

JAMESON: THE TASTE ABOVE ALL ELSE STRATEGY (in *Encyclopedia of Major Marketing Strategies*, Golson Media, 2013, pp. 223-226 <http://www.gale.cengage.com/servlet/ItemDetailServlet?region=9&imprint=000&titleCode=GBSE1&cf=e&type=4&id=15916259>)

George Rossolatos, PhD Researcher, University of Kassel, Germany

Entry Head

Company Name: Pernod Ricard
Product Name: Jameson
Website: <http://www.jamesonwhiskey.com>
Strategy Name: "Taste Above All Else: Lost Barrel"
Marketing Tactic: Integrated
Sector Name: Alcoholic Drinks
Strategy Date: 2009

Situation Analysis

- Established no.1 brand in the Irish Whiskey market segment.
- Need for sourcing business from other segments in order to meet aggressive two-digit growth targets.
- Competing in a mature market with established brand players.
- Opportunity for growth by enhancing appeal to a younger demographic.

According to Report Linker (2012), the value of the global spirits market exceeded \$262 billion in 2010, while growing at an above 3% rate year-on-year. The market is expected to exceed \$306 billion in 2015, representing a 17% increase in five years. Market volume exceeded 19,000 million liters in 2010 and is forecast to grow by 10% by 2015, reaching 22,000 million liters. The whiskey category leads the market, with 26% market share. The whiskey market is segmented into Scotch (61%), US (21%), Canadian (15%) and Irish (3%) whiskies (IWSR-International Wine & Spirits Research 2011; Davy Research 2011).

Pernod Ricard is the world's second-largest spirits company (volume) and co-leader in the Premium spirits segment. The company's key competitors on a global scale are Diageo, Bacardi-Martini, Brown-Forman, Moet-Hennessy, Beam, Constellation Brands, Gallo, Campari, Remy Cointreau and local players, such as UB Group (India) and CEDC (Poland). The company was founded in 1975, pursuant to the merger of Pernod SA and Ricard SA. "In 1988, the Group took over Irish Distillers" (Pernod Ricard Annual Report 2011/2012), manufacturer and marketer of Jameson.

Pernod Ricard's portfolio includes ABSOLUT vodka, Ballantine's, Chivas Regal and The Glenlivet Scotch whiskies, Jameson Irish whiskey, Martell cognac, Havana Club rum, Beefeater gin, Kahlua and Malibu liqueurs, Mumm and Perrier-Jouet champagnes, as well as Jacob's Creek and Brancott Estate wines. The company has segmented its brand portfolio according to the so-called House of Brands structure, which comprises the following segments: global icons, strategic premium spirits brands, strategic prestige spirits & champagne brands, key local spirits brands and

priority premium wine brands (pernod-ricard.com). Jameson is part of the strategic premium spirits brands, also featuring Ballantine's.

From its acquisition in 1988 up until 2012, Jameson has been growing in volume at a rate of 10%, from 0.4 million 9-litre cases to 3.9 million. "One of the key means in which Jameson has been able to overcome the effects of the recession is by targeting "pre-commitment" young men aged 25-34 years old" (Datamonitor 2010). As reported by Datamonitor, Irish whiskey is particularly appealing to this consumer segment, by virtue of its smooth taste.

The key opportunity for the brand was to maintain double-digit growth in a highly competitive, mature market (whiskey), populated by strongly entrenched brand players (i.e. Jack Daniels, Johnnie Walker), by enhancing its appeal to a younger demographic.

Target Market

- Jameson's core demographic group for this campaign was young males, 25-35 yrs. old.
- From a lifestyle segmentation point of view, the primary target-group is characterized as "Ambitious Socials", that is upwardly mobile young men, who are just starting to establish themselves.
- Opportunity for further solidifying relations with key stakeholders, such as bar-tenders and wholesalers.

"Whiskey has always appealed more to the older generation, despite endless marketing attempts by brands to target younger drinkers" (Marketing 2010). Whiskey consumption is largely skewed towards males, with differing patterns in terms of age, SE class/status, lifestage, consumption occasion/place, among standard vs premium and malt whiskey brands. "The recession has affected the spending habits of consumers, with many choosing to drink at home instead of the on-trade, or limiting their alcohol consumption altogether" (Datamonitor 2010).

