



THE COLDEST PLAY IN RETAIL, HARBIN BEER'S BACK RACK HACK

In the spring of 2025, Harbin Beer, China's oldest and most iconic northern lager brand, owned by AB InBev, executed one of the most genuinely counterintuitive retail marketing campaigns of the decade. Rather than competing for premium shelf placement at the front of convenience store and mom-and-pop shop refrigerators, Harbin deliberately engineered a system to position its product at the back of the fridge, the most overlooked and commercially "worst" retail location in any beer cooler, and turned it into a competitive advantage.

The insight was deceptively simple and grounded in physics: the back of a retail fridge runs 6.5°C colder than the front. In China's warm southern provinces, a market where Harbin, a brand synonymous with northern ice and cold, was historically a challenger, the promise of the coldest possible beer is not a minor feature; it is the purchase decision. Working with BBDO China, the brand built a custom spring-loaded refrigerator rack (the "Back Rack Hack") that used Harbin's mountain logo as both a visual guide and physical lane keeper, ensuring shoppers could reach the coldest beers at the back without disturbing competitors' front-positioned stock.

The results were commercially unambiguous. Partner stores recorded an 18.7% increase in Harbin Beer sales versus the prior month, while consumer engagement with the fridge display, measured via shopper interaction, rose 20.27%. The campaign earned a D&AD 2025 submission and wide industry recognition as a case study in behavioural engineering, retail innovation, and the power of owning a physical attribute before owning a shelf position.

This report examines the anatomy of the Back Rack Hack across four lenses: retail science (the physics of refrigeration and shelf economics), behavioural psychology (the universal consumer drive toward the coldest option), brand strategy (how Harbin converted a weakness into a brand truth), and market context (China's beer retail landscape and the strategic importance of warm-southern expansion for a northern heritage brand). We close with strategic implications for brand managers, retail merchandisers, and FMCG investors evaluating AB InBev's China portfolio.

01 THE CAMPAIGN, ANATOMY OF THE BACK RACK HACK

The Problem: A Shelf War Harbin Was Losing

Walk into any convenience store, supermarket, or *lingtong dian* (mom-and-pop shop) in China and the beer fridge operates on a single, brutal commercial logic: **visibility is sales**. The front row is the battlefield. Brands pay slotting fees, deploy trade promoters, and negotiate aggressively with store owners for front-of-cooler placement. In a market where impulse purchase drives the majority of off-premise beer sales, the front row is real estate, and real estate is revenue.

For Harbin Beer, a brand with genuine emotional resonance among Chinese consumers but fewer resources to outspend the marketing budgets of Snow Beer (CR Snow/Heineken JV) and Tsingtao in the convenience channel, competing for front-row positioning on pure commercial muscle was a diminishing game. **Over 60% of Harbin's total sales flow through small independent retail outlets** where the negotiating dynamic is particularly acute and where a well-resourced competitor can easily buy Harbin off the front shelf entirely.

The Insight: Physics as a Product Truth

The creative leap began with a physical observation, not a marketing claim. Retail refrigerators do not cool evenly. The compressor and cooling coils in a standard reach-in beer cooler are located at the rear of the cabinet. The front of the fridge, the section consumers interact with first, is constantly exposed to warm ambient air every time the door is opened. The cumulative effect is measurable and significant:

<p style="text-align: center;">Front of Fridge (Standard) Avg. temperature range: 6°C – 8°C Exposed to door-opening warm air cycles</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Back of Fridge (The Hack Zone) Avg. temperature range: ~0°C – 1.5°C 6.5°C COLDER, nearest to cooling coils</p>
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This temperature differential is not a marginal rounding error, it is the difference between a "cold beer" and a **genuinely ice-cold beer**. For Harbin, a brand whose entire identity is anchored to its origin city's sub-zero winters, the **Songhua River ice**, and the famous Harbin Ice and Snow Festival, this physical fact was not merely a product feature. It was the perfect expression of the brand's core promise, hiding in plain sight at the back of every fridge it occupied.

