

Liquid Death

Qualitative Research Report

Insight Innovators

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Research 055

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Executive Summary

This research report analyzes the communication strategies of Liquid Death and identifies key problem areas affecting its brand messaging and consumer engagement. While Liquid Death has successfully transformed the bottled water industry with its bold branding and commitment to sustainability, our research finds gaps in how Liquid Death connects with certain audiences. These communication challenges come from inconsistencies in brand messaging, limited audience targeting, and a potential mismatch between its edgy tone and the broader audience's expectations.

Through our exploration of consumer behavior and brand perception, we identified that while Liquid Death appeals to a younger, niche, trend-conscious demographic, its messaging may confuse consumers who are less familiar with this edgy and rebellious style. While its sustainability mission resonates with eco-conscious buyers, the brand's rebellious and humorous voice may undermine the seriousness of this commitment. This dissonance in communication creates problems with deep consumer loyalty.

The report outlines three primary problem areas in Liquid Death's communication strategy:

- Problem Statement #1: Liquid Death's sarcastic and edgy humor-based marketing may create brand misconceptions, leading consumers to question how seriously the brand is committed to sustainability.
- Problem Statement #2: Liquid Death's edgy marketing appeals to a niche audience but may not resonate with a broader, more diverse consumer base.
- Problem Statement #3: Liquid Death's higher price point compared to other bottled water brands may deter cost-sensitive customers.

To tackle these problems, we provide recommendations for improving Liquid Death's communication approach to increase its attractiveness to a wide range of customers. Liquid Death can increase customer engagement, boost brand loyalty, and increase its market presence by improving its messaging to better balance humor with sustainability, reaching a wider audience, and maintaining consistency in its voice.

This research is an important step for Liquid Death to improve its marketing strategy, fit messaging to audience expectations, and establish itself as a leader in the drinking water industry.

Consumer Wants and Needs

- Targets Gen Z and Millennials that value authenticity and sustainability (Liquiddeath, 2024)
- Aluminum cans with anti-plastic messaging who want eco-friendly items (Liquiddeath, 2024)
- Drawn to the brand's humorous marketing and edgy, rebellious attitude (Liquiddeath, 2024)
- Healthful substitute for soda or alcohol satisfying need for convenient hydration options (Mintel, 2024)
- Available in both sparkling and still water (Liquiddeath.com, 2024)

Cost

- Pricing costs between \$1.50 and \$2.50.
- More expensive than other brands with its premium positioning. (Liquiddeath, 2024)
- Opportunity cost: caring about the environment with use of recyclable aluminum cans = longer-term environmental advantages outweigh the greater upfront cost.

Convenience

- Available in bulk and separately: amazon and online website (Liquiddeath.com, 2024)
- Store locator on website (60,000 in U.S) (Liquiddeath.com, 2024)
- Not as available in major grocery stores compared to competitors, very limited availability internationally (Mintel, 2024)
- Stores listed selling Liquid Death on website (Liquiddeath.com, 2024)
- Taller, non-resealable, or reusable packaging (Liquiddeath.com, 2024)

Communication

- Dark humor and edginess in communication style
- "Murder your thirst" campaign gains attention through taboo humor (Adweek, 2024)
- Controversial humor generates free publicity and fits brand personality (Forbes, 2024)
- 4 million on Instagram, 6.2 million on TikTok, and active on most social media (Instagram.com, 2024) (TikTok.com, 2024) (Vivvix, 2024)



Competitor Analysis

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Smartwater and Liquid Death are chosen as competitors because they both appeal to health-focused and eco-friendly people with a clean image.



Essentia and Liquid Death are chosen as competitors because they both target people who want premium/pricier quality water.



La Croix and Liquid Death are chosen as competitors because they both come in cans, offer bubbly water and fun flavors, and have cool branding

Consumer Wants and Needs

Smartwater	Essentia	La Croix
<p>Added Electrolytes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Includes added electrolytes to help keep you hydrated, especially after workouts or a busy day (Clifford, 2014). <p>Vapor-Distillation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Customers want water that tastes clean and pure (Mills, 2024). Smartwater goes through vapor-distillation, which makes it taste fresh and gives a sense of high quality (Mills, 2024). <p>Healthy & Fancy Image:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Many Smartwater buyers feel they are making a healthy choice (Smartwater, 2024). It's also seen as a "fancy" brand, appealing to people who want to show they care about health and lifestyle (Mills, 2024). <p>Easy to Find & Buy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Smartwater is convenient to grab on-the-go, like at the gym, a convenience store, or even at school (Smartwater, 2024). People want it to be accessible and available wherever they are (Clifford, 2014). 	<p>Super Hydration with High pH:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> People who choose Essentia are looking for water they believe hydrates them better because of its high pH level (Mills, 2024). Athletes and health enthusiasts think it's especially beneficial after workouts (Essentiawater, 2024). <p>Health Boost:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seen as a healthier choice due to its purification process, which helps with detoxification and recovery (Mills, 2024). Buyers like that it feels more than just regular water (Essentiawater, 2024). <p>Nice Bottles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Essentia is viewed as a premium brand, and customers appreciate its high-quality look and refined taste (Mills, 2024). <p>Proven Quality:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Essentia emphasizes its testing for purity and performance, and customers who value science-backed claims feel confident they're drinking something good for them (Essentiawater, 2024). 	<p>Healthy Soda Alternative:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> LaCroix is popular with people who enjoy fizzy drinks but want to avoid the sugar and calories of sodas. It provides a refreshing, bubbly option without guilt (LaCroix, 2024). <p>Fun Flavors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> LaCroix fans appreciate the variety of flavors, letting them try new tastes without artificial ingredients (LaCroix, 2024). <p>Edgy & Popular:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Many people buy LaCroix because it's trendy, and they like being part of a cool, healthy, and refreshing movement (LaCroix, 2024).