Nielsen (2010) reports that alcoholic drinks' on-premise consumption has been impacted by the recession. However, the impact of the recession has not been translated into increased price-sensitivity in the alcoholic drinks market, which is traditionally characterized by inelastic demand patterns (especially the on-premise sector). Instead, frequency and average volume per consumption act have been primarily affected. Especially in the case of consumers who opted for less expensive alternatives, increased dissatisfaction was reported (Nielsen 2010). In the face of signs of economic recovery, "younger Millennial consumers (aged 21-27) signaled their intent to go out much more often, while consumers 55+ were much less optimistic about their future "going out" prospects" (Nielsen 2010).

Jameson's initiative to target the "Ambitious Socials" segment was a bold endeavor, given that this demographic still carries traces from a previous lifestage (18-24 yrs. old), which is characterized by elevated experimentation and a proclivity to switch among brands in a category repertoire. Additionally, younger entrants in the whiskey category usually opt for established standard whiskey brands, even though the taste of standard whiskey has been occasionally described as harsh to new category recruits. Furthermore, Jameson was potentially confronted with internal competition, insofar as Chivas Regal was also targeting the same

demographic (Marketing 2010), albeit with a completely different positioning strategy. Jameson, by virtue of its smooth taste, was particularly apt for appealing, at least as regards functional attributes/benefits to its prospects. However, in the context of a highly image-driven category, such as alcoholic drinks, in order to render its proposition relevant and appealing, it had to resonate with its targets' mores. As will be shown in due course, this task was achieved by transforming its key functional attributes and brand mythic elements into a resonant, consistent and ongoing narrative.

Marketing Strategy

- Increase on-trade (on-premise) sales in the face of an adverse economic situation that impacted on outgoing consumption habits.
- Build brand equity long-term by capitalizing on the brand's heritage in an original way that disrupts category codes.
- Transform "Ambitious Socials" into brand ambassadors.

Premiumisation and innovation are key trends in the alcoholic drinks category. Pernod Ricard is actively leveraging the premiumisation trend with view to generating sustainable cash-flow from its hallmark brands. Currently, 73% of the company's sales stem from premium brands in its portfolio (Pernod Ricard Press Kit August 2012). However, as noted by Datamonitor (2011), stringent advertising regulations imposed in different geographical regions may counter the prospective benefits to be reaped from launching premium brands and line-extensions (such as Jameson Select Reserve). In terms of innovation, Pernod Ricard pursues various strategic routes, featuring the design of new products, testing new modes of consumption, innovating new ways of communication (particularly through digital technologies), initiating new sales channels (Pernod Ricard Annual Report 2011/2012). The above are complemented by strong investment in emerging markets with view to consolidating strong market presence.

The strategic marketing objectives that underpinned the "Taste Above All Else" campaign consisted in upholding the brand's positive sales momentum, while increasing preferential scoring along salient brand image attributes among its prospective consumer pool, as well as key performance indicators, such as likeability, purchase intention and intention to recommend the brand.

The advertising objectives that were set with view to meeting the strategic marketing objectives consisted in generating involving awareness among prospects, by leveraging the brand's heritage, albeit in a non-standard fashion. The aim was not to replicate an abundantly tried and tested recipe, by drawing on sublimations of a brand founder's traits, feats and tribulations or on the embellishment of a brand's country of origin attributes, but to gain credibility for the brand offering by disrupting entrenched category codes and gaining buy-in from prospective brand advocates. As stated by a company's ad agency spokesperson (Creative Effectiveness Cannes Lions 2011), "prior to 2010, Jameson's success was attributable to two things: the taste of the product itself (smooth and balanced; not super-sweet like a bourbon, not harsh like a scotch) and the natural character of the brand (authentically and approachably Irish)". These strategic creative

pillars, though, were not sufficient for meeting the advertising objectives and sustaining the brand's positive momentum.

Marketing Tactics

- TV campaign that dramatized brand heritage in an alternative manner.
- Supported by Print, Radio, Out-of-Home (Transit and Billboard), PR, Digital.
- Building on the Creative Idea of "Taste Above All Else".

The 'Taste Above All Else' creative platform leveraged the power of story-telling, by effectively diffusing fictive narratives, with a subversively humorous twist, that revolved around the feats of the brand's founder John Jameson. "The Lost Barrel", launched in the U.S. market in 2009, was the first in a commercials series that sought to flesh out the brand's refurbished positioning, that is taste, but with a flavor of "non-serious seriousness" about the brand's heritage. "The advert told the story of brand founder John Jameson jumping overboard his ship into the sea to retrieve a lost barrel of whiskey. In order to attract the young male target, the company designed the ad to look like a scene from an epic movie, while promoting the heritage of Jameson whiskey in a witty manner" (Datamonitor 2010).

