

Final: Cann's Colorado Expansion

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I. COMPANY OR ORGANIZATION BACKGROUND

Cann is a cannabis-infused “social tonic” beverage company founded by Jake Bullock and Luke Anderson in 2018 (Yakowicz, 2021). Frustrated by the lack of beverages that could accommodate their active lifestyles, Bullock and Anderson saw the potential for a fresh alternative to smoking and drinking. Cann is designed to give consumers a light and uplifted buzz without the hangover, calories and regrets associated with alcohol. Unlike its cannabis-infused competitors that have drinks with anywhere from 5 to 100 mg of THC, Cann contains only 2 mg of THC paired with 4 mg of CBD — just enough to produce the perfect amount of buzz for social occasions (“Vendor Spotlight, n.d.). Since it is a beverage, the THC gets absorbed almost right away, leading to its blissful effects being experienced within 10 to 15 minutes and gradually wearing off after roughly an hour (Cann, n.d.). In addition to having virtually no cannabis taste, Cann is low in calories with only 30 to 35 calories per can (Reed, 2021). Moreover, there are no preservatives or refined sugars: Cann consists of lightly carbonated water, natural herb flavors, not-from-concentrate juice, a touch of organic Mexican agave for sweetness and pure cannabis extract (Cann). Cann comes in 6-packs of small 7.5 fl oz cans that retail for about \$20 (Yakowicz). While Cann is priced on the higher end of cannabis drinks, this is all part of Cann’s strategy to target the kind of consumer “who wants to have fun but wants a product without artificial ingredients” (Yakowicz).

Cann has completely taken over the THC beverage market since its inception. In addition to raising \$12 million from Imaginary Ventures, Navy Capital and Green Revolution Thumb Industries since 2018, Cann is expected to triple its revenue (from its \$3 million in sales in 2020) and acquire 5 percent of the \$175 million cannabis beverage market share in the US by the end of 2021 (Yakowicz). As the fastest-growing THC beverage in the country and top-selling cannabis beverage in California, Cann has attracted celebrities such as Gwyneth Paltrow, Rebel Wilson, Tove Lo, Ruby Rose and Darren Criss to invest in the company (Cann). These A-list celebrities have united with the brand to change the way people socialize by offering a healthier alternative to alcohol. With five delicious fruit-forward flavors — lemon lavender, grapefruit rosemary, pineapple jalapeno, blood orange cardamom, and cranberry sage — Cann is currently available in dispensaries across Massachusetts, California, Nevada, Illinois and Rhode Island (Yakowicz). As the cannabis beverage industry continues to grow, so will Cann in its endeavors to reach more consumers and become the go-to alternative to alcohol.

II. MISSION STATEMENT (BUSINESS GOAL)

- Cann is on a mission to revolutionize the way consumers socialize by offering a better-for-you alternative to alcohol and other vice products.
- Cann's goal is to become the best-selling cannabis-infused beverage in the country by reshaping social drinking with a non-alcoholic, microdosed beverage that delivers a perfect, uplifting feeling

III. BRAND POSITIONING

- **To:** healthy hedonists who want to have fun at social gatherings but are looking for an alcohol alternative and/or are new to cannabis
- **Brand is:** the fastest-growing, most popular cannabis beverage in the country
- **That:** unlike other cannabis drinks, uses a lower dose of THC (only 2 mg) and all-natural ingredients
- **Because:** by bringing the dose down, consumers get a more controllable, uplifting buzz without having to worry about hangovers, calories or regrets.

IV. STATEMENT OF PROBLEM OR OPPORTUNITY

With an incredible year of growth that includes a 300 percent sales increase, an A-list roster of investors and three new product lines — a 5 mg dosed Hi Boys of Cann's signature flavors, Roadies for on-the-go consumption and the first-of-its-kind naturally caffeinated cannabis drink, Passion Peach Mate — there is no doubt that Cann is here to stay (Cann, 2021). Continuously searching for the next big way it can make an impact on the industry, Cann has a great opportunity to continue its expansion in order to maintain its position as the top-selling cannabis beverage in the nation. There are currently 18 states where recreational marijuana is legal: Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Illinois, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, Montana, Nevada, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Oregon, Vermont, Virginia, Washington (Berke, Gal & Lee, 2021). In addition, it is also legal in Washington, D.C. and Guam. However, Cann is sold in only five of those states: Massachusetts, California, Nevada, Illinois and Rhode Island (Yakowicz, 2021). Therefore, there is an enormous opportunity for Cann to expand into other states to reach a broader audience and increase its market share.

