

CLOS DU BOIS

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2023 Chiat Awards - Written Case Study

Long Live, Clos du Bois

Introduction

The wine category as a whole is struggling to win younger drinkers¹. This has led to a slew of new brands that reject tradition and shed all of the stuffy pretense of wine. They have humorous names, abstract designs, and bright colors². Several have been founded by celebrities and influencers³, while others fall into the quickly growing natural category⁴.

When it comes to Chardonnay, the challenge is even tougher. In fact, “Younger consumers are driving wine trends, and they don't want chardonnay” was the headline of one recent newspaper article. With the Premium Chardonnay in decline, how would Clos du Bois - a struggling wine brand that's been around since the 1970s - convince younger drinkers to buy a bottle?

We leaned into their progressive values and intolerance for bias, thereby making “old people's wine” seem aspirational and chic. Our effort won with both younger and older drinkers, reversing the brand's downward trajectory and defying the category's decline.

Sources:

1. The Wine Business Sees a Problem: Millennials Aren't Drinking Enough, New York Times, February 2022

2. Who says Chardonnay can't be cool?, The Guardian, April 2019

3. “It's Time to Stop Laughing Off Wines With Funny Names”, June 2021

4. Insights from Drizly's Top 5 Celebrity Wine Brands, BevAlc Insights, July 2021

Background and Business Challenge

Clos du Bois was on the wrong side of new category trends in wine. It was founded in 1974 and looks pretty much the same today as it did then. And not in a cool, heritage way. Their most popular varietal, Chardonnay, typically sells for less than \$10 and you can find it in your average grocery store. Quite simply: there's nothing cool or modern about it. These headwinds led to a lack of investment in the brand, and subsequently a three-year double-digit slide in volume¹.

Meanwhile, Chardonnay as a whole hasn't been cool since the '90s², and after a brief COVID-fueled spike in 2020, the category shrunk 11% by volume in 2021³. Not surprisingly, the brand's recent struggles meant that the marketing budget would be modest. And while it was an increase from the last few years, we were still being outspent by our core competitors⁴.

The challenge: we needed to come up with a new brand campaign that would overcome key hurdles and stabilize volume declines in the first year, while improving brand health metrics with both younger and older cohorts.



Sources:

1. E. & J. Gallo Winery, FLEX, 2019-2021
2. How Natural Wine Became a Symbol of Virtuous Consumption, New Yorker, November 2019
3. IRI, week ending August 21, 2022
4. Pathmatics competitive spending, January 2021 - August 2022

Strategic Thinking

Chardonnay is an “old people’s wine.” This was an actual quote, uttered by a 30-something in one of our focus groups. She was a Chardonnay drinker, but she didn’t drink it as often as she otherwise might, especially when out or with friends, because it’s embarrassingly uncool¹. There’s even a phrase for this: ABC – “anything but chardonnay.”

Our focus group respondents had trouble assigning any adjectives to the brand, other than plain or safe. When asked who the brand would be if it were a celebrity, older names kept coming up. One even said Helen Mirren, and not in a flattering way! Our association with older women wasn’t giving us clout or cachet - it was actually hurting the brand. Clos du Bois was just wallpaper. It was a brand that had been around for a while but meant nothing¹.

Which got us thinking: Wait a minute... older women are amazing! They’re the badasses we all want to be. That’s because, once you get to a certain age, you have the confidence to wear what you want and say what you want. They don’t desperately seek acceptance like the rest of us². And well, there’s nothing cooler than that. We’ve seen proof of this in popular culture – from fashion-oriented Instagram accounts that document senior citizen street-style³ to the youth-fueled obsession with older cultural icons⁴ like Fran Lebowitz⁵, Iris Apfel⁶, and Diane Keaton⁷.

The unlock: We realized that we could turn “old woman’s wine” from a pejorative into a point of pride. As a brand that’s been around since the 70s and has and has an average consumer age of 50⁸, Clos Du Bois had the right to take this issue on directly. So we did.

