

# Texas Barber Bracket

**Bronze | Effie United States | Experiential Commerce Marketing/Commerce & Shopper | 2023**

Advertiser(s): **Unilever Beauty and Personal Care**

Lead Agency(s): **Arc Worldwide**

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This campaign didn't just surpass expectations, it established a new standard for activation with a longstanding partner (NCAA) and retailer (H-E-B).

The program helped reignite a category that was flat and uninspired, and turned it into a focal point of excitement during a key cultural moment at the local level.

### THE CHALLENGE & OBJECTIVES

Guys' participation in grooming was down after COVID cramped everyone's style: Unilever's key sponsorship of NCAA was hit hard, too.

### THE INSIGHT

For unmotivated guys to get moving again, they needed to be rejuvenated with a past passion and a reward structure..

### THE STRATEGIC IDEA

Inspire Texans to find the confidence of an NCAA player by providing the power of the pros behind their swagger..

### BRINGING THE IDEA TO LIFE

Put NCAA fans into the barber chair for a grooming consultation that gets them game-day ready and feeling confident.

### THE RESULTS

Texas Barber Bracket drove participation in March Madness festivities and trial of Unilever brands, raising Unilever men's grooming sales.

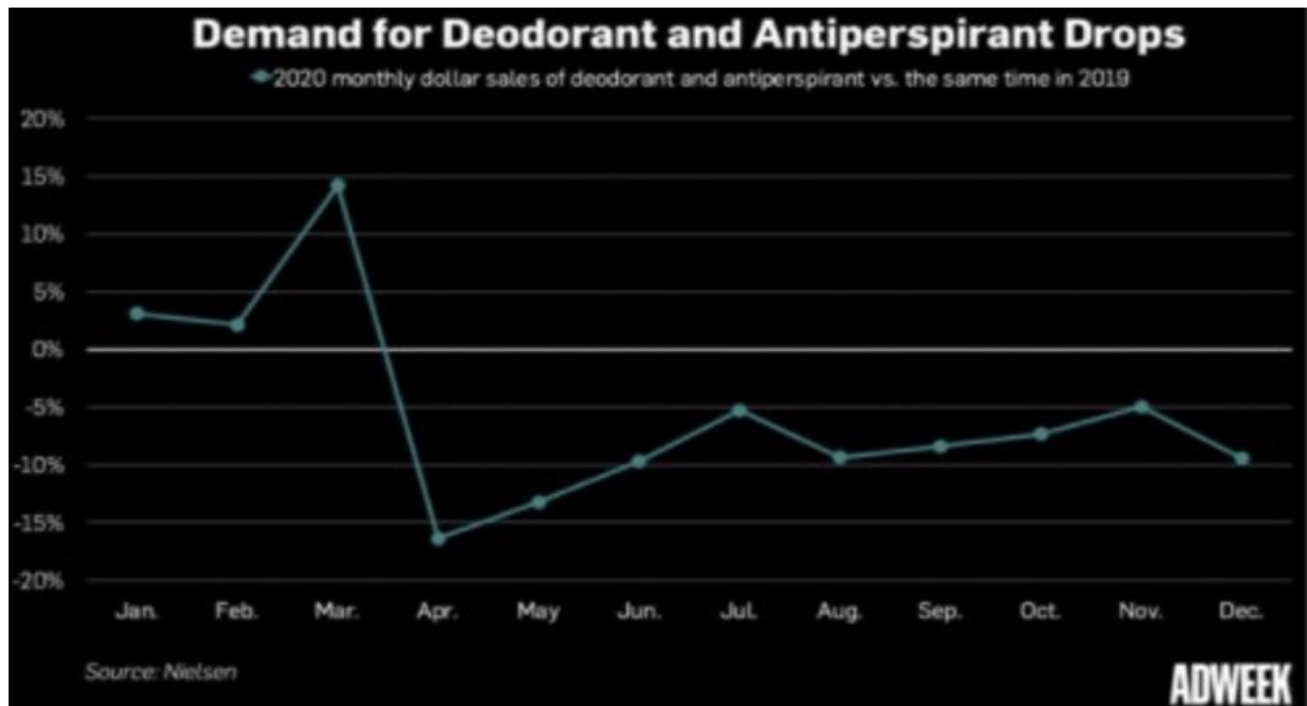
.

