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**DBA Design Effectiveness  
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**IRN-BRU's Tartan Army**

**A.G. Barr**

**Beverages**

**June 2015**

(For publication)







**“I’m not gonna lie – I bought this because it had my clan on it...”**

**IRN-BRU consumer, 2015**

**“Perfectly timed with New Year celebrations and Burns, these added theatre in an otherwise dull trading period.”**

**ASDA Scotland Regional Director**

IRN-BRU continues to be Scotland's leading carbonated drink, outselling all others. For generations, the brand has remained highly salient with sharp, irreverent advertising and the courage to challenge conventions.

Caught in the crossfire of the on-going grocery price war, IRN-BRU must constantly balance their investment in price with investment in brand-building activity.

IRN-BRU's Tartan design campaign offered 58 individual labels to engage their loyal fan base. The Tartan labels were available for exactly 3 months.

Over the 3 months, website traffic leapt to its highest ever level and sales were 17% higher – lifting their share from 19.1 to 19.9%.

Despite having such a short period to recoup the investment, the Tartan campaign delivered £34 in sales for every £1 invested in design.

**185%**  
uplift in website traffic

**17%**  
sales growth

**£34**  
of sales for every £1 invested in design

Word count: 122

### Our brief

**In Scotland, IRN-BRU is a mature brand with ready availability and high penetration.**

With a shrinking universe of impulse outlets and an increasingly competitive grocery environment, opportunities for growth are few, but the A.G. Barr team is nothing if not ambitious and had set itself demanding targets:

**Boost website traffic by 10% and grow sales by 2%.**

Although the team had not considered design as a mechanism to achieve their goals, we felt there was potential to attract light and medium buyers of competitive carbonated soft drinks with a limited edition design. For mature brands, saliency is often the path to growth.

We proposed a design campaign, one that could leverage a medium they already owned; their packaging, to get people talking about the brand.

### Description

Launched in 1901, IRN-BRU is described as 'Scotland's other drink', after Scotch whisky.

The brand is sold in a variety of formats, but the design campaign focused on two of the biggest sellers – the 500ml and 2 litre PET bottles.

For many Scottish people, tartan symbolises their collective and individual identity. The patterned cloth originally identified membership of the clans and has become a recognised emblem for a proud nation.

IRN-BRU's Tartan labels brought together two icons of Scotland to remarkable effect.

### Targets:

**10%**

boost in website traffic

**2%**

growth in sales

**Launch date:**  
**January, February,**  
**March 2015**

### **Market overview**

A highly competitive, volatile and deflationary market.

In recent years, a majority of British consumers have become more price conscious in their spending. As a consequence, the Scottish soft drinks market has become more volatile, with deals, offers and discounting rife as companies fight for market share. Loyalty has generally been declining and price deflation has stolen any value growth.



## Outline of design solution

**Supported by the House of Tartan, 58 designs were selected to become the image of the IRN-BRU limited edition, covering up to 11,000 different surnames.**

Collaboration with Hewlett Packard helped us execute the idea using an algorithm to drive a digital press to pre-randomise the label designs, ensuring each shop would receive a variety and fans could have a fair chance of securing their own family tartan.

Over 5.5 million bottles were produced, hitting the shelves on Hogmanay (Dec 31st) and available in stores until the end of March 2015.

Word count: 89



**“Och aye, IRN-BRU’s tartan-tastic new bottles are pure phenomenal man.”**

**IRN-BRU consumer, 2015**

**“Perfectly timed with New Year celebrations and Burns, these added theatre in an otherwise dull trading period.”**

**ASDA Scotland Regional Director**

The initiative was welcomed by the major grocers in Scotland. Off fixture display was achieved in Tesco, Morrisons, ASDA and the Co-Op and sales grew in each.

Overall, the brand grew 17% against the same period last year.

The idea clearly engaged consumer interest with IRN-BRU seeing their biggest ever week of traffic to their website. Over 12,000 sets of digital Tartan labels were downloaded and the campaign delivered 185% more visits than in the equivalent period last year.

Numerous posts on social media were recorded and the company received several requests from consumers for personal supplies of the Tartan bottles.

### Return on Investment

Sales during the period increased by 1/2 million litres. At an average selling price of £0.85 per litre, the incremental value generated was £425,000 for an investment in design of just £12,500. A return of £34 for every £1 invested.

**185%**

uplift in website traffic

**17%**

sales growth

**£34**

of sales for every £1 invested in design



## Other influencing factors

No brand advertising took place during the period of the Tartan labels.

IRN-BRU promotional activity remained comparable with the same period in 2014.

Competitive activity was, if anything, present at a greater level during the period.

### Data sources

1. Financial Times, March 2015
2. TNS Omnibus, Feb 2015
3. Client data supplied by A.G. Barr