Sources:

1. Clos du Bois Focus Groups, March 2021

2. This Is the Age When Your Self-Esteem Is Highest, Time, August 2018

3. A Joyful Celebration of Chinatown’s Stylish Seniors, The Cut, March 2021

4. The Rise of the Over-50 Fashion Mentors, New York Times, February 2022

5. Everybody Loves Fran. But Why?, New York Times, January 2021

6. Style Icon Iris Apfel Celebrated Her 100th Birthday With a New Job, InStyle, 2021

7. Five Looks That Prove Diane Keaton Is in a Style League of Her Own, Vogue, January 2021

8. Clos Du Bois Superbrief, June 2021

Creative Execution

Our brand platform, “*Long Live*”, aimed to take the negative stereotype that Chardonnay is only for old women and reframe it as aspirational, with an air of “hell yes!”. Our reason-to-believe was “decades of experience for people for people who know what it’s like to live a little”, nodding to the fact that Clos Du Bois itself has a rich history to draw from.

To direct our [launch film](#), we hired Courteney Cox, a 50-something icon from the 90s who recently won a new generation of young fans that discovered Friends through Netflix. Not only would she help us earn press but hiring her helped fight against the bias she suffers from as a woman approaching 60. Her work for Clos du Bois helped open new doors for her, as it was her commercial directorial debut.

Next, we conducted a study on ageism and found that over 60% of people 55+ felt that their age group is not authentically represented within alcohol advertising¹, which made headlines². We followed that up by partnering with Brooke Shields, who helped generate coverage in E!³ and Vogue⁴ by honestly voicing the struggles that she herself had faced as she's aged. Following that, our press blitz, our videos, posts, and shelf talkers launched, showing the world how aspirational older people actually are. Our cast was made up of regular people in their 60s and 70s that simply know how to live a little. They included a dancer, a skater, a cowboy, and a nude model.

Our message reached audiences young and old across major social channels, partnering with younger-skewing Conde Nast titles like Glamour and GQ, and Pinterest. In social and at retail, our headlines consistently used the phrase “long live” – toasting to the reasons why we all want to emulate older people.



Sources:

1. Long Live Campaign Study, March 14 - 23, 2022
2. Actress Courteney Cox Joins Clos du Bois to Challenge Ageism in Wine Advertising, Wine Spectator, April 2022
3. Brooke Shields Talks Fighting Ageism in Advertising and Flipping the Script Against Stereotypes, E! Online, April 2022
4. The Perfect Mother's Day Present With...Brooke Shields, Vogue, April 2022