# THE CHALLENGE

## STATE OF THE MARKETPLACE & BRAND'S BUSINESS

It seems safe to assume you're very familiar with the negative impact COVID had on so many industries. At this point, you've probably read at least a few tragic tales about categories and brands hit hard from 2020-2021. Well, that story is true here, too...in more ways than one.

First, we have Men's grooming - an amalgamation of categories including Deodorant<sup>1</sup>, Hair Care, Personal Wash and Facial Skincare. Unsurprisingly, these categories were seriously stalled from 2020-2021 as men had few reasons to get jazzed up. Prior to COVID, these categories experienced organic growth year over year - indicating that manufacturers like Unilever (with brands Dove Men+Care, Degree, AXE, SheaMoisture Men and Suave Men) should continue to invest behind them to win their fair share.



That's exactly what Unilever had done: built a longstanding partnership with the NCAA as the "Official Men's grooming Products." They centered activity against key moments when sports become cultural events, not just games. Historically, this partnership peaked in March during March Madness - the moment when thousands of people flock to different regions and millions tune in to see the story of the nation's greatest basketball teams unfold.

Well, March Madness was fundamentally changed by COVID: In 2020, it was cancelled all together. In 2021, it was held cautiously with extremely limited attendance.

COVID had truly cramped our style.

Fast forward to 2022, and this was Unilever’s chance to reignite participation:

- Engagement in the Men’s grooming category, getting guys to return to their grooming routines.
- Maximization of their NCAA partnership by building excitement for the first “real” March Madness in years.

## THE OBJECTIVE & RESULTS

<b>OBJECTIVE OVERVIEW</b>	<b>RESULT OVERVIEW</b>
<p><b>Business Objective 1</b></p> <p>Reinvigorate men’s participation in the grooming category</p> <p>KPI: increase in dollar sales of Unilever men’s grooming products</p> <p>Rationale- The goal was to accelerate sales of Unilever men’s grooming categories (hair, skin, deodorant) and brands (Dove Men+Care, AXE, Degree, SheaMoisture Men and Suave Men) at a faster growth rate than the previous period. +5% is an established benchmark for Unilever scale projects.</p> <p>The growth was to be measured specifically at H-E-B in Texas, where the Sweet 16 and Elite 8 were being held and local activations would be hosted.</p>	<p><b>Business Result 1</b></p> <p>Total men’s grooming sales saw a significant incremental sales life the during the campaign vs. 10 weeks prior.</p> <p>Context- The results blew past our initial benchmarks.</p>

<p>Measurement: Measured via sales performance of Unilever men's grooming products during the campaign period.</p>	
<p><b>Marketing Objective 1</b></p> <p>Bring new men's grooming shoppers in H-E-B</p> <p>KPI: Increased penetration of buys at H-E-E</p> <p>Rationale- Grocery stores are not known as destinations for shopping personal care. Shoppers tend to gravitate towards Mass and Drug channels. We needed to drive foot traffic back to H-E-B brick and mortar locations.</p> <p>Measurement- Tracked offer redemption from lapsed shoppers.</p>	<p><b>Marketing Result 1</b></p> <p>A large number of shoppers who redeemed offers had not purchased men's grooming products at H-E-B in the last 52 weeks.</p> <p>Context - This program saw an increase in new shoppers to the Unilever men's grooming brands compared to other men's programs this year.</p>
<p><b>Activity Objective 1</b></p> <p>Create an engaging experience that satisfied both shopper and H-E-B key stakeholders</p> <p>KPI: Positive sentiment during the event and from senior H-E-B stakeholders afterwards</p> <p>Rationale- This was key because the goal was, ultimately, to create an experience that would engage guys and go beyond a standard promotion. In order for this to be effective, we needed to ensure the experience was worth doing!</p>	<p><b>Activity Result 1</b></p> <p>Overall, the experience was positively received by guys and H-E-B stakeholders alike - driving participation and positive reactions across the board.</p> <p>Context - The work was positively received and allowed Unilever to gain further momentum with H-E-B to continue events like this in the next year:</p> <p>"If there was any way we could do this, it was with Unilever. And you guys went above and beyond, so thank you." -</p>