According to Fortune Business Insights (2020), the global cannabis beverage market size is projected to be valued upwards of \$2 billion by 2026. With over \$15 million in investments throughout the past three years, Cann is in an incredible position to take advantage of its funding to support development into new markets and expand its production capacity by broadening and accelerating the product development (Bobrow, 2020). In addition, when Cann launched in Illinois just before 4/20 this year, co-founder Luke Anderson pointed out that “in a newly recreational market like Illinois, there are many cannabis consumers who want to start with a low dose option,” and Cann is one of the only products on the market that accommodates more timid first-timers (Green Thumb Industries, 2021). This untapped market is perfect for Cann to target and capitalize on, while also presenting a unique opportunity for dispensaries to earn trust and loyalty with these new cannabis users. The opportunities for Cann are truly endless. But for this specific campaign, Cann should leverage the power and position it holds in the market to extend into Colorado.

This past year, U.S. cannabis sales reached a record of \$17.5 billion – a 46 percent increase from the previous year (Yakowicz, 2021). A significant portion of these sales came from Colorado – one of the largest adult-use markets – which saw a 26 percent increase in year-over-year cannabis sales to hit a total of \$2.2 billion (Yakowicz). Moreover, Colorado has the greatest market penetration in the country with a large portion of Coloradans consuming some form of cannabis (Yakowicz). Given Cann’s success in similar markets such as California and Illinois, Colorado is the logical next step in the beverage’s rollout. With a thriving market for cannabis, a plethora of colleges and universities and several high-profile annual events such as the X Games Aspen and Telluride Film Festival, the opportunities are endless for Cann to expand and make a name for itself in Colorado.

V. RESEARCH

- Research Goals:
 - What are the demographics/psychographics of Cann’s current customers?
 - What makes customers buy one cannabis drink brand over another? Is it the company’s values, price points, product comfort level or brand name?
 - What makes Cann unique compared its competitors?
 - How can Cann expand in ways that competitors have not done before?

- How can Cann reach a wider range of consumers?
- How can Cann promote its product without the negative connotations associated with cannabis?
- Research Methodology:
 - **Primary Research**
 - a) *Qualitative*: We will conduct three focus groups via zoom, each focusing on our key target audiences to ensure our results have a wide representation. Each focus group will have ten individuals to retain a small and comfortable space for individuals to respond. These individuals will consist of both men and women from different regions, socioeconomic status and ages. This will create a more well-rounded campaign that is positively received by all parties.
 - b) *Quantitative*: We will conduct a social media analysis of current Cann consumers to see what strategies and/or products have worked and what have not. This will allow us to better understand Cann's base and confirm whether or not it parallels our target audience(s) in Colorado. In addition, we will survey a sample of approximately 3,000 consumers on what they know about cannabis beverages in general, their openness to trying a micro-dosed drink and their opinions of Cann. The data from the survey will give us a better idea of what consumers want to see and how they want to see it.
 - **Secondary Research**
 - a) Colorado Official State Web Portal
 - (1) Provides most up to date laws about marijuana use including buying, selling, using and having.
 - b) Media coverage from The Street, Esquire, Forbes, Hollywood Reporter, Techcrunch, Global News Wire, PR News Wire, Paper Magazine, LA Magazine, Insider, Thrillist, The Higher Path, Wine Magazine and Food and Wine.

- (1) Sentiment analysis.
- c) New Cannabis Ventures
 - (1) Provides the latest information on news and events about all new Cannabis products worldwide.
- d) Adweek and PR Week
 - (1) Provides recent articles on the best cannabis marketing campaigns.

