

Branding the Future Research

For my 'Branding the Future' research project I have decided to talk about the Premium Lager market. I will be discussing its brand leaders and their brand values and I will be illustrating examples of their graphic styles and the brands perceived images.

The reason for choosing Premium lager was because I am already very familiar with UK lagers and lager can designs. This will be because my family are strong lager drinkers and I have witnessed much lager cans/drinks over the years. I have also my own personal experience of testing and trying many lagers in the last couple of years.

So what is lager? Lager beer is bottom-fermented (lager means bottom) and is overwhelmingly the dominant type of beer in all developed countries except the UK and the Republic of Ireland. During the 1990s, however, lagers overtook the domestic dark beers to take more than 50% of the UK market. The styles of lager vary from country to country (but with less variation than the dark, top-fermented beers) and include: the pilsner lager, developed in Czechoslovakia; wheat beer, mainly from Germany; ice beer and dry beer, developed with new brewing technologies in the 1990s to produce cleaner tasting lager; and specialities sold in small quantities, such as fruit flavoured beers (usually from Belgium).

The first question I have to think about then it comes to discussing the UK's top Premium Lager brands and brand leaders is; *what do brand leaders create?*

In my view, brand leaders are promising to go somewhere unique over time. As a result a brand leader should be creating relationships of value with the customers, relationships that people would miss if the brand did not exist. This relationship brand leaders create with their customers (if they truly earn peoples trust) is one of the only reasons that can explain such success with the public. Gaining trust is the most valuable and core asset a corporate leader can create.

Here are two quotes' I found on the internet. The first quote for me sums up exactly my opinion on brand leaders.

"A great brand taps into emotions. Emotions drive most, if not all, of our decisions. A brand reaches out with a powerful connecting experience. It's an emotional connecting point that transcends the product." – Scott Bedbury/Nike, Starbucks

This next quote, for me is a very important quote. The public see design, such as packaging, posters, websites, flyers etc. as just a layer or a surface to a product. But I feel that without design a product would feel worthless. Design to me is very important and without design everything would be so dull. I also think it is a big selling point of a product.

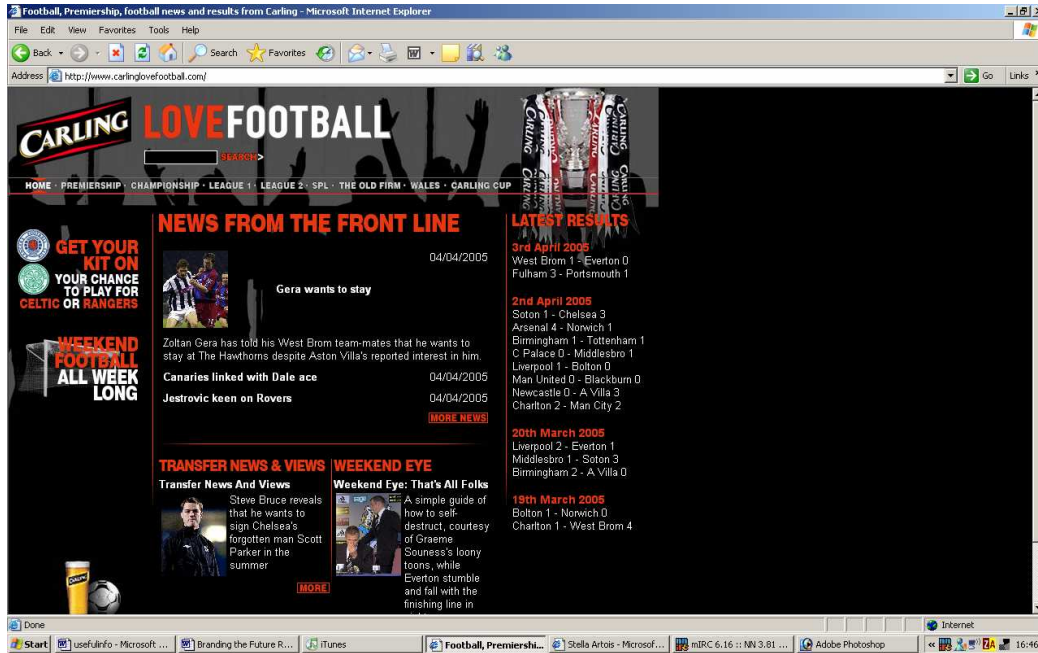
"We don't have a good language to talk about this kind of thing. In most people's vocabularies, design means veneer. ... But to me, nothing could be further from the meaning of design. Design is the fundamental soul of a man-made creation." - Steve Jobs

