

**Final Semester Capstone Project**  
**Dr Pepper: 12/11/25**  
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## **Executive Summary**

In the soda market, Dr Pepper is the #2 brand in the U.S. behind Coca-Cola. In order to maintain or surpass this standing there are some beneficial improvements Dr Pepper can incorporate within their brand. Of the people who regularly consume and drink caffeinated beverages 93% of them range from ages 18-24. This informs Dr Pepper that to grow their business it would be impactful to curate their advertising and brand identity towards attracting Gen Z college students. Since 2014, Dr Pepper has become the official sponsor of the College Football Playoffs and within the College Football deal they have also engaged in giving many students a free tuition. While Dr Pepper is active in the college community, it would be beneficial for them to go above and beyond.

Gen Z college students have many goals and priorities in life, some being achieving their health goals or actively engaging in school spirit. Dr Pepper can put their focus towards both aspects of one's life, which will draw attention and interest towards their brand. Incorporating more diet and sugar free Dr Pepper flavors will attract those whose goal is to attain a healthy lifestyle and values wellness. Offering more diet and sugar free options will allow people to feel heard and be able to choose their better-for-you drink. Along with adding more flavors and diet and sugar free alternatives, Dr Pepper can also gain more attention from college students by incorporating college football into their packaging and advertising. Designing the packaging based on specific college football teams will increase the engagement of students from all throughout the United States. For example, including navy blue, white, and the Nittany Lion on a Dr Pepper can would attract many Penn State students creating excitement within the student base and influencing them to buy and purchase these drinks. Adding new designs during college football season and creating a variety of new year round sugar free and diet options will increase and satisfy Dr Pepper's audience.

Overall, Dr Pepper will work to incorporate more fascinating designs and packaging, attract their audience through social media, create a strong community, and draw the attention of many Gen Z college students with the new and improved flavor options and packaging designs. Dr Pepper will make sure to engage with its audience through media platforms to ensure this is effective.

## **Situation Analysis**

### **• Current market position and recent performance metrics**

Dr Pepper, originally common in the south, has overtaken Pepsi in the soda market. Keurig Dr Pepper ended 2024 with net sales totalling \$15.35 billion representing a 3.6% increase. In the refreshments segment which includes their soda, they had a 5.8% increase in net sales leading to a \$9.3 billion dollar increase.

While Coca-Cola and Pepsi were fighting for consumer preference, Dr Pepper established themselves in 1885, creating a cult-like following in southern states of the U.S. Starting in the 1970s, Dr Pepper began marketing to the national audience as a non-cola option, quickly growing in popularity. They jumped \$41.9 million to \$226.8 million in a decade. This has paid off, with the 2024 report reporting that Pepsi and Dr Pepper were tied at 8.3% of the soda market with Dr Pepper just nosing them out.

### **• Competitive landscape**

The US soft drink market is expected to reach \$338 billion by the end of 2025. Coke continues to be the leader of the soda market by a huge margin at roughly 19% of the total share. While the gap between number one and number two is high, Coke's market share has fluctuated since the 90s, having a peak of 20.8% in 1995 to a 17.5% share in 2010. In recent years, Coke has seen about a .3% decrease in share since 2020.

In 2024 Pepsi sat on par with Dr Pepper, representing 8.3% of the market share of carbonated soft drinks (CSD). While they have lost their number two rank in the last year, Pepsi Co recently bought the ProBiotic soft drink Poppi earlier this year for \$1.95 billion.

In 2024 Coca-Cola partners Sprite and Diet Coke had significant shares in the market. Sprite owning 8% and Diet coke owning 7.8%.

With the rise of prebiotic soda alternatives in the market, there are two clear contenders. Poppi, started in 2015 as Mother Beverage before being rebranded in 2020, had over \$500 million in revenue in 2024. Ollipop, founded in 2018, had \$400 billion in revenue last year.

Several other companies have started getting their foot into the soda market as well; Coca-Cola's new Simply Pop, Spindrift, Bloom Nutrition's Bloom Pop, and Health-ade kombucha's SunSip.

- **Category trends in carbonated soft drinks**

In the last few years there has been a consumer shift to having less sugar in drinks, with Innova Market citing 72% of consumers are sugar conscious when it comes to soft drinks, with half of that limiting artificial sweeteners as well. And younger consumers like Gen Z want both health functional drinks while maintaining flavor variety. A report from Food Business News showed that 82% of consumers say drinking their favorite beverages increase their mental health and 59% seek beverages that can meet the daily nutrient needs. This relates to the growing consumer crave for functionality in their drinks such as low sugar, low calorie, or prebiotics.

- **Key market dynamics and consumer behavior shifts**

Gen Z tends to have different beverage preferences than older generations. For example, they are less likely to have a hot coffee in the morning and either skip it entirely or aim for a cold beverage instead. They also buy less traditional products such as dairy milk and reach for dairy alternatives at the grocery store. Gen Z is also the lowest percentage of Americans to drink alcohol.

