REVIVING AN ICON

CARLING | 2018 ENTRY

For publication

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Our redesign for Carling has enabled the UKs largest beer brand to achieve substantial growth - despite the overall market experiencing an immense decline. Without any ATL support, growth has exceeded above expectations, in a climate where all the mega trends are affecting the category in a negative away, both on and off trade.

Although Carling is the UK's No. 1 lager, **the mainstream lager category which it leads has been under significant threat.** Volume sales are down by 5.6% in the past 4 years, whilst value is up in the same period by 5.5% driven by a shift towards more premium offerings. Mainstream lagers are therefore facing serious competition as drinkers buy into craft and imported lagers and trade up to higher value products. Coupled with the premiumisation challenge, consumers are going out less and when they do, consuming less alcohol; with 1 in 3 adults actively reducing their alcohol intake.

Carling had moved away from some of its key visual equities in a bid to premiumise and distance itself from the "lager lout" image the wider category had become associated with. Meanwhile competitors had created stronger brand iconography and Carling was struggling to resonate and be recognised by its target consumer and customers. NPD launched was not performing; when Carling had extended into the adjacent cider market it had adopted an entirely different look and feel for cider that meant it was unrecognisable from the core Carling offering. **This resulted in the portfolio looking disparate, disjointed and no longer like Carling.** Even employees could no longer articulate what Carling was all about.

Overall, the outlook for Carling and other mainstream lagers was bleak. It was clear that they needed to proudly own their rightful position in the market as Britain's No. 1 lager and re-establish their relevance to consumers and buck the category trend. For us, the answer to these challenges lay in **reimagining Carling's famous black label and creating a modern confident masterbrand.**

We created an iconic visual identity that was both instantly recognisable as Carling and new – capable of creating a visual shift and driving reappraisal. We celebrated Carling's proud brewing credentials and Burton heritage within the brand world. By adopting a Masterbrand strategy across the brands entire portfolio of products we were able to introduce a **bold, single minded consistency across the entire Carling portfolio,** which includes Original Lager, Cider & Premier. The modern striking design appeals to new consumers and loyal drinkers alike.

RESULTS

Launched in January 2017, Carling has since had two years of consistent growth, outpacing the market and flourishing not only behind the bar but on supermarket shelves.

Carling has managed to **reverse the category trend,** despite mainstream lager as a whole struggling, Carling's sales have grown adding nearly £30m (+8.7%) to £350 million, whilst its key competitors continue to fall - Fosters (down £47.9m, -11.9%) and Carlsberg (down £23.4m, -11.3%) despite increasing their marcomms spend. Carling Cider has benefitted from the rebrand with its Black Fruits variant alone adding £13.2m in the year since it launched.

The updated visual identity is simple yet proud, reinforcing Carling's unmistakable visual equities in order to stay relevant in a rapidly declining market.

Clean, simple, fresh and unpretentious Carling can now claim back it's icon status.

> **"The new identity is simple yet proud, reinforcing Carling's values - genuine, dependable and unpretentious, cementing and driving our position as Britain's original and best loved lager."**
>
> Miranda Osborne, Brand Director

CASE STUDY OVERVIEW

KEY BUSINESS OBJECTIVES

- Increasing Carling's value share within mainstream lager
- Grow Carling ahead of rivals Carlsberg and Fosters
- Grow Carling Cider as a credible competitor to Strongbow drinkers

BUSINESS CHALLENGE TO BE SOLVED

Carling faced three major challenges:

Firstly; the overall beer landscape has significantly evolved. Whilst Carling had maintained its position as the UK's favorite mainstream lager, the category was facing serious competition from more premium craft beers and import lagers such as Peroni. Other mainstream competitors such as Fosters and Carlsberg had increased their overall marcomms spend and launched innovation to help combat this, as well as upping their visual equities, whilst Carling fell behind.

Secondly; Carling's portfolio of products (including Carling, Carling Cider and Carling Premier) was treated inconsistently, which created confusion amongst consumers and customers and a disjointed brand portfolio. Cider adopted a product look and feel that borrowed generic codes from the category and did not look like it came from the same brand.

Thirdly; consumers, customers and even employees were struggling to articulate what Carling stood or was recognized for. Historically, Carling had played on a uniquely British wit and playfulness to be a beer 'of the people'. It is a proudly mainstream quality lager. Yet, in a bid to fit in with trends, the previous incarnation of the brand tried to shift perceptions of Carling into a more premium space, which meant Carling had lost its sense of identity.

