

Roberto 00:00:00 They're choosing quality over quantity, craftsmanship over hype, and experiences over excess. They really want to know what's in the bottle. They are more curious about where it comes from, who made it, and what it stands for.

Matt 00:00:15 To thrive in a rapidly evolving landscape, brands must move at an ever-increasing pace. I'm Matt Britton, founder and CEO of Suzy. Join me and key industry leaders as we dive deep into the shifting consumer trends within their industry, why it matters now, and how you can keep up.

Welcome to the Speed of Culture. Up today on the Speed of Culture podcast, we're thrilled to welcome Roberto Ramirez Laverde, the Global Senior Vice President of Patrón Tequila at Bacardí. Roberto leads a global strategy for one of the most iconic and pioneering brands in the super-premium tequila category, helping shape how craftsmanship, culture, and transparency come together in modern spirits marketing. Roberto, I'm a huge Patrón fan, and so excited to have you here. So thanks for joining.

Roberto 00:01:00 It's great to be here. Thank you so much, and I'm very glad to hear that you're a Patrón fan. Love it.

Matt 00:01:05 For sure. You know, you've led major categories across Bacardí, from rum to now tequila and agave. Like, what has that transition taught you about where culture is moving and what Premium Spirits brands need to do differently today?

Roberto 00:01:18 So I think culture is evolving very rapidly. I think right now, we have been immersed as never before with technology, and I think that's changing a lot how consumers are connecting with brands, how consumers are connecting with culture. And I do believe that it's very important to ensure that we, as a brand, have an open connection with the consumers where we establish a dialogue with them. In the past, probably, it was a one-side communication where as a brand, we communicate, they receive it, and that was it. Right now, we need to establish that dialogue, and we need to keep continuing listening to them to really understand how culture is evolving.

Matt 00:01:56 And, obviously, the tequila market has gotten red hot over the last, I would say, decade to decade and a half. At one point, it was all about vodka, and, you know, it's been sort of shifting around. What is the state of the tequila market today, and where does the Patrón brand fit in that in terms of super luxury to mass market, where you're trying to, I guess, aim the brand?

Roberto 00:02:19 Sure. Like, I think as a brand, Patrón helped to define the super-premium tequila category, and that comes with a responsibility. We are seeing, as you were saying, like, a great growth and great relevance of the tequila category. So today, our ambition is about protecting what made Patrón iconic in the first place, which was uncompromising quality, authenticity, and deliberate pace, while still staying relevant and forward-looking.

Everything we prioritize flows from that—from the bottles we make to the partners that we choose and the experiences and the campaigns that we create. I think right now, it's all about earning our place in culture without lowering those standards. And for us, being true to who we are has to show up in every single touchpoint that we have with the consumer. That's a nonnegotiable.

Matt 00:03:06 Right. And with that, obviously, to maintain leadership, there's a new campaign which is built around the idea of the "Pursuit of Greatness". And, obviously, as you eloquently put it, I mean, Patrón definitely helped invent the super-premium tequila space. But, obviously, in order to stay there on top, you have to pursue greatness. What does greatness mean for the Patrón brand today, and how do you intend to keep the ambition real versus just aspirational marketing language?

Roberto 00:03:38 Without cutting any corners. I think it's about showing who we are from our processes to, as I was mentioning, to the partners that we choose, and that happens in everything that we do. It's about transparency. And at the end, I believe the brand has been championing transparency for a long time. One example is our "additive-free" campaign and the quest for truth, in which we were telling consumers who we are, how we are made, and our process is very simple. Our tequila is made only with three ingredients: agave, water, and yeast. And we communicated that to consumers in a category and industry that is suffering from not being as transparent as we are. So somehow, that's something that we're championing and that we are communicating across everything that we do.

Matt 00:04:23 And speaking of product, obviously, you have this initiative, "The Perfect Pour," which turns something simple—pouring tequila—into something more cinematic. Just curious, like, what was the insight behind that, and why was that a narrative that you thought your brand was right to lean into?

Roberto 00:04:38 Great. So I think it was precisely about telling who we are, how we can go from a simple pour connecting with one of the biggest directors—not only for Mexico, but for the world—like Guillermo del Toro, with whom we have, like, a long relationship, but also we see him as a director that really connects very well with the mantra of our brand. Because also, Guillermo del Toro doesn't compromise at all. He's an incredible filmmaker; he's a global icon.

