



THE INFINITELY  
RECYCLABLE BALL  
ALUMINUM CUP<sup>®</sup>

**CASE STUDY:**

**CONNECTING CONSUMERS TO A  
REVOLUTIONARY EVERYDAY  
PRODUCT**

**SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY**

# INTRODUCTION

We know there is a critical plastic issue: many plastics are never recycled, or cannot be, and end up in landfills. Aluminum, on the other hand, can be recycled an infinite number of times. So Ball Corporation created the most disruptive product in the history of disposable cups: the Ball Aluminum Cup (BAC).

The BAC looks premium, provides a cool drinking sensation, and is more durable than plastic cups. It's just a better disposable cup that doesn't harm the earth. But it had a small budget and big goals. Somehow, it had to break through to the right people and get them talking.

We targeted an eco-conscious consumer and realized that they had an emotional conflict we could tap into: they want to display their values through the products they use, but they don't always know what products to buy. So we realized the strategy would be stronger if it was about them—not the cup.

We showed them that the BAC is a simple way to show the world they care about the environment, since it's a product that can authentically claim sustainability. And they realized they can now take one small but important step toward making a difference.

## BACKGROUND

Billions of single-use plastic cups wind up in landfills each year. Furthermore, plastic cups can only be recycled a small number of times before they also have to go to a landfill. To combat this environmental catastrophe, the disposable Ball Aluminum Cup (BAC) was born, from a company whose business is based on aluminum products—Ball Corporation. Unlike plastic, aluminum is infinitely recyclable, making it a much more sustainable alternative to single-use plastic cups, such as the ubiquitous red cups we all know. When you recycle the BAC, which is itself made from 90% recycled materials, it can be back on the shelf in 60 days.

This disruptive product has a number of other unique attributes when compared to its plastic counterparts. It's more substantial—and more durable. It provides a "cool" sensation when you hold it and sip cold drinks. It also provides a more premium look than plastic. And it fits into any number of use cases where fun and celebration are on tap.

# GOALS

Ball viewed the BAC division as a start-up, which meant it had a small budget but large goals. It wanted to increase sales by over seven times the level of the previous year and double the sales velocity at retail. At the same time, it was ramping up its distribution, expecting to get to 70% distribution at mass retail by the end of 2022.

Our budget was not going to be able to materially affect sales. After all, it was a new product that was still in the process of being sold-in to retailers. However, we did set goals for the campaign that would show a material change among people who saw the advertising. This included increases in:

- Product Awareness
- Brand Consideration
- Brand Affinity
- Purchase
- Repurchase

As an agency we were eager and excited to work on such a sustainable brand, a brand that was trying to shake up an entire category. We are a team of people who take environmental issues to heart and couldn't wait to get started. We felt like we were promoting a cause. And everyone contributed.

# TARGET

Our prime prospect was the Eco-Conscious Consumer, who is motivated by the promise of an eco-friendly world. They are willing to take the time to come up with creative solutions that reduce their impact on the environment, even if it means spending more. This group views their consumer behavior as a means to convey their eco-friendly values, and sees sustainability as more than simply a single thing, but rather as a lifestyle to be incorporated into everything they do.

Demographically, they are 57% female and 43% male. Their age ranges between 18 and 64, but we knew we needed to appeal to the Gen Z and Millennial audiences in particular, given their passion for environmental causes and for holding brands accountable. Ball also conducted a survey that showed purchase intent of 71% among ages 16-34.

# THE INSIGHT

We knew that an alternative to plastic would resonate with a lot of people: 83% believe it's important or extremely important for companies to design products that can be reused or recycled (Accenture, June 2019), and 70% of consumers are willing to change their habits to reduce their environmental impact (IBM, January 2020).

Furthermore, from Ball internal research, we knew that even though many in the U.S. have an eco-conscious mindset, their knowledge is not very deep. The research showed that many people who were prime prospects felt they didn't know how to shop eco-consciously. And they seem to know they are lacking in knowledge, because they stated they crave more information on how they can make a positive difference. A full 73% of consumers said they would choose environmentally friendly containers if they were given a choice.