According to Abstrax Hops, 85% of Gen Z use social media to influence their decisions. 77% of Gen Z use TikTok to discover products and 75% use Instagram. And 55% have purchased food or beverages that have gone viral on social media. And Gen Z is likely to experiment with viral drink trends.

- **Dr Pepper's college football marketing success analysis**

Dr Pepper holds one of the most efficient sports marketing deals. They became the official sponsor of the College Football Playoffs in 2014 and struck a deal that would lead through the 2026 season. This deal was accompanied with the fictional mascot Larry Culpepper who quickly became a fan favorite, even selling out as a halloween costume for two consecutive years. He was a major connection between a brand and the real sports-fan experience.

Through the CFP deal, Dr Pepper has gifted over 10,000,000 in tuition to lucky students through the football toss during the game. And has interactive challenges throughout the playoff such as a photo

contest, supplying the winner with a year's supply of Dr Pepper, prioritizing their on-site fan connection with consumers.

Dr Pepper also capitalizes on the fan connection with their “Fansville” commercials. Now on their eighth season, the show parodies sports obsessed fans through a fictional town. And with the shift in NIL for college athletes, they utilize top football athletes in the country in their commercials. The integration of sports culture into Dr Peppers branding helps to solidify the genuine connections Dr Pepper is marketing towards.

## **SWOT Analysis**

### **Strengths:**

One strength of Dr Pepper is their “signature blend of 23 flavors.” This unique flavor combo not only makes them recognizable but makes them stand out as a flavor. In the constant cola battle between Pepsi and Coke, their flavor allows them to be a separate entity entirely, giving them an edge to consumers and competitors.

Second, according to Tracksuit, Dr Pepper has the number one brand relevance for 18-34 years old on social media. This is significant, because leveraging this existing connection with the younger audience will lead to long term customer loyalty for the brand.

Next, Dr Pepper’s immersion in college football culture is a great strength for them. Their deal with the college football playoff allows them to connect with sports-fans and make a community impact with their tuition give-away. Similarly, their comedic commercials “Fansville” have an extremely positive rating on several channels according to Chief Marketer. Now on their eighth season of the “show,” Fansville represents Dr Pepper’s understanding of sports fan culture which resonates well with their audience.

Another strength for Dr Pepper is their bold flavor combinations and flavor innovation keep them relevant and their consumers engaged with trying new products. Their strawberries and cream flavor was among these and through this, the company was awarded as the #1 carbonated soft drink innovation of 2023 from the Shorty Awards, and generated \$300 million in sales from the product.

A final, major strength for the brand is their ability to be distributed by both Coke and PepsiCo. As an independent brand Dr Pepper is allowed the best of two worlds as they are manufactured and distributed by two major competitors. This agreement gives Dr Pepper broader retail and consumer reach.

### **Weaknesses**

As the company continues to grow and profit it still has several weaknesses limiting total growth. First, while Dr Pepper has become the #2 soda is still behind coke by a significant margin. Coca-cola has a huge market share at 19.2% according to Beverage Daily, and is rated as one of the most valuable

brands worldwide. Meanwhile Dr Pepper has an eleven point disparity and has a value of roughly 4.8 billion as of 2024 putting them at a disadvantage.

Second, Dr Pepper relies on PepsiCo and Coca-cola as their bottlers and distributors. This can be harmful as PepsiCo and Coca-cola are their direct competitors. And in competitive situations this can cause conflict of interest and allow these companies to favor their own product over Dr Pepper's.

Additionally, compared to the two competitors, Dr Pepper is not on par with their global presence. Both brands have a large market overseas compared to Dr Pepper who only has sales concentrated domestically as well as their brand following. This makes them vulnerable to shifts in the US market as well as limits their overall brand growth.

Finally, Dr Pepper as a soda is not the ideal choice for health conscious consumers. In a world where more people are following the health conscious trends normal sodas including Dr Pepper are not performing as well. A lot of consumers are turning towards "healthy soda" brands such as Ollipop or Poppi.

### **Opportunities**

Dr Pepper has several opportunities they can take advantage of. Starting off, with Gen Z having lower rates of alcohol consumption and being labeled as "sober curious," the non-alcoholic carbonated beverage market is growing. Research from CGA shows that there is an increase in demand for soft drinks at bars as well. Dr Pepper can leverage this by creating new flavors that could be considered fun and for the aspect of social drinking and enter the alcohol market but as a sober alternative.

Next, as food trends continue one staple for the last few years has been the "dirty sodas," soda creations featuring syrups and creamers designed by the individual. These trends have gone viral on social media, positioning Dr Pepper to experiment with kits or flavors to be utilized for dirty sodas.