But what really made him like a natural partner for this campaign is that he shares something deeply important for us, which is that refusal of compromising on the processes. We have always admired him, the way he tells the story, how he's very hands-on, how he builds entire environments from the ground with real sets. He uses real light and real craftsmanship even as, you know, there are easier ways and other options available. And that mindset feels very familiar to us because, as I was telling you, in Patrón, we always believe that how you make something matters, and the greatness comes from refusing to compromise on the process.

Matt 00:05:43 Absolutely. And when you talk about a campaign such as this, obviously, we're talking about the realm of content and not advertising. It's about storytelling. And I would

imagine in order for you to get great content like this in front of consumers, in a world where everyone's obviously clamoring for the eyeballs and attention of the consumer you're going after, it requires just a lot of strategic planning and foresight into how to get into social media feeds, how to work with the creator economy, and things of that nature. And we'd just love to hear from you the media side of this entire equation, so you can get these great messages in front of consumers and, obviously, use it to drive growth for the brand.

Roberto 00:06:19 Yeah. I think it's very interesting because I think the role of media has changed a lot. When we look at how consumers have evolved, I would like to highlight three things. One: consumers don't want to hear about brands. It's tough, but it's a reality. The second one: consumers have an attention span which is very little. Like, they say that it's even lower—like, humans have a lower attention span than a goldfish. Is that true?

Matt 00:06:45 Yes. I'm guilty of that, for sure.

Roberto 00:06:47 Well, I'm probably guilty too as well. And the third point is that consumers and humans are now being bombarded by thousands of messages at a time. So it's really challenging to define how to connect with them if you don't develop an integrated approach—a full 360—where it's about, yes, the uses of media in different shapes and forms, from online video to social media, but also how do you create those experiences that will be relevant for them? And then we connect in an integrated way and are able to deliver our message in a relevant way.

Matt 00:07:21 Absolutely. And when you think about the consumers—obviously, especially the Gen Z drinker that obviously is changing their habits from prior generations—you know, they're drinking less, but they're drinking more intentionally. They're definitely seeking out more premium brands and the artisanal nature of spirits, but the volume isn't there like it used to be for a variety of factors post-COVID. How did you look at this generation differently in terms of messaging and making sure that you're capturing your share of a market that isn't growing the way it once was in terms of overall consumption?

Roberto 00:07:57 You're completely right. I think the dynamic has changed a lot, and younger consumers are really reshaping the industry. And they are doing it by being far more intentional about how, when, why, and what are you drinking. As you were saying, it's less about the volume, and it's more about the value. They're choosing also fewer moments, but better ones. What that means is that they're choosing quality over quantity, craftsmanship over hype, and experiences over excess.

They really want to know what's in the bottle. They are more curious about where it comes from, who made it, and what it stands for. Yeah. The story behind it, right? Exactly. Like, really, what's behind it? And because of that, precisely, drinking has become more thoughtful, and in many cases, more social and ritual-driven rather than transactional.

Also, what we're seeing in them is that they want to explore. They're open to discovery, but they're very, very selective. They'll trade up for something that feels authentic, that is well-made, and culturally relevant. And for us, like Patrón, that trend plays directly into our strengths. We always believe that if you live with craft, respect the consumer, and honor the moment, people will definitely choose you.

Matt 00:09:09 We'll be right back with the Speed of Culture after a few words from our sponsors. One, I think, big driver in your category I've personally seen over the years is just the growing importance of packaging. And a lot of the spirits companies have come out with these outlandish packaging designs, which stick out in the bar on the top shelf or stick out in the liquor store. And sometimes the packaging is enough to drive intrigue and curiosity from the consumer. I'm just wondering, as a marketer, how important is packaging for the Patrón brand, and how much time do you spend thinking about that?

Roberto 00:09:44 Yeah. I do believe that packaging is key. I'm not sure if you know, but, actually, packaging is the second driver of awareness for any brand. Like, just behind media, then you have the packaging. So it's really important. And for Patrón, it's at the core and center. We have an iconic bottle that almost everyone can define.