The strategic reframe was clean and powerful: **Harbin is not in the worst position on the shelf. Harbin is in the coldest position on the shelf.** The back of the rack was not a liability to be remedied. It was a claim to be amplified.

The Solution: Engineering the Grab

The insight creates a narrative, but a narrative alone does not move product. The practical problem remains: if Harbin is positioned at the back of the fridge, how does a consumer, accustomed to reaching for the nearest bottle, actually access it, especially without disrupting the entire front-loaded stack of competitors? This is where the campaign moved from strategy to engineering.

BBDO China designed a **custom refrigerator rack system**, the Back Rack Hack hardware, built around three integrated components:

- **Spring-loaded auto-advance mechanism:** As a Harbin beer is removed from the rack, the spring system automatically propels the next bottle forward into the grab position. The result is that Harbin never looks depleted or unreachable, there is always a cold bottle positioned at the accessible edge of its dedicated lane, regardless of how many have been taken.
- **The Harbin Grab Lane:** A dedicated, clear vertical lane is cut into the front-loaded rack architecture, running from the rear of the fridge to the front access point. This lane, physically clear of competitor bottles, gives shoppers a direct path to Harbin without having to displace other products. It is simultaneously a navigation tool and a brand statement.
- **The Ice Mountain Logo as Wayfinding:** Harbin's signature mountain logo, representing the Songhua River source region, is incorporated into the rack design as a visual marker for the grab lane. The logo serves a dual function: it reinforces brand recognition at the moment of physical engagement, and it physically demarcates the lane entry point, turning brand iconography into functional hardware.

The elegance of the engineering solution is that it **converts the act of reaching for a cold beer**, a universal and instinctive consumer behaviour, into a branded experience. The consumer does not think "I am performing a marketing interaction." They think "I want the coldest one" and they reach back. Harbin is simply the brand that made the coldest one reachable.

02 THE SCIENCE , REFRIGERATOR PHYSICS & CONSUMER COLD-SEEKING BEHAVIOUR

The Thermal Architecture of the Retail Beer Fridge

Understanding why the back-of-fridge temperature advantage exists requires a brief engagement with refrigeration physics. Standard reach-in cooler cabinets , the workhorses of convenience retail globally , use a **vapour-compression refrigeration cycle** in which the evaporator coil (the cold side) is positioned at the interior rear or ceiling of the cabinet. Cold air is generated at this point and falls or is circulated by a fan toward the front of the cabinet. However, the cooling cycle is constantly fighting a thermal battle:

- **Door-opening convection:** Every time a shopper opens the fridge door, a column of warm ambient air (typically 25°C–38°C in a China warm-south retail environment in summer) enters the cabinet and rises, mixing with the coldest air near the door opening. Bottles at the front absorb this thermal load directly.
- **Glass-front radiation:** In glass-door reach-in coolers, the door itself is a thermal conductor. Even with double-glazed doors, the glass surface is significantly warmer than the interior, and bottles near the front are subject to radiant warming from the door surface.
- **Customer handling:** Front-row bottles are physically handled and replaced multiple times per hour in high-traffic stores. Body heat from handling adds a measurable thermal load to front-row stock.

The cumulative effect of these factors produces the **6.5°C differential** that Harbin measured and used as the campaign's central claim. This is not a marginal or edge-case observation , it is a consistent, reproducible, and well-documented phenomenon in refrigeration science. What made Harbin's campaign breakthrough is that no consumer beer brand had previously **claimed this phenomenon as a product truth and engineered a retail system around it.**

Consumer Psychology: The Universal Reach-to-the-Back Behaviour

The Back Rack Hack did not invent a new consumer behaviour , it **monetised an existing one.** Any observer of consumer behaviour in a grocery or convenience store cold aisle will recognise the "deep reach": the moment when a shopper, dissatisfied with the temperature of the front-row bottles, extends their arm past the first row to retrieve a bottle from deeper in the stack. This behaviour is universal across cultures, climates, and demographics.

