

MULTICHANNEL

Maker's Mark shakes up spirits ads with politically-themed campaign

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By RACHEL LAMB

Maker's Mark is playing off of the 2012 U.S. presidential elections through a satirical politically-themed campaign that promotes its brand image and products via social media, events, television and out-of-home ads.

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The “Cocktail Party” campaign stars James Carville and Mary Matalin, a husband-and-wife couple who notoriously differ on their political views. Maker's Mark took this opportunity to bring together all groups – from both the Democratic and Republican parties – to join one: the Cocktail Party.

“What we are trying to do is basically take a different lens on the political process,” said Jason Dolenga, brand director at **Maker's Mark**, Deer Field, IL. “This is not about the Republican Party or the Democratic Party, it is about the Cocktail Party.

“This is something that we have played around with for a long time and thought that we should go to every level with this campaign,” he said. “Rather than bickering with friends and family about the different parties, just kick back and enjoy with a glass of bourbon.

“That is pretty much the essence of it.”

Election spirit

The essence of the Cocktail Party campaign is centered around a series of short videos. Hosted on the Maker's Mark [YouTube](#) page, the Cocktail Party videos feature Mr. Carville, Ms. Matalin and Maker's Mark president Bill Samuels Jr.

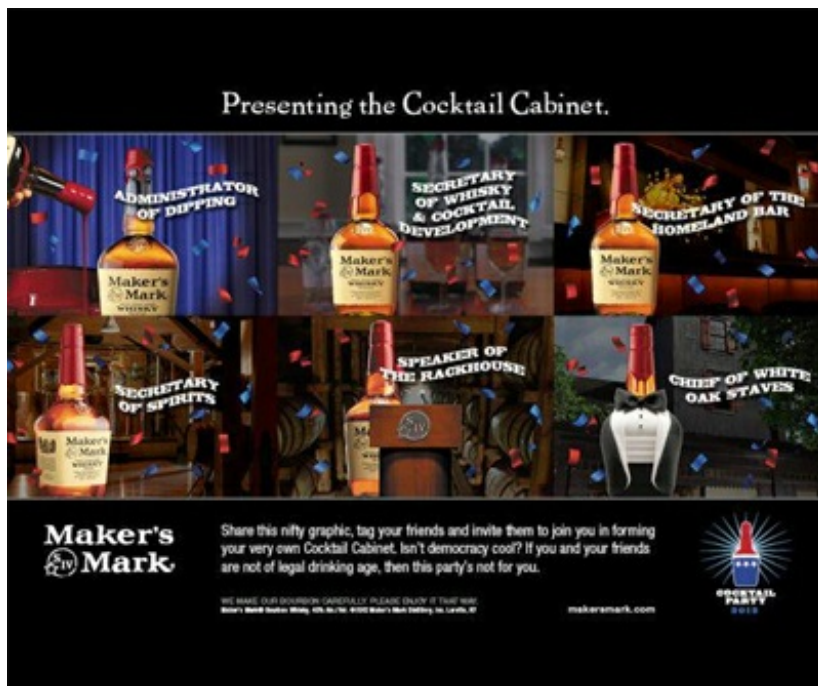
Cocktail Party video

According to Mr. Samuels, "The elections are often marked by conflict, disparagement and rhetoric and, as most aptly said by William Shakespeare, are 'full of sound and fury, signifying nothing.' So we thought, why not bring everyone together, regardless of politics, and create a little lighthearted and irreverent rhetoric of our own."

Consumers can also see the videos on the Maker's Mark Web site. They can participate in political cartoon caption-writing and look at the recipe for the official platform cocktail, The Conservative.

Additional "propaganda" will be posted throughout the campaign season, according to Maker's Mark.

Another portion of the Maker's Mark campaign is on social media. A variety of "campaign slogans" and images from the Cocktail Party are available on the Maker's Mark Facebook page.



Election photo from the Maker's Mark Facebook campaign

To round the campaign out, Cocktail Party campaign ads will premiere on Comedy Central's "Colbert Report" Aug. 27 to kick off with the Republican National Convention.

The ad campaign will continue for the Democratic National Convention and at select times through the fall campaign season.

The Cocktail Party is also being presented through out-of-home ads in Chicago and events in New York, Austin, San Francisco and Kentucky.



Maker's Mark Cocktail Party

"We chose a 360-degree strategy because it is the best option for the brand," Mr. Dolenga said. "As much content as we can get out there, the better."

Shake it up

Many other spirits brands are using multichannel campaigns to push their brand image and products.

For example, Ultimat Vodka is portraying brand image and elevating awareness via

multichannel efforts spanning print, geo-targeted digital ads, unconventional out-of-home marketing and sponsored events that encourage its core demographic of white-class professionals to work less and play more.

The campaign was unleashed in the summer to promote “Summer Friday” concepts and to encourage weather-related fun. The multichannel efforts were likely in an attempt to reach as many of Ultimat’s ideal consumers as possible ([see story](#)).

In addition, LVMH-owned Hennessy added to its Wild Rabbit campaign with a multichannel collaboration featuring Futura, an artist whose persistence and refusal to give up in the pursuit of excellence makes him an ideal brand ambassador for this effort.

In an attempt to reach its core demographic of African American and Hispanic consumers over 21 years old, Hennessy created a limited-edition bottle, a QR code campaign, social videos and a Facebook effort ([see story](#)).

For this particular campaign, Mr. Dolenga claims that Maker’s Mark is not targeting its traditional audience. Rather, it was that the idea drove the strategy rather than the strategy drove the idea.

“Given the assets we have and the interest in general that the presidential campaigns generate, the ideas just kept coming,” Mr. Dolenga said.

Final Take

Rachel Lamb, associate reporter on Luxury Daily, New York