

Category:

3.2 Design

4.3 Food and drink

Client:

Black Wolf Brewery

Date: January 2016

PUTTING A WOLF IN DISTINGUISHING CLOTHING



01. INTRODUCTION

A storm was brewing for Traditional Scottish Ales Ltd (TSA). Based in Stirling, the brewery had seen success and won numerous awards for their portfolio of traditional real ales.

But then came the sudden boom in the craft ales market and they struggled to keep pace with the new wave of independent breweries that appealed to a younger, more style-conscious audience.

Tayburn was asked to rebrand TSA and launch two new ranges of craft beers. To be competitive, the ranges needed to tap into the growing market of contemporary ale drinkers and help TSA grow distribution in supermarkets across Scotland.

However, without any marketing support this was a big ask. The number of independent UK breweries had reached a 70-year high and we were faced with stiff competition, making it hard to win over consumers and retailers alike.

But instead of being intimidated by the challenge we saw this as an opportunity to demonstrate the power of simple, good design. A lack of other significant media spend focused our efforts on the role that brand packaging could play in inspiring customers from shelf to point of sale.

We created a distinctive new name and visual identity for the brewery that could hold the existing traditional ales and launch new craft beers under the same brand. Impactful and characterful packaging was designed to cut through the tired and cluttered ale aisle and give people a reason to choose us.

The design was considered by Asda to strike the perfect balance between cutting edge and universal appeal that lead to their remarkable decision to list the new flagship range of beers in all of their Scottish stores without even having the final product available. Tesco was soon to follow suit, listing the range in 71 stores, and Sainsbury's in 25. The stage was set, and the brewer saw a jump in brand equity against an average decline of 10.8% across the category.

We saw this as an opportunity to demonstrate the power of simple, good design.

The Black Wolf Brewery logo



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02. AMBITION AND OBJECTIVES

Background

Traditional Scottish Ales (TSA) was a regional brewing company with a selection of traditional ales that played off their Scottish identity. This had been a successful strategy for them over the years as local stockists sought regional beers and had led to numerous brewing awards, including two Scotland Food and Drink awards and a prestigious 2012 World Beer Award Gold Medal.

But as the beer drinking demographic shifted towards a younger, more style conscious customer and the craft ale market exploded, they had ambitions to grow their business accordingly. They wanted to increase their appeal to this new younger audience and increase their distribution nationally.

The brief

Our task was to rebrand the brewery and launch a new range of craft ales to help tap into a growing market of contemporary ale drinkers. We were also asked to redesign a legacy range of traditional ales with a more contemporary look and feel, making these beers more accessible to the new market but retaining loyal customers.

Ultimately, we needed to take the brewery from a niche regional offering to a national beer brand with equivalent distribution.

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The original TSA range of beers



02. **AMBITION AND OBJECTIVES**

Objectives

TSA came to us with three tasks, all intrinsically linked to a bold new direction:

1. Create a new name and brand for the brewery. They needed a fresh brand that was not defined by tradition or geographic location, but under which they could continue to sell their legacy range of beers.
2. Launch a new flagship range of craft beers that would appeal to the younger demographic of contemporary craft beer drinkers (bearded beer hipsters, not bearded real ale buffties).
3. Take the line of traditional ales with which the brewery was originally successful, and transform their design so as to appeal to the growing, younger market while maintaining their loyal customers.

The ambition for the new ranges of beers was to get them listed with supermarkets across Scotland.

03. **STRATEGIC THINKING AND EFFECTIVE PLANNING**

Market challenges

Competition is rarely more intense. In 2013, the Campaign for Real Ale (CAMRA) was reporting a 70-year high in the number of independent breweries, totalling 1,147 across the UK.¹ The group predicted that this number would accelerate through 2013 and 2014 as the market grows to support craft beer makers.

They were correct. The UK government reported last summer that number has passed 1,400.²

Three considerations that fed into our design

We knew we were launching into a growing market. However, this also meant we were going to face heavy competition. For our re-branding and design project, we focused on three key questions:

1. How do we grow distribution?

Supermarkets on the whole are notoriously difficult to get listed into. It takes months and they only do a few products at a time, never mind an extended range. We needed to provide a compelling reason to list our beer ahead of all other new brands.

2. How do we reach a new audience?

The beer aisle has become overly cluttered. So customers (overwhelmed with choice) tend to find mental shortcuts by looking for what stands out or looks familiar. Our existing brand looked like everyone else, but without the benefit of a recognisable brand. Our beers needed a distinctive and in-your-face look that could capture customers' attention and reassure them without relying on a big brewery badge.

3. How do we balance our regional heritage?

While the authentically regional heritage of our existing brand had strengths in specific local markets, it was seen to be too niche for supermarkets to offer wider distribution across Scotland and the rest of the UK. Our challenge was to launch a contemporary beer brand with universal appeal while staying true to our Scottish heritage.