Effect and Impact

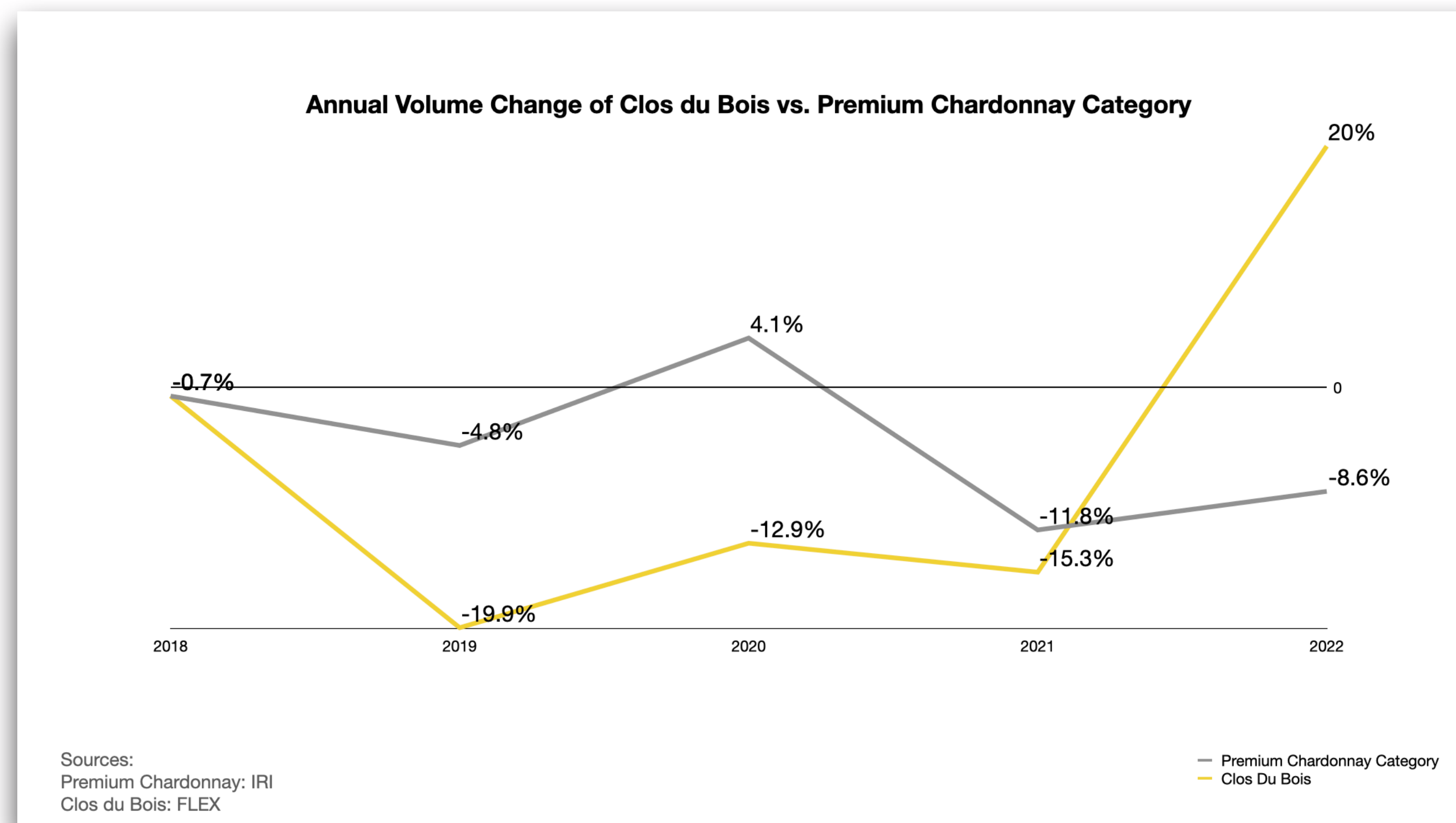
We achieved our volume goal and a whole lot more, putting the brand on an upwards trend for the first time in years. And we handily exceeded our marketing objectives – both driving consideration for a brand that was being ignored, and improving the perception that the brand is modern despite its history and packaging.



KPI #1: stabilize volume declines to 0%

Objective: Volume had experienced double-digit declines for three consecutive years, and was down 8.6% as of August 2021 – one year before our campaign ended.