There are 2 obvious brand leaders for Premium Lager in the UK. The top brand leader in the UK is officially Carling followed by Stella Artois. The 3rd most popular Premium Lager is more difficult to decipher. I have looked all over the internet for official stats and ratings for top UK lagers but I can't find anything. Anything I do find I have to pay £300 to view as it is a detailed report roughly 200-300 pages long on a specific year. If I had to guess I would say the 3rd most popular lager in the UK would be either Fosters or Carlsberg.

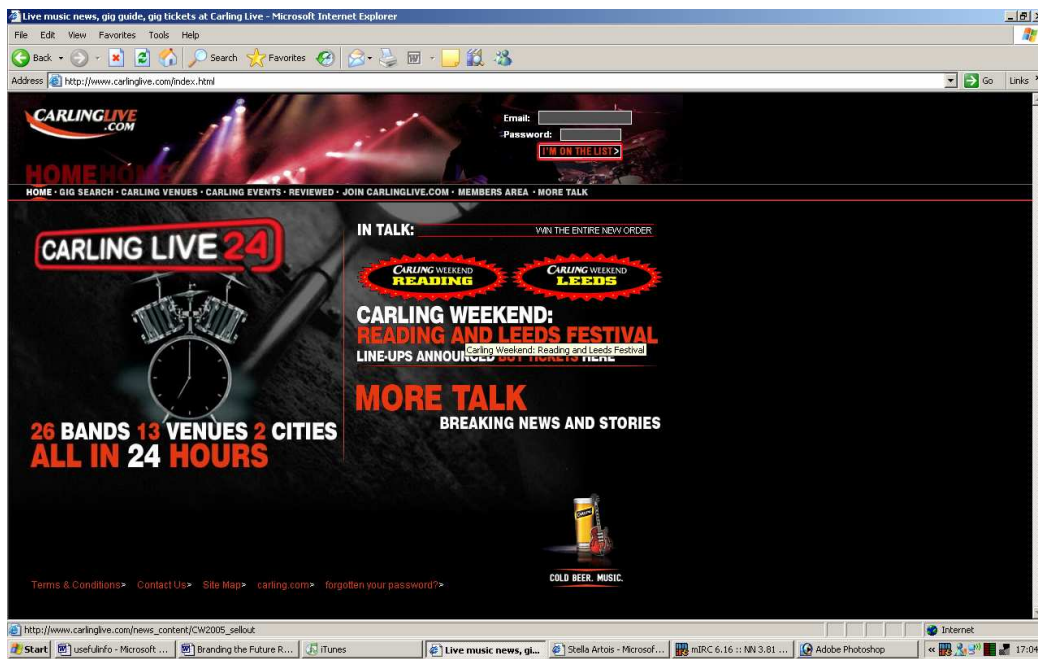


I am firstly going to talk about Carling, the UK's leading lager brand. The reason people buy Carling is because of its brand image. The brand image Carling creates is that they 'love football' and that they are a football lager. This is clever because the absolute majority of lager drinkers are either football lovers or football hooligans. They do not promote football hooliganism but simply promote their love for football. They are trying to win the support of the public by trying to show us they have something in common. They are trying to win our trust by promoting a similar interest in their target audience, and that is what they have achieved.

All over their website there are images of football crowds and cheering lager louts. To the lager drinker this is an attractive concept as it makes them feel at home with the product. To the common lager lout or lager drinker the most fun and exciting way to drink lager is with all your mates at a football game. The sight of people cheering and having a good time also strengthens the want for the lager. Football fans are easily the biggest target audience and consumers of lager this is why they have made such a strong advertising scheme based on it. If you look on their website you will see 'love football' dotted around the site and they even have a separate section for football news.