Another opportunity for the brand is leveraging their preexisting contract with the College Football Playoffs. Now that they have expanded to a 12 team model, Dr Pepper has the opportunity to expand their connection to several other schools as opposed to four. This leaves room for more investment in teams as well as team specific branding.

Dr Pepper can also capitalize on college students' interest in trends, school pride and their ability to influence their peers. Dr Pepper can do certain collabs and pop ups on select college campuses advertising limited time merch, can designs, and flavors specific to each university.

Finally, as the common food trends revolve around healthy diets and less sugar intake Dr Pepper can begin to expand their Diet and Zero Sugar flavors, encouraging their consumers to not venture elsewhere for their no sugar fix.

### **Threats**

One threat to Dr Pepper's growth is the growing popularity of pre and probiotic sodas from brands like Poppi and Ollipop, who, according to the Food Institute, both made over \$400 million in sales in 2024. Since these brands fit into the better for you version of sodas they fit right into the current health trends.

Along with this, another threat is PepsiCo's recent purchase of Poppi and Coca-cola's new Simply Pop sodas. The acquisition of these two assets give Dr Pepper's top competitors a foot in the market for healthy soda alternatives.

Another threat is the recent growth of sugar taxes in America. In the last decade, eight cities have adopted sugar taxes including major cities in California, Pennsylvania, and Colorado. UPenn LDI reports that this has caused a 27% national decrease in soda sales making Dr Pepper sales vulnerable.

The final threat is the decrease in the average consumption of carbonated beverages. According to NovaAdvisor, the market of soda drinking is decreasing as consumers shift more toward low sugar and low calorie drinks. So although Dr Pepper market share continues to trend upward, the market entirely is starting to shrink.

# DR PEPPER SWOT ANALYSIS

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 23-flavor unique formula allowing them to be different from a cola</li> <li>• Dr Pepper has a big social media presence allowing them to be the most relevant brand in 18-34 year olds.</li> <li>• Huge platform with college football Playoffs offering a connection with sports fans</li> <li>• Bold flavor combinations and innovation (strawberries and cream, blackberry)</li> <li>• Distributed by both Coke and PepsiCo.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Still the number two soda by a very wide margin, Coke also has a larger marketing connection.</li> <li>• Does not have its own distribution or bottling facility (uses PepsiCo and Coca-cola)</li> <li>• Global distribution is not on par with Pepsi and Coke</li> <li>• Not the ideal choice for health conscious consumers</li> </ul>
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• With GenZ having lower rates of alcohol consumption, Dr Pepper can introduce fun flavors for "social drinks"</li> <li>• Dirty Soda trend popularity, create kits or flavors catered to that.</li> <li>• 12 team CFP allows for expansion of team connection and sponsorships.</li> <li>• College campuses love branded items, create "college cans" for select campuses</li> <li>• Create more flavors in diet and zero sugar categories to follow the recent trend.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pre/probiotic sodas are gaining popularity compared to traditional sodas.</li> <li>• PepsiCo has acquired a prebiotic soda allowing them to expand their market towards this and Coke has Simply Pop</li> <li>• Increasing popularity of sugar taxes in states like California, Pennsylvania, and Colorado.</li> <li>• People are drinking less carbonated beverages entirely over the last two years.</li> </ul>

## Brand Positioning Analysis

Dr Pepper's brand positioning is of a uniquely flavored, indulgent treat that celebrates individuality through cultural rituals like football, innovative flavors, and digital engagement, attracting loyal Gen Z fans who interpret it as a fun, nostalgic, and differentiated alternative to mainstream sodas, boosting its market share to #2 in the US. In FutureBrand's Consumer Index, Dr Pepper highest scores are in consistency, mission, pleasure and authenticity. It outscored Pepsi in Mission (47% Dr Pepper vs. 39% Pepsi), Inspiration (38% Dr Pepper vs. 33% Pepsi), and Individuality (36% Dr Pepper vs. 27% Pepsi) (<https://www.beveragedaily.com/Article/2024/07/01/Building-a-beverage-brand-What-is-Dr-Pepper-doing-right/>). The images below identify Dr Pepper's competitive positioning against other brands and how its flavor can be distinguished from others.

