# Aviation Gin Wins March Adness 2020, Once Again Showing How to Mobilize a Fan Base

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9 hours ago

Once again, Aviation Gin has proven itself a titan of advertising in Adweek's thrilling March Adness bracket, claiming the championship for the second year running.

Starting with a sixth-seed ranking (because of course we have to give our heroes room to continue growing), Aviation Gin made short work of some of the world's biggest brands. The company charged through the bracket on the shoulders of its adoring fans, helped along by retweets and engagement from the brand's Twitter account as well as owner Ryan Reynolds.

> *Last year, @VancityReynolds' brand @AviationGin ????emerged as an unlikely champion????, and now the conquerer rises again to defend the title.*
>
> *Its challenger?*
>
> *Ad titan @nike ????, whose athletic campaigns may be the most iconic and emotionally powerful in the ad world. ????*
>
> *VOTE!*
>
> *— Adweek (@Adweek) April 9, 2020*

In its March Adness debut last year, Aviation began as a scrappy underdog but stunned everyone as it steadily advanced through both breezy and nail-biting contests to claim the title.

“Just looking at the other 63 brands in the tournament last year and this year, it is still surreal but a motivator,” said Adrian Molina, senior brand manager for Aviation Gin. “Aviation is a high growth brand, though still relatively small compared to the other industry juggernauts in the competition; being pitted against giants is an exciting challenge—allowing us to measure how far we can punch above our weight class.”

This year was certainly an odd one for our annual March Adness tradition, and there was a great deal of debate among the Adweek team about whether we should proceed in light of the global crisis we’re all facing. But in the end, we decided that a little bit of levity was just the thing the advertising world needed right now—and based on participation, most people agreed.

We also did something a bit different this year: We ran *all* of

our voting rounds on Instagram Stories as well as Twitter, which resulted in some entirely shocking victories and reversals driven by an enormous response from our IG audience.

On average, Instagram saw more than triple the amount of participants as Twitter, which in some cases—like Burger King vs. Doritos or Nike vs. Popeyes—completely flipped the tables on the Twitter consensus.

Instagram voting tipped the scales as Doritos managed a victory of over 200 votes on Instagram. Doritos also defeated advertising favorite Bud Light in IG voting.
Also defying expectations was Nintendo, which defeated Hulu, Amazon and Doritos to reach the Final Four before Nike managed a narrow victory over the popular gaming brand.

Aviation easily defeated such brands as McDonald’s and Target, while victories against PlayStation and Netflix proved more of a challenge. Often, both brand leaders and staff felt torn by the difficult decisions they had to make. After all, gin makes

for a perfect pairing with Netflix.

Once again, it was the brand's (and Reynolds') history of creating hilarious and timely campaigns, as well as its regular engagement with fans, that once again gave it the momentum to defeat the industry giants it was pitted against. Reynolds and the brand account both commented on and shared the social polls with their signature humor and friendly tone.

The truly harrowing moment came when Aviation Gin faced off against Marvel—two Reynolds-affiliated brands going head-to-head—but in the end even Reynolds had to go with his own baby.

> *Um… this is awkward. ????*
>
> *— Ryan Reynolds (@VancityReynolds)* ***April 6, 2020***

As you can see from the numbers below, the final round against Nike—whose ads are almost universally recognizable—wasn't as easy as some of Aviation's earlier wins, but the spirit brand triumphed once again.

**Aviation Gin:** 1,771
**Nike:** 729

(It’s also worth noting that more that 138,000 total votes were cast during our Final Four voting, with more than 60,000 of them going to Aviation Gin.)

Beyond the bracket, Aviation and Reynolds’ other brand Mint Mobile have been positively engaging fans during the pandemic, with the Deadpool star leaving voicemails for Mint subscribers announcing free unlimited data to help through the crisis. Aviation, meanwhile, is donating $15,000 to the United States Bartender’s Guild and adding an additional 30% “tip” to the donation for every bottle delivered through Drizly and other adult beverage delivery services through May 1 in a #TipYourBartenders campaign.

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