As well as having a section for football Carling have gone one further and have a complete section for music festivals and gigs.



Here you can find information on Carling's own events. They have their own venues all over the UK and hold festivals and concerts throughout the UK during the year. I think this is also another clever brand image because it means, although their main target audience is football fans, people who love music and attend festivals and concerts perceive a different image. This is an image of their interest in music and drinking lager at festivals is a big part of it. I have never been to a gig or a concert

without seeing almost every man there with a plastic pint cup in his hand. This is also going to make them a lot of money because what beer will be sold at these venues? Almost definitely, purely Carling. There aren't many other lager brands that have festival and concert venues like Carling do, the only other brand I can think of that have had their own festival is Stongbow and that is the leading cider brand.

This is why Carling is the biggest larger in the UK. Simply because they have created strong relationships with two of the biggest lager drinking markets in the UK, football and music. Other than Carling creating relationships with its consumers, I think the taste is also very good. There are lots of beers out there that are either too weak, too strong or have an off taste about them. Taste is more of a personal thing but I think Carling is one of the nicest tasting beers on the market. They pride their selves in their taste, 'brewed at 4.2% for a fuller flavour' and I think this quote is true.

Much has changed in lager land over the past 20 years.

More women are now drinking pints. Alco-pops have appeared on the scene and are becoming extremely popular for women and for men. A lot of people have even stopped going to pubs altogether, preferring to stay at home with a nice glass of wine.

This is why Carling has started to drop the blokey double-act that dominated its TV adverts for so many years, in favour of a more surreal gender-neutral approach.

One recent advert saw a man cleaning out a toilet bowl with his tongue, encouraged by his watching girlfriend. This advert involved a lot of humour but at the same time made the whole feeling of the lager more like a unisex drink. I think Carling will still carry on with the perception that it's a mans drink and I think women will never start drinking lager seriously. I think they will carry on with the perception of being a 'football drink' and that Carling is a mans best friend and will carry on being the number 1 seller for many years to come.



I'm briefly going to discuss Carlings graphic styles. Carlings colour scheme is mainly based around black and white. The colours of their lager cans are purely black and white with a hint of red in the logo (the lines above and below the word Carling) which adds a small bit of life to the design. Like a lot of lager brands Carlings logo is



purely the name of the brand. The font Carling is written in is likely going to be their own, this is why we would recognise it if we saw it anywhere however, I think one of the things that would make us recognise it most is that it is slanted.

Throughout the rest of Carlings advertising campaigns and on their website the font faces mainly consist of Arial Black in the colours white and red with a lot of black

and greys consisting of the background. Overall I think Carlings design and graphic styles are quite simple and effective which is probably the best way to market lager.



I am now going to talk about Stella Artois, the second leading lager brand in the UK. From what I have read, Stella Artois is a close competitor with Carling but hasn't quite got the same grip on the public. I believe that this is because their advertising campaign is grabbing the targeted audience strongly enough. Stella's adverts for the past 15 years, since the beginning of their most noticeable lager advert campaigns have all been foreign orientated. All of them are clever adverts in the way that the dialogue is 100% foreign and we have no idea what they are saying but we still fully understand the advert. Their adverts commonly make you really want a pint of Stella too which is a really successful method of advertising. The way they do this is by making the scene feel sweaty and hot or worn out, tired and then you see a man with a nice big refreshing beer and it looks lovely. Their advert also revolves a lot around humour and reward e.g. a man paints a picture and sells it to a bar tender for a pint of Stella, we see the bar tender put it on the wall, the camera moves back and the room is full of paintings. Another example would be a man coming back from war and he is rewarded by a big fresh pint of Stella. Every time they make a new advert I think they aim to make you want the beer as you see the man drinks it. In my opinion Stella's main aim of perception from their adverts is that a man would do anything for a pint of Stella, I also think the message they try to get across is that there is no better reward/gift than a pint of Stella and there is nothing else better in the world.