The result of these challenges was a brand that had **lost its standout and personality** and faced a serious recognition problem. The gap between Carling and its main competitors had slimmed and there was a concern that long-term, it wouldn't realistically be able to hold onto its spot or even reverse its decline. In the ferociously consolidating mainstream lager category, **it's every brand for themselves and Carling had an ambition to be the last man standing.**

CASE STUDY OVERVIEW

STRATEGIC THINKING

We worked with Carling to bring a compelling, relevant meaning back to the brand that positioned them in their rightful place in the market and gave them a reason to be chosen over other mainstream lagers.

Historically, Carling had been a setter of standards, associated with exceptional behaviour and British wit, driven by previous famous advertising campaigns. We wanted to reinstate this confidence and quality and celebrate that Carling is a dependable, unpretentious lager of the people, drunk country-wide by groups of friends. It is a quality mainstream lager, a social leveller and the steady beat to great nights out. It helps keep the stories going and we wanted to capture this, moving away from any pretention to celebrate what it brings to good times together.

SCOPE

- Visual identity
- Brand world
- Architecture Strategy
- Carling primary and secondary packaging
- Carling cider primary and secondary packaging
- Carling Premier primary and secondary packaging
- Structural tap handle for Lager, cider apple and cider black fruits, and Premier
- Brand guidelines

KEY FACTS

· The project launched in January 2017
· £388,000

DESCRIPTION

Brewed exclusively in Burton-on-Trent, Carling has widely been recognised as Britain's no.1 beer for many years, with 1 pint sold every 11 seconds. It is proudly a beer of the people, using British great quality ingredients, designed for drinking very cold.

This is a brand which takes provenance and purity seriously, using only 100% Red Tractor-assured British barley. In total, 157 farmers make up the Carling suppliers' family, known as the Molson Coors Growers Group, and they help to harvest 100,000 tonnes of barley which go into making the Carling brew. Carling uses growers in Worcestershire and Hertfordshire who supply exclusively to Carling. Another one of the brewer's key ingredients happens to be the water from Burton itself, which has just the right balance of salts and minerals to make it brilliant for brewing. The beer is checked at least 200 times throughout the brewing process and tested at every stage, ensuring that superior quality goes into every can.

We wanted to celebrate Carling's quality and tap into the latent associations of being a setter of standard and exceptional behaviour to re-establish Carling as a confident, unpretentious and Britain's favourite lager.

CASE STUDY OVERVIEW

OVERVIEW OF MARKET

The mainstream lager category as a whole has been under significant threat and is in **long-term decline** with sales down 11% since 2011.

The on-trade is facing challenging times amidst macro cultural shifts that see consumers going out to drink considerably less (a 10% dip in on-trade visits) – as a consequence it feels like we hear about another pub closure on a daily basis. This is a huge difficulty for Carling and other mainstream brands as a significant proportion of sales is driven by the on-trade, not to mention pubs as a platform for driving awareness and engagement.
Since 2014, lager volume sales have dropped by 5.6%, whilst value is up in the same period by 5.5% as drinkers increasingly switching to higher value products; buying into craft and more premium imported lagers. When consumers do drink – they are trading up. Consumers are seeking brands with stronger heritage and deeper stories. Premiumisation has been driven by both provenance and local producers, as craft moved into lager, as well as the big players creating premium tiers and relaunching existing offerings with more crafted look and feels. Overall volumes of the top 100 brands have fallen by almost 14.8 million litres. (The Grocer 14 July 2018). But value is up, meaning they are spending more.

All bad news for standard lagers like Carling, but mainstream lager does still makes up the lion's share of the category. The 3 leading brands Carling, Fosters and Carlsberg make up 48% of total volume - but this share has dropped from 56% in the last 4 years.

OUTLINE OF DESIGN SOLUTION

Our first step was to bring meaning back into the brand and recapture the codes and values that were familiar whilst keeping it relevant for today's market. We needed to reflect Carling's true personality: Confident, Unpretentious, Dependable, Quality – It's the steady beat behind our great stories.

We looked back at Carling's rich heritage and quickly realised the brand had lost its one true equity – the black label. To bring this icon back, it needed to be meaningful, modern and iconic. Breaking the wordmark out of the old lozenge and positioning it beneath allowed us to elevate the label as a proud icon for the brand. It draws from Carlings Black Label heritage but updates it in a forward-facing manner that embodies the excitement and promise of things that are yet to come.

