

Amul Milk: How the world's youngest nation turned to the world's original energy drink

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Source: WARC Prize for Asian Strategy, Entrant, 2014

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This case study explains how Amul, an Indian dairy cooperative, tackled slowing milk consumption by presenting it as a natural energy drink to appeal to young people.

- The youth, who are a major chunk of population in India, were slowly but steadily shying away from drinking milk and preferring more glamorous health and energy drinks.
- Amul reached out to young people by making milk relevant to their lives and speaking to them in the language that they understand best - sports.
- It went on to position milk as 'the world's original energy drink' and infused a cool quotient which has always evaded something as mundane as milk.
- The brand not only achieved success in increasing its sales but was also able to resonate with the mindset of the youth - evident through a jump in its brand scores.

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Campaign details

Brand owner: Gujarat Cooperative Milk Marketing Federation

Lead agency: FCB Ulka

Brand: Amul Milk

Country: India

Industry: Dairy products, fats, oils

Channels used: Cinema, Internet - general, Packaging and design, Radio, Social media, Sponsorship - event, property, Sponsorship - media, Television

Media budget: 500k - 1 million

Executive summary

This case study describes how Amul tackled slowing Indian milk consumption by presenting it as a natural energy drink to appeal to young people.

In a country where milk has more than food connotations, the consumption of milk was decreasing. The youth, who are a major chunk of population in India, were slowly but steadily shying away from drinking milk towards more glamorous health and energy drinks. This raised alarm bells for the future of the milk category in India. Amul Milk, being the market leader and the source of livelihood of 3,500,000 farmers who are part of its cooperative movement, stepped in to arrest this decline of consumption. It reached out to the youth by making milk relevant to their lives and speaking to them in the language that they understand best – sports. It went on to position milk as 'the world's original energy drink' and infused a cool quotient which has always evaded something as mundane as milk. The brand not only achieved success in increasing its sales numbers but was also able to resonate with the mindset of the youth which was evident through a jump in its brand scores.

Market background and cultural context

India is a country where the spectrum of usage of milk spans from cultural and religious needs to biological ones. Milk finds its relevance not only as food for gods but also as food for the common man. This makes India the largest milk-producing and -consuming nation with the demand for milk *per capita* being 300 grams per day.

The milk market in India is approximately 350 million litres per day. Amul and Mother Dairy are the only two brands that have a national presence. Amul Milk dominates the category with 26% market share.

Brand Amul is owned by Gujarat Cooperative Milk Marketing Federation Ltd (GCMMF), India's largest food-product marketing organisation, which was responsible in spurring a social revolution in India. Being a cooperative movement, it is responsible for the livelihood of 3.5 million farmers.

Amul has been instrumental in bringing about this social change in India by changing the way women are looked upon in this country. It stands as the greatest example of propagating women's empowerment by creating hundreds of thousands of women entrepreneurs and helping them to find their rightful place in society. Out of every rupee that Amul earns, 85 paise directly goes to the women farmers who constitute the movement. It is Amul's constant endeavour to take this movement to another level and benefit the lives of many more women.

However, in recent times, for a country where milk finds its place in the staple diet of most of its citizens, the growth in the consumption of milk had slowed to less than 1% (source: NDDB). This was an alarming state of affairs for the entire milk category.

Amul, being the market leader, had to arrest this decline in consumption as any slowdown in milk would have a crippling impact on not just the balance sheets but also on the lives of the 3.5 million women farmers and their dependents who are integral to the Amul movement. Thus, the challenge was not only to fulfil corporate interests but also to maximize human interests.

Objectives

As the category leader, Amul wanted to take the initiative to bring back the lost days of glory of milk and cultivate

a milk-drinking culture amongst the youth – thereby increasing overall consumption.

Thus, our key objective was to make milk relevant to youngsters. We used the following benchmark to measure our success: Increase volume sales by 10 million litres in one year, resulting in 5% increase in annual volumes in this completely mature category.