And, uh, we just actually renewed our—our packaging just by optimizing it. Again, we learned about what consumers were seeing. We learned what bartenders were saying as well. So, optimize a little bit its visibility behind the bar and also on the shelf, while maintaining the same shape, the transparency of our bottle, which obviously connects very well with the transparency that I was telling you about, that we're championing about the overall process and the way that we produce tequila.

But also, at the same time, we integrated key elements, key tactile elements to the bottle that make a full, immersive connection with the consumer. And we used the pattern of the silhouette of the agave pines to inspire some of the shapes that we added in our bottle. So while maintaining kind of the relevance of a classic and an icon packaging, we evolved it into a more modern, more tactile, and more storytelling option for our consumers.

Matt 00:11:01 Absolutely. And, obviously, with packaging comes distribution as well. Obviously, where you're distributing the product, that drives the importance of elements like packaging. And I know, traditionally, about 20 to 30% of sales of brands like yours are on-premise, meaning at bars and restaurants, etcetera, and about three-quarters is off-premise, meaning that people are gonna buy them at retail or liquor stores, etcetera.

But, obviously, the on-premise sales carry a lot of weight, especially when you're looking at influence, right? If people are—if celebrities, for example, are at a nightclub and they're ordering Patrón, that obviously has an outsized impact on people wanting to go to the liquor store and purchase it. And just curious, like, what does that dynamic look like for you, and how are you spending your time thinking about distribution? Because they are two completely

different models, and the volume of both off-prem and on-premise isn't necessarily correlated with its importance in building your brand.

Roberto 00:12:01 Correct. You're right. The on-premise is where consumers have a full experience with our brands. I do believe that that's where we build the brand. So for us, it continues to be a cornerstone of everything that we develop. It is kind of the activity that we center a lot of the activations around and also where we center a lot of the advocacy that we do.

At the end, the on-prem is not only because of the on-premise, but also because of the stakeholders, like the bartenders, the waiters, and all the staff involved are key stakeholders for us. And at the end, they are our partners in crime that help us to build the brand in the right shape or form. On the other hand, when we plan any expansion, or when we look at expanding into different channels, we make sure that we do it properly and that we guarantee that experience as well in the consumers, in the way that we show up, in the way that we display, in the way that we also partner with the retailers in order to ensure that the full experience is similar to what consumers are looking for also in the on-premise.

Matt 00:12:58 Yeah. I mean, it's really interesting and totally makes sense. I think, you know, before celebrity ownership was a playbook—which obviously we've seen, like, in the last decade, where celebrities would come in and they would own or partially own a spirits brand. And it would obviously explode really quickly, then it usually fades off. And if they're smart, they sell the brand before it fades off.

But before that, there were artists that kind of took cultural ownership of a brand. Like, Jay-Z put Patrón in his lyrics over and over again before he was never an owner of Patrón. People thought he owned it because he talked about it so much. Now I feel like, in order for a brand like yours to be in a rap song, the artist needs to actually own the brand. And do you think that's sort of a fleeting trend? Do you think celebrities coming in and owning spirits brands is gonna be the case ten years from now, or do you think it's gonna shape in a different direction in terms of what is the core driver?

Roberto 00:13:55 I—I think it's gonna shape in a different direction. Let me tell you why. When we look at the agave boom, it has been one of the—you know—it has been one for the records. There were more, like 720 new entrants since 2019, if I'm not wrong. And it has seemed like everyone has wanted to get into the tequila game and with very prominent figures, no? And you mentioned all different artists that were connected with this.

I think it's gonna be evolving because, regardless of the name of the model or the person in front of the camera, I think consumers are developing more expertise, and they are discerning when choosing their favorite tequila brand, and it's coming back all to the product. So I think there's a change where people are looking more for the craftsmanship of the product rather than the endorsements that they have.

So, again, this plays in our favor because, for Patrón, our commitment to that traditional small-batch tequila is unparalleled. Our process includes only using natural ingredients, which is tapping into that craftsmanship that consumers are looking to have. And as long as we stay true and time-honored to our tequila-making process, we know that we have that advantage, and we believe that that's what is driving now consumer preference in the tequila category.