In behavioural economics terms, this is an example of **effort-justified preference:** the consumer's willingness to expend additional effort (reaching further, potentially disturbing other products, risking social awkwardness in a crowded aisle) is a direct proxy for how strongly they value the perceived quality difference , in this case, temperature. The deep-reach behaviour is the consumer **voting with their body** for a colder product.

Research in beverage consumer psychology has consistently shown that **perceived temperature is a primary quality signal for cold beverages**, particularly beer. In blind taste tests, identical beers served at slightly different temperatures are rated materially differently on taste, refreshment, and brand satisfaction. This is not irrational , cooling genuinely affects the expression of volatile aromatic compounds and the perception of bitterness and carbonation. But it also means that the signal of **visual coldness** (frost on a bottle, visible condensation, a deeper position in the fridge) operates as a powerful quality heuristic even before consumption.

Harbin did not need to teach consumers to value the coldest beer. It needed only to **make the coldest beer reliably findable and reachable** under its own brand mark. The Back Rack Hack is fundamentally a system for reducing the transaction cost of acting on a preference that already existed.

03 CHINA BEER MARKET , THE WARM SOUTH OPPORTUNITY

Harbin's Geographic Brand Identity and Its Southern Challenge

Founded in 1900, Harbin Beer holds the distinction of being China's **oldest commercially produced beer brand**, originating in Harbin , the capital of Heilongjiang province in China's far northeast, a city defined internationally by its extraordinary winters, Siberian-origin cold fronts, and the world-renowned Ice and Snow Festival. The brand's equity is deeply anchored in this geography: cold, pure, northern, authentic.

This heritage is a significant commercial asset in northern China, where Harbin commands strong regional loyalty. The strategic challenge lies in **southern expansion**. China's warm southern provinces , Guangdong, Fujian, Zhejiang, Hunan, Jiangxi , represent enormous beer consumption markets, particularly in the premium and mid-premium segments where AB InBev has directed much of its Chinese growth investment. But in the south, Harbin's "cold northern origin" positioning has historically registered as a brand story rather than a direct product experience.

The Back Rack Hack resolves this tension with architectural elegance. **The warm south is precisely where the 6.5°C temperature differential matters most.** In Harbin city itself, on a -20°C January day, the temperature difference between front and back of a fridge is a curiosity. In Guangzhou on a 38°C August afternoon, it is the entire purchase decision. The campaign deployed the brand's core identity , coldness , in the geographic context where coldness is most valued by the consumer.

China's Beer Retail Landscape: The Mom-and-Pop Channel

Understanding the channel strategy of the Back Rack Hack requires understanding China's distinctive beer retail ecosystem. Unlike mature Western markets where large-format grocery chains dominate off-premise beer sales, China's beer distribution remains heavily concentrated in the **lingtong dian** (small independent convenience shop) and similar small-format outlets. These stores , often family-run, operating seven days a week, deeply embedded in residential and commercial communities , account for a disproportionate share of impulse beer purchasing.

For Harbin specifically, these small independent outlets account for **more than 60% of total brand sales volume**. This creates both the challenge and the opportunity that the Back Rack Hack addresses. In a large hypermarket, a brand can negotiate category management and planogram compliance through corporate channel agreements. In a lingtong dian, the store owner decides where your bottles go, and that decision is made fresh every morning when they stock the fridge.

Retail Channel Type	Est. % Beer Sales (China)	Shelf Control Dynamic
Mom-and-pop / Lingtong Dian	~45–55%	Owner-discretion; relationship-driven; highly susceptible to competitor lobbying and slotting payments
Chain convenience (711, FamilyMart, Lawson)	~20–25%	Planogram-controlled; corporate negotiation; slotting fees for premium positioning
Supermarket / Hypermarket (Walmart, Carrefour, RT-Mart)	~15–20%	Category managed; national agreements; lower impulse factor; planned purchases
On-trade (bars, restaurants, KTV)	~10–15%	Brand-exclusive agreements common; high-margin; controlled serving temperature

04 COUNTERINTUITIVE BRAND STRATEGY , WHEN SURRENDER IS VICTORY

The Taxonomy of Counterintuitive Marketing

The Back Rack Hack belongs to a specific and genuinely rare genus of brand strategy: the **deliberate relinquishment of a conventionally valued resource to claim a more valuable, unconventional one**. This is distinct from cost-cutting driven trade-downs (accepting worse placement because you cannot afford better) or from niche positioning (targeting a smaller audience). It is the active, publicly communicated choice to refuse the conventional measure of success because a different measure is more strategically durable.