Ball had also conducted a lot of research to determine whether the product features appealed to these prime prospects, and it was clear that most people loved the product. But we felt that just focusing on product attributes would not capture the inherent emotional tug that the target felt about behaving more eco-consciously.

So we believed that we would have more impact if we went further than just showing how terrific the product was. After all, we already knew most people would like the product; what we didn't know was how to convey that this truly was a revolutionary event in the staid category of disposable cups, and that people should sit up, take notice, and stop buying plastic cups. And then it hit us—*it's not about the cup, it's about the people.*

After all, these are people who want to learn more and do more about sustainability. They are passionate about the cause, even if they don't always know exactly what to do. So we decided to position the product as something that allows them a platform to make a statement about their values, and we made it an easy shopping decision: simply swap out your single-use plastic cups for BACs, and the world (or at least your party guests) will know that you care. Our core strategy was: *Disposable plastic cups are over. Welcome to the Ball Aluminum Cup.*

# THE CREATIVE IDEA

Just as the strategy invited people to meet the BAC, the creative idea invited them to actually express themselves on the cup. In essence, the medium of the cup became the message in our *"Make a Statement"* campaign. Using the additional insight that people write their names on their plastic cups using black markers to keep track of them at a party, we decided to use the BAC as a platform for people to see statements handwritten directly on the cup, statements that allowed us to showcase the sustainability of the cup. The cup was used to “make a statement” in the voice of our target audience, allowing them to identify with the cup as being for them, a cup that allowed them to show off their values.

This creative approach also allowed us to put the cup and its branding front and center, with thumb-stopping power as people scrolled their feed. It also proved to be flexible enough to hold additional messages, such as the premium look or the durability of the cup. But the core idea remained the same—use the BAC as a platform for our target’s voice and desire to show off their concern for the earth by ditching traditional plastic cups.

Irreverence and authenticity were critical in this campaign, as we know this tone resonates best with an audience of Millennials and Gen Z; as much as they care about the environment, lecturing doesn't go over well with them. So the statements spoke in a cheeky, colloquial human voice about the cup's sustainability as well as its other experiential qualities, and its ability to level up your fun occasions, particularly in summer, such as beach parties and BBQs. Additionally, many of our statements were customized and timed for cultural relevance.

It's worth noting that there were differing opinions at the client over whether the creative approach “denigrated” the premium look of the cup, since handwriting on plastic cups is usually not that attractive. We countered, respectfully, that we would never obscure the Ball logo with handwriting, and that we would hire a professional calligrapher to ensure the writing was elegant while still seeming to be handwritten.