The Burton-on-Trent watermark proudly celebrates the brands provenance, adding craft and depth to the design. Depicting the river Trent's unique water – a vital ingredient in making Carling - as well as other key landmarks from the town honours its rich industrial and brewing heritage right in the heart of Great Britain. The light rays emanating from the town creates a sense of energy and represents a pride in where the brand is made.

The new design has enabled the brand to establish an **ownable look and feel,** from a distinctive illustration style taken from the watermark to its very own custom typeface inspired by the wordmark, giving Carling an exciting new language that is recognisable and can be utilised across all branded touchpoints.

The previous portfolio was fragmented and confused – with the Carling brand relegated to endorser on many of the products. The redesign has **united the Carling family** – taking a Masterbrand approach across the entire portfolio to achieve a consistent proposition.

Ultimately the redesign is dynamic, simple and proud, cementing Carling as the UK's favourite lager.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS

INCREASE CARLING'S VALUE SHARE WITHIN MAINSTREAM LAGER

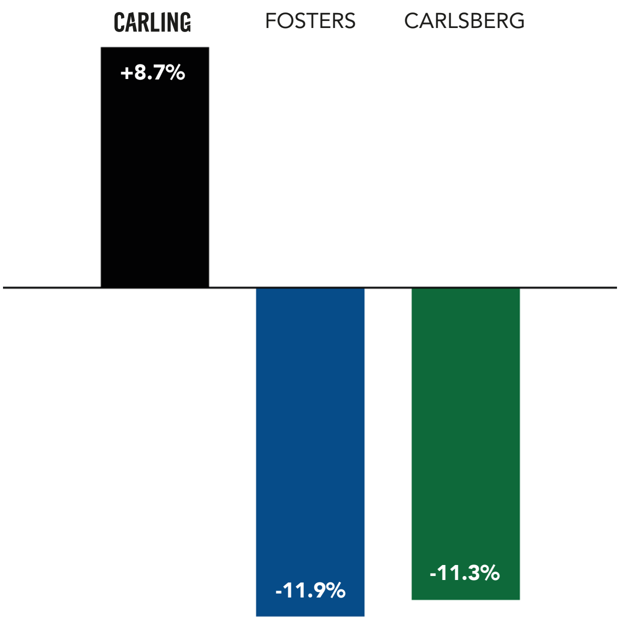
Carling has shifted an extra 565k litres (2.8%), adding an extra £3.6m to the category and proving there's still space for standard lager in the supers. (The Grocer 15 July 2017)

GROW CARLING AHEAD OF RIVALS CARLSBERG AND FOSTERS

Despite mainstream lager as a whole struggling, Carling has seen **sales growth of nearly £30m (+8.7%) to £350 million.**

No such luck for their competitors Fosters (down £47.9m, -11.9%) and Carlsberg (down £23.4m, -11.3%) who are facing serious trouble. (The Grocer, 14 July 2018)

TOP 3 LAGERS VALUE SALES 2017 / 2018



Carling has managed to stave off the fate of other large brands:
"This boils down to two crucial elements: price and brand stewardship."
(The Grocer, Britain's Biggest Alcohol Brands, 15 July 2017)

CARLING CIDER MUST DRIVE TRIAL AND PENETRATION AMONGST STRONGBOW DRINKERS

The move to a Masterbrand approach has significantly benefitted Carling cider.

Carling fruit cider offerings have added nearly £14M in value sales since the redesign with Apple cider **surging by +126% since the redesign.** While Strongbow's original apple cider has lost -9.5% in volumes and -7.3% in value.

Carling was able to introduce a new Black Fruits cider to rival Strongbow's Dark Fruit offering which is Carling's highest growing SKU - a significant portion of its growth (a cool £13.2m) has come from this alone, launching just last year as a competitor to Strongbow's frontrunner Dark Fruit. (The Grocer, Britain's Biggest Brands, 14 July 2018)

OTHER INFLUENCING FACTORS

Over the last two years Carling has halted all ATL campaigns for Carling's core ranges.

Carling has had a partnership with the Premier League during this period.

Their main competitors Carlsberg + Fosters are all amongst the top 10 alcohol advertisers.
With Carlsberg upping their ad spend by 300%.

Carlsberg – £5,120,028 spend (313.2% increase)

Fosters - £2,675,678 spend (5% increase)

RESEARCH RESOURCES

The Grocer, Focus on Alcoholic Drinks, 28 October 2018
The Grocer, Britain's Biggest Alcohol Brands, 14 July 2018
Mintel Food and Drink Report 2017
The Cask Report 2018