The historical library of truly counterintuitive brand strategies is small but instructive. Avis's "We're Number 2 , We Try Harder" campaign converted the weakness of market rank into a work-ethic claim. Apple's "Think Different" rejected the prevailing mass-market computer narrative. Patagonia's "Don't Buy This Jacket" ad attacked consumption culture to strengthen a sustainability brand truth. What unites these examples , and the Back Rack Hack , is that the counterintuitive move only works when it is **grounded in a genuine and defensible product or brand truth**. It cannot be manufactured or claimed without a physical reality underneath it.

- **The conventional move for Harbin:** Spend more on slotting fees, trade promoters, and store owner relationships to secure front-row positioning. Mirror competitors. Fight for the same space with the same tools.
- **The counterintuitive move Harbin made:** Accept back-of-rack position. Frame it publicly as a deliberate choice. Engineer a physical system that makes the back-of-rack a superior consumer experience. Convert the worst retail space into the most compelling product claim.

The strategic advantage of the counterintuitive move is **category inimitability**. The moment a competitor attempts to copy the Back Rack Hack , to position their own product at the back of the fridge and claim the cold advantage , they are confirming Harbin's ownership of the cold territory. The only response available to a competitor is to own a different beer experience truth. Harbin has inoculated the temperature claim by being first, being engineered, and being authentically connected to a brand identity built on coldness for over 120 years.

The Role of Brand Heritage in Making the Claim Believable

A critical and easily overlooked dimension of why the Back Rack Hack works is that it is not a claim invented for commercial convenience , it is a claim that is **consistent with everything Harbin has communicated for its entire brand history**. Harbin Beer has never needed to stretch to own "coldness." Its city of origin is one of the coldest inhabited cities on earth. Its most famous local landmark is an annual festival of ice sculpture. Its brand colours, visual language, and marketing have consistently invoked frost, ice, and northern winter.

When Harbin tells consumers "we are at the back of the fridge because that is where it is coldest, and coldest is what we are," the consumer has **no cognitive dissonance to resolve**. The claim is instantly plausible because it is perfectly coherent with the brand's pre-existing identity. This is the brand heritage dividend: years of consistent identity investment that made a single unconventional retail move immediately credible. A brand without that heritage anchor attempting the same campaign would face a believability gap that engineering alone cannot close.

Retail-Level Brand Activation as a Strategic Moat

One of the most strategically interesting aspects of the Back Rack Hack is the **physical nature of its competitive moat**. Most brand differentiation in the FMCG space operates at the level of communication , advertising, packaging, pricing signals. These are all easily replicable. A competitor can copy an ad concept, match a packaging design change, or match a price point within weeks.

The Back Rack Hack creates differentiation at the **retail infrastructure level** , a place where copying is slower, more expensive, and requires physical logistics. Once a custom rack is installed in a fridge, it occupies space, organises the display, and integrates with the physical architecture of that refrigerator. A competitor cannot simply decide to also be at the back of that same fridge with their own spring-loaded rack , the physics of shelf space do not permit it. Harbin has used engineering to create a **positional monopoly** at the channel level in every store where the rack is deployed.

05 THE ENGINEERING INNOVATION , RETAIL HARDWARE AS BRAND MEDIUM

From Communication Medium to Physical Medium

Marketing communication typically operates through established media channels: television, digital, out-of-home, in-store point-of-sale. The Back Rack Hack represents a genuinely different creative mode , the use of a **physical retail hardware object** as the primary medium of brand communication and product delivery. The rack is not an advertisement for a product experience. It is the product experience.

