

# **The Pripps Blå Case**

## **The Fall of the Favourite**

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### **TEACHING NOTES**

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The authors prepared this case solely as a basis for class discussion and not as an endorsement, a source of primary data, or an illustration of effective or ineffective management. Although based on real events and despite occasional references to actual companies, this case is fictitious and any resemblance to actual persons or entities is coincidental.

# Teaching Plan

This brand management case targets university students on Masters level within marketing and management with an interest in developing a deeper understanding of brand reputation in the product category of FMCG. This guide aims to assist the case presenter(s) in order to prepare, structure and lead comprehensive and informal discussions in accordance to the case learning objectives. The teaching plan starts with a synopsis of case setting and a key issue, and continues with learning objectives, engaging questions and further reflections.

## Case Synopsis

The journey for Pripps, a Swedish beer brewery, started in Gothenburg in the mid 1800's by Johan Albrecht Pripp. In 2001, the company was acquired by Carlsberg Group, which followed by a shutdown of the company's factories. Nevertheless, the intellectual property rights still had power and the brand Pripps Blå were by most Swedes seen as an iconic brand with a strong heritage.

The Pripps Blå beverage was at start a beer for everyone and a brand that every Swede had a relationship to. The brand fastly grew and during the major part of the 1900's it was a favorite among the Swedes, a classic icon representing the idyllic Swedish summers. In the late part of the 1900's the brands number one position on the market was defeated and the market shares continuously declined. The brand reputation of Pripps Blå slowly turned negative and its perceived image became associated with low-priced beer, often linked to older men and alcoholism. Attempts were made to save the brand's position on the market, but in 2011 the sales had dropped to an unacceptable low level. The increased competition from both beer giants and microbreweries and the decreasing sales numbers indicated that something needed to be done to revive the Pripps Blå brand and save its heritage.

This case opens up to a discussion on a scenario where the case audience needs to solve a managerial issue and come up with a new brand strategy for Pripps Blå to increase their sales and improve the brand reputation, without neglecting its heritage.

## Learning Objectives

When presenting and discussing this case, the audience should gain a number of key learnings. Within this section, the overall learning objectives will be presented with support from established theoretical frameworks within the field of corporate brand management and reputation. The aim is to let the case audience gain insights in how to manage a strong brand with a dropping reputation without neglecting its core values. In the following section, theoretical concepts will be explored and

connected to the themes of the Pripps Blå case, which are: rebranding, brand identity and reputation, and brand heritage.

## Rebranding

For companies working on a market where sudden changes and unexpected events are reoccurring, communication needs to be flexible and adaptive to its environment. Hence, communication is an essential tool when a rebranding is needed due to previous poor performance and a mismatch between the brand identity and the stakeholders image (Roper & Fill, 2012). Three of the main reasons for rebranding, according to Roper and Fill (2012), are considered to be based on changes in organizational and ownership structure, image and competitive related issues. The management team at Pripps Blå had, over several years, noticed a change on the market and a decision was taken to make a marketplace realignment to improve sales performance and once again strengthen the brand reputation. This was the start of the rebranding of Pripps Blå, led by a brand management team at Carlsberg Sverige.

Modern brand management is often criticized as being too eager when it comes to rebranding. The action can be considered as a quick fix of an issue that normally is more deep-rooted within the organization (Roper & Fill, 2012). Thus, when a rebranding takes place, heritage and history of the organization often gets lost and the essence of the brand risks to become forgotten (Roper & Fill, 2012). In the case of Pripps Blå one can notice that the brand management team and the creative agencies took this into account and that they did their best to keep the heritage alive, by still including the old symbols in the new logo and continuously working on the marine and summer themes. Further, a market analysis and consumer segmentation took place prior to the rebranding to find the most suitable target group to build the new brand identity on.

When examining the outcomes of the rebranding of Pripps Blå, the case audience can notice that the sales has not increased as much as one might expect (**See Exhibit 1**). This can lead to a discussion on whether the brand management team might have been too eager to rebrand the iconic brand Pripps Blå.