VI. SITUATION ANALYSIS

- *Internal*

- **Strengths**

- a) One of the best-selling cannabis beverages in the country
 - (1) Cann is the top-selling cannabis beverage in key markets such as California, the second best-selling cannabis beverage in the U.S. and is projected to acquire 5 percent of the market share for cannabis beverages this year (Yakowicz, 2021).
- b) Trendy branding and A-list celebrity investors
 - (1) Cann has attractive, trendy and aesthetically pleasing branding that allows it to stand out among its competitors. Additionally, Cann's trendiness is reflected in its supporters, with A-listers such as Gwyneth Paltrow and Rebel Wilson among its investors (Katz, 2021).
- c) Unique selling point
 - (1) Cann has a much lower dosage compared to its competitors, thereby allowing for a much different kind of experience for consumers that is less intense and more accessible (Ryan, 2021).
- d) Low-calorie with all-natural ingredients
 - (1) Cann beverages have only 30 to 50 calories per serving compared to 100+ in popular seltzers such as White Claw,

and consist of simple, all-natural ingredients like agave, not-from-concentrate juice and carbonated water (Cann).

■ **Weaknesses**

a) Small brand presence on social media

(1) Cann currently has accounts on popular social networking sites such as Twitter, Facebook and Tik Tok but is not frequently active. In addition, its Instagram account is no longer active.

b) Not sold in all available markets where marijuana is legal

(1) While recreational marijuana is legal in over 20 states and territories, Cann is only sold in five of these markets (Yakowicz).

c) High cost for a low dose

(1) Cann 4-packs currently start at \$14 and 6-packs start at \$20, with most beverages containing 2 mg of THC and 4 mg of CBD. Competitors such as Major offer 100 mg drinks in a similar price range (Cann).

○ *External*

■ **Opportunities**

a) Colorado's growing cannabis market share and high market penetration

(1) Colorado is the second largest cannabis market in the U.S. and has the greatest market penetration when it comes to cannabis consumption (Yakowicz).

b) Trend of growth within both the cannabis beverage market and the cannabis market at-large

(1) Cannabis continues to become increasingly mainstream as more states and territories legalize its use recreationally. Moreover, new forms of cannabis consumption – beverages, in particular – are becoming increasingly popular alternatives to smoking, edibles, etc. (Ryan).

- c) Wellness culture and the trend of responsible, healthy consumption
 - (1) Healthy eating and drinking remains a popular trend, with seltzers such as Truly and White Claw emphasizing their calories per serving compared to beer and other beverages (Dimitrakis, 2020).
- d) COVID-related consumer behavior adjustments
 - (1) The continued COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in a variety of different behavior changes for consumers, impacting everything from the ways we socialize to how we think about our health (Pinkser, 2021).

■ **Threats**

- a) Inability to sell cannabis products outside of a dispensary
 - (1) Due to current federal laws, cannabis products can only be sold in dispensaries or shipped in states where it is legal (NCSL, 2021). Therefore, alcoholic beverages have a major advantage since they can be sold in grocery stores, convenience stores, etc.
- b) Continued popularity of alcoholic seltzers as well as alcohol in general
 - (1) The market for hard seltzers is worth billions, with popular brands such as White Claw and Truly currently dominating sales alongside entries from established beer brands like Bud Light and Corona (Dimitrakis).
- c) Growing list of competitors, many of which offer higher dosages at a lower price
 - (1) Competitors such as Wunder and Major continue to rise in popularity, with the latter leading in country-wide sales and the former offering notably similar product, pricing and branding to Cann (Yakowicz).
- d) COVID-related economic issues

(1) The ongoing pandemic continues to impact the U.S. economy – both businesses and individuals – despite improvements over the past year (McKinsey, 2021). As a higher-priced product, consumers may look for more budget-friendly alternatives.