Here is a small article I found discussing Stella Artois;

'Reassuringly inexpensive'

The plain fact is Britain has always liked its lager to have a foreign accent. And this was never more apparent than in the British love affair with Stella Artois - possibly the biggest marketing triumph of them all. When Stella - a Belgian beer brewed in Wales and sold on its French heritage - was unveiled in the 1980s, it caused something of a stir in marketing circles. Its "reassuringly expensive" tag line looked like commercial suicide - and was met with anger by the company's bemused sales reps. But the aspirational tone chimed perfectly with the times. Unlike the lumpen Hofmeister devotee, the Stella drinker liked the finer things in life and was not afraid to pay for them.

Sophistication

The irony, of course, is that Stella has become about as mass market as it is possible to be. "Managing to position something as reassuringly expensive, when it isn't, is hard to beat in marketing terms. "In fact, Stella is anything but expensive. It is on discount nearly everywhere you go," says Kevin Baker, of drinks analyst Canadean. The television ads for Stella ooze quality and continental sophistication. But they are created specifically for the UK market. Elsewhere in Europe, Stella advertising is more cheap and cheerful. It helps, of course, that Stella is considerably stronger than its predecessors.

I think some of what was said in this article is true. I think another reason why Stella lovers drink Stella is because of the fake foreign 'accent' it gives. All their advertisements are foreign orientate and make the lager feel as though it has a wonderful foreign history which makes the lager feel more exotic and exciting when really it's brewed in Wales. I think this is a big brand value for Stella Artois however not big enough to be the leading brand in the UK, I think if they integrated this foreign idea with football they might just be able to beat Carling in lager sales.

This idea of 'reassuringly expensive', to me, is a pretty stupid tag line. I think that if it was me that it would put me off the lager. Lager is lager and if a lager is noticeable more expensive in price I will go for the best one a reasonable price. I think Stella have succeeded in the tag line 'reassuringly expensive' because people like to buy the best. People believe that you pay for what you buy so if it is more expensive it is going to be better. Is I a brand values for Stella but at the same time a weakness; I think a lot of people buy it because it's more expensive but I also think a lot of people don't but it because its more expensive. Stella also has the highest percentage over



other beer which is also a brand value because when it comes down to it why do you drink lager? To get drunk, and if the percentage it higher this will happen quicker which may be seen as more value for money to some people.

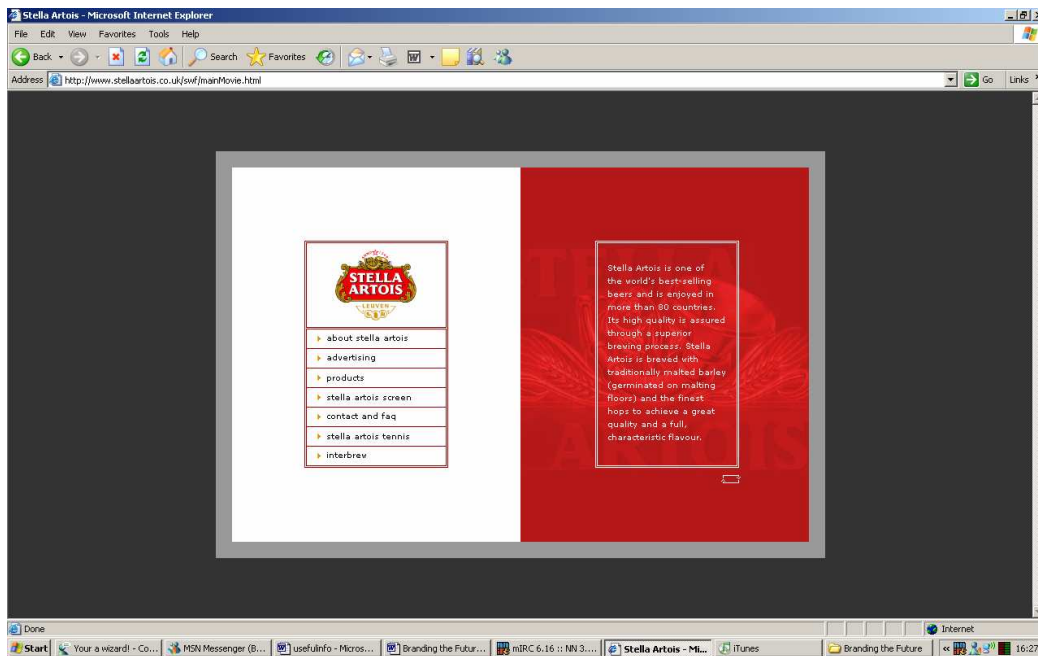
To me I think Stella is widely seen as an expensive, classy, sophisticated, exotic and traditional beer, and I think this why it is 2nd in the market leader board. I think that if they related to their target consumers more and made more of a relationship with the public they could easily be number 1.