## Brand Identity & Reputation

The brand identity and reputation can be viewed as “two sides of the same coin” (Urde & Greyser, 2016 p.95), where identity is related to internally rooted question concerning the core values and promises of the corporation, whilst reputation handles the external perceptions over time (Urde & Greyser, 2016). An interesting aspect for brand managers is the alignment of the brand identity and reputation. This alignment is a must in order to avoid gaps between the two sides and the significance of a “match” or “mismatch” has to be interpreted by the management (Urde & Greyser, 2016). The brand Pripps Blå was struggling with a falling reputation that needed to be restored in order for the brand to survive over time. The reputation of the brand had grown older with the consumers segment and

did not match with the identity that the brand management team wanted to transfer to the Pripps Blå's potential customers. This led to the decision to rebrand Pripps Blå in order to acquire a new, younger, "hip" customer segment in order to revive the brand.

In a tricky situation like the one Pripps Blå were facing before the rebranding, the Corporate Brand Identity and Reputation Matrix (CBIRM), constructed by Urde and Greyser (2016) (**See Exhibit 2**) can be used to understand the situation and deal with it. The matrix consists first of a 3x3 matrix handling the identity aspects of a brand and deals with the dimensions of the external, external/internal and internal parts of a brand. This one is linked, both diagonally, horizontally as well as vertically to the reputational parts surrounding. These ones consist of *relevance, recognisability, willingness-to-support, trustworthiness, differentiation, performance, credibility and responsibility*. The strength in the framework lays in the potential to define, align, develop and explore the relationship between brand identity and reputation and the framework helps to assess which parts of the brand that are presumably damaged. When it comes to Pripps Blå, it is noticed that some of the elements concerning the reputation has been affected and by defining these, one can identify what needs to be done to restore the reputation. The consumer's *willingness-to-support* the brand was declining due to the brand's failed efforts to inspire and engage consumers. Another element is the *relevance*. Before the rebranding the associations to the brand Pripps Blå, related to old men and alcoholism, was not considered to be appealing by many consumer segments and the value the brand was offering could be considered not meaningful for the consumers. *Differentiation* can also be considered to be an element that attracts attention in this case. Pripps Blå's market position was distinct, but in the wrong way due to consumers' faulty associations that did not match the wanted position of the brand.

However, the Pripps Blå's *performance* has stayed the same throughout the years and is a factor the consumers can rely on. The same goes for the *trustworthiness* since Pripps Blå has a long track-record to rely on. When it comes to the *recognisability* through communication, the conclusion is that the brand has always been consistent to their themes of the marine, summer, archipelagos and Gothenburg, which also has been a way of distinction.

Due to these factors, the recommendation which would be considered for the brand before the rebranding is to work on the *willingness-to-support, relevance, and differentiation*. These recommendations go hand in hand with the new Pripps Blå identity.

## Brand Heritage

Pripps is one of the oldest brands in Sweden with its start in the mid 1800's. This gives the brand an impressive track record and history to work with. Urde, Greyser and Balmer (2007) developed the Brand Stewardship model (**See Exhibit 3**) as a way to see how the heritage of a brand is constructed and leveraged. Thus, when it comes to Pripps Blå, it can be seen that the five elements (*track-record, longevity, core values, use of symbols, and history important to identity*) found in the model relates

closely to how the brand is positioned and how the management has chosen to work with the brand over time.

The definition of a heritage brand is considered to be one where the positioning and value proposition is based on its heritage (Urde, Greyser & Balmer, 2007). The origin of Pripps Blå plays an important role in how the brand management team have chosen to position the brand, also after the rebranding. Hence, the strategic intent of Pripps Blå has been to use their heritage as a part of their brand and something to bring into the future. Moreover, a perspective from a strategic intent is that when a brand has a heritage that has been imbedded, this can generate brand leveraging both on an a national and an international level (Stewart-Allen, 2002). Urde, Greyser and Balmer (2007) argues that there are three dominant fields within heritage research, one of them regards iconic branding, i.e. culturally dominant and distinctive. Pripps Blå can be considered as an iconic branding type due to its appropriation on Swedish culture.