Communication

Smart Water	Essentia	La Croix
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High advertising budget 12 million spent on advertisements in last 12 months (Vivvix, 2024) Ensures broad exposure and shows premium brand image Instagram most consistent use (Instagram.com, 2024) Focuses on famous figures for advertising (Instagram.com, 2024) Enhances status with celebrity culture Heavily focused on traditional media, may not appeal as strong to younger consumers like Millennials and Gen Z. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimal advertising spend \$4.6K spent on adv. in last 12 months (Vivvix, 2024) 4.7K digital Reliance on word-of-mouth limiting reach More engaging on Instagram and Tiktok Brand loyalty fueled by memes and relatable content (LaCroix, 2024) Capitalizing on trends and engagement Maintains a presence on a variety of social platforms (LaCroix, 2024) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lower advertising budget 220k spent on advertisements in last 12 months (Vivvix, 2024) Limited ads suggest smaller reach Keep up subscription and loyalty program (Essentiawater, 2024) Presence within the health and wellness community, focusing on customer retention. High follower count on socials (Essentiawater, 2024) Targets health-conscious consumers Sponsors athletic events and partners with fitness influence (Essentiawater, 2024)

Convenience

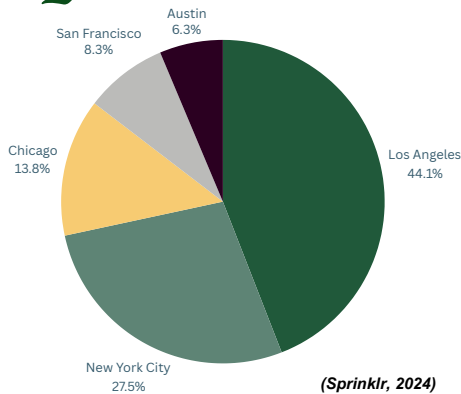
Smartwater	Essentia	La Croix
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Available in both cans and bottles (Coca-cola.com, 2024) Widely available in the U.S. and internationally (Coca-cola.com, 2024) Resealable and reusable bottles (Coca-cola.com, 2024) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Only available in North America (Essentiawater.com, 2024) Over 90,000 retail locations in the U.S. (Essentiawater.com, 2024) Can be recycled at any recycling facility in the U.S. (Essentiawater.com, 2024) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Smaller, compact cans Recipes available on website for convenient mocktail-making (LaCroixwater.com) Primarily available in France (Essentiawater.com, 2024 & LaCroixwater.com)

Smartwater	Essentia	La Croix
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> \$1.60 to \$2.20 (20 oz bottle) (Target, 2024) Competitive price Added electrolytes for hydration (Smart Water, 2024) Higher cost than generic water May not suit budget-conscious buyers (Mills, 2024) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> \$1.70 to \$2.30 (20 oz bottle) (Target, 2024) Premium quality High-pH water for health-focused consumers (Essentia, 2024) Price may deter those seeking basic hydration (Mills, 2024) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> \$0.50 to \$1.00 (12 oz can) (Target, 2024) Most affordable Refreshing flavored option (LaCroix, 2024) Flavored option may not meet needs for pure hydration (Mills, 2024)

Cost

Consumer Analysis

Current Customers



Demographics	Psychographics	Lifestyle
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Gen Z and Millennials (Sprinklr, 2024) -Very active and health and environment conscious -Have some disposable income, middle to upper class -Reside Urban cities (Sprinklr, 2024) -They are typically students or young professionals, and working in the creative or tech industry. (Mills, 2024) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Looking for the highest quality hydration and affordable price -Health conscious, prioritizing hydration, open to paying more for health benefits -Value sustainable brands -Young consumers with disposable income, more likely to buy health enhancing water -Stick with their favorite brands, open to exploring others -"Sober-curiosity", looking for non-alcoholic alternatives (Mills, 2024) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Have active lifestyles, like fitness, outdoor adventures, etc. -Convenience is everything -They are highly active on social platforms, influenced by trends and brands with strong digital presence (Mills, 2024)

Consumer Day In The Life

Jake, a college student in California, always has Liquid Death in his daily routine. After his morning workout, he rehydrates with it, loving its hydration. He knows Liquid Death is sustainable because of their cans, so he grabs a can before heading to class. At his small liberal arts college, many students practice eco-friendly measures in their every day lives. As a sober student, he likes the edgy packaging, which allows him to fit in without alcohol at a party that evening. Later, while scrolling Instagram in bed Jake looks through his feed to make sure he is staying up to date with all the trends.