# CREATIVE EXECUTION 1

Animated Instagram Ad

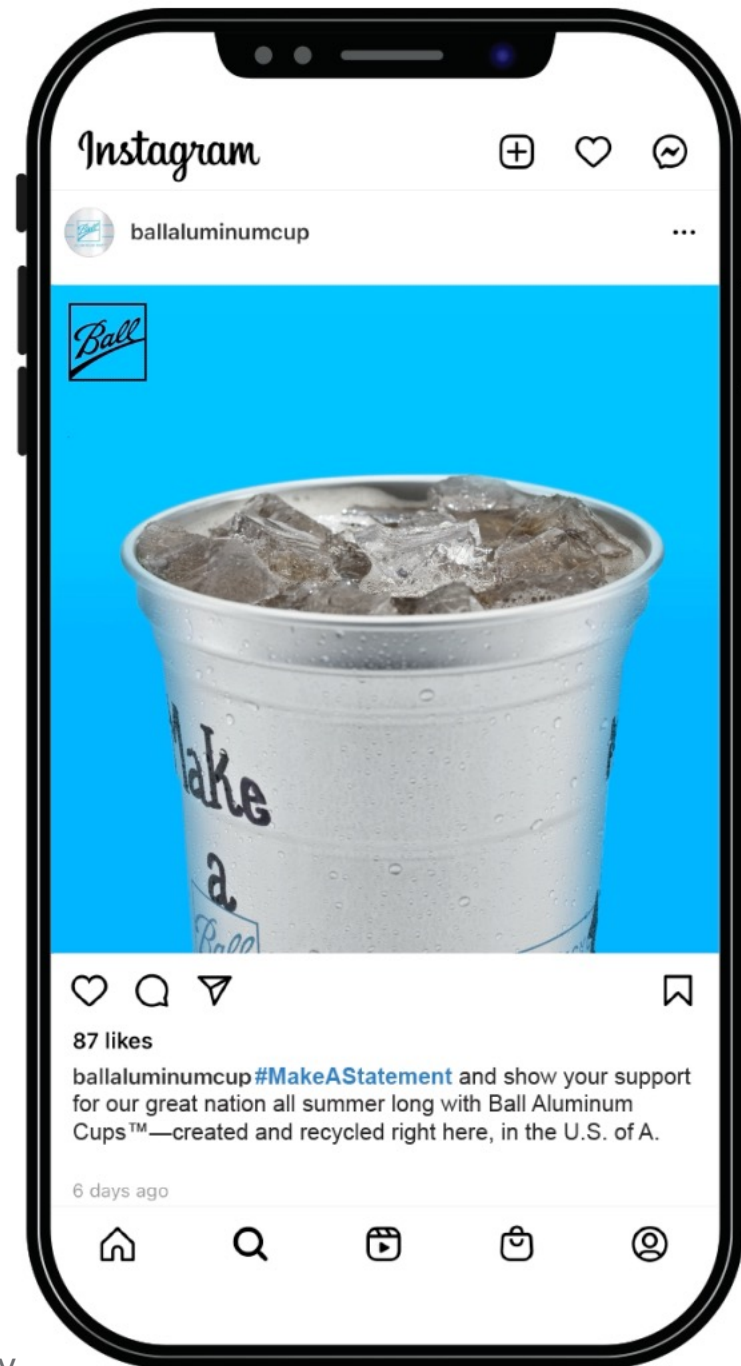


Press Play



# CREATIVE EXECUTION 2

Animated Instagram Ad



Press Play

# CREATIVE EXECUTION 3

Animated Instagram Ad



Press Play

# CREATIVE EXECUTION 4

Video Ad



Compared to an ordinary disposable plastic cup

Press Play

# THE EXECUTION

Because we wanted to preserve as much of our budget as possible for the media buy, production had to be done on a shoestring. By design, the nature of the campaign allowed for a pared-down approach, as opposed to more complicated effects. We focused on the messaging of the statements, and put the product—and branding—front and center.

The campaign came to life on Instagram, in both Stories and In-Feed Video Ads. We also engaged several Instagram and TikTok creators to extend the campaign, extolling the cup's virtues in ways that were organic to their own content. Each creator also made their own statement, handwritten directly on their cups, to create synergy with the larger campaign.

# THE RESULTS

Over the course of Spring and Summer, key seasons for sales, we delivered more than 200 million impressions, with a cost per impression of under a penny. And Ball's tracking study showed that nearly 25% of respondents claimed awareness of BAC advertising, even with our small budget, proving that the advertising was breaking through and driving product awareness.

Beyond that, the tracking study showed that ad exposure had a significant impact on funnel metrics:

	Ad Aware a	Ad Unaware b
<b>Aware of Brand</b>	55 <sup>b</sup>	22
<b>Would Consider</b>	52 <sup>b</sup>	21
<b>Ever Purchased</b>	48 <sup>b</sup>	14
<b>Repeat Purchase</b>	43 <sup>b</sup>	10

Percent of respondents at each stage of funnel. Superscripts denote significance.

As for advertising's effect on brand affinity, 83% of those who were ad-aware said they had a more positive impression of the brand vs. 66% of those who were not ad-aware.

The campaign has had a halo effect that amplifies its value beyond mere impressions. And it created momentum that has lasted into 2023.

**Thank you!**