This moves the campaign out of the conventional marketing taxonomy and into a category more akin to **design-led brand activation** , the discipline of using designed physical objects to create brand interactions that could not exist in any other format. The closest analogues are not advertising campaigns but product innovations: the Coca-Cola contour bottle (a container designed to be identifiable by touch alone), the Heineken draught keg (at-home dispensing hardware that transformed beer serving into a branded ritual), or the Nespresso pod system (which made coffee quality a design system rather than a commodity).

Technical Design Principles of the Back Rack Hack

Design Element	Function and Brand Logic
Spring-Loaded Auto-Advance	Ensures a Harbin bottle is always positioned at the accessible front of the back-lane, regardless of depletion level. Eliminates the "empty shelf" perception problem and guarantees the product is always "ready to grab." Mirrors the mechanical logic of premium retail displays (supermarket gravity-feed shelving) applied to the back-of-fridge context.
Dedicated Grab Lane	A physically clear vertical corridor running through the competitor-populated front of the fridge to the Harbin position at the back. Removes the primary friction point in back-of-fridge access (having to move other bottles) and communicates visually that Harbin has its own dedicated space , a premium positioning signal delivered through architecture rather than marketing spend.
Ice Mountain Logo Wayfinding	Harbin's signature mountain silhouette , an icon immediately recognisable to Chinese beer consumers as the Harbin brand mark , is integrated into the physical rack structure as a lane marker. This achieves three simultaneous functions: brand recognition at close range, wayfinding for the grab, and a tangible connection between the brand's visual identity and the physical experience of accessing the coldest product. Brand iconography converted into functional hardware.
Compatibility with Standard Fridges	The rack system was designed to work within the standard dimensions of the reach-in cooler cabinets prevalent across China's small retail channel, requiring no modification to the fridge itself and minimal

Design Element	Function and Brand Logic
	installation time. This is critical for adoption in the mom-and-pop channel, where store owners cannot be asked to change equipment or invest capital in brand activation.

06 RESULTS, SCALABILITY & AB INBEV CHINA STRATEGY

Campaign Results

The Back Rack Hack generated commercially significant results across both sales and brand equity metrics in its initial rollout phase in China's warm southern provinces. The headline outcomes were:

Metric	Result
Sales uplift vs. prior month (partner stores)	+18.7%
Consumer engagement with fridge display	+20.27%
Brand perception: "Harbin = coldest beer"	Significant improvement , shoppers more likely to associate Harbin with coldest available option
Industry recognition	D&AD 2025 submission; Contagious Campaign of the Week; Cannes-adjacent industry press coverage
Store owner reception	High adoption in pilot stores , rack system perceived as organisational benefit, not brand imposition

The 18.7% sales uplift figure is particularly striking when viewed in the context of mature beer market dynamics. Single-digit growth for an established brand in a penetrated channel is typically considered strong performance. An 18.7% uplift driven by a change in shelf position and a custom rack , without any increase in advertising spend, price promotion, or product reformulation , represents an exceptional return on a relatively modest retail hardware investment.

Scalability Considerations

The Back Rack Hack's scalability depends on several variables that merit honest assessment alongside the commercial success of the pilot:

- **Hardware cost and logistics:** Custom rack systems require manufacturing, distribution to stores, installation (even if minimal), and periodic maintenance. At low volumes (pilot phase), per-unit economics are unfavourable. The scalability proposition depends on whether the 18.7% sales uplift justifies the hardware investment at larger deployment volumes , a standard return-on-trade-investment calculation that AB InBev's revenue management teams will have modelled rigorously.
- **Store owner cooperation:** The rack system works only if store owners agree to install it and maintain the Harbin-at-the-back positioning. In the pilot, store owner reception was reported as positive , the rack organises fridge space and reduces stockout risk. At scale, maintaining this

cooperation requires ongoing trade relationships, and there is no structural reason competitors could not respond by offering competing rack installations for their own products.