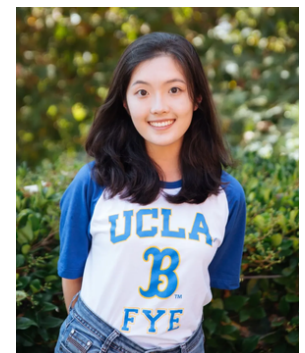


Prospective Customers

Demographics	Psychographics	Lifestyle
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Gen Z and Millennials -High disposable income -Live in urban cities -In college, high education or post grad (Mills, 2024) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Health conscious -Value sustainability -Brand loyal but adventurous -Interested in experiences -"Sober-curiosity" -Edgy (Mills, 2024) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Engaged in social media (Sprinklr, 2024) -Looking for stories and a unique experience -Active and fit (Mills, 2024)

Prospective Consumer Day in the Life

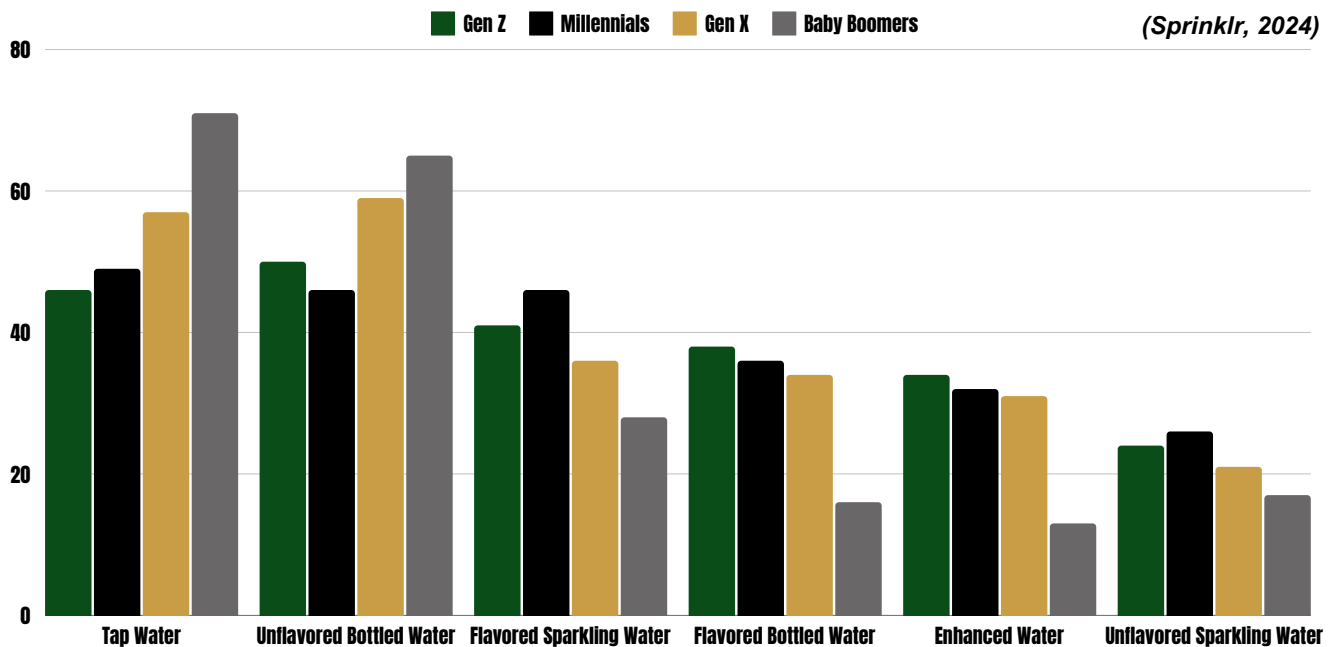
Mia, a student at UCLA, starts her day with yoga and a Liquid Death to stay hydrated, for her health and its sustainability. She brings it to social gatherings because the packaging hides her sober lifestyle. At night she posts a picture of her Liquid Death, sharing her eco-friendly choices with friends. She receives many likes and comments from her friends who also share a mutual love for the environment and caring for it. After she posts she scrolls through TikTok and sees the newest fashion trends, making a mental note of what she will buy tomorrow when she goes to the mall with friends.



Industry Analysis

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- The trend for bottled water is trending upward since 33% of consumers say they drank more this year than they did the year before, mostly for health reasons (Mills, 2024).
- Lower-priced water is the number one buying factor in the water industry, making it difficult for water manufacturers to express their unique and distinctive features (Mills, 2024).
- With greater consumption rates and more usage than prior generations, Gen Z and Millennials are driving the category ahead. These generations are brand-loyal and highly engaged customers that are willing to try premium, specialty, and higher-quality water variations (Mills, 2024).



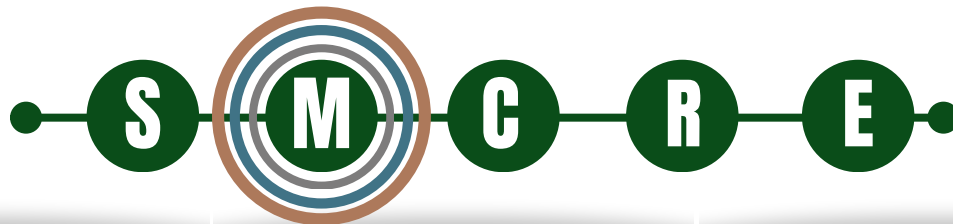
- Customers believe that different kinds of water are appropriate for different occasions, therefore strategic planning for methods of distribution is required. Flavored still and sparkling waters are popular as "social" beverages and drink substitutes and flavorless bottled waters are preferred for both workout and overall wellness (Mills, 2024).
- 63% of consumers believe that inflation has made it difficult to justify buying eco-friendly water packaging, which has led to a lack of interest in sustainably packaged water. Only 20% of consumers believe that plastic water bottles negatively impact the environment (Mills, 2024).
- #WaterTok and "Hydration" have been turned into buzzwords as water has become more of a "trendy" necessity for a healthy lifestyle. 65% of consumers say they are trying to drink more water and they seek creative ways to do so (Mills, 2024).