## Overview of Key Learnings

The focal point of this case is to illustrate how the reputation of a brand can change over time. Understanding the complexity in how a brand with a strong heritage, but damaged reputation, can avoid losing brand equity and market shares are the key learnings of this case. In **Table 1** below, the overview of the key learnings is demonstrated:

**Table 1** Key learnings

Key Learning Objective	Theoretical Application	Case Application
<b>Remember that a strong brand can have a weak reputation.</b>	If it is not a competitive advantage, it should be taken care of (Roper & Fill, 2012).	A marketplace realignment was done due to weak performance. Since Pripps Blå did not have a competitive advantage, it was not recommended to continue in the with the old branding.
<b>Align brand identity to brand reputation.</b>	See which parts of the brand reputation that have been damaged to identify what needs to be done to restore the reputation (Urde & Greyser, 2016).	Performance, trustworthiness and recognisability was reputational issues that needed to be dealt with.
<b>Evaluate if a rebranding is needed and how it will affect the brand in in the long run.</b>	Eagerness can be considered dangourous. Do not see a rebranding as a quick-fix to a perhaps more deep-rooted issue (Roper & Fill, 2012).	Is there a more deeper-rooted issue within the brand or was a rebranding the right way to go?
<b>Evaluate the competition and potential consumer segments.</b>	If it is not relevant for today's market, it is not relevant to the customers (Ferraton, 2018).	2011 was the year of the "hipster", hence this consumer segment was chosen, even though the main competitor already already targeting it.
<b>Create a brand activation plan.</b>	Develop a distinct, visible and consistent communication plan with a clear personality (Urde & Greyser, 2016).	An attractive brand personality matching the chosen consumer segment's preferences was created, which generated recognisability with various brand activations.

# Discussion Questions

The stated learning objectives calls for a comprehensive discussion among the case audience, hence the case presenter(s) should prepare questions both for starting the discussion and to keep the discussion alive. The following suggested questions (main and assisting questions) are created for this case in particular and are suggested to be used by the presenter(s).

## Main Question

- Which branding strategy should Pripps Blå choose to increase sales and improve brand reputation?

In the presentation of the case, some alternative consumer segment, all relevant in to the Swedish marketplace of the late 2010's, should be presented to the case audience. This in order for them to discuss and evaluate on the preferred way to go for the Pripps Blå brand. We have prepared four alternative ways (A-D), presented below:

**Strategy A:** The Brat - A consumer segment enjoying the finer things in life. Social gatherings at exclusive nightclubs and restaurants at Stureplan or Avenyn are recurring happenings in these individuals lives. When it comes to music, the EDM genre is preferred and the dancefloor is filled with fistpumping blazer wearers. By making Pripps Blå the ultimate beverage for the young Swedish upper class one can assume that the remaining population soon also will prefer the Pripps Blå beer.

**Strategy B:** The Social Foodie - A consumer segment loving the social life and aesthetically looking food (preferably organic, healthy and gluten free). Every meal has to be uploaded on a social media site with a nice filter to show off their exciting and admirable lifestyle. By making Pripps Blå the ultimate drink to this consumer segment, the amber coloured beverage would not only generate free brand exposure, it would also be the best beer to drink while eating for every social creature.

**Strategy C:** The Hipster - A consumer segment of urban individuals who shows an extra interest for microbreweries and music. These individuals, preferably dressed in trendy vintage apparel, prefer pubs and live concerts at places like Andra Långgatan and Södermalm, over bass pumping dancefloors on Stureplan or Avenyn. By making Pripps Blå the ultimate drink to this segment, one can assume that the brand will be recognized as a trendy and hip beverage that will be consumed at music festivals and by the culture elite.

**Strategy D:** The "Dad" - A consumer segment closely related to the current one, although making it more sophisticated to fit the regular "dad". The "dad" likes to drink beer while barbecuing, watching the football game from home, and while being out in the nature doing typical "dad-stuff". By making Pripps Blå the ultimate drink to this consumer segment, a great rebranding will not be needed and the risks that come along with it will be avoided. One can assume that the "dad" will make

sure that the beer will return to being Swedes number one beer for everyone and for every occasion.