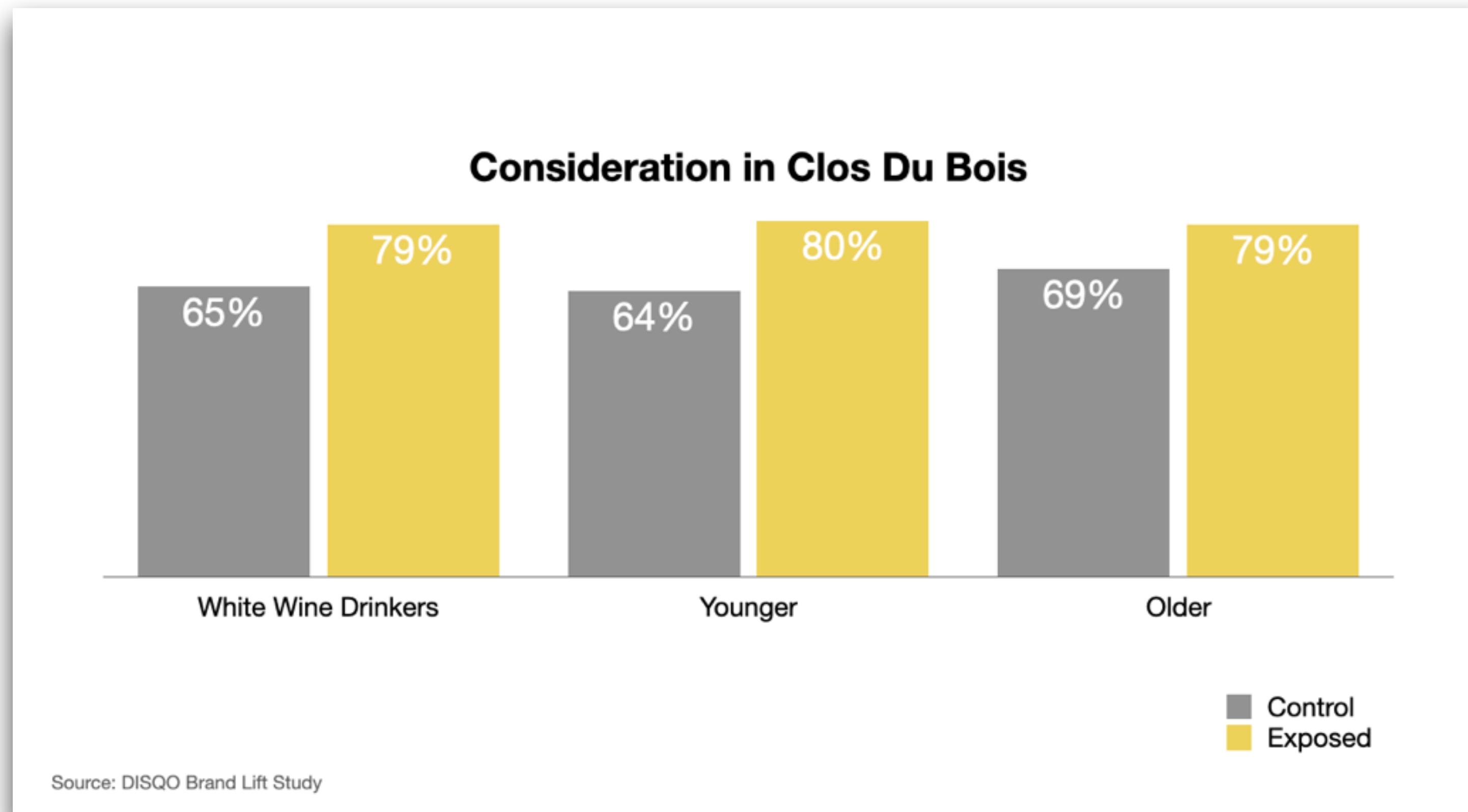
Result: Volume didn't just stabilize – it grew 16.6%. Meanwhile, the category was down 8.3%, and each of Clos Du Bois' key competitors are down as well: Bogle: -5.9%; Cupcake -9.3%; Chateau Ste. Michelle -13.7% . [Note: Clos du Bois is owned by the E. & J. Gallo Winery. Volume is tracked internally using a tool called FLEX.]



KPI #2: increase consideration

Objective: With decades of history, people knew the brand name but were ignoring it. To increase volume, we needed them to take us seriously. We aimed to improve consideration by five points (from 65% to 70%).