Image 1 (left) and Image 2 (right)

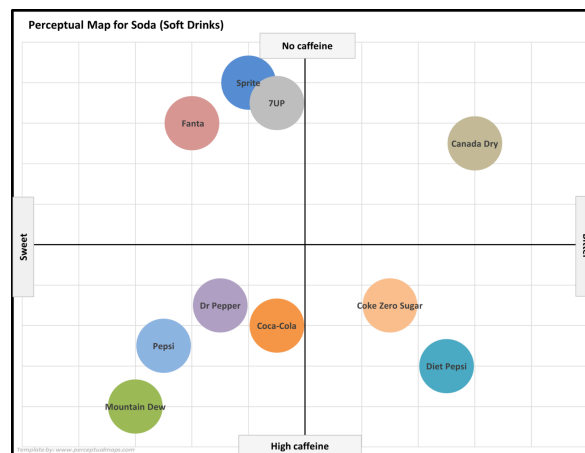
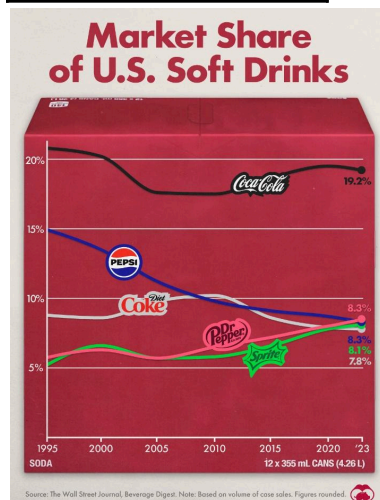


Image 1 Credits: <https://www.thedrum.com/opinion/dr-pepper-just-overtook-pepsi-could-coca-cola-be-next>

Image 2 Credits: <https://www.perceptualmaps.com/example-perceptual-maps-for-soda/>

Looking at these images, specifically #2, it can be extracted that unlike other brands, Dr Pepper offers a unique blend of 23 flavors. With a balanced taste of sweet and caffeinated, it offers a diverse flavor catalog for consumers. In order to maintain the spot of #2, it is important to build presence of multi-faceted platforms as well as amplify its brand identity of aligning with college football. While Coke, Pepsi, and Dr Pepper all share points of parity as sugary, mainstream, and caffeinated sodas they also hold points of difference. Pepsi aims to target trends, Coke leans into tradition, while Dr Pepper

angles itself as a separate entity from the cola war with 23 flavors and the appeal to college football with “Fansville” predominantly for Gen Z and millennials. Dr Pepper stands as the go-to flavorful favorite, with an unmistakably bold option that stays tapped into culture while delivering a mix of fun, indulgence, and genuine community for the fans who swear by it.

## Consumer Personas

# Consumer Persona 1 for Dr Pepper

Below is a comprehensive view of our target's customer's needs, behaviors, and brand relationships.

### Background



**Name:** Soda-loving Sally

**Age and gender:** 21 year old female

**Location:** The University of Oklahoma

**Occupation:** Student

**Family Status:** Single

**Income:** \$7,000

### Psychographic Profile:

Sally is a 20-year-old female studying Journalism at The University of Oklahoma. She enjoys spending her time with her roommate and best friends. Her favorite weekend activities involve watching the Oklahoma Sooners and tailgating with her friends and family. She was born and raised an Oklahoma fan and supporter, and takes gamedays very seriously. She prioritizes making gamedays and tailgates as perfect as they can be, making sure all of the best food and drinks are supplied.

### Behavioral Snapshot:

In Sally's free time, she watches YouTube videos, as does 68% of people ages 18-24, she specifically consumes the Sooners highlight reels. During away game weekends, she hosts a watch party, making sure the television is ready with the game on at all times, and always provides soda and food. She is a ride-or-die Sooners fan and takes her favorite teams very seriously. When new gear comes out, she is the first to purchase it and recommend it to others and is up to date on all of the sports news, fan experience events, uniform drops, ticket information, etc.

### Goals/Challenges:

Sally spends her days focused on the Oklahoma Sooners and making sure she is up to date with all the new information and news. She strives to one day become a sideline reporter because of how invested she is in football and the Oklahoma Sooners. She makes sure she is always repping and supporting her team, and she takes pride in doing so. She is always excited to celebrate the Oklahoma Sooners and always supports the team. She is always keeping her friends updated on the new and exciting merch launches for the Oklahoma Sooners, after seeing updates on social media platforms such as X, Instagram, and YouTube, similar to the 88% of people ages 18-24 who consume and use social media. On social media platforms, Dr Pepper would attract her eye and excite her, as they would be in support of the Oklahoma Sooners via their new packaging.

### Decision-Making Profile:

- **Top 3 Decision Factors:** 1. Creates Excitement 2. Appearance Satisfaction 3. Personal Connection
- **Trusted Information Sources:** Her most trusted Information sources are X, YouTube, Student Reporters, ESPN, Soonerssports.com and the Pat McAfee show.
- **Purchase Triggers:** A purchase trigger for Sally would be walking into her favorite grocery store or local convenience store to see her favorite soda having her college logo on it.

### "A Day in the Life" Narrative:

Soda-loving Sally starts her day bright and early in the morning at 6:00 am. She wakes up, makes breakfast, and heads her way to the gym. She always ends her workout with a 30-minute walk on the treadmill so she can scroll on Twitter and her other favorite trusted sources. She uses this time to be up to date with the Sooners' football news. She then attends all her classes for the day and comes back to her apartment around 5 pm to make dinner and crack open her choice of Dr Pepper while watching ESPN, on non-gamedays, and her choice of game on college gamedays.