SWOT ANALYSIS

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<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bold branding makes Liquid Death stand out in the shelves among regular water brands • Markets products as entertainment • Liquid Death uses aluminum cans to show sustainability efforts, resonating with eco-conscious consumers • Strong social media presence boosts visibility and engagement with audience 	<p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Edgy and humorous marketing appeals to niche consumers • Liquid Death's limited availability in stores makes it less convenient to consumers • With higher pricing, Liquid Death is considered a premium product and is not as affordable compared to competitors
<p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With health trends on the rise, people are buying more water • Potential to enter international markets with sustainable, unique branding • Partnerships with like-minded brands or influencers are trending and can boost reach and awareness 	<p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highly competitive market with many established and new brands • Rapidly changing trends require brand to adapt quickly to stay relevant • Stricter packaging regulations and increased costs might hinder sustainability efforts

Problem Statements



<p>Message</p> <p><i>Problem: Liquid Deaths sarcastic and edgy humor-based marketing may create some brand misconceptions and have consumers questioning how serious their commitment to sustainability is.</i></p>	<p>Message</p> <p><i>Problem: Liquid Death's edgy marketing appeals to a niche audience but may not resonate with a broader audience</i></p>	<p>Message</p> <p><i>Problem: Liquid Death is more expensive than other brands, which can deter cost-sensitive customers.</i></p>
<p><i>Liquid Death's sarcastic brand persona might cause consumers to question their serious commitment to sustainability and defer them from buying the brand.</i></p>	<p><i>The brand's edgy branding and message appeals to a specific consumers but misses others. This reduces causes consumers in a broader audience to lack interest and desire.</i></p>	<p><i>Liquid Death's struggles to explain why their higher price is worth it in their message. This weakens desire and action (AIDA), as some customers aren't convinced the price is worth it</i></p>

Research Objective

- **Task 1:**

- Derived from Problem Statement 2:
 - Liquid Death's edgy marketing appeals to a niche audience but may not resonate with a broader audience
- Goal:
 - To understand Liquid Death's audience perception

- **Task 2:**

- Derived from Problem Statements 1 and 2:
 - Liquid Deaths sarcastic and edgy humor-based marketing may create some brand misconceptions and have consumers questioning how serious their commitment to sustainability is.
 - Liquid Death is more expensive than other brands, which can deter cost-sensitive customers.
- Goal:
 - To analyze the effectiveness of sustainability messages and price reasoning

- **Task 3:**

- Derived from Problem Statement 2:
 - Liquid Death's edgy marketing appeals to a niche audience but may not resonate with a broader audience
- Goal:
 - To analyze consumer engagement



In-Depth Interview

Why In-depth interview?

The one-on-one, open-ended approach of in-depth interviews allowed our participants to express their ideas and emotions in a relaxed, conversational environment. When looking at the brand perception and emotional output of Liquid Death's unique branding and sustainability messaging, in-depth interview is helpful. Each participant had the freedom to voice their own thoughts without outside distractions. We were able to dive deeper into particular answers and could understand the motives, attitudes, and values to understand consumer engagement better.

Procedure

An In-depth interview by Insight Innovators was conducted for Liquid Death took place from October 25 to November 1, 2024 to learn more about consumer thoughts and feelings. The study included 18 participants, 10 male and 8 female, ranging in age from 18-22. Participants from diverse locations, including Austin and Lubbock, Texas; Brooklyn, New York; and New Jersey, showed various cultural influences and reflected Liquid Death's target demographic of older Gen Z. To guarantee accessibility and comfort for all participants, the interviews were conducted both in-person and via Zoom, with participants receiving video links via email. A moderator used a structured interview guide to guide each interview, which lasted between 45 and 60 minutes. The interviewer began with icebreakers, followed by discussion questions creating a conversational environment that encouraged participants to share their insights.

Sampling method - Purposive sampling

Purposive sampling allowed us to gain detailed information about participant behaviors and attitudes regarding Liquid Death's branding and messaging. This approach allowed us to concentrate on particular topics, such as the brand's edgy image and dedication to sustainability. By selecting people who actively interact with and are familiar with Liquid Death's branding or products guaranteed that the responses showcased to the brand's target market of Gen Z and Millennials. This sampling offered a relaxed, open-ended style that encouraged participants to share their reasons and feelings, which would have been more difficult to record using quantitative techniques. This allowed us to have research that was specific and meaningful.

Summary of Important Findings

Brand Perception and Appeal

- Because of its distinct, alternative look, the participants see Liquid Death as an edgy, unorthodox brand that stands out amongst other water brands.
- The brand's distinct name, outlandish can design, and dark colors, it has been commonly compared to brands like Monster and Redbull
- Younger customers find the brand especially appealing due to its unruly appearance and rebellious approach; consumers who indulge in music festivals and more alternative lifestyles feel particularly drawn to it.

Social Media Engagement from Consumers

- Participants found that Liquid Death's humor and edgy branding on social media played a significant role in grabbing younger consumer's attention.
- Many participants felt led to purchase and try Liquid Death after seeing advertisements on TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube due to the brand's alignment with customer's ideals making Liquid Death memorable.

Sustainably Aware

- Liquid Death's eco-friendly approach resonated well with participants and was received as a positive value for the consumers who are focusing more on purchasing sustainable options, rendering the product worth the cost.
- Sustainability was not the primary purchasing factor, but many people felt they resonated with the eco-friendly message Liquid Death provides, providing positive opinions.