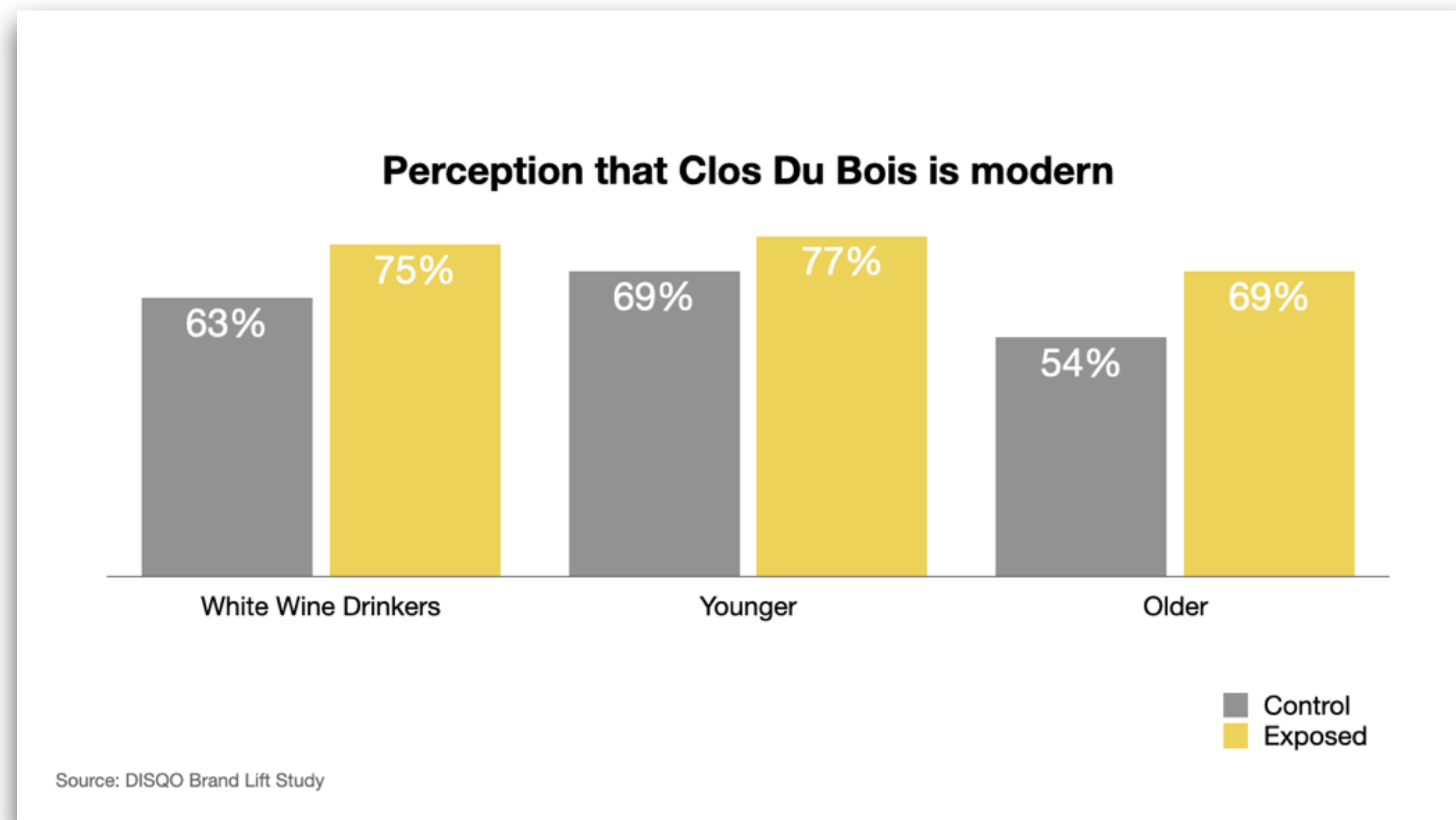
Result: We increased 14 points to 79%, nearly tripling our goal of a five-point lift.



KPI #3: increase perception that brand is modern

Objective: We can't win younger drinkers and we run the risk of losing older women if they think the brand is outdated. We aimed to improve by five points (from 63% to 68%).