Now I am briefly going to discuss Stella's graphic and design styles. If you look at the can to the left you will see that compared to other lager can designs this one if very sophisticated. I have always thought of Stella can looking very posh compared to other and has a look about it that just looks expensive. It might possibly be the over complicated design with the use of a lot of gold and the nice rich red colour smack bang in the middle. I think that Stella do have their own font face but I think it isn't very recognisable if it was saying anything that wasn't 'Stella



Artois'. Their logo is very recognisable though as it consisted of not only 'Stella Artois' but a bright red background which is framed in a sophisticated golden frame with the established date above and a strange thing on the bottom which to me looks like three coins.

If you look at their website you will notice how sophisticated it looks straight away. This is because of the neat simplistic design and the use of subtle but professional flash effects.



Unlike Carling they do not support the idea of football nor music but they do have a whole separate website for films. I think this is interesting because films aren't really related to lager drinking. It is obviously a good way to advertise as the film industry is probably the biggest industry on this earth bar music but I do not think people will be able to relate a pint of Stella with a movie whereas people can relate a pint of Carling with a football match.

I think the overall feeling we get from Stella's graphic style and design, and the lager as a whole is class. Overall I think Stella is a close competitor with Carling even though they have a completely different idea of advertising and winning customers.

I am not going to talk about the 3rd highest competitor because I do not have the resources to find out who is the 3rd biggest brand in the UK.

This is the best statistics graph I found online;

Fig 4 Total GB Beer Sales						
Products	Value £m		Market share	Volume 000s brls		Market share
Standard Lager	£5407m	+4%	35.6%	10785	+2%	36.7%
Premium Lager	£4064m	+4%	26.8%	7184	+4%	24.5%
Superstrength Lager	£126m	-9%	0.8%	279	-7%	0.9%
Standard Ale	£3280m	-1%	21.6%	6612	-4%	22.5%
Premium Ale	£904m	-5%	6%	1673	-6%	5.7%
Stout	£963m	-2%	6.3%	1603	-4%	5.5%
Total Market	£15193m	+2%		29353	-1%	

User Profile for My Own Lager Brand

Age: 18-80

Sex: Male & Female

Target Audience: Lager louts, ravers, people who like live music and possibly football

Income: Any class – Beer will be priced competitively, not expensive.

The idea of my lager is aimed at music fans and lager louts. I am not aiming to promote football hooliganism or drunkards but I am aiming my beer to these people (probably some of the biggest markets for lager). I think that aiming my lager at people who have a keen interest in music will make them trust your lager because it will seem as though my brand has an interest the public do. My lager will also be very English heritage based, very patriotic so that the drinkers will have something to be proud of and passionate about. They will feel a sense of reward drinking the purely English brewed beer as no other country will be getting their hands on it.

The packaging design will be my main selling point. The packaging will be in the shape of a pint glass. It will either be a tin can with the design on the tin or a strong plastic cup with a transparent frosted design on the cup and the main design will be on the card holding the cups together.

The main design scheme will be based around the Union Jack flag and there will be a limited edition series for individual flash such as Scotland Wales and England. These will become collectables.