Insight and strategic thinking

The goodness of milk is inherent to India. It is a country where the consumption basket includes all age groups. In such a scenario, we were faced with the mammoth task of increasing consumption among people who are already milk drinkers.

Data showed that the relevance of milk to the youth was dwindling. Young people, who accounted for one out of every four Indians, were exiting milk consumption earlier than ever before and did not resume consumption later in life (source: 12–25 age group, Census of India 2011, TGI 2013 and SMRS Research). After conducting in-depth interviews with youngsters, we realized that milk was nowhere on their radar for beverages.

Young men shied away from consuming milk as they did not perceive drinking it as a sign of masculinity and adulthood. For them, milk was restricted to being used by kids and was required for the healthy development of their bones and teeth. The association of milk with kids was so strong that young men felt awkward consuming milk in front of their peers and themselves felt it to be immature and childish.

The recent spurt of glamorous drinks like fruit juices, energy drinks, protein shakes etc had successfully built a health halo around them. Milk was getting overshadowed by the glitz value of these new drinks and seemed dull, boring and outdated to young consumers. We were thus facing the audacious task of changing the perception of milk as a whole in the minds of Generation Y.

The first question that we asked ourselves was, *'Is there anything new to say about milk?'*

With all the generic goodness of milk being common knowledge, any messaging about good health, calcium or bones would not cut ice with the youth. We needed a more motivating argument in order to resonate with them. Product interrogation revealed a hitherto unknown benefit:

- Milk = rich source of vitamin B12 = primary source of energy;
- One cup of milk = 25% of daily vitamin B12 needs.

Energy had the potential to connect with the 'work hard, play hard' youth of today.

The second question that we asked ourselves was, *'How do we get youth to start talking about something as mundane as milk?'*

We needed a big enough hook to get them talking about it. Sports, movies and music are the biggest youth passions (in that order; source: social-media analytics). Sports activities were always seen as highly energy-intensive, and connecting milk with sports would wake up the youth.

If sport was the answer, then the Olympics posed as the biggest opportunity waiting to be leveraged and we could use it as a hook to begin the conversation.

The creative strategy

We had to practically relaunch milk in the consumption repertoire of young India by leveraging the Olympics as a platform to build a strong connection between milk and energy.

The product truth that we leveraged: Milk is rich in energy.

Youth insight: Energy-intensive sports are the premier youth passion.

By marrying our product truth with our key insight, we arrived at our strategic idea: Use the Olympics to infuse milk with energy, igniting conversations around milk among the youth.

Creative expression: Amul Milk, the World's Original Energy Drink.

Implementation, including creative and media development

We had to deliver on a shoestring budget – GCMMF as a co-operative is permitted to spend only 1% of its turnover on advertising across all brands, hence only a fraction of this amount was available to us and we had to maximize return from every rupee.

The marketing dialogue of milk had to be dramatically changed from the traditional way of promoting milk for 'motherly love and goodness' to a more upbeat and energetic context. Hence, we repositioned milk as an energy drink.

We created the 'Milk Girl', a figure in the form of milk emerging from a glass to perform various athletic feats, symbolic of the energy emanating from Amul Milk.

The rough budget allocation apportioned to each media channel along with the order of the activity was as follows:

1. TV: 80%
2. Cinema, digital and packaging: 5% each
3. Radio: 5%

Igniting conversations on social media

Today's youth live in the real world but share their lives in the virtual world. It was therefore vital to integrate Amul Milk into this world of Facebook, Twitter and online gaming.

Premiering the film on Facebook: a category first

We tied this up with the launch of a special Facebook app, '*Energize your Olympians*', which allowed audiences to energize their favourite Olympian using a glass of milk to show support. *In a nation where cricket is the beginning and end of sport, we got consumers to engage with 13 different sports and cheer for our athletes in those fields.*

We also sponsored *premier youth-focused sports* like EPL, the Indian Premier League, Formula 1 and the French Open to cement our associations with sports.

Innovation in packaging

In India, the packaging of milk pouches is not discarded after a day but are recycled for other purposes. We leveraged Amul's huge reach by integrating the Olympic sponsorship on 1.5 billion packs and even celebrated India's medal winners.