- **Category follow-on risk:** If the Back Rack Hack demonstrably improves Harbin sales by 18.7%, it will attract attention from Snow Beer, Tsingtao, and international premium brands. The response will likely be attempts to install their own rear-of-fridge systems, which would erode Harbin's positional monopoly, though Harbin retains the advantage of being first and of having the most coherent brand justification for the position.
- **Geographic concentration:** The campaign is specifically calibrated for warm southern China. In colder markets, the 6.5°C differential is less commercially meaningful to consumers. The campaign's scalability is therefore regionally bounded by climate, which is, counterintuitively, a strength rather than a limitation, as it maps perfectly to the brand's strategic warm-south expansion objective.

AB InBev's China Portfolio Strategy

The Back Rack Hack does not exist in isolation, it is a channel activation within a broader AB InBev China portfolio strategy that has undergone significant evolution since the company's acquisition of Harbin Beer in 2004. AB InBev's China beer operations span a portfolio from Budweiser (positioned in premium on-trade) through Corona (imported premium, beach/lifestyle) to Harbin (mainstream/accessible with strong heritage credentials).

For AB InBev's China revenue management, Harbin's performance in the off-trade small-retail channel is strategically important not primarily as a volume driver (where Snow Beer and Tsingtao's scale advantages are difficult to overcome on cost) but as a **brand health and brand relevance metric**, a leading indicator of how the brand is connecting with younger consumers who will trade up to Budweiser and Corona as their purchasing power grows. A 20.27% improvement in fridge engagement among the target demographic in southern China is, from an AB InBev portfolio perspective, a brand-building result as much as a sales result.

07 STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS , FOR BRAND MANAGERS, RETAILERS & INVESTORS

For Brand Strategists and CMOs

The Back Rack Hack offers five generalisable strategic lessons that transcend the beer category:

- **Look for the physics before you look for the positioning:** The campaign began with an observation about refrigerator temperature, not a brand workshop. Physical product truths that are genuinely differentiated, and that competitors cannot replicate without fundamentally changing their own product, are more durable than communication-led positioning. Ask what physical reality about your product or its consumption context is currently unclaimed.
- **Convert a structural disadvantage into the advertising claim:** Harbin did not solve its back-of-shelf problem. It made the back-of-shelf problem the point. The most powerful brand moves often reframe what the category treats as a weakness as a strength, but only when there is a genuine underlying truth. The reframe without the truth is simply spin; the reframe with the truth is strategy.
- **Engineer the consumer behaviour, not just the communication:** The rack system did not tell consumers Harbin was cold. It created a physical experience in which consumers actively chose to reach past competitors to get to Harbin. Behavioural engineering (making the desired behaviour easier, more rewarding, or more culturally legible) is more durable than persuasive communication because it changes the choice architecture rather than the consumer's mind.
- **Use brand heritage as credibility infrastructure:** The cold claim works for Harbin because 125 years of northern heritage made it immediately believable. Brands that have invested consistently in a single identity dimension build a credibility reserve that allows unconventional moves to land

without dissonance. The Back Rack Hack was the payoff on decades of consistent brand investment.

- **Retail hardware as a creative medium is underexplored:** The industry invests billions in digital, social, and broadcast media and a fraction of that in the physical retail environments where the majority of purchase decisions are made. The custom rack cost a fraction of a national advertising campaign and generated an 18.7% sales uplift. The media ROI calculus deserves reexamination by every FMCG marketing department.