The commercial dramatizes John Jameson's attempt to salvage a whiskey barrel from the depths of the ocean, by portraying a confrontation with a giant octopus, strongly reminiscent of the Cracken mythological creature that was popularized by the Pirates of the Caribbean blockbuster. This hyperbolic scene that is ironically divested from any heroic connotations through the narrator's voice-over, is succeeded by the portrayal of John Jameson's emergence from the sea depths to the coast, only to attend his... funeral. "The idea was to turn a traditional whiskey strategy - heritage - on its head, approaching our own brand story with a wink, with wit, and with exaggeration" (Cannes Effectiveness Awards 2010). A serious whiskey that doesn't take itself so seriously was intended as a 'third way' in whiskey consumption habits.

This is neither humorous advertising, as in the case of Famous Grouse (or, at least, this is a different sense of humor in the alcoholic drinks category) nor strictly speaking self-ironic. It is suspended between irony and seriousness, hence the non-seriously serious tone-of-voice. The creative style consists in a nuanced challenge of the relevance of traditional heritage branding claims in a category where such claims have been over-used. What is challenged is the relevance of the very brand heritage strategy, by drawing on brand heritage, which attests to the paradoxical, double interpretive movement that is instituted in the brand's discourse. In fact, the attribute 'Taste' that appears in the commercial's pack-shot as an integral element of the brand's core promise, does not emerge at all, in strictly product-related terms, in the course of either "The Lost Barrel" commercial or its sequel (i.e. the "Hawk" and "Fire" commercials- see links in the References section). There is no direct substantiation of how taste is qualified in Jameson's brand language (perhaps as the outcome of a distillation process or as the result of a secret recipe that includes blending with other ingredients, as might be expected).

The promise of taste is suspended above all else, in which case the descriptor "all else" refers to peripheral elements of the brand as brand heritage. In essence, brand heritage elements are recruited in a subversive fashion, in order to demonstrate that it is by virtue of their lesser importance that Jameson's taste stands above them. By comparison, this implicit suggestion put forward by the brand, also seems to be propounding that brands (at least in the concerned product category) that stress "all else" at the expense of taste, essentially are not as tasteful as might be expected. Hence, the campaign attains not only to undermine the value of a heritage branding approach in the alcoholic drinks category, but to employ a heritage branding approach in a subversive manner only to point out that at the end of the day it is Jameson's superior taste that stands out.

The not wholly uncontroversial creative route adopted by Jameson in this campaign was also reflected in the brand's media planning strategy. The choice of communicative vehicles reflected the subversive creative idea. Instead of premium spots placements in prime-time, the brand opted for leveraging alternative communication channels that resonated with its non-seriously serious positioning and maximized the creative idea's advocacy potential. "National TV ran on Comedy Central, and on comedy shows on TBS and FX; print was featured in *The Onion*, *Paste* and *Rolling Stone*, while a digital sponsorship and banners ran on *comedycentral.com*. For radio, we decided to deploy a classic, 1930's golden-age-of-storytelling approach"(Cannes Effectiveness Awards 2010). The global brandcomms budget throughout 2011-2012 exceeded €80m.

Outcome

- Unprecedented uplift in sales.
- Above-norm increases in brand health metrics.
- Enhanced consumer engagement with the brand's values and brand advocacy.

The "Above All Else" campaign proved to be resistant to the adverse recessionary climate, by yielding a 24% sales increase for Jameson in the on-premise channel. Moreover, the sales boost proved to be sustainable in the ensuing periods. As reported by *irishcentral.com*, Pernod Ricard achieved a 15% sales increase during June 2011 - June 2012, with an all-time high of 3.9 million 9ltr cases of whiskey being sold and a net profit of €1.2 billion.

In terms of brand health metrics, awareness increased by 30% from April '09 to April '10 (Pernod Ricard's Brand Tracking Study April 2010). Likeability and stand-out perceptions for the ad exceeded brand and category norms, while intention-to-buy was boosted among non-brand users. Brand image was significantly ameliorated along salient attributes, such as "premium," "authentic" and "great tasting".

Equally importantly, brand advocacy was effectively promoted among prospects, as suggested by the prolific viral diffusion of positive comments among the ad's viewers in blogs and social media sites. "Seven days post television launch, Jameson received 78.0% of all consumer posts vs. other major whiskey competitors, and "Lost Barrel" had 20,000 followers on Twitter" (Cannes Effectiveness Awards 2010).