Building a bond with India's most talked-about Olympian this year

We integrated Amul Milk into the immensely anticipated *Bhaag Milkha Bhaag*, bringing the link between milk and energy to life.

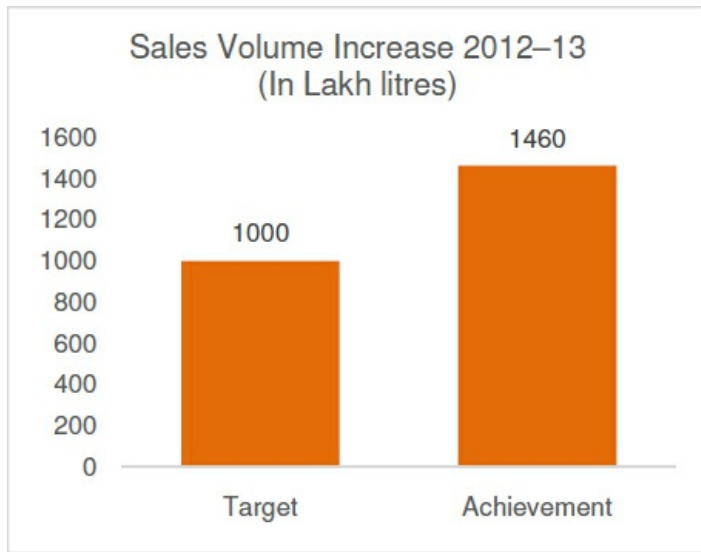
Making milk the drink of choice for superheroes

We associated ourselves with superhero movies like *The Amazing Spiderman* and *The Man of Steel* by creating India's first 3D ad film.

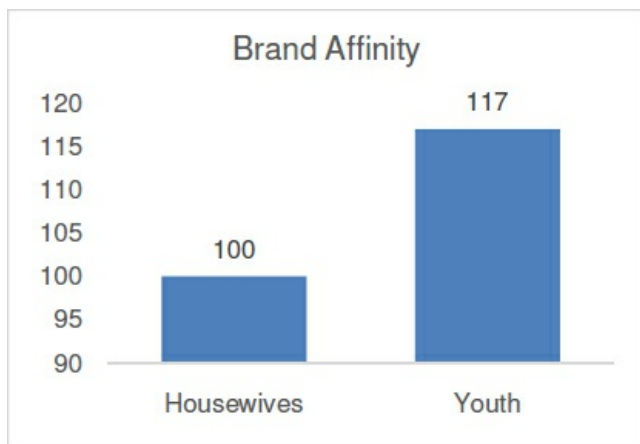
The idea was to infuse milk with zest and youthfulness, thereby making it 'cooler' than any artificial cold drink.

Performance against objectives

The campaign exceeded the sales objective, delivering 8% growth (against the target 5%) in a mature market (source: client data).



Brand affinity scores among the youth surpassed the core housewife target group (source: IMRB brand track: 5,778 housewives, 1,949 young people).



Amul's associations on youth jumped 25% (source: IMRB brand track: 1,949 young people).



The numbers on the ultimate youth arena, Facebook, speak for themselves:

- 25 million Facebook impressions;
- 10.4 million unique visitors on Facebook;
- 179,000 likes.

We reached 1.5 billion consumers at zero incremental cost through the innovative promotion on the packaging.

Lessons learned

It is easy for market leaders to get complacent and enjoy the perks of owning the highest market shares. However, they should be vigilant about the probable threats that can affect the entire category. Amul Milk identified the threat of young people shying away from consuming milk and took the right measures to reverse this scenario.

To effectively reach your target audience, you need to talk to them in a language that they understand best. Amul spoke to the youth through the language of sports and Bollywood – two fevers that engulf their lives.

An integrated marketing approach becomes mandatory to reach out to the target group at their favourite touchpoints. Amul Milk went full throttle to reach out to young people through all channels that validated the 'cool' quotient – sports, movies, social media etc.

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