For Retail Category Managers and Merchandising Teams

The Back Rack Hack raises important questions about **how category management orthodoxies can be disrupted by brands willing to invest in retail engineering**. For retail category managers, the implications include:

- **Temperature mapping as a category tool:** Most retailers have not systematically mapped temperature gradients within their beer cooler category and communicated this to shoppers or leveraged it in category layout decisions. The data that underpins the Back Rack Hack , 6.5°C differential , is available to every retailer. Brands that use it proactively will drive engagement; retailers that use it proactively in category layout can improve overall category satisfaction.
- **Physical access infrastructure as a differentiation layer:** As more brands invest in custom retail hardware (smart coolers, app-connected displays, IoT-linked inventory systems), the physical architecture of the category fixture itself becomes a source of competitive differentiation. Category managers should develop clear policies about who can install what, under what conditions , before the hardware arms race arrives uninvited.
- **Small-format retail as innovation laboratory:** The Back Rack Hack's success in mom-and-pop stores reflects a broader truth: small-format independent retail is more amenable to brand-driven innovation than large chains with planogram compliance requirements. Brands seeking to test retail innovation should prioritise independent channels.

For FMCG Investors: AB InBev (BUD) Considerations

From an investor perspective, the Back Rack Hack is a meaningful datapoint in the AB InBev China portfolio narrative , though it should be contextualised appropriately:

- **China is a material AB InBev growth market:** Greater China revenue represents a significant component of AB InBev's Asia Pacific division, which is one of the group's highest-margin regions. Harbin's performance in the off-trade channel in southern China contributes directly to this division's revenue trajectory.
- **Brand health in the mainstream tier matters for portfolio premiumisation:** AB InBev's China strategy relies on a pyramid model in which strong mainstream brand health (Harbin) provides the consumer base from which premium trading (Budweiser, Corona) occurs. Campaigns that measurably improve Harbin's brand perception among younger consumers in the southern market are therefore upstream of the premium revenue that analysts focus on.
- **The campaign demonstrates disciplined innovation in a cost-constrained environment:** AB InBev has faced consistent pressure to reduce overhead and trade spend globally following the Anheuser-Busch merger and subsequent debt deleveraging. The Back Rack Hack demonstrates the kind of capital-efficient, insight-driven market activation that generates outsized commercial returns relative to spend , the quality of marketing investment AB InBev investors should reward.
- **Monitor for scalability announcements:** If AB InBev's China leadership announces a broader rollout of the Back Rack Hack system across additional southern provinces and store formats, this should be read as a signal that the initial pilot economics support national deployment , a meaningful positive indicator for Harbin's channel performance.

MATRIX CAMPAIGN CONVICTION MATRIX

Dimension	Assessment	Score	Commentary
Insight Originality , is the core truth genuinely new?	OUTSTANDING	9.5 / 10	Physics-grounded, unclaimed, brand-coherent
Brand Coherence , does the claim fit the brand?	OUTSTANDING	10 / 10	125 years of cold heritage; flawless fit
Execution Quality , does the hardware deliver the experience?	STRONG	8.5 / 10	Spring mechanism + lane + logo: elegant, low-friction
Commercial Results , measurable sales impact?	OUTSTANDING	9 / 10	+18.7% sales uplift; +20.27% engagement
Strategic Defensibility , can competitors copy it easily?	STRONG	8 / 10	Hardware moat + brand coherence; risk of rack wars
Scalability , can it work at national / global scale?	MODERATE	6.5 / 10	Climate-dependent; hardware cost at scale; logistics complexity
OVERALL CAMPAIGN CONVICTION	EXCEPTIONAL	8.6 / 10	Among the best insight-to-execution retail campaigns of the decade

K2 Capital , Brand Strategy Scorecard: Harbin Back Rack Hack

<p>THE INSIGHT 6.5°C COLDER Physics converted to product truth</p>	<p>THE MOVE SURRENDER THE FRONT Counterintuitive strategy with real engineering behind it</p>	<p>THE RESULT +18.7% SALES The worst shelf space became the best commercial outcome</p>
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<p>+18.7% Sales Uplift vs. Prior Month</p>	<p>6.5°C Temperature Advantage , Back vs. Front of Fridge</p>	<p>+20.27% Consumer Engagement with Fridge Display</p>
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<p>60%+ Harbin Sales from Mom-and-Pop Shops</p>	<p>BBDO China Creative Agency , D&AD 2025 Submission</p>	<p>AB InBev Parent Company , World's Largest Brewer</p>
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Sources & Disclosures

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