Influencers' Friends /

Poker

Colombian beer brand recruits the best friends of famous influencers to generate disproportionate reach and underline the brand's fundamentals.

The Context

Poker, the beer of friends since 1929, is one of the main local beer brands in the country. However, it isn't exempt from slowdowns or loss of market share. In 2021, the brand had a drop of 0.2% in total sales volume due to the aggressive pricing of its main competitor Andina, the rise of global beer brands with strong investments in global assets, and the arrival of new players such as hard seltzer drinks.

The Ask

Poker wanted to reach more consumers than ever (men and women aged 18-24) in order to address 2021's sales drop. So the challenge was to come up with an idea that would have a large media impact with a tight budget, in order to accomplish the following objectives:

- Reach: +120 million people reached
- Social media interactions: increase of +100% compared to benchmark
- Consumption past 4 weeks: +1.5 p.p.
- Trial (ages 18-24): +2 p.p.
- Differentiation attribute: increase of +5 p.p.

The Strategy

In the modern digital media environment, one way to achieve high impact in a short space of time is to work with high-level influencers. According to a study by Launchmetrics, influencer marketing grew by 42% in the last year, resulting in approximately $15 billion in sales worldwide, highlighting its potential effectiveness. In addition, 70% of people confirm that following celebrities has influenced their purchasing decisions. The problem is that Poker, being a local brand, is never be able to compete with the budgets and global agreements of brands like Budweiser, Heineken, Corona and others, which use artists such as J Balvin and Messi.

The eureka moment came from the understanding that the brand didn't need to hire big influencers to benefit from their reach. Why? Because when you see celebrities' content on social media, you inevitably end up seeing their friends. And since Poker is the beer of friends, the brand decided to use them to piggy-back on the reach of the biggest influencers in Colombia.

The Idea

As the beer of friends, the brand created a new influencer marketing strategy: "Influencers' Friends". Instead of recruiting big-name influencers, the brand recruited their best friends.

Poker enlisted the best friends of the country's most famous celebrities: Andrés López (J Balvin's BFF), Daiky Gamboa (Karol G's BFF), Iván Ceballos (Juan Fer Quintero's BFF), and more to become the new Poker Gang, achieving impressive results thanks to the content they made alongside their famous friends. At last, Poker was next to the biggest celebrities and achieved unprecedented reach by reinventing the use of influencers on social media.

The Campaign Execution
Poker searched for and selected key influencers to reach the whole country. Based on the main interests of its audiences, the brand identified the most relevant and powerful influencers. They were Karol G, J Balvin, Juan Fer Quintero, Maleja Restrepo, and other renowned local influencers. With them, the brand covered key areas for its audiences, like music, sports, fashion and entertainment. After reviewing the influencers' profiles on social networks, Poker identified their BFFs and signed them up.

To give visibility to the influencers' BFFs and establish the connection they have their famous friends, Poker generated a series of audiovisual content where anecdotes, stories and secrets were revealed. This piqued the interest of the brand's audiences, since they love to see the more human side of their idols. But most importantly, this initiative encouraged the famous friends to repost the content, enabling the brand to benefit from their social media reach. The brand provided the Poker Gang with all the necessary tools (beers) so that when they hung out with their famous friends, and shared those moments on social media, there was always a Poker beer nearby.

The Results
The campaign generated a number of impressive results:
- 1,200% increase in social media interactions
- 3.5 p.p. increase in trial amongst consumers aged 18-24
- Over 560 million people reached on social media
- 4.6 p.p. increase in consumption past four weeks
- 16.3 p.p. increase on the differentiation attribute, meaning that Poker is a brand that is leading the way in the category in the eyes of its consumers
- Over $10 million saved in celebrity endorsements

Contagious Insight /

Clarity & consistency / By targeting the best friends of major celebrities, Poker has not only found a low-cost way to piggy-back on the reach of those celebrities but has also created a campaign that is resolutely loyal to the brand's strategic fundamentals. Since 2008, after tens of thousands of Colombians had taken to the streets to call for an end to conflict between paramilitary groups and communist guerrillas, Poker has been a symbol of Colombian unification and friendship. *Influencers' Friends* is the latest in a long line of campaigns that have used innovative tactics to underline this core brand tenet. From *Bot Friends* in 2019, where the brand infiltrated the advert-free territory of WhatsApp by hiding telephone numbers assigned to branded bots under Poker beer caps, to *Bank of Friendship* in 2020, where the brand opened its own bank to encourage friends to save money together and enjoy shared experiences, to its *Reunions* campaign during the pandemic that reminded people of their responsibilities towards their friends, Poker has been unerringly consistent in its core messaging. It is a powerful example of how the delineation of a clear space for a brand to play in can help to unlock outstanding levels of creativity.

Less money, more authenticity / [GWI data](#) has shown that Gen Z, the target audience for the *Influencers' Friends* campaign, craves more authenticity on social media. 42% of Gen Z social media users think that people should show more of their "real" selves on social media, compared to 36% of other age groups. This desire for authenticity has led to a number of significant brand successes, including the [*Famous Orders*](#) campaign from McDonald's – a campaign that underlined the universal appeal of McDonald's food and introduced younger audiences to the preferred McDonald's menu combinations of their favourite celebrities. This felt authentic and intimate. Poker's *Influencers' Friends* campaign is not just an exercise in saving money (although over $10 million was saved in celebrity endorsements). It is also a way for the brand to bring audiences closer to celebrity stars, showing them in new, more authentic, and more down-to-earth lights. A double win for the brand.