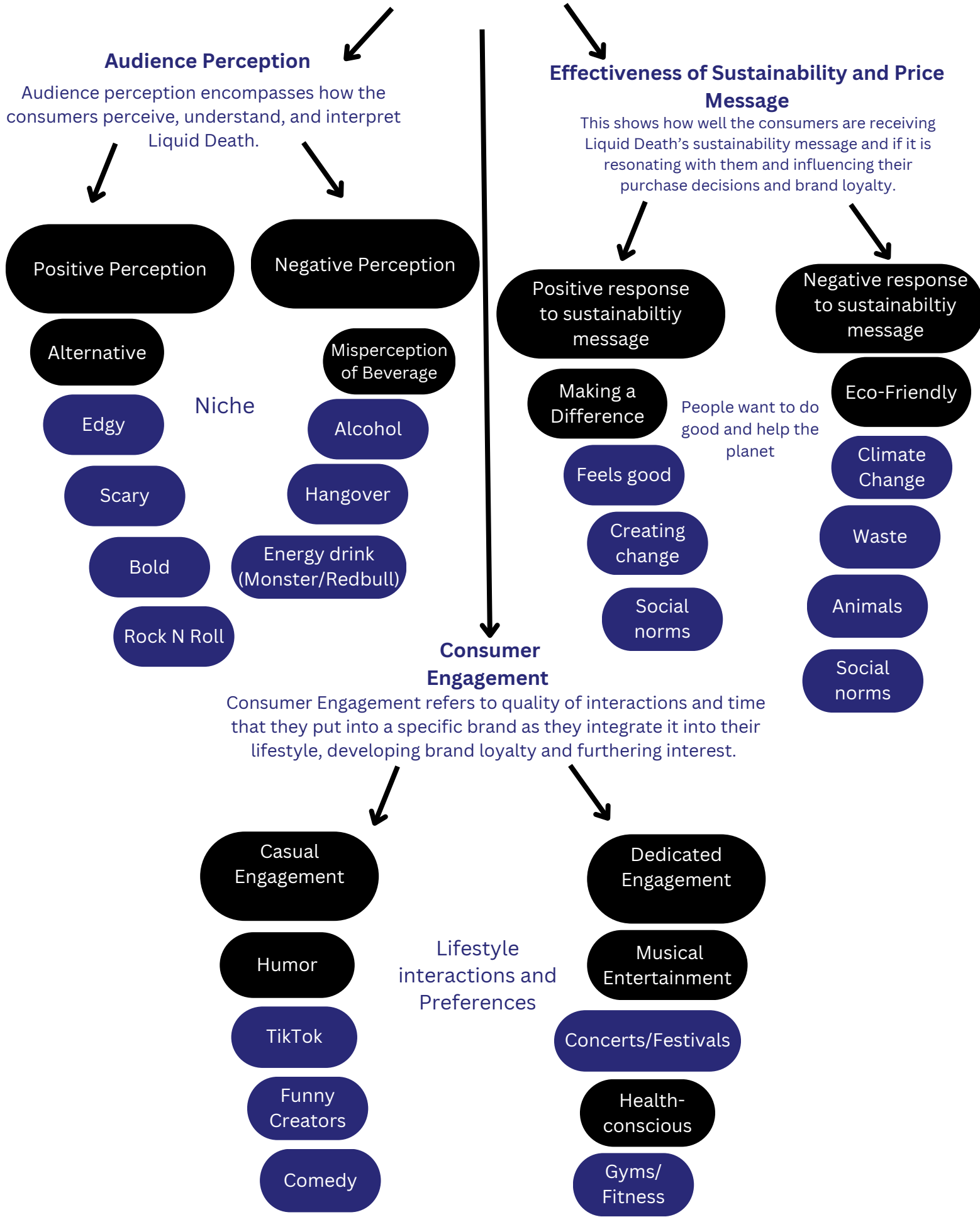
Functionality and Lifestyle

- Liquid Death has served as a major choice for hydration amongst many different lifestyles, like sober people, athletes, and festival goers.
- The brand also has provided an alternative edge for people as they drink it in any social setting.

Quality and Flavor

- Participants believe that flavor and taste are driving factors in their water purchases, despite Liquid Death's strong branding and message.
- It was recorded that Liquid Death's quality and taste have created a strong pull for customers and have helped contribute to a loyal following

Bold Consumer Connections



Detailed Findings

Meta Theme - Brand Perception

- Brand Identity
 - Liquid Death consumers mention that the brand has an edgy or alternative vibe to it.
 - Name of Liquid Death immediately sets the brand apart from competitors
 - The visual branding mimics alcoholic or energy drink packaging which links a perception of a high-energy product.
 - Humor draws in consumers because of the unexpected brand personality
 - Participant 1 described the brand as having a "rock n roll vibe," adding that it felt "alternative and edgy."
 - Participant 5 connected the brand to a "rock music" aesthetic, saying, "When I think about it, I think about rock music, tattoos, and guys that drink beer."
- Bold Branding
 - Many participants mentioned that Liquid Death's unique and intense branding makes it stand out among the shelves.
 - Participant 7 mentioned, "It's different from other water brands. Usually, water brands sound refreshing, but Liquid Death sounds more rebellious."
 - Participant 10 shared, "The fact that it is a water brand but is advertised in such a darker, more unorthodox way for certain clientele for sure."

