p> <p>(4b) Focus, but not forget the root of the problem regarding Bud Light and further push the issue to reinstate positive thoughts associated with Bud Light by slowly integrating Bud Light back into the spotlight after tensions have resolved. This would present well on Snapchat in a fast, witty response.</p>

### **TACTICS:**

Each strategy allows for an equal response of activating a tactic. For each of the 4 strategies brainstormed for the strategic communication marketing plan for Anheuser-Busch, there are 3 tactic examples provided to attempt to revive the brand image. Each of the 12 tactics integrate an understanding of the PESO model. Strategy numbers 1a, 1b, 2b, and 4c demonstrate the ‘paid’ portion of the model due to the necessary actions of spending money to create advertisements or to create new public relationships with public figures. Strategy numbers 2a, 3a, and 3b reinforce the concepts of earned media. These tactics do not require monetary values to



achieve and can be done by the motivated, hardworking employees. Strategy numbers 4a and 4b encompass content that can be shared and distributed between other images and/or other companies, including within the brand of itself. This works perfectly in the case of Bud Light and the beginning purpose of the strategic communication marketing plan. Strategy numbers 1c, 2c, and 3c shows owned media that is both used and distributed by itself. They are using their own previous and established content to promote their brand and products on their website that they own. As a result, Anheuser-Busch will be able to not only use their own in-house resources and reliable employees but utilize their surroundings and past supporters to overcome this unforeseen incident.

### **TIMELINE:**

To properly be able to execute a successful strategic communications marketing plan, there needs to be ample investment of both time and money to prepare each portion of the plan. To ultimately generate the most verbal exchanges of Anheuser-Busch, there would be no better time than the holidays to ensure extensive conversations within large gatherings of groups. To implement the plan, the most effect timing would be about 12 months with some included estimated extra time for mistakes. 12 months may seem short to some and long to others, but with an immediate starting allows for ample use of the time allotted. 12 months creates for a logical cycle in the process. With an immediate start date allows for increased motivation and tactics to be immediately implemented into action.

### **BUDGET:**

Budgets can be tricky and variable depending on the time of year, state of the economy, and who the ultimate outside resources are required from. This creates for some flexible numbers while remaining within a reasonable range. The expected and reasonable budget for this plan

averages at about \$405,000 for the year. This budget does not include the daily necessary spending for the company as well as employee salaries, nor does it account for any foreseeable increases throughout the span of this plan. This may seem like an extravagant number for the average person or even to some much smaller business, but for a company that already is worth around 109 billion, it is a small price to pay even after the unfortunate aftermath of losing so many customers. Some of the necessary resources that can be used to increase the betterment of the plan would be advertising costs, sponsorships & partnerships, high quality sets, and high-tech external programs to monitor progress. Calculating the expected expenses of the necessary resources can help to gauge an appropriate, expected average for Anheuser-Busch to need. Depending on the economy, industry, and ultimately final choices of spending, each estimate will fluctuate causing the final cost of the spending to change slightly as well and simultaneously prove each resource requires a different amount to be carried out successfully. Some investments are cheaper than others, while some may seem more extravagant than necessary. The goal is to invest more to make more without wasting any money. It is always smarter to over budget than under budget. For a better estimate of spent money for the commercial advertisement, it was more logical to budget one number for the entire production rather than dividing up individual numbers that needed to be specifically assigned to each area of production to allow for a more flexible budget as well as a more realistic one. The only separate portion of that budget is the cost of airing. If at the end of the plan there is a loss of revenue with little to no results, the plan will have to be adjusted accordingly for the following year.

**MEASUREMENT:**

Tactics would mean nothing without tracking the changes that they create. To best understand which tactic is creating what result, it is important to continuously update and maintain accurate measurements of statistics. For best results, using an external measuring site helps to organize interactions from each platform. Hootsuite is a popular, dependable source to utilize. Further, it is important to incorporate human calculated statistics to calculate what the program cannot. Maintaining stable relationships and noticing them reflected in the results allows for a more linear success rate and organized fashion of the plan. As always, sales often are the defining factor of how the products are doing. If sales are increased once again, the plan is improving the brand from the mistakes that were made; if sales are decreasing or stagnant, there is little to no progress occurring from the plan. If there is little to no change or a decrease in already negative reviews, it would be necessary to revisit the plan and adjust as the plan progresses. There is no telling what will certainly happen when a plan goes public, but what remains important is the progression being made in the right direction.

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## References

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