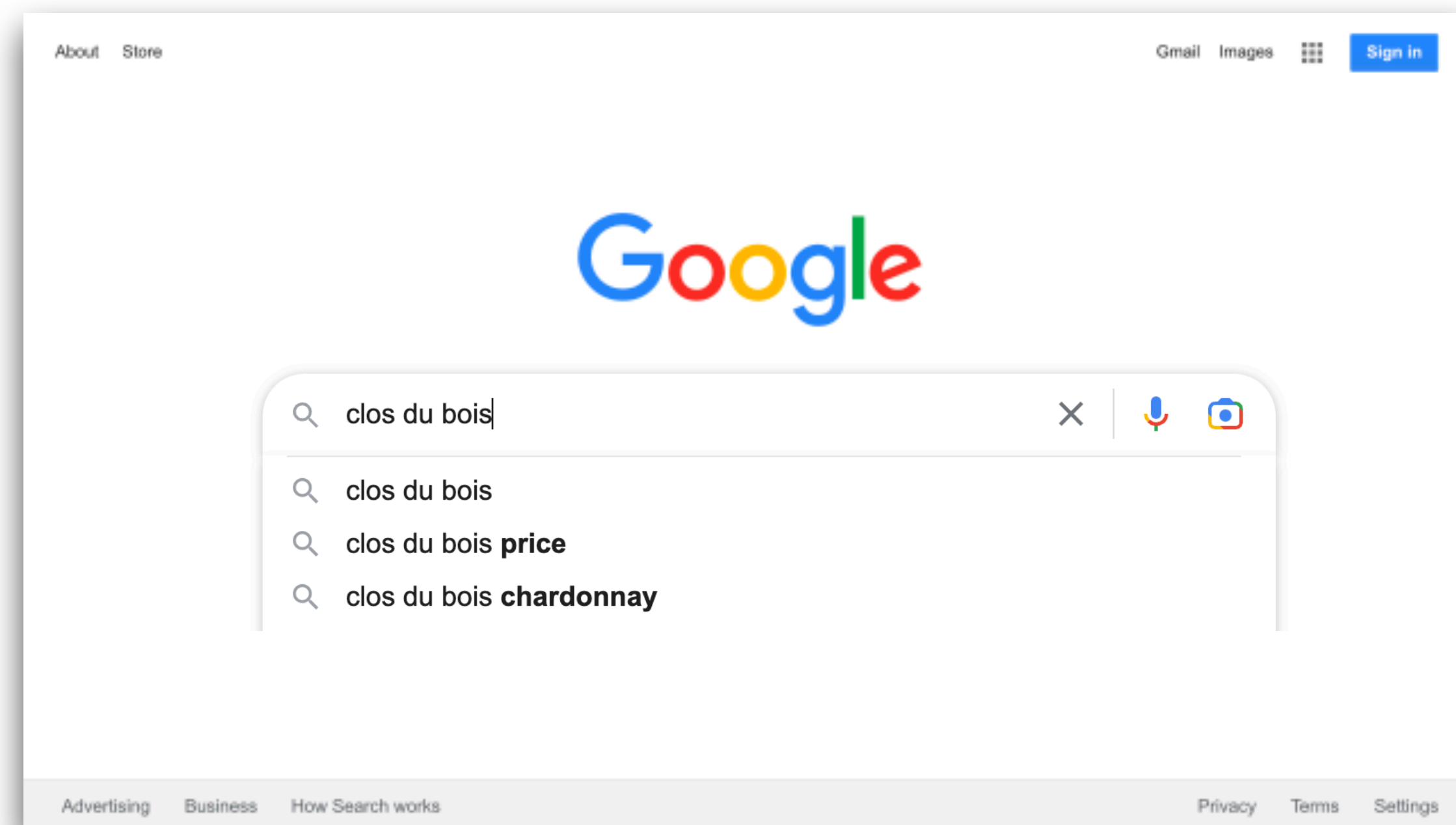
Result: Perception that the brand is modern increased 12 points to 75%, more than doubling our goal of a five-point lift. We increased consideration amongst both our younger and older audiences.