## Assisting Questions

- How will the chosen consumer segment affect the heritage of the brand?
- Does any of the consumer segments have more or less competitive advantage?
- Is it relevant for today's and the future society? (E.g. changes in trends and consumer behavior)
- Can a reputational damage of the brand occur by choosing any of the consumer segments? (E.g. relevance, recognisability, willingness-to-support, trustworthiness differentiation, performance credibility, responsibility)
- How could the brand activate a communication plan for the segment? (E.g. social media presence, events, sponsorship, PR-opportunities, advertising)

After having presented the Pripps Blå solution to the case audience, the case presenter(s) can ask one final question before the case is over (**See Epilogue**)

- Does the “Hipster” of 2011 still have the same attractiveness as it once had?

*Note that the different strategies presented to the case audience will create/need different assisting questions.*

## Teaching Suggestions

The purpose of this section is to present teaching suggestions to be used by the case presenter(s) when handling this case. We strongly recommend the use of PowerPoint, video clips and online voting through sites such as Pollev.com. In **Exhibit 4**, we have included proposed visuals, done with PowerPoint, that may be used when presenting the case, together with suggested teaching notes on what to say when presenting. To keep the case more personal, the case presenter(s) can request that the case audience write their own “name tags” before the case starts to keep the discussion smooth.

To make it easier for the case audience to follow the case discussion, we recommend the presenter(s) to use a whiteboard to summarize the comments given from the case audience with the pros and cons on each consumer segment (**See Table 2**). We recommend that the case presenter(s) start with the first consumer segment, discuss that one, and then move on to the second one, discuss it, and then continuing with the third one and so on. This to make it easier for both the audience and the presenter(s) to keep track on the comments given by the audience without confusion and mixing them together (**See example in “Board Plan”**). We want to encourage discussion; hence, we have prepared a couple of assisting question to be given if the case audience are shy or if the discussion is slow-started.

When the case presenter(s) have reached the last consumer segment, they should ask the audience if they have anything to add to the other segments while

showing them the next slide with a summary of the four of them. Afterwards, when the discussion part has reached saturation and no more comment are given by the case audience, the presenter(s) should use the online voting site Pollev.com to make the class vote on the “best” customer segment which will be the way for Pripps Blå to go in their rebranding.

In the discussion, we strongly want to recommend the case presenter(s) to act like discussion leaders and not “take over”. You are not going to give the answer to the class, but to encourage them to think independently and in accordance to the Pripps Blå brand discussed in the beginning of presenting the case. If more than one presenter is present, it can be easier to divide the tasks so that one person leads the discussion while the other(s) writes on the whiteboard.

This is a case provided with insight information from people involved in the rebranding in 2011. Hence, we had the fortune to be provided with material that one cannot find on the Internet. Moreover, we had a “case film” sent to us, used in the visuals to present the “solution” part. This video cannot be used outside of this case presentation by the case presenter(s) and cannot be shared further.

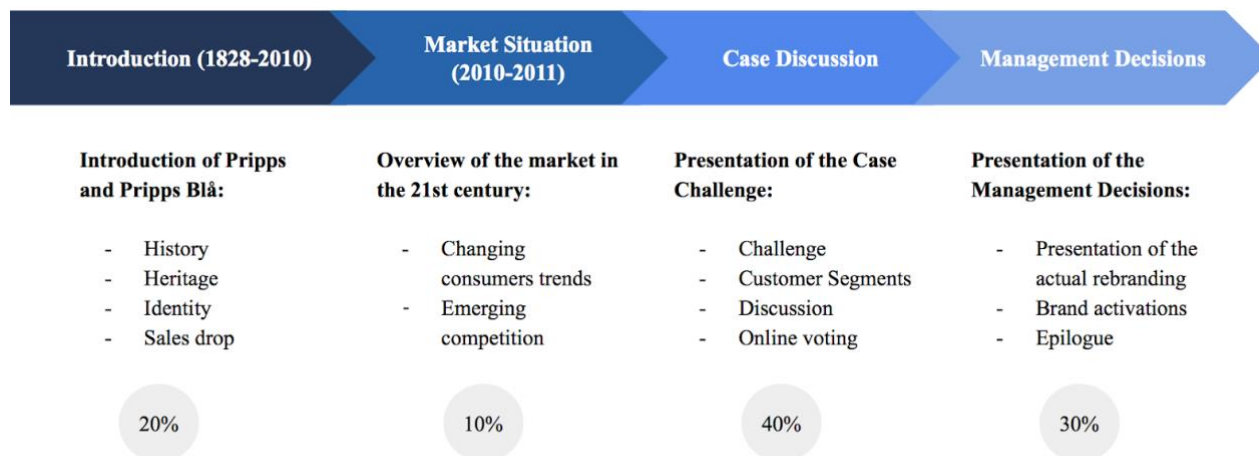
## Time Plan

In order to give the case presenter(s) an idea of how long each part of the case presentation should be, a suggested time plan is presented. Our suggestion is that the full presentation including discussion should be estimated to approximately 45 minutes. If the discussions for each consumer segment become rich, an extension of this time is preferred to reach saturation of the discussion. This, in order to enrich the learning.