Measurement- During the events, garner reactions from participating guys Post event, receive feedback from H-E-B stakeholders	Benjamin Covarrubia, H- E-B Senior Business Development Manager
----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----------------------------------------------------------------

## RESULTS OVERVIEW

Unilever’s Texas Barber Bracket was an unmitigated success in rejuvenating men’s grooming sales at H-E-B. But we didn’t just get our lax “Disheveled Dudes” back into action and buying our brands, we brought entirely new users into our portfolio and the wider men’s grooming category at H-E-B. By the end, we generated parking lots of enthusiasm with our Texas Barber Bracket experience, driving more foot traffic at H-E-B locations, and solidified a deeper relationship with the retailer. H-E-B was so thrilled with the results that they have already kicked off plans for 2023. The Texas Barber Bracket is set to be a staple tentpole initiative at the retailer for years to come.

## ADDITIONAL RESULTS

N/A

## OTHER CONTRIBUTING FACTORS

- Societal or Economic Events (e.g. changes in economic, political, social factors)

In March of 2022 the market was still reeling from the effects of the pandemic from both a behavioral and financial perspective. Guys were still grooming less, and as inflation began to set in, they were a little more reticent to spend in areas they weren’t excited about. Additionally, H-E-B was still suffering from a Covid- induced lack of foot traffic; however, H-E-B and Unilever had a cultural moment they could latch onto right in their backyard.

The NCAA tournament was *finally* back to being a live, fully attended event - and it was coming to Texas. Channeling enthusiasm for March Madness gave us the opportunity to pump up shopper excitement, getting guys back to their grooming best, and accelerating shoppers’ trips to their local H-E-B stores.

### **Objectives Sources:**

1. Adweek via Nielsen, Monthly Deodorant Sales 2020 vs. 2019

### **Results Sources:**

1. IRI 3/9/2022 - 3/22/2022: Men's grooming Sales
2. H-E-B Retail Media Campaign Report, 3/9/2022 - 3/22/2022

## **THE INSIGHT & THE BIG IDEA**

### **AUDIENCE**

Flashback to mid 2020 and you can picture him (or maybe you even were him): a "Disheveled Dude."

He was starting to let his daily grooming routine go (deodorant? Nah...) and letting previously short locks grow just to see how it would go. Perhaps a man-bun would come from it! Or letting stubble lengthen into full-blown beard. It was even well-documented that showers were happening fewer and farther between.<sup>1</sup>

Many "Disheveled Dudes" stopped participating in workplace standards and social society IRL, therefore they stopped participating in the grooming rituals necessary to keep up with social standards. While they might be experimenting with hair length, they were putting hygiene routines aside.

But it wasn't just that our guys had fallen off the grooming bandwagon - they had fallen out of sync with how to represent themselves in the world. By no longer participating in rich, human interaction - whether on a date night or in the basement of a sports bar - men had become a little more awkward and less sure of themselves.<sup>2</sup> We had to help "Disheveled Dudes" out as they emerged from their houses and back into the real world: from feeling stale to getting their swagger back again.

### **THE INSIGHT**

So how do you get someone who is lax about their grooming to do something about it for the first time in a couple years?

It was a tough task, and even tougher when we realized what the pandemic had also delivered - general complacency. With months and months of sitting around with little incentive or ability to go out, it was actually HARDER to get guys back to the things that they used to regularly do, even with restrictions lifted. They weren't just a little more awkward, they were passive and unmotivated even though they wanted to get back to doing more of what they loved.