VII. STRATEGIC INSIGHTS

- *Expanding to key markets where recreational marijuana is legal:*
 - As the second largest cannabis market in the country, Colorado is the logical next step for Cann’s continued expansion. Colorado is home to a diversity of different types of consumers, many of which closely align with Cann’s target audiences such as young, active social drinkers who prioritize their health.
- *Highlighting that Cann is a viable alcohol alternative:*
 - While alcohol remains the most common social vice – namely because there has never been a drink alternative to provide a comparable sensation – the popularity of Cann and similar drinks signals that there is an opportunity to become the next big thing. Cann can highlight that it provides an uplifting buzz that is controllable and does not leave users feeling hungover the following day.
- *Emphasizing what sets apart Cann from other cannabis drinks:*
 - Unlike other THC-infused drinks with significantly higher dosages, Cann is not focused on giving consumers the typical high associated with marijuana. Rather, Cann is carving out its own section of the cannabis beverage market to offer an innovative drink that provides a unique buzz that is not quite like anything consumers have tried before.
- *Spreading product awareness among key audiences:*
 - Despite a growing cult following for Cann, it still does not have the same level of brand recognition as its alcoholic competitors such as White Claw and Truly. Moreover, there is still not widespread awareness that such a drink exists, regardless of the brand. It would be in Cann’s best interest to

increase its activity across all socials, particularly Instagram, Tik Tok and Twitter, and invest in targeted digital marketing initiatives.

- *Continue to build the brand and its personality:*
 - While Cann already benefits from attractive and aesthetically pleasing branding on both its products and website, it lacks personality on its social media channels and ultimately falls short when it comes to staying active on social media. Cann's Twitter represents a good start for developing brand personality, but there is significant room for improvement and growth.

VIII. COMMUNICATIONS GOALS

- Influence the people of Colorado to try Cann.
 - Expand on Cann's success in markets where it is currently sold by rolling out Cann in dispensaries throughout Colorado. Ensure that Cann's message of creating a new standard for what it means to drink socially is effectively communicated both online and offline to target audiences across the state.
- Convince people of Colorado that Cann is a better alternative to alcohol and typical methods of consuming cannabis.
 - Highlight what sets Cann apart from the rest of the crowd: its enjoyable low-dose buzz, health benefits and lack of any hangover-causing ingredients. Characterize Cann as the best-tasting, most accessible alcohol alternative that allows consumers to have fun with no regrets.

IX. COMMUNICATIONS OBJECTIVES

- By the start of Q3 2022, increase positive coverage and awareness of Cann by 10 percent.
 - Increase net favorability of Cann by expanding its online presence and building relationships with consumers as well as influencers and journalists.

- By the end of Q2 2022, relaunch Cann’s Instagram and increase engagement on all socials by 15 percent.
 - Increase Cann’s activity on social media by relaunching its Instagram page and posting frequent content on Tik Tok and Twitter to help build brand personality.
- By the end of Q4 2022, build positive relationships with at least 50% of Colorado-based dispensaries to ensure the availability of Cann products in as many locations as possible.
 - Build and maintain healthy relationships with dispensaries throughout Colorado in an effort to have Cann products sold in as many locations as possible.

X. TARGET AUDIENCES

- TA 1, *The Healthy Hedonist*: health-focused individuals ages 21 to 35 in Colorado looking for a beverage that provides a buzz without all the negative aspects of alcohol (e.g. high calories, hangover, etc.).
 - Healthy Hedonists are those looking to enjoy themselves while prioritizing healthier alternatives when it comes to eating and drinking, particularly with products made of all-natural ingredients that are low in calories. While popular seltzers such as White Claw are marketed as low-calorie, Cann is marketed as an even better-for-you alternative with the added health benefits of THC and CBD.
- TA 2, *The Practical Partier*: individuals ages 21 to 35 living in Colorado who want to have fun while socializing but in a more controllable and responsible manner.
 - Practical Partiers are young adults who enjoy social events, particularly those where drinking is involved, but are looking for a more responsible way to take part in the fun. This also includes students seeking a way to go out and have fun without feeling bad the following morning. They are involved on-campus in extracurricular activities and, much like Cann itself, are the perfect balance between social and responsible.

- TA 3, *The THC Trainee*: individuals ages 21 to 35 living in Colorado who are new to cannabis (and may not like the feeling of alcohol) who are looking for a more accessible form of consumption as opposed to smoking.
 - THC Trainees are those who are interested in consuming cannabis but desire a more controllable experience. Given that people who are new to marijuana do not know which brand or dosage to intake for their first time, Cann allows for a tamer, more relaxed and more enjoyable experience from a trustworthy source.