### Dr Pepper Connection Statement:

Soda-Loving Sally represents Dr Pepper's college fanatic, community-focused Gen Z college student audience. Her values of a close-knit community, being active in school spirit, and staying committed and loyal to her identity align with Dr Pepper's brand positioning around their support of college students. The college tuition giveaway and the sponsor of College Football Playoffs deliver a sense of a close community, fan encouragement, and team support that her lifestyle requires.

# Consumer Persona 2 for Dr Pepper

Below is a comprehensive view of our target's customer's needs, behaviors, and brand relationships.

## Background



**Name:** Curious Charles

**Age and gender:** 22 year old male

**Location:** Penn State University

**Occupation:** Student

**Family Status:** Single

**Income:** \$5,000

### Psychographic Profile:

Cautious Charles is a 22-year-old Penn State student looking to get his B.A. degree in Finance. He puts high priority on his wellness as he trains for the THON™ 5k and also has a large hyper fixation with football. He is an avid Penn State Football fan and never misses a tailgate. Charles is looking for a healthier alternative opposed to the usual gameday drinks with high calories; he has tried Diet Coke and Diet Pepsi and has yet to find a drink that answers his needs. But he recently discovered Dr Pepper's diet options.

### Behavioral Snapshot:

In Cautious Charles's free time, he watches College GameDay YouTube shorts and NFL Fox Network on the television. He uses social media for 3-4 hours daily. His social media usage is mainly to keep in touch with family and sports updates. When consuming such media and entertainment, he finds that much of advertising is way too annoying and gets oversaturated. A similar mindset to 82% of regular carbonated soft drink drinkers.

### Goals/Challenges:

Diet Dr Pepper's expansion into colleges will hinge on connecting with students like Charles, whose daily rhythm blends wellness goals, social energy, and constant sports engagement. A personal goal for Charles is maintaining a healthier lifestyle while still enjoying the tailgate culture he loves, while his purchase goal is finding a low-calorie drink that feels flavorful, refreshing, and "game-day worthy." Charles faces lifestyle pain points like balancing fitness with social indulgence, managing a busy class-gym-social schedule, and resisting sugary drinks that derail his training. His purchase pain points include skepticism from trying other diet sodas he found bland, limited availability in campus stores, and hesitation to commit to a new product without strong peer or social media validation.

### Decision-Making Profile:

- **Top 3 Decision Factors:** 1. Health-Consciousness 2. Flavor Satisfaction 3. Convenience and Availability
- **Trusted Information Sources:** His most trusted information sources include Instagram accounts like PSU Barstool and College GameDay, NFL YouTube highlight channels, and peer recommendations from friends in the gym and tailgate circles.
- **Purchase Triggers:** A strong purchase trigger for Charles would be encountering Diet Dr Pepper at a tailgate or campus convenience store like Diplo-MART right before a game. If it was paired with social media hype or a friend praising its flavor, he would be enticed to commit to trying it.

### "A Day in the Life" Narrative:

Curious Charles begins his day like many college students, waking up in his apartment downtown. He then checks his Instagram feed, like 62% of 18-24 users, specifically accounts like PSU Barstool & College GameDay. He is also quick to visit their YouTube channels for game highlights, like 68% of 18-24 users. Like 26% of regular carbonated soft drinkers, Curious Charles gains his information from social media. He then makes his way to the gym and from there to his two classes. After a shower, he is ready to go out with friends for pizza and watch the nightly football game.

### Dr Pepper Connection Statement:

Curious Charles represents Dr Pepper's health-minded, sports-driven college student audience. His values of wellness, flavor satisfaction, and social connection align with Dr Pepper's brand positioning around bold taste, variety, and better-for-you drink options. The Diet Dr Pepper model delivers the full-flavor experience, low-calorie profile, and easy-on-the-go availability that his active, game-centered lifestyle requires.

## **Core Consumer Insight**

Through our research and analysis our consumer insight is as follows; Gen Z gravitates toward drinks that make them feel part of a team, trend, or campus culture, but they only fully embrace brands when what they're drinking aligns with their identity and health values.

According to MRI Simmons, 79% of 18-24 year-olds believe in a healthy lifestyle, yet 72% also use food as emotional comfort and identity expression. Innova data also shows 72% are sugar-conscious, while 85% use social media to drive decisions, with TikTok and Instagram as primary discovery channels.

This reveals the core tension for consumers: Gen Z wants drinks that express who they are and connect them to their communities, but they do not want those choices to conflict with their personal choices of "wellness"

Dr Pepper can serve both of these consumer needs through a dual strategy.