KPI #4: increase organic searches

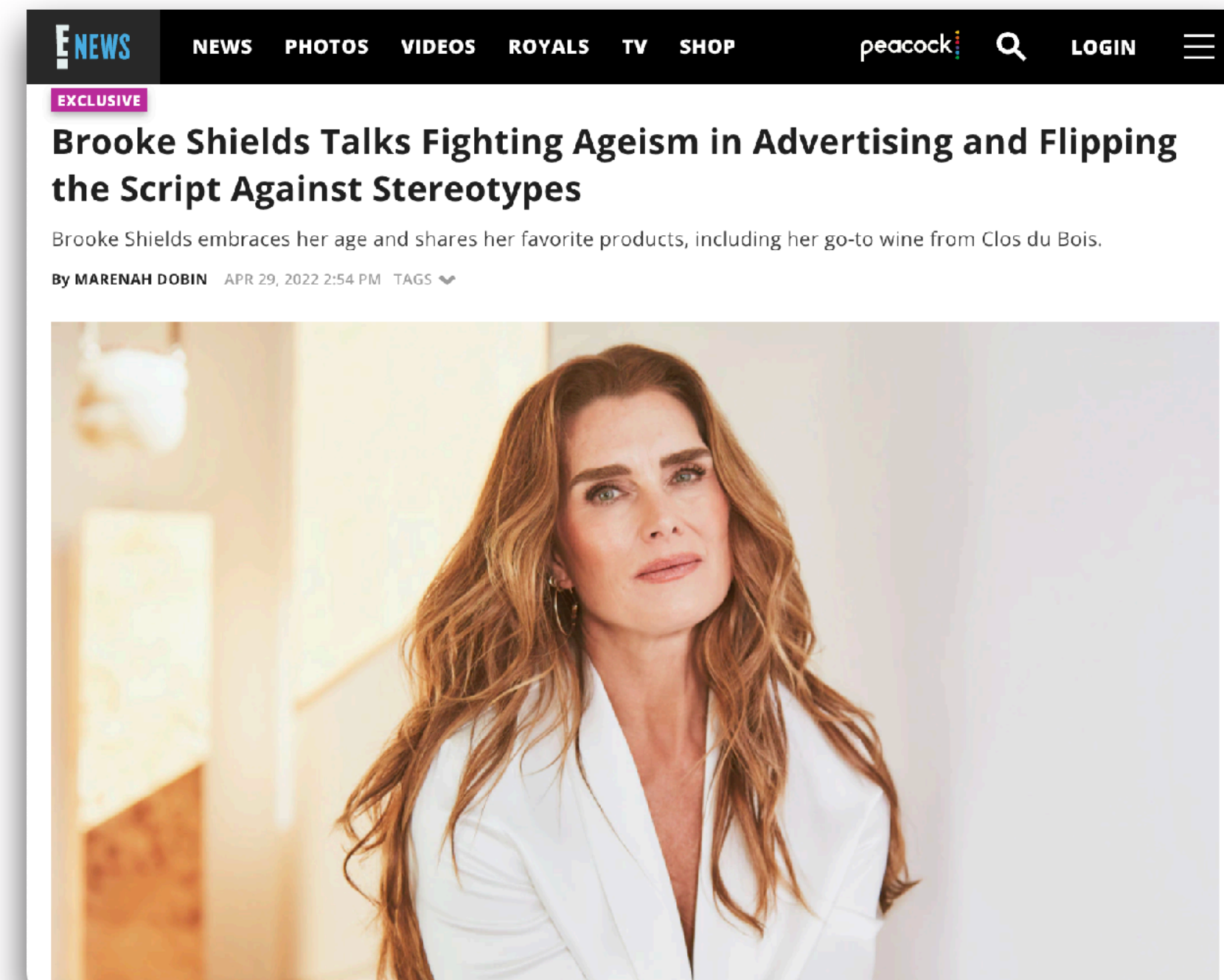
Objective: We used organic search as a proxy for interest, salience, and purchase intent. Searches for the same time period in 2021 were 13,000 (April - August), and we aimed for 20,000.

Result: We increased organic searches in the same period from 13,000 to 31,000, an increase that was 2.5x higher than our goal¹.



Other Notable Results

In addition to beating our volume growth goal, Clos du Bois has garnered more brand attention and pervaded cultural conversations around aging:



- Market share grew **.83 points**¹
- Amongst Premium Chardonnay's we climbed **from the #3 spot to #2**¹
- Same **store velocity grew 12%** versus YAG²
- YTD distribution is **up 13.3%**²
- Social followers **are up 42.7%**³
- We earned **13** pieces of coverage, totaling **7 million additional impressions** specific to the Long Live campaign⁴.

Sources:
1. IRI Total US MULO YTD w.e. 8-21-22
2. E. & J. Gallo Winery FLEX, August 2022, Depletions
3. Clos du Bois internal social dashboard, August 2022
4. Cision, August 2022

Long Live,

CLOS DU BOIS



THANK YOU