Meta Theme - Sustainability

- Value of Sustainability
 - While some participants deeply value sustainability efforts, others were less impacted by them, showing a mixed attitude towards Liquid Death's eco-friendly focus
 - Participant 8 said, "I care about being eco-friendly, and I love that they promote using aluminum cans instead of plastic."
 - Participant 6 stated, "I don't care about [sustainability] at all."
- Sustainable Packaging
 - Liquid Death's use of cans as their packaging strongly conveys their sustainability efforts

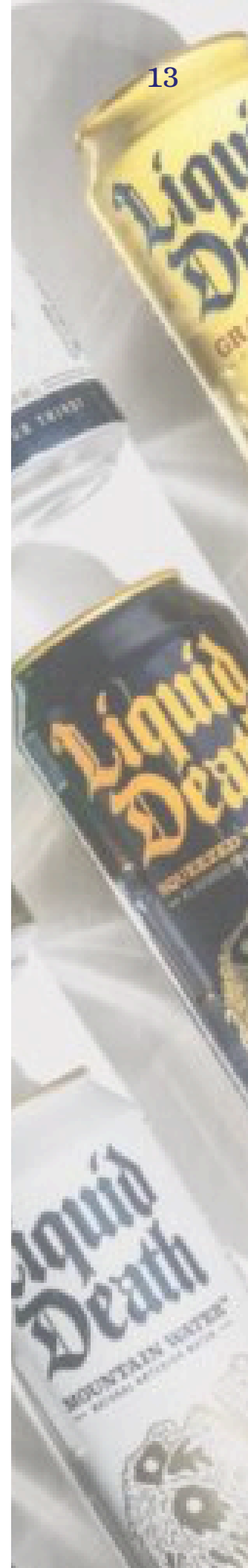
- Participant 4 said, "When water comes in the metal water bottles, it's sustainable."
 - Participant 12 stated that, "Sustainably packaged water is worth the higher price because it provides a convenient way to help the environment little by little."

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Meta Theme - Price Reasoning

- Justifying the Premium Price
 - Many participants view the higher price as justified by Liquid Death's environmental efforts
 - Participant 8: "Liquid Death is worth the higher price because... it supports a better cause than just being a good drink."



- Participant 7: "The sustainability part makes it feel worth it...they're making a difference environmentally."
- The Challenges of a Premium Price
 - For some consumers, Liquid Death's higher price is a challenge and makes it difficult to buy the product frequently
 - Participant 7: "It is a little too expensive for me just to pick it out."

Meta Theme - Consumer Engagement

- Casual Social Media Engagement
 - Liquid Death puts out eye-catching media on their socials through humorous and unorthodox content
 - Participant 9: "I think it's funny; they do a good job at catching the attention of people because I even showed my friends how weird their ads were."
 - Participant 11: "I've seen it advertised on TikTok a couple of times... it looks like a beer or something, which makes it stand out."
- Dedicated Social Media Engagement
 - Liquid Death's sustainability message and distinctive look resonates with their dedicated followers. For these followers, Liquid Death is more than water, it's a lifestyle that aligns with their values
 - Participant 8: "I've seen them on Instagram a lot, especially during festival season. That's where they usually find people like me."

WHAT?

- Purchasing Liquid Death at concerts/festivals
- Purchasing on special occasions
- Purchase Liquid Death based on the edgy and unique can design

- Matches the edgy, fun vibe of the event
- A cool, conversation-starter drink for social events
- The design stands out and appeals to individuality and a unique consumer group, they can showcase who they are through the can

WHY?

wow!

- Feels like part of the show, not just a drink
- Turns water into a bold statement piece
- The can is more than water, it's self-expression



Consumer Journey Map

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The consumer on this journey is someone who values individuality and seeks brands that reflect their unique personality. They are drawn to edgy, unconventional cultures like music and festival scenes, where standing out is important. They care about sustainability but prefer to make eco-friendly choices in a fun, stylish way.

First
Kill

Testing the
Waters

Cracking
Open

Join the
Cult/Loyal

Spread
Death

Consumer encounters Liquid Death through the content they put out on social media platforms like TikTok or Instagram. They are intrigued by the dark and humorous branding.

The consumer decides to look deeper into Liquid Death on their website and discovers their strong commitment to sustainability, they are excited that they found a brand they align with.

The consumer makes the decision to purchase and try Liquid Death. So they use the store locator on the Liquid Death website and head to the nearest one.

After sipping on Liquid Death the consumer feels satisfied and is content with their purchase. They also feel connected to the brand identity and decide to follow Liquid Death's social media accounts.

Liquid Death is now the consumers drink of choice. They love it so much they begin to get their friends on it, give it as gifts, share it on social media, etc. They feel as though they are part of a movement.

Product

Liquid Death Canned Water

Objective

To amplify Liquid Death's appeal to a more diverse and broad audience while still preserving its alternative, edgy brand identity and commitment to sustainability.

Target

Liquid Death's target audience is primarily Gen Z young adults aged 18-24 and millennials aged 25-34. This audience is primarily eco-conscious individuals who have an appreciation for alternative and edgy lifestyle choices. These individuals could also enjoy music festivals, being active, socializing sober, or any form of unique and edgy life experience.

Current Thought

Liquid Death is seen as a dark, edgy, and rebellious brand with a sense of niche humor and an unorthodox way of appealing to consumers. The brand's humor and bold appeal command attention, but Liquid Death's eco-friendly efforts do not always serve as a main focus to consumers. A number of consumers could find the higher price as a barrier when it comes to purchasing water.

Desired Thought

Liquid Death is a brand that is not just different, bold, and edgy, but also a leader in sustainable water brands that offer high-quality water and packaging. When buying Liquid Death, the higher price is justified due to its distinct brand identity, delicious taste, and eco-friendly efforts.

Rationale

When looking at Liquid Death's sustainable packaging, bold marketing/branding, and high-quality water, the brand will be able to break barriers when reaching a larger and broader audience. Showing the brand's commitment to eco-friendly packaging and sustainability will attract new consumers while still building and maintaining the loyalty of its current followers.