XI. CURRENT AUDIENCE BRAND PERCEPTION

- Cann provides an innovative new way to drink and enjoy oneself, all while tasting great and providing a viable alternative to alcohol.
 - Cann currently has mostly positive perceptions from consumers. Some popular reviews include: “So delicious and amazing that I basically no longer drink alcohol,” “The future of social drinking,” and, “I’ve dreamed of your product for years,” (Cann).

XII. DESIRED AUDIENCE BRAND PERCEPTION

- Cann seeks to be perceived as the new drink of choice for Coloradans looking for a healthy alcohol alternative that provides an enjoyable buzz without leaving you feeling hungover the next day.

XIII. KEY MESSAGE MAPPING

- **Single-minded message:**
 - Cann is the future of social drinking: consumers get to enjoy an uplifting buzz without worrying about unnatural ingredients, calories and feeling bad the next day.
- **Audience-specific messages:**
 - TA 1: Cann is an all-natural, preservative-free, low-calorie alcohol alternative that still provides an elevating and enjoyable buzz.

- a) For the Healthy Hedonist, Cann needs to highlight that it is the better-for-you alternative to alcohol that does not leave you regretting last night.
- TA 2: Cann is the ideal drink for those looking to enjoy themselves in social settings without feeling a loss of control in the moment and without feeling hungover the next day.
 - a) For the Practical Partier, Cann must emphasize that its product provides a comparable buzz to alcohol minus the hangover. Cann is the perfect drink for students and young professionals looking to have fun without having to worry about the next morning.
- TA 3: Cann offers a pleasant yet controllable introduction to cannabis for those who have never been to a dispensary prior and/or may have had a less-than-ideal experience with cannabis in the past.
 - a) For the THC Trainee, Cann is the perfect gateway to cannabis as a tasty microdosed drink without any cannabis flavor. Moreover, Cann provides a feeling unlike typical cannabis consumption – one more in line with a buzz.

XIV. STRATEGIES

- Build partnerships at Colorado-based organizations and invest in high-profile sponsorships for events that take place in the state
 - Partner with notable members of groups related to different target audiences for Cann such as winter athletes and health influencers.
 - Build a brand presence at colleges and universities in Colorado.
 - Sponsor major events that are likely to attract target audiences.
- Position Cann as the go-to drink for any and all social events and highlight what makes it stand out amongst its competitors in the cannabis drink industry.
 - Utilize digital ads and billboards to create interest in the product and spread awareness that it is launching in Colorado.
 - Use social media to develop a more distinct brand personality and gain a larger audience.

- State the facts: what makes Cann better?
- Focus the narrative on the benefits (e.g. health benefits, overall feeling, etc.) of cannabis over alcohol.
 - Highlight projections of where the industry is going over the next 5-10 years.
 - Highlight why the cannabis industry is so successful.
 - Highlight what makes it a better alternative to alcohol.
- Emphasize Cann's efforts and commitment to uplifting marginalized communities.
 - Highlight that Cann is a queer-owned brand that prides itself on diversity both internally and externally.
 - Celebrate annual celebrations of marginalized groups such as Pride Month.
 - Highlight what Cann does differently in terms of uplifting marginalized groups with awareness, donations, etc.

XV. TACTICS

- **Paid**
 - Invest in becoming an official sponsor of the annual 2022 Winter X Games Aspen (pre-launch) and the 2022 Telluride Film Festival
 - a) X Games targets health-focused individuals with active lifestyles
 - b) TFF targets social drinkers and celebrities/influencers
 - Release a digital advertising campaign highlighting the advantages of Cann over alcoholic beverages
 - a) Put out a series of lighthearted ads that critique alcohol and its unfortunate side effects (e.g. hangovers) and emphasize Cann as the ideal alternative.
 - Purchase billboard space across Colorado to advertise Cann's rollout in the state