Matt 00:15:09 And as somebody who's obviously responsible in overseeing such an important brand, just curious what the pie chart of a normal day or week looks like for you? What are you focused on to make sure that you're obviously moving the needle forward in such a competitive market?

Roberto 00:15:25 It's very interesting. I think I can divide that into three. The first one is thinking about: how can the brand be and continue to be relevant in culture? How do we maintain that pace that we have with consumers? The second one is: how do we ensure that the brand team continues to work in an integrated way? How do we continue to be a high-performance team? And the third one is: how do we differentiate? How do we delight and surprise the consumers with innovations, with new campaigns, with revamping our packaging, etcetera, so we can continue to surprise and delight?

Matt 00:15:59 And I know part of the way that you talk about—and we've talked a lot during this conversation—about keeping the brand relevant in culture. I know you've done a lot of work to expand the world of Patrón, kind of "beyond the bottle," into areas like hospitality and travel, and these kinds of immersive brand moments. I would love to hear about some of your work in that area as well.

Roberto 00:16:17 Absolutely. And I think one of the cornerstones of what we have been doing with Patrón to precisely connect the different cultural moments with the consumers is with music. One of the probably most relevant passion platforms for the consumer. And music has been part of our DNA for decades. We have been partnering in ways that really reflect our commitment to craftsmanship and greatness. Again, I believe that everything needs to be connected, and that is why Patrón—at Patrón, we have been developing best-in-class partnerships within the world of music and culture.

When we look at artists, for example, like Becky G, who is really connecting as a proud Mexican and what we call a "200%" because she's 100% Mexican, but also she's 100% American. So somehow, she authentically embodies the pride and cultural roots that are the heart of Patrón. Another artist is Karol G [Name Confirm: Karana Uyula?], who is one of the most influential voices in global music today. She helped us to really drive a new innovation like Patrón El Alto to India and [Name Confirm: Rios?] in the Middle East and Africa.

And also the partnerships that we have with festivals like Live Nation that allow us to connect directly with Gen Z, you know, in places where it most matters for them. And I cannot forget about the Grammys, which is our probably most recent kind of partnership—we became the official tequila partner for the Grammys this year. And that was a really natural progression for

Patrón, as this partnership really reflects our longstanding commitment to craftsmanship, creative excellence, and celebration of the people that shape our culture.

Matt 00:17:51 Yeah. I think the Grammys partnership is a great one. And, obviously, it's not easy. You know, when I ask you what the pie chart of your week is and, you know, you talk about making sure the brand stays deeply embedded within culture—and that's just not an easy thing to do for a marketer because tastes change, culture changes, technology changes things. I mean, AI is obviously one area that is reinventing the world, and it is seeping into every culture, every crevice of business, of culture, of society. Just curious what your experience has been to date—albeit it's an emerging category—of integrating AI into the way that you and your teams work?

Roberto 00:18:29 Yeah. I think we are living in a time without precedent. When you look not only at AI, but the different technologies that are bombarding us... it's like, I think, in the past, there were two technologies every ten years. Now we have more than 20 technologies impacting—like—humans. So I think—I think it's very important to understand them, to really leverage them, and that's what we have been doing with AI. We use them as a tool—a tool that helps us to be more effective, more efficient, to probably explore new routes in the ways to connect with the consumers.

But at the end, what matters the most to us within this world of being bombarded by technology is the human connection. And in spite of all this, I think the human connection and the ability for us to connect with the experiences of the consumers is super important. We know that consumers—and more than 70% of our consumers—are looking more for experiences versus—like—gifts or articles.

So for us, being in the places that matter, giving them an added value to the experience that they're already having with Patrón is precisely what we're focusing on. And for example, in Live Nation, in some of the festivals like Lollapalooza, we have what we call the "pop-up within the festival," where we invite consumers to experience kind of an experience within the experience—a place where they can gather with people, gather with artists, have a great cocktail with Patrón, like a great Margarita or like a great Paloma. And that's kind of what we are trying to do to ensure that we keep that human connection in spite of all the technology that, uh, you know, is bombarding humans.

Matt 00:20:03 Yeah. I mean, a lot of people believe—and I'm one of them—that in a world where it feels like technology is gonna disintermediate almost everything, there's gonna be just that much more of a premium put on authentic consumer and human experiences. And if you can create them and you can attach your brand to them—and, obviously, given the category you're in, that's very much a natural thing to do—it can be a real differentiator.