In the first part of the case presentation the presenter(s) will give an introduction to the case, including the background story and the identity of Pripps Blå. This will be followed by a description of the market situation during 2010 and 2011, including trends, consumer behaviour and competition. Subsequently, four suggested consumer segments will be presented, including discussion after each and every segment (**See example in Table 2**) followed by an online voting where a winning consumer segment strategy is chosen. By this time, the case has reached its paramount and the actual rebranding strategy will be presented and a case video will be shown to illustrate the brand activations and the emotions Pripps Blå was aiming to project. Finally, a reveal of how the branding strategy developed up until 2017 will be presented together with the following question: “Does the “hipster” of 2011 still have the same attractiveness as it once had?”. Here, after a short discussion among the case audience, the case presenter(s) can finalize the presentation by reflecting upon the rebranding and if the brand management team could have done something differently and if this was a long-term solution for the brand.

**Figure 1** Time Plan





## Board Plan

Below follows a suggested structure that the case presenter(s) can use when it is time for case discussion. The structure is created in a way that will make the discussion easy to follow for all participants. In addition, the structure is simple to duplicate during the discussion in the participants own laptops and notebooks, to keep for later reflection.

**Table 2** Board Plan

	Strategy A The Brat	Strategy B The Social Foodie	Strategy C The Hipster	Strategy C The "Dad"
<b>Pros</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Trickle-down effects</li> <li>- Exclusivity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Free exposure</li> <li>- Linkage to food</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Matches Gothenburg origin</li> <li>- Interest for microbreweries</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Close to original branding</li> <li>- Including</li> </ul>
<b>Cons</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Excluding segments</li> <li>- Do not match the heritage</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A simple lager beer</li> <li>- Excluding consumption situations</li> <li>- To narrow, mostly girls in this segment and girl drink less beer than boys</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To narrow</li> <li>- Trend sensitive segment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Close to original branding</li> <li>- Discourage young consumers</li> </ul>

The structure should be drawn on a whiteboard without revealing the following consumer segments beforehand, to not prime the discussion in any way. For example, when starting the discussion, only Strategy A, "The Brat", should be put on the whiteboard. After the discussion is done, the case presenter(s) moves on by exposing Strategy B, "The Social Foodie". In the positive and negative boxes the case presenter(s) writes down the participants comments as short and precise as possible, preferably with key words or bullet points. Moreover, different colored whiteboard pens could be used to illustrate the pros and cons in a contrasting way.

## Epilogue

The purpose with this case was to present an issue that can occur for any company working towards customers markets in any industries. We do not want to take away the ambiguity by divulging this epilogue as the only correct approach to the issue. The one approach that Pripps Blå chose is one of many options that could have been successful.

From the four presented alternatives, Pripps Blå chose to target the consumer segment presented as Strategy C, “The Hipster”. We have been in touch with the current brand manager at Pripps Blå and additionally two of the actors who were involved in the rebranding in 2011; the creative agency WDW Creative, who had responsibility over the rebranding, and the multi platform network United Screens, who were part of the social media activations and influencer collaborations. All three parties agreed that the “urban hipster” segment was the right way to go during these times. But times are changing, and in today’s society, does the “hipster” of 2011 still have the same attractiveness as it once had? This might give an idea that the brand management was too eager to change the brand and that this choice of segment was not suitable for a long-term brand strategy. In conclusion, there may have been alternatives that could have been equally successful to the Pripps Blå brand, and maybe even alternatives that could have been more suitable in the long-term.