What is the single most persuasive idea we can convey?

Liquid Death is a premium water brand that "murders your thirst" while still supporting the planet and adding character and sustainability to everyday hydration.

What tone of voice should we use?

Bold, sarcastic, and edgy humor in branding and marketing but also making sure that the messages are still authentic and relatable. The target audience appreciates the alternative and rebellious humor, but the tone should still be able to be understood by any prospective buyer.

Recommendations

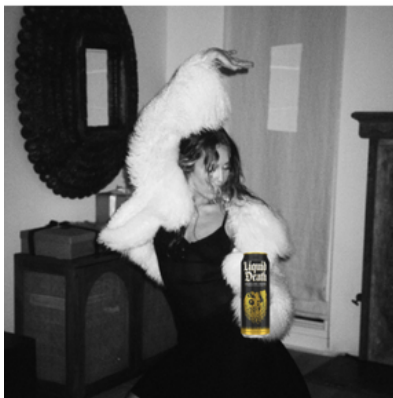
Liquid Death needs to partner with sober organizations, such as rehab facilities, for the next year to increase brand awareness and attract more sober individuals who can use it as an alternative to alcoholic beverages in social settings to feel included. By giving back to these communities, Liquid Death demonstrates its commitment to meaningful causes, which helps justify its higher price point compared to its competitors. These efforts not only reinforce the brand's values but also encourage cost-sensitive consumers to support a product that makes a positive impact, creating a deeper connection with its audience.



Poster/General Ad

Liquid Death needs to work with/sponsor sober celebrities to increase its brand awareness from October and November to attract more sober people who will find these influencers as an inspiration to start purchasing Liquid Death. These efforts should be highlighted on social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and Twitter to maximize visibility. Miley Cyrus and Tom Holland are both influential figures who resonate with Gen Z for their decisions to embrace sobriety. Cyrus, known for her evolving public persona, has openly discussed her sobriety journey, aligning with Gen Z values.

Similarly, Holland, the 'Spider-Man' actor, has shared his experience of quitting drinking after struggling with 'Dry January,' highlighting the positive benefits of a sober lifestyle. Collaborating with these sober celebrities provides Liquid Death an opportunity to expand its reach and resonate with a border audience.



Social Media Post



mileycyrus

Staying sober just got cooler 💧 Proud to team up with @LiquidDeath for a bold, sustainable way to hydrate. #LiquidDeath

Liquid Death needs to host pop-ups in Gen Z hotspots, such as college campuses, fitness studios, and grocery stores, to connect with its target audience and demonstrate its authentic commitment to sustainability, addressing misconceptions created by its sarcastic and edgy marketing. For the gyms and universities, the pop-ups should be at younger-aged populated gyms such as 24 Hour Fitness and Equinox and mid-to-large-sized college campuses such as Texas Christian University in Fort Worth and The University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa. Hosting pop-ups in grocery stores like Trader Joe's and Whole Foods highlights the brand's alignment with healthy and sustainable living. Additionally, by choosing diverse locations such as gyms, college campuses, and grocery stores, the brand can reach a wide variety of people to share its message on preventing drunk driving, promoting its product as a responsible and stylish choice for designated drivers, and reinforcing its commitment to social responsibility and safety.



Pop-up Banner

Liquid Death needs to start selling its canned waters at bars to provide a non-alcoholic alternative for sober individuals, designated drivers, or those who simply don't want to drink that night. Locations like trendy cocktail lounges, sports bars, and live music venues. Bars often cater to a mix of drinkers and non-drinkers, and with limited non-alcoholic options available, selling Liquid Death would not only provide a stylish alternative for those who feel more comfortable holding a drink in social settings but also reinforce the brand's alignment with responsible drinking initiatives. This addresses the problem of Liquid Death's marketing appealing to a narrow segment, creating an opportunity to resonate with a broader demographic while remaining true to the brand's bold, rebellious vibe.



Bar Poster

Limitations

The sample size was somewhat small with the interviews being conducted only over a span of a couple of days.

The small number of people and narrow time frame may not accurately represent accurate purchasing behavior and brand perceptions among different seasons and people.

We only used purposive sampling knowing that each individual we interviewed was already familiar with Liquid Death and their branding. This unfortunately excludes individuals who might not be familiar with or who may be hesitant about the brand.

In the FGI guide, some of the questions had very specific themes that could have unintentionally led participants to think a certain way when answering the questions. The guide was structured a certain way when talking about branding or sustainability which could have overshadowed other crucial factors like taste and affordability

Participants were from different locations around the United States, but the sample size was still too small to capture and assess the geographical factors of purchasing Liquid Death and consumer behaviors.

Improvements

Expand the sample size and interview people during a broader period of time to expand the timeline and amount of reach. For example, interviewing people during music festival season as well.

Using stratified sampling could aid in representing a more even section of potential buyers, which could aid Liquid Death broaden the sampling frame to include more diverse consumers, like people who are in different age groups or people who are unfamiliar with Liquid Death. This would provide more information about the audiences that Liquid Death needs to tap into.

More open-ended questions can be integrated into the FGI guide to expose the participants to unexpected themes and help them question broader topics.

Increase the number of participants in each region of the United States to help pinpoint location-based information and insights that could help structure future marketing strategies.

Conclusion

By appealing to Gen Z and Millennials with its edgy branding, dark humor, and dedication to sustainability, Liquid Death has established a strong presence in the drinking water industry. Campaigns like "Murder Your Thirst" and the use of recyclable aluminum cans have gained a following among rebellious and eco-friendly consumers. However, its communication style, which caters to a niche audience, limits its appeal to broader demographics.