### **1. Health Values**

Dr Pepper can expand their zero sugar and diet offerings to give those health conscious consumers a guilt free option within Dr Pepper's Products. Allowing consumers to feel the connection and identity of Dr Pepper without compromising habits and wellness.

### **2. Campus Identity**

Dr Pepper can begin by leveraging their number one social media relevance (according to Tracksuit) to engage in trend participation and campus culture. Distribute limited-time options tied to viral moments and trends. They can expand their fan connection through the new 12-team college football playoff model such as creating NIL sponsorships with top performing football athletes from various schools. Similarly, they can strengthen their ties to campus culture through campus specific experiences such as pop-up shops, merch, and specialized school branding across Dr Pepper products. This positions Dr Pepper as a brand of belonging. The beverage for trend lovers, sports fans, and a taste of school pride.

This insight is important for Dr Pepper because it clarifies the brand's role; not forcing Gen Z to choose between indulgence and wellness, but giving them options that let them feel healthy while still participating in the fan, trend, and campus culture that Dr Pepper represents.

### **Strategy-on-a-Page**

- Dr Pepper needs to increase its relevance within the Gen Z college students so that they gravitate to purchasing Dr Pepper products over other drink options available.
- For Gen Z college students who are chronically online, active on social media, engaged in popular trends, and are interested and influenced by others.
- In a world where there are many competitive soda brands, such as Coke and Pepsi, people often resort to Dr Pepper's competitor before choosing Dr Pepper itself, because it continues to be the number two soda.
- The problem is Dr Pepper does not stand out compared to other soda brands, therefore, Gen Z consumers do not resort to Dr Pepper as their drink of choice.
- However Dr Pepper is a large brand that engages in the college community but can become more active and seen within it by creating a feeling of close community between college students and Dr Pepper, allowing the target audience to feel heard by offering more flavors, diet, and zero sugar options.
- So we need to capitalize on making as many new favors as possible, making more sugar free and diet options available, incorporating college logos into their design, and working on TikTok and Instagram ADs/videos so that many college students become invested in Dr Pepper.
- So that Gen Z college students are attracted and invested in all that Dr Pepper offers, the new and improved soda flavors and appearances, so that it becomes many students' preferred beverage.
- Helping to strengthen Dr Pepper so they can succeed against competitors, while creating a community within students from the exciting and new flavors and designs they have to offer.

## **GET-WHO-TO-BY Creative Brief**

**Objective:** Dr Pepper's objectives center on deepening its relevance with Gen Z by boosting brand preference, increasing trial of core and Zero Sugar flavors, and strengthening its presence within college culture and viral drink trends. The brand aims to expand awareness in the better-for-you space while activating campus partnerships, NIL relationships, and social-driven experimentation to position Dr Pepper as the go-to choice for flavorful, community-driven beverage moments.

**GET:** Gen Z, especially college students and culturally plugged-in young adults who thrive on community, trends, and digital influence. These consumers value individuality, flavor exploration, and belonging. They are highly active on TikTok and Instagram, driven by viral drink trends, sports culture, and novelty experiences. They are also increasingly health-conscious, choosing beverages with functional benefits, low sugar options, or brands that feel authentic and culturally participatory.

**WHO:** Dr Pepper stands as a bold, iconic non-cola original. Its personality blends a sense of sports fixation with modern trend awareness. Dr Pepper is the brand that understands fandom, sports fandom, flavor fandom, and social community, with a confident, playful identity that never imitates competitors. It positions itself as the flavorful outlier. It is a drink for people who want something distinct.

**TO:** Encourage Gen Z consumers to actively choose Dr Pepper as their go-to social beverage by increasing trial of core flavors (Original, Zero Sugar, Strawberries & Cream) and deepening emotional loyalty. Prompt them to share their Dr Pepper experiences on social media, integrate Dr Pepper into "viral drink" culture, and associate the brand with moments of belonging, celebration, and personal expression.

**BY:** Enhancing Dr Pepper's presence within college culture, through limited-edition campus cans, increased on-campus flavor exposure, will strengthen the brand's connection with Gen Z students. These efforts create a more interactive, social, and culturally relevant experience with the product, ultimately

driving young consumers to choose Dr Pepper as their go-to beverage during everyday moments, game days, and social events.

**Key Insight:** We know that Gen Z gravitates toward brands that feel participatory, authentic, and integrated into the cultural spaces they care about, like college sports, campus life, and social media trends. They are highly influenced by viral content and peer experiences, creating immersive and sharable interactions with Dr Pepper is essential for boosting trial, loyalty, and overall brand love within this demographic.

**Mandatories:** The campaign must uphold Dr Pepper's signature "One You Crave" identity and reinforce its flavor-first personality while elevating college-focused touchpoints. All activations must incorporate the Dr Pepper logo, official brand colors, and core visual guidelines. Required elements include campus-branded packaging, NIL-aligned content, and social components that encourage TikTok and Instagram sharing. All creative must celebrate flavor, fandom, and community, which are the pillars that define Dr Pepper's connection to young consumers.