## Reflection

This case was created as an assignment in the Master level course Corporate Brand Management and Reputation (BUSN35) at Lund University School of Economics and Management, held by Mats Urde, Head of Course. The course is built on case based teaching, where students are exposed to real life managerial problems in order to bridge practical and theoretical knowledge. This particular case was created by three students with the aim of self-teaching as well as teaching fellow students and other case listeners interested in this academic field.

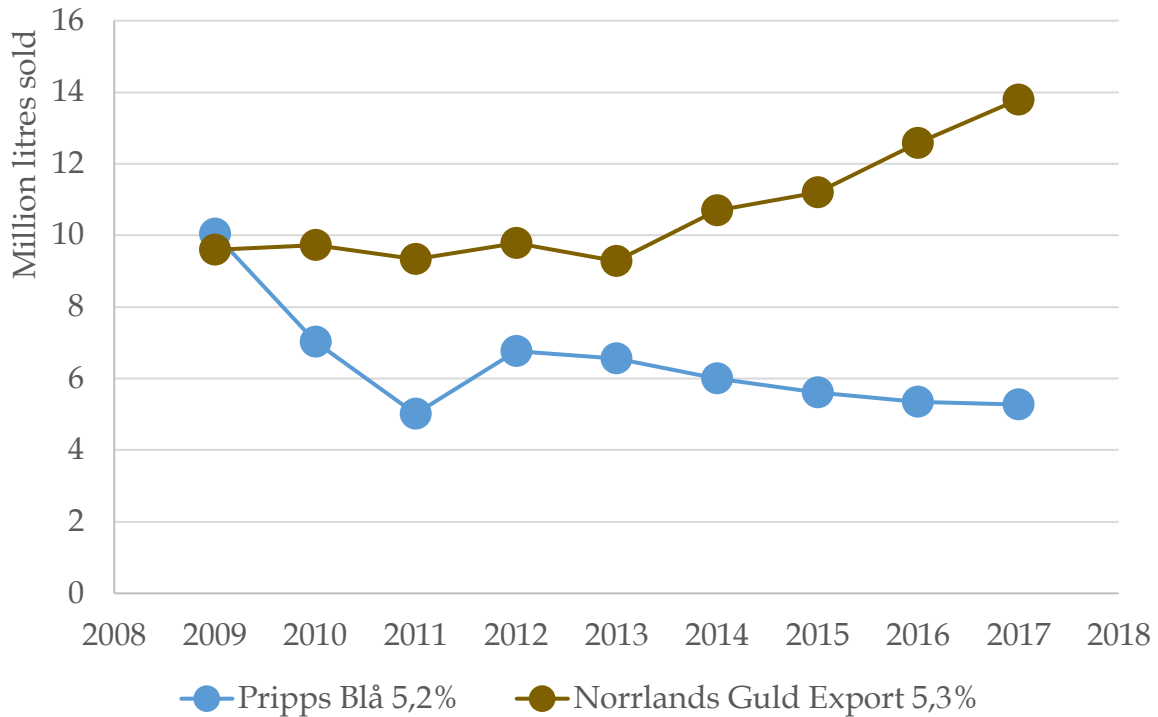
The process for creating the case began with a brainstorming that boiled down to three interesting case topics. After a supervision with Urde and PhD-Candidate Axel Welinder, a unified decision was taken to immerse into the case of Pripps Blå and its rebranding in 2011. To get deeper insights into the events that led up to decision of a rebranding we contacted different concerned actors; Systembolaget<sup>1</sup>, several advertising and creative agencies, and Carlsberg Sverige. Phone interviews were conducted where we gained exclusive insights not available to the public regarding the rebranding processes.