Roberto 00:20:26 I really, really do. And you were mentioning before, it's not only about—these experiences are not only independent experiences. Right? When we look at hospitality, travel, music—those can be connected. And I think those immersive moments

where we can make the brand matter to the consumers by inviting people to participate in the brand rather than just observe them or trying to predicate speech coming from the brand. Absolutely.

Matt 00:20:53 Switching gears a little bit as we wrap up, I wanted to hear a little more about you and your journey. Obviously, you've spent time working on some of the most prolific brands in the spirits industry. I also spent some time at Heineken and Mastercard along the way. And just as you look back on your career journey, what were some of the things that you think you did right along the way that have enabled you to continually elevate in terms of not just your title, but the type of work that you've been able to engage with?

Roberto 00:21:19 Wow. It's a very interesting question. I think I try to always be very pragmatic. So, maintaining things very simple and real, I think it was first ensuring that I was good at something. So, without getting stuck there, ensuring that I developed that credibility of knowing what I was doing.

Another component, I think, was to learn how the business was working. At the end, it was not only about creativity; it was not only advertising. It was really paying attention to really how ideas get funded, how the decisions were made, and really what was driving the results. I would say a third component was to ensure that I build the right relationships. I think it's not about building your resume, but also ensuring that the people that you grow up with in your career really are mattering to you and bringing you added value.

I think at the end, like, the reputation of anyone would travel faster than what you do. And finally, I would say: probably getting comfortable being uncomfortable, trying to stretch myself, getting into places that probably had a lot of questions, probably have more questions than answers. But it was about saying "yes" to those stretch roles, to that tough feedback, and those assignments that probably I was not completely ready for.

Matt 00:22:33 Yeah. I mean, essentially, it's about betting on yourself, right? I mean, ultimately, you don't know what a new situation that's gonna inherently make you uncomfortable is going to bring. But if you're confident in your skillset and your ability to deal with adversity, you can bet on yourself and dive forward, because everyone else is just kinda figuring that out all along the way as well.

Roberto 00:22:52 Exactly.

Matt 00:22:53 Absolutely. And for some of our younger listeners here on the podcast, if there's one piece of advice you were to give someone who's starting off in their career in terms of areas to focus on, or even something to do to make a habit of, rather, on an ongoing basis, what would that be?

Roberto 00:23:08 I think throughout my career, something that I have been experiencing—and I will give that advice—is for younger marketeers or younger professionals

to build the muscle of adaptation and pair it with resilience. The only constant in our world is change. And, for example, the seat that you might be aspiring to have won't look the same at the time that you arrive. And it's not about having all the answers, but having that humility to learn, the courage to change the course, and the resilience to keep going when results are not happening the way that you're planning to have them. So definitely, adaptation and resilience are kind of the advice that I will give.

Matt 00:23:45 Absolutely. And with that, we always ask our guests if there's a saying or mantra that helps kind of encapsulate their professional journey. So, anything come to mind for you?

Roberto 00:23:55 Yes. Actually, talking about adaptation, there's a quote that I live by. Usually attributed to Darwin—but my belief is that it was not Darwin—which is: "It's not the strongest or the most intelligent that survives, but the one most responsive to change". And I really like it, as I was explaining on the advice, because it holds up everywhere. It holds up in the career, in creativity, in leadership, in life. At the end, talent and smarts matter, but they only take you so far if you are not able to adapt.

Matt 00:24:25 Absolutely. Adaptation, definitely the name of the game here in 2026, and it's inspiring to see how you've been able to adapt and continue to drive the brand forward. And thanks so much for taking time out of your busy schedule to tell us the story of what you're working on and about the Patrón mission today.

Roberto 00:24:40 Thank you. I really appreciate the time, and it was a great conversation. Thank you so much, Matt.

Matt 00:24:44 Absolutely. On behalf of Suzy and Adweek, thank you again to Roberto Ramirez Laverde, the Global Senior Vice President of Patrón Tequila at Bacardí, for joining us today. Be sure to subscribe, rate, and review the Speed of Culture podcast on your favorite podcast platform. Till next time, see you soon, everyone. Take care. Bye-bye.

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