- a) Using a billboard that displays all the different flavors of Cann as a way to market their new expansion into Colorado will bring more awareness to the campaign.
 - b) Plastering billboards across the state (in high populated areas) will help reach a larger audience, peak their interest, and hopefully, persuade them to go buy some.
- **Earned**
 - Create a brand ambassador program (“Cannbassadors”) primarily targeting college students over the age of 21
 - a) Recruit campus ambassadors schools in Colorado such as the University of Colorado Boulder, Colorado State University and University of Denver to share the launch and help build support for Cann on social media
 - (1) This will help develop a loyal fan base for Cann as campus ambassadors will be in charge of creating events (even after the launch) and new marketing strategies to get more people interested in the drink.
 - Develop a list of news outlets and journalists to build relationships with and pitch stories to
 - a) Aim to get coverage in relevant publications such as Forbes, Paper Magazine, Tech Crunch, Insider, Thrillist, etc.
 - Build relationships with smaller, Colorado-based influencers, particularly those with a focus on health and wellness, lifestyle and/or food and drink
 - a) Identify Tik Tokers and Instagram micro-influencers with relevant interests based in Colorado to help spread awareness for Cann.
- **Shared**
 - Share user-generated content on all socials (Instagram, TikTok, Twitter)
 - a) After/during the pop-up event, people will take to social media to share their experience/discuss their thoughts on Cann. Those that attended the event will be given incentives such as, earning coupons, being featured on Cann’s social media, etc.) to post on

their social media. This user generated content will create free publicity for Cann by bringing awareness to the launch in Colorado and spreading it beyond with the discussions.

- Start using hashtags with Cann puns that fit in with current trends to use in social media posts and digital ads
 - a) Get campus ambassadors and influencers to post on social media talking about hangovers and high-calorie drinks using hashtags such as #cantrelate and #canceled (e.g. “Sunday scaries? #cantrelate” or “alcohol? #canceled”).
- Pride Month campaign
 - a) Similar to Cann’s 2021 Pride Month campaign, 2022 will work with rising stars within the queer community to emphasize the brand’s continued commitment to amplifying queer voices via socials, digital ads and billboards – rather than co-opting queerness for a single month.
- **Owned**
 - Restart Cann’s Instagram account @drinkcann and increase the amount of content posted across all socials
 - a) Frequent content posted on Instagram, Tik Tok and Twitter will become a top priority and help add personality to Cann’s brand.
 - Host a series of pop-up shops/tasting events at dispensaries throughout Colorado.
 - a) Host bi-annual pop-up events (one during Q2 2022 and one during Q4 that is holiday themed) to generate buzz about Cann while also providing opportunities for market research, brand engagement and product awareness.
 - (1) Get consumer feedback on what they want to see and how they like the product.
 - (2) Include areas where people can take photos/videos/reels with/of the product to post on social media. Provide

incentives (e.g. free limited edition products) to attract consumers.

(3) Invite local influencers/celebrities to attract more attention and buzz.

b) Create limited edition products to give out during pop-ups such as Cann cocktails and Cann popsicles (“Cannsicles”).

- Create an interactive educational site that allows users to learn more about what sets Cann apart from alcoholic drinks and other cannabis beverages
 - a) Highlight the many problems associated with alcohol consumption.
 - b) Highlight the health benefits of cannabis.
 - c) Allow for direct comparisons between Cann’s nutritional facts/ingredients and leading alcoholic seltzers’.

XVI. KPIs – MEASUREMENT & EVALUATION

- Earned media coverage
 - Cann can evaluate its success in continuing to generate positive media coverage by analyzing the favorability of product mentions, the amount of mentions/features and the tone/sentiment.
- Online engagement and social media
 - Cann can evaluate its success in improving its social media presence by analyzing engagement across social media channels and monitoring the changes such as increases in followers, likes and other forms of interaction.
 - Monitoring monthly website traffic: Google Analytics can be used to measure conversion rates or page views. To reach the objective of raising awareness and increasing sales of Cann, the brand should monitor website traffic by measuring the effectiveness of its SEO team for organic web traffic and/or checking to see how many referrals its social team sends to the site (Riserbato, 2020).
- Colorado expansion

Social media campaign													
Ad campaign – digital and billboards													
Educational site													
Cannbassadors – recruit and train													
Pop-up shops													
Pride Month campaign													
Telluride Film Festival sponsorship													

Pre-launch: yellow

Launch: green

Post-launch: blue

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