The tone of the brand's marketing sets it apart and resonates with younger consumers who appreciate bold messaging. With a huge amount of followers on platforms like Instagram and TikTok, Liquid Death's strong social media presence is an advantage. To unlock Liquid Death's full potential, the brand will broaden its messaging to focus on hydration and health benefits alongside its sustainability mission, with its brand voice while reaching a wider audience.

Additionally, its high pricing, while consistent with its sustainable and premium positioning, may scare away budget-conscious customers due to a lack of clear messaging. By balancing its humor with clear communication about its environmental goals, appealing to more demographics, and showing the value behind its premium pricing, Liquid Death will overcome these challenges and position itself as a trusted brand in the bottled water market. This approach will strengthen its brand but also give long-term growth and customer loyalty.

To expand its buyer audience and strengthen brand loyalty, we recommend Liquid Death partners with sober organizations, work with sober celebrities, host pop-ups, and begin selling their products at bars. All of these strategies resonate with Liquid Death's target audience.

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Appendix

STCO 35503/60113 Research

IDI Guide

Liquid Death–In-Depth Interview Discussion Guide (conducted during the week of October 27th, 2024)

INTRODUCTION: (5 minutes)

INTRO

Welcome our IDI participants and thank them for coming and for agreeing to participate. Introduce myself and tell them details about the interview and that we will be conducting research for our client, Liquid Death, and will be focusing on consumers' perceptions of canned water, branding ideas, and beverage choices.

Proposed Script: "Hi! Thank you so much for taking the time to speak with me today, I appreciate it. My name is (Sofia, Bonnie, Meg, and Jenny), and I am here to ask you a few questions about Liquid Death and your thoughts on their branding and message. Before we start, would you mind giving me your name, how old you are, and where you're from? Also, could you please share your gender, if you're comfortable?"

DISCLOSURES

Let the participant know that the interview will be recorded for accuracy and ethical purposes but will not be disclosed.

Proposed Script: This interview is part of a research project to understand how people perceive Liquid Death's branding, their sustainability efforts, and how they connect with audiences like you! As you informed me through the consent form, I will be using an audio recorder on my phone to record tonight's interview and session so we can listen to it at a later date to make sure we didn't miss anything.

PERMISSIONS

Let the participant know that they can feel free to excuse themselves at any moment to use the restroom, get water, or grab a snack. The participant has the right to refuse to answer any question if they feel the need to do so.

Proposed Script: This interview is part of a research project to understand how people perceive Liquid Death's branding, their sustainability efforts, and how they connect with audiences like you! Feel free to excuse yourself at any time to use the restroom, grab water, or grab a snack.

GUIDELINES

To make this a research session, here are some guidelines:

- Please turn off your phones
- Talk clearly and in an understandable tone and volume
- Understand that there are no wrong answers and that we want a sincere, unbiased opinion

- The researcher/proctor may have to interrupt to keep the interview on track

Proposed script: I just want to let you know that this interview is being recorded, but all of your responses will be kept confidential and will only be used for research purposes. You can choose not to answer any question or stop the interview at any time if you feel uncomfortable. Please feel free to share your honest opinions. There are no right or wrong answers, and your feedback is very valuable to us. Do you have any questions for me before we begin the interview?

I'll be sure to keep an eye on the clock to ensure we get out no later than 7:30 PM.

.Please introduce yourself:

- First name, research interest
- Icebreaker questions: Explain what specific features (app, activities) you enjoy the most with your Phone.

Proposed Script:

- How often do you purchase bottled/canned water?
- What is your go-to drink when you are thirsty?
- What do you feel is the driving factor behind most of your purchases?
- Which of these is the most important to you when buying beverages: taste, brand or convenience?

TASK I: Understand Liquid Deaths audience perception (25 minutes)

- How did you first hear about Liquid Death?
- What do you think of when you first hear "Liquid Death"? (projective technique)
 - Can you try to explain why that comes to mind?
- How would you describe Liquid Death's vibe?
- What other brands would you associate with Liquid Death?

TASK II: Analyze the effectiveness of sustainability messages (25 minutes)

- What characteristics do you look for from a water brand?
- What does sustainability mean to you?
- What shows that a water brand values sustainability?
- Are you more likely to buy water from a brand that you know practices sustainability?
- Complete this sentence: "Sustainably packaged water is worth the higher price because..."
- Why is that reason important to you?

TASK III: Analyze consumer engagement (25 minutes)

- How do you usually spend your free time?

- Are there certain apps, websites or shows you turn on in your free time?
- What types of media do you use most often? (streaming apps, music apps, news, etc)
- Are there certain brands or specific content that you often follow or engage with on social media? If so, what draws you to them?
- Have you ever encountered Liquid Death on any type of media platform? If so, what platform?

Wrap-up (5-10 minutes)

9. Is there anything else you would like to say about Liquid Death that you haven't had a chance to say yet?
10. Summary and adjourn: Brief the final thoughts and summarize what you've heard from the interviewee regarding their opinions to make sure you've heard them correctly.

Facilitator/GA assignments:

- Set up a desk, chair, recording devices (check for audio recorder phone battery and storage capacity 24hrs in advance) by 5:00pm.
- Interviewer will greet the interviewee and pass out a brief consent form.
- Interviewer makes a brief memo about the interviewee (This will be a foundation to make your transcripts)
- After the IDI you will be creating an IDI transcript.