**Success Metrics:** Success will be measured through a 5–8% lift in unaided brand awareness, a 15% increase in social engagement across TikTok and Instagram, and a 3–5% national sales lift during the campaign period. Additional goals include a 20% rise in campus-area sales, 250k+ user-generated content posts, 50M+ NIL-driven impressions, and a 10% increase in trial of core and Zero Sugar flavors.

## Integrated Channel Plan

	<b>Awareness :</b>	<b>Interest :</b>	<b>Familiarity :</b>	<b>Engagement :</b>
<b>Business Objective</b>	Increase brand awareness and sense of community between Dr Pepper and Gen Z college students within the competitive market of beverages.	Strive for the target audience to be interested in wanting to experiment and try new flavors, purchase the new packaging and be curious about what Dr Pepper will be offering.	Making sure that the target audience is constantly seeing advertisements and media regarding Dr Pepper. Making sure they are frequently reminded about Dr Pepper and how Dr Pepper can satisfy one's needs.	Aim to have consistent and long-term loyal customers. Always strive to satisfy your audience's needs so that they remain loyal customers and are satisfied with Dr Pepper so that they engage with the brand.
<b>Audience Goal</b>	Strive to be aware of what Dr Pepper itself is doing to create a sense of community within college students, try and connect with college lifestyle, become a necessity for social gatherings within the college community and become more active and trending on social media platforms.	Become invested and excited to branch out, explore, and try new flavors Dr Pepper will offer, and stay up to date with the social media posts and news that Dr Pepper will share.	Understand that Dr Pepper is a beverage you can drink consistently, and it can satisfy whatever your goals and needs may be. Become familiar with the different options and flavors that are being offered. If one is a creature of habit, one can choose a favorite Dr Pepper and have it be one's go-to daily drink.	Actively engage with Dr Pepper's social media platforms, media outlets, website, email, etc. This will allow customers to feel a sense of community and enjoy engaging with Dr Pepper and the media platforms they offer.
<b>Communication Goal</b>	Stay aware of Dr Peppers competitors and what they have to do to succeed over other soda brands such as Coca-Cola.	Emphasize on the new flavors available or the fan favorite flavor to spike interest in the target audience to want to try as many flavors as they can. Express the new customized	Constantly push notifications, advertisements, and social media posts. Be on top of the post when something new is offered and constantly be posting existing Dr Pepper	Express that you care about what the audience and consumers like, dis-like, want, and don't want. Express that the business enjoys feedback and honest opinions of the customers.

		designs for each college creating most college students to be interested and invested in what the packaging looks like, the appearance of it, and how appealing it looks. Incorporate influencer and athlete engagement to increase the audiences interest in Dr Pepper.	products. Strive to make Dr Pepper have a strong presence and impact in college life.	Prove that Dr Pepper engages with its audience by doing college gameday pop-ups, posting on social media platforms, email customers who purchase, etc.
<b>Key Channels (PESO)</b>	<p><b>Paid :</b> Commercials, Ads, flyers, signs/billboards</p> <p><b>Earned :</b> Sports platforms/ college football recognizing and sharing what Dr Pepper is doing and incorporating</p> <p><b>Shared :</b> audience sharing Dr Peppers social media posts and new products and packaging</p> <p><b>Owned :</b> Social media platforms, brand website</p>	<p><b>Paid :</b> Paid partnerships with athletes (NIL deals), pay popular influencers to spike audiences attention, social media ADs, brand packaging</p> <p><b>Earned :</b> Voluntary influencer engagement,</p> <p><b>Shared :</b> Reviews posted on social media platforms, creating viral social media posts that people repost</p> <p><b>Owned :</b> TikTok, Instagram, X, Brand Website</p>	<p><b>Paid :</b> Hand our flyers on college campus, billboards and signs all across and near college campuses</p> <p><b>Earned :</b> College Gameday Recognition</p> <p><b>Shared :</b></p> <p><b>Owned :</b> Brand Website (add updates and improvements constantly), actively post on social media platforms (TikTok, Instagram, X)</p>	<p><b>Paid :</b> Dr Pepper Pop-Ups, brand packaging with college logos on it</p> <p><b>Earned :</b> Reviews, college students conversing about Dr Pepper</p> <p><b>Shared :</b> Customer posts of beverages, influence promotions, comments on social media posts, hashtags to create a sense of community</p> <p><b>Owned :</b> Email, TikTok, Instagram, Brand Website</p>
<b>KPIs (evaluation measures)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Social media engagement</li> <li>- AD views</li> <li>- Commercial views</li> <li>- Social Media posts likes and</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Influencer posts engagement (likes and comments)</li> <li>- click-through rate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Brand purchases</li> <li>- Website visits</li> <li>- Social media followings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Click-through rate</li> <li>- Post comments, reviews, likes, and shares : strive for 20% increase in social media</li> </ul>

	shares			engagement - Brand purchases - Audience review videos and brand advocacy - Conversations about Dr Pepper
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## **Recommendations & Conclusions**