Furthermore, the new flagship range wouldn't even be ready until launch. We were therefore tasked with convincing notoriously sceptical supermarket buyers to stock our new range based on the merits of our design solution alone.

1. CAMRA, Good Beer Guide shows that Britain now has more breweries per person than anywhere in the World after two years of continued growth (Press Release, 10 September 2014)

2. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/britain-becomes-brewing-powerhouse>

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04. ORIGINALITY, CREATIVITY, EXECUTION AND IMPLEMENTATION

The big idea: The legend of the Black Wolf

We created a distinctive identity for TSA that was born out of local folklore but brought a contemporary edge to the craft ale market. Local legend has it that a wolf saved Stirling (the home of TSA) from Viking invaders in the ninth century by howling warning alerts.

We decided that the Black Wolf would become the figurehead that gave supermarkets a reason to stock and customers a reason to buy. TSA became Black Wolf Brewery and the Black Wolf became a powerful branding tool in 3 keys ways:

1. Regional identity with universal appeal

To get national distribution in Supermarkets we needed to have universal appeal and demonstrate that we would help them sell more beer to a younger audience. But we did not want to lose sight of the genuine Scottish heritage that made the beers a credible choice for customers. The Black Wolf helped put a contemporary spin on local history and gently side-stepped any tired or clichéd Scottish imagery.

2. Winning disproportionate share of shelf

The wolf identity also provided a clever way to get the full range stocked in each supermarket. By creating the 'wolf pack' (a mixed four-pack with the full 'litter' of Black Wolf craft beers) we gave shoppers a reason to buy more bottles and supermarkets a reason to stock the full range.

The story of the black wolf from
the back of the Lomond Gold bottle

MANY MOONS AGO, IN THE BLACK OF NIGHT, VIKING INVADERS WERE ABOUT TO ATTACK OUR HOMETOWN OF STIRLING, WHEN A HOWLING WOLF ALERTED THE DEFENDERS, WHO SAVED THE TOWN. WE RAISE A GLASS TO THAT WOLF. THE BLACK WOLF.

04. ORIGINALITY, CREATIVITY, EXECUTION AND IMPLEMENTATION

Together the visual identity and brand personality stood out and gave shoppers a reason to pick up our bottles.

3. Interrupting the sleep-shop

We knew from the start that our biggest challenge would be to interrupt shoppers disengaged buying patterns and give them a reason to choose Black Wolf beers over anyone else. We therefore created a simple design with bold illustration and blocks of colour that stood out from the rest of the beer aisle.

While big national brands trade on their inherent familiarity to build trust at the point of purchase – we did not have that coverage or reputation to instantly win people's hearts. We therefore developed an engaging personality in the illustrated character with lightness of touch and humour to create a more warm and trusting narrative and engage and endear the customer. Together the visual identity and brand personality stood out from the complexity and earnestness of the category and gave shoppers a reason to pick up our bottles.

The range of Black Wolf Craft Beers



05. SCALE AND EVIDENCE OF RESULTS

Supermarket listings

The new flagship range of craft beers was a smash with supermarket buyers. Black Wolf's flagship range was given a listing in all of ASDA's 57 stores in Scotland, based on design visuals alone. The beers were still being brewed and the artwork for the labels hadn't even been sent to the printers! ASDA were seeking innovation in the category and they found it with Black Wolf Brewery.

Tesco would soon raise this by listing Black Wolf in 71 stores while Sainsbury's listed the range in 25 stores. Lidl were to follow by stocking Gold Digger and Tundra Wheat Beer in their Scottish stores, and UK-wide with Lomond Gold and Big Red.

Consumer sentiment

Since the rebrand and launch of the new ranges, Black Wolf have bucked a declining trend. To assess performance of Black Wolf for consumers in the supermarkets, we looked at Shopper Equity³ of the top 20 SKUs in the craft beer category year-on-year between 2013-14 and 2014-15.⁴ The new range hit the shelves in May 2014.

3. Modelled Return of Sale for all products when price, seasonality, distribution and unit size are equal.

4. Source: ACNielsen Data to April 2015

The range of Black Wolf Heritage Beers



05. SCALE AND EVIDENCE OF RESULTS

Within the craft beer category in supermarkets, the top 20 SKUs averaged a shopper equity decline of 10.8%. Amongst this top 20, only six beers bucked the downward trend, two of which were Black Wolf's Rok IPA and Black Wolf's William Wallace.

Against the decline, Rok IPA from the flagship range saw an increase of 12.9% shopper equity and William Wallace from the Heritage range was one of the top performers in the category with a 22.7% increase.

% Shopper Equity Change YoY