*This section will be further elaborated after the case presentation...*

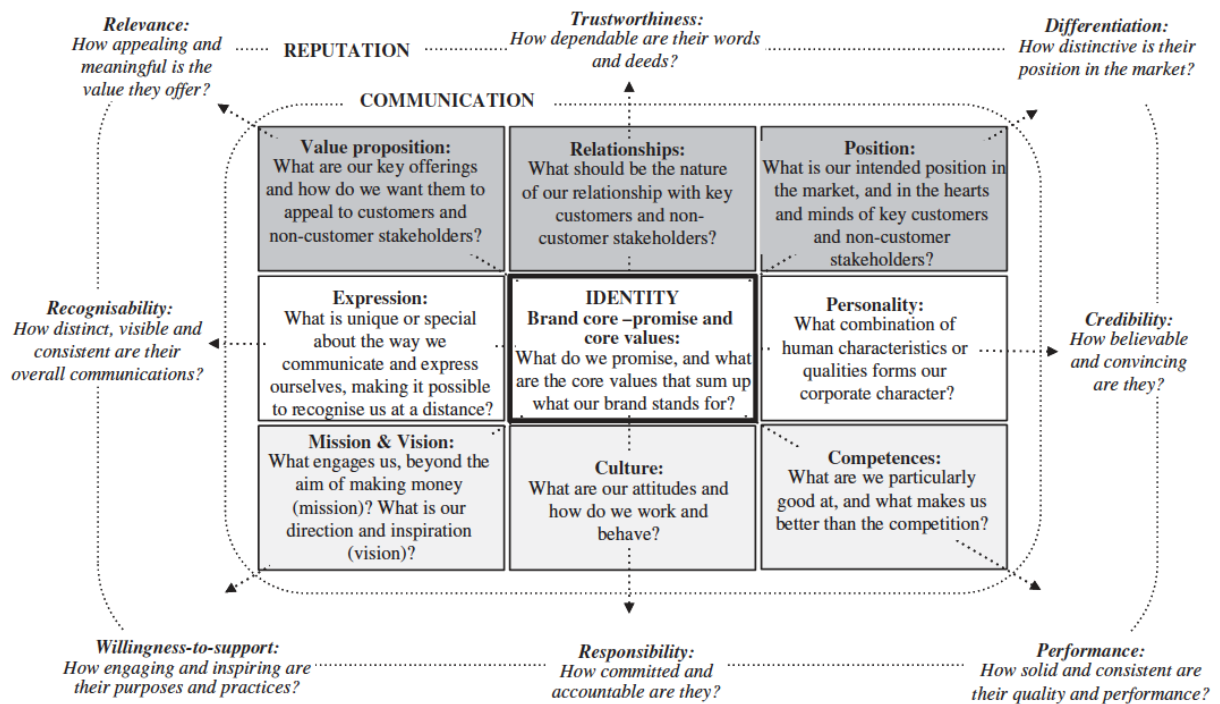
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<sup>1</sup> Swedish Alcohol Retailing Monopoly

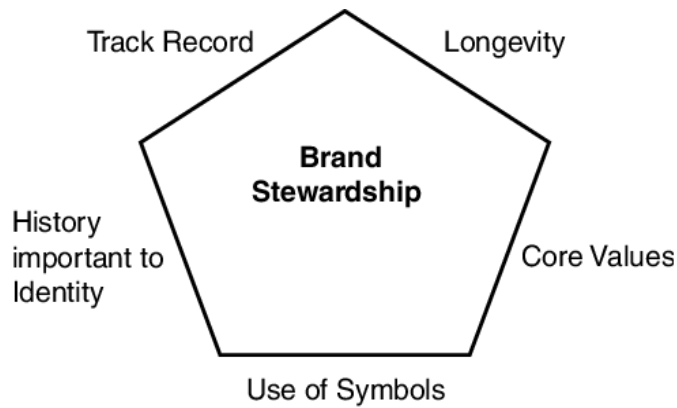
**Exhibit 1** Sales numbers before and after the Pripps Blå rebranding (Systembolaget, 2018)



**Exhibit 2** Corporate Brand Identity and Reputation Matrix (Urde & Greyser, 2016)



**Exhibit 4** Brand Stewardship model (Urde, Greyser & Balmer, 2007)



**Exhibit 4** Proposed visuals for case presentation, PowerPoint

The slides are organized as follows:

- Slide 1:** THE FALL OF THE FAVORITE. Pripps Blå logo.
- Slide 2:** THE GLORY OLD DAYS. Historical context and milestones.
- Slide 3:** THE GLORY OLD DAYS. Visuals of the brand's history.
- Slide 4:** THE IDENTITY. Brand identity elements: Blue color, wooden crates, history production, strong heritage, strong story, a rich tradition, and high standards.
- Slide 5:** A BRAND IN CHANGE. Market trends and challenges.
- Slide 6:** CONSUMERS OF THE