Sidebar

The story of John Jameson

John Jameson was born in 1740 and founded his distillery in 1780 in Dublin. His passion for whiskey was evinced in every aspect of the production process, from personally selecting barley and casks to the invention of the triple distillation process. Jameson whiskey's smoothness is attributable to triple distillation. John Jameson was a forerunner of modern qualitative research methods, such as ethnographic research. He conducted interviews in local pubs and taverns and observed consumption habits in situ. He also product-tested his whiskey by offering pub-goers free glasses, which were nick-named "Jemie". The "Taste Above All Else" strategy evolved from feedback that was gathered from bar-tenders. Fascinated by the Jameson culture, advocates were often telling stories to clients about the brand, rather than just giving away free shots. The narrative substrate of the "Taste Above All Else" campaign was inspired by the informal story-telling approach that was adopted in this personal selling predicament, which continued John Jameson's legacy.

Author Name: George Rossolatos, PhD Researcher

Affiliation: University of Kassel, Germany

Further Reading

Business and Leadership (2011). Sales Up 13pc at Pernod Ricard; Jameson sales surge. Available from <http://www.businessandleadership.com/business/item/28465-sales-up-13pc-at-pernod-ric> Accessed 16 November 2012.

"CLIO Awards Jameson Global Campaign". Available from <http://www.clioawards.com/catalog/2012/film/entry.cfm?entryid=201213334&award=50&from=1&to=500&order=0&direction=1> Accessed 10 December 2012.

"CLIO Awards Winners". Available from http://www.clioawards.com/catalog/downloads/CLIO_Awards_Winners_2012.pdf Accessed 10 December 2012.

Creative Effectiveness Cannes Lions (2011). Jameson Taste Above All Else Campaign.

Datamonitor Case Studies (2010). Jameson Case Study: Targeting the "Recession-Resistant" Consumer. Available from <http://www.datamonitor.com/> Accessed 16 November 2012.

Datamonitor Company Profiles (2011). Pernod Ricard Company Profile. Available from <http://www.datamonitor.com/> Accessed 16 November 2012.

Davy Research (2011). Jameson-One of the Pillars of Pernod's Growth Story. Available from

<http://www.davy.ie/> Accessed 16 November 2012.

International Wine & Spirit Research
<http://www.iwsr.co.uk/pages/about.html>

"Jameson Fire(February 24 2011)". Available from
<http://creativity-online.com/work/jameson-fire/22496> Accessed 10 December 2012.

"Jameson Hawk of Achill(October 4 2011)". Available from
<http://creativity-online.com/work/jameson-hawk-of-achill/24699> Accessed 10 December 2012.

"Jameson Lost Barrel (October 19 2009)". Available from
<http://creativity-online.com/work/jameson-lost-barrel/17662> Accessed 10 December 2012.

"Jameson Taste Above All Else Campaign (Hawk)". Available from
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LstgvSbu_v8 Accessed 10 December 2012.

"Jameson Taste Above All Else Campaign (Lost Barrel)". Available from
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N3_UDyb9Yzs Accessed 10 December 2012.

"Jameson Youtube Videos". Available from
<http://www.youtube.com/user/jamesonwhiskey/videos?view=0>
Accessed 10 December 2012.

Nielsen Report (2010). Despite Improving Economy, Alcohol Beverage Consumers Cautiously Indulge. Available from
http://www.nielsen.com/us/en/insights/press-room/2010/despite_improving1.html Accessed 29 November 2012.

O'Shea, Kerry (2012). "Jameson whiskey sales see all-time high - sales up 15 percent in the last year". Available from
<http://www.irishcentral.com/news/Jameson-whiskey-sales-see-all-time-high--sales-up-15-percent-in-the-last-year-168252766.html>
Accessed 29 November 2012.

"Pernod Ricard Annual Report 2011/2012". Available from
<http://pernod-ricard.com/>
Accessed 29 November 2012.

"Pernod Ricard Press Kit August 2012". Available from
<http://pernod-ricard.com/>
Accessed 25 November 2012.

"Pernod Ricard's The House of Brands". Available from
<http://pernod-ricard.com/99/brands/see-all-brands>
Accessed 29 November 2012.

Parker, Philip M.(2011). The World Market for Whiskey: A 2011 Global Trade Perspective. Available from
<http://www.icongrouponline.com/> Accessed 10 December 2012.

Report Linker (2012). Global Alcoholic Drinks Industry. Available from <http://www.reportlinker.com/ci02014/Alcoholic-Drink.html> . Accessed 9 December 2012.

Rossolatos, George (2012). Brand equity planning with structuralist rhetorical semiotics Vol.I. Amazon Press.

"Whiskey: A mature market". Marketing, October 20 2010. Available from <http://www.marketingmagazine.co.uk.html> Accessed 9 December 2012.