To sustain Dr Pepper's newly secured #2 position in the U.S. soda market, the brand must heighten its presence on the cultural and behavioral spaces of Gen Z like college campuses and social media, while also strengthening its position as a healthier alternative. To do this effectively, Dr Pepper should collaborate with existing campus beverage partners and distributors when launching school-branded cans and on campus activations, ensuring alignment with current "pouring rights" agreements. Strategically, the brand should prioritize high-visibility, college-focused activations (limited-edition campus cans, NIL partnerships, and game-day pop-ups) that reinforce Dr Pepper's role as the soda of fandom, community, and ritual. Short-term action items include amplifying digital-first storytelling on TikTok and Instagram, expanding zero-sugar and diet selections, to meet health-conscious demand, and capitalize on viral drink trends through customizable college cans. Long-term initiatives should focus on solidifying Dr Pepper's reputation as the most flavor-forward brand in the category through ongoing innovation, expanding distribution touchpoints on and around campuses, and deepening its college football partnerships.

As Dr Pepper increases its cultural footprint, the brand must also anticipate potential challenges from rising threats like pre/probiotic sodas, continued category declines in sugary beverages, or Coke and Pepsi that invest in its own campus-focused distribution programs. One strategic move is strengthening the brand's position as the mental health and comfort beverage, supported by the insight that 82% of consumers feel their favorite beverage boosts moods. It gives Dr Pepper an emotional edge that functional sodas cannot replicate. By rooting creativity in authenticity, flavor, and fandom, the brand reinforces the values that Gen Z already associates with Dr Pepper.

The success of this strategy can be evaluated through a measurement framework aligned with business objectives and cultural relevance markers. Key KPIs include increases in unaided awareness (+5-8%), social engagement (+15%), trial of core and zero-sugar flavors (+10%), and campus-area sales (+20%), along with user-generated content benchmarks (250K+ posts) and NIL-driven impression

(50M+). At a high level, budget share should prioritize digital media (35-40%), flavor and packaging innovation (20-25%), college partnerships and NIL deals (20-25%), and experiential activations such as pop-ups and sampling programs (10-15%) with remaining funds dedicated to research, measurement, and contingency. A balanced investment across flavor innovation, community-building, and campus immersion ensures Dr Pepper not only maintains its #2 position, but amplifies its status as Gen Z's most beloved, culturally plugged-in soda brand. One that routinely delivers excitement, flavor, and a sense of belonging.

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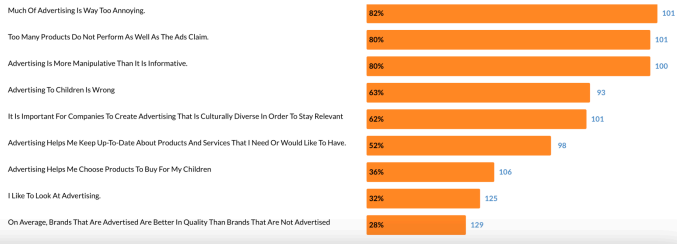
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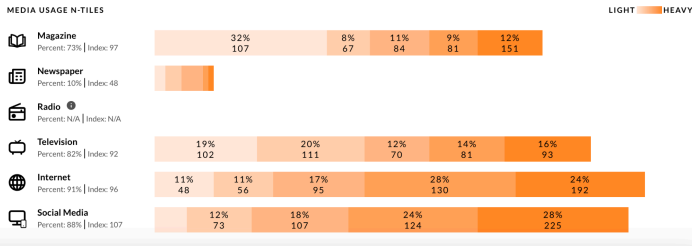
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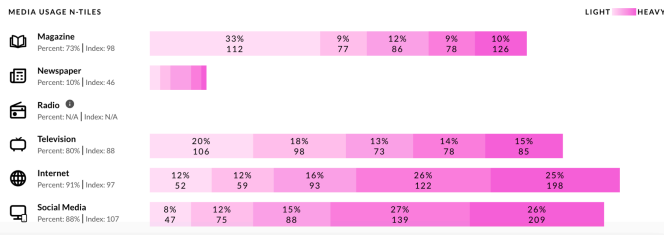
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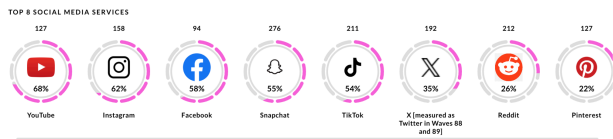


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Social Media Usage

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TOP 5 REASONS FOR USING

TOP 5 ACTIVITIES

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