With guys lulled into passive grooming habits and daily lives, turning their heads and getting them back in the groove required their passionate participation.

It turned out that getting unmotivated guys back into action actually required an extra step. We found in our research that once our guys were unmotivated, **we couldn't**

**just prompt them to jump into something that they were passionate about, we needed to pair that experience with a reward.<sup>3</sup>**

With our answer on how to get their attention, in order to start building that confidence back we needed to intercept them with something compelling and at the right place, at the right time. Luckily for us, we had something at our fingertips that our guys were incredibly passionate about that exuded confidence and swagger, the NCAA tournament. Knowing that our guys were on autopilot mode when making their typical grocery run, we would need to disrupt them before getting into stores by delivering a gamified bracket-based experience, and really turn heads by setting them up with the pros who give NCAA basketball players their confidence- their barbers.

## **THE CORE IDEA OR STRATEGIC BUILD**

Inspire fans to get the confidence of an NCAA player by providing the power of the professionals behind the swagger.

### **Sources**

1. NY Times article, "See Fewer People. Take Fewer Showers." 5/6/21
2. Washington Post article, "It's not just you. We're all socially awkward now." 8/16/2021
3. MRI Simmons, 2021 and 2022 studies

## **BRINGING THE IDEA TO LIFE**

### **ACTIVATION STRATEGY**

We put NCAA fans into the barber chair for a grooming consultation that got them game day ready and feeling confident.

Inspired by the competition of the NCAA tournament, we created the Texas Barber Bracket, championing the spirit of look good, play even better with some local flair. We paired our bracket-style contest with a tailgate that toured H-E-B locations during the tournament. Barbers educated shoppers on how Unilever's men's grooming products help them look their best. The final winner, as voted by our shoppers, was crowned champion and received a significant grant to advance in their career.

### **BRINGING THE IDEA TO LIFE**

There were three key building blocks our campaign needed to be successful.

1. Create an engaging, consultative space that inspires guys to feel confident in new grooming routines and products
2. Bring men and their partners out from their homes and into the world
3. Engage shoppers with the spirit of competition during March Madness

## **RATIONALE**

First, we had to create an experience that didn't just show the products to shoppers - we had to earn their attention and make it worth leaving the house for!

During the first round of the NCAA tournament, we hosted on-site pop-up events at four H-E-B locations featuring the barber finalists from our bracket. A custom-designed Airstream trailer that mirrored a classic barbershop with hints of basketball fandom served as our center of confidence. Shoppers were rewarded with free haircuts, received personalized Unilever product recommendations, watched live streams of March Madness games and spun a prize wheel for gift cards, products and tickets to the NCAA Sweet 16 and NCAA Elite 8 games.

The Texas Barber Bracket launched with a microsite highlighting 16 up and coming Texas barbers, their stories, and a way for shoppers to vote for their favorites. Social media influencers spread the word about the contest, directing shoppers towards our microsite. Once there, voting triggered an automatic entry into a sweepstakes in which shoppers could win an all-inclusive trip to the NCAA Final Four, H-E-B gift cards, or Unilever products.

Knowing that many of our shoppers would be planning for grocery-driven stock-up trips, weekly pre-shop email blasts helped get men's grooming products on the list. To aid in conversion, end caps and shelf signage promoted the bracket contest, voting incentive and an in-store offer for Unilever products endorsed by the barbers. Finally, off-site media and social posts continued to highlight the campaign and offer-related content until a winner was finally named and awarded a \$15,000 grand prize.

## **INVESTMENT OVERVIEW**

Compared to other competitors in this category, the budget is: About the same

Compared to prior year spend on the brand overall, the brand's overall budget this year is: More

Our partnership with the H-E-B retail media team was crucial in promoting our onsite Texas Barber Bracket experience. We amplified the events in-store with posters and promoted the sweepstakes with a QR code on in-store end caps. We pushed our in-store and online offer to shoppers via an onsite digital end cap, category aisle banners, sponsored coupon, weekly email inclusion, dedicated email, brand page, and a coupon page banner, forming one of our most robust media plans for the year. Paid amplification of influencer posts was also included in the full media budget.



## **Production & Other Non-Media Expenditures**

Activation budget included experiential production costs for Airstream (wrap and interior décor), onsite brand ambassadors, influencers, printing and development costs of key visual, in-store signage, onsite event materials, sweepstakes, microsite development, film crew, prize giveaways, and coupon offer redemptions.

## **Owned Media**

N/A

## **Sponsorships and Media Partnerships**

- Product Placement - Ongoing
- Sponsorship - On Site
- Sponsorship - Live Activation
- Sponsorship - Talent or Influencer
- Unique Opportunity

The activation presented a unique opportunity to showcase our partnership with the NCAA as the official men's grooming products of the Final Four. Looking good and playing well inspired our barbershop experience. We featured Unilever men's grooming products on the Airstream counters, and barbers recommended it to event goers as they got their haircuts. Brand ambassadors helped sell our brands to shoppers. We also contracted with three local influencers to further promote our onsite events and coupon offer.

## **Sources**

1. Paid media figures provided by SAS' in-house media team
2. Production costs provided by SAS' in-house events team as well as the agency's production arm.

# CREDITS

Advertiser 1:

## **Unilever**

**Franck Valas, Shopper Marketing  
Lead - Grocery & Emerging  
Alyssa Offer, HEB Customer Business  
Manager  
Laura Garcia, HEB Customer  
Business Manager  
Jayme Jansky, Head of Omni-  
Channel Shopper Marketing  
Steve Kohring, HEB Sales Team Lead**

Agency 1:

## **Arc Worldwide**

**Jacqueline McCabe, Creative  
Director  
Denise Henderson, Account Director  
Jeff Gabuzda, Strategy Director  
Emma Eason, Senior Account  
Executive  
Hunter Whitney, Account Executive  
Ryan Lowe, Senior Art Director  
Rachel Duncker, Executive Producer  
Lauren Elliott, SVG, Strategy Director  
Lynn Cross, SVP, Account Director  
Alma Klein, SVP, Creative Director  
Susan Laesch, VP, Client Operations  
Director  
Arm Theinpeng, Associate Creative  
Director  
Cooper Slack, Junior Art Director  
Kristen Sims, Senior Project Manager  
Maggie DeGarmo, Project Manager  
Donna Biancalana, Project Director  
Alaina Africano, Associate Creative  
Director  
Steven Jaynes, Senior Copywriter  
David Reiss, Copywriter  
Mary Wright, Junior Art Director  
Teddy Nagaro, Associate Director,  
Midwest Print and Digital**

Contributing 1:

**Publicis Hawkeye**

**Heather Casteel, VP, Production**

**Kali Blechle, Event Producer**

Contributing 2:

**Captiv8**

**Bryce Adams, Senior Director,**

**Partnerships**

**Allison Spence, Manager, Business**

**Strategy and Success**

**Holland Miller, Senior Brand**

**Manager**

Contributing 3:

**Mindshare**

**Jacob Guy, Manager, Digital**

**Investment**

**Mason Bates, Head of Sponsorships**

**Rebecca Corrigan, Associate**

**Director, Ecommerce**

Contributing 4:

**H-E-B**

**Haley Ng, Enterprise Account**

**Executive**

**Matthew Epstein, Digital Account**

**Manager**

© 2023: The information available through effie.org is the property of Effie Worldwide, Inc. and is protected by copyright and other intellectual property laws. This brief may be displayed, reformatted and printed for your personal use only. By using effie.org and/or by downloading case histories from it, you agree not to reproduce, retransmit, distribute, sell, publicly display, publish or broadcast the information to anyone without the prior written consent of Effie Worldwide, Inc. Effie® is a registered trademark/service mark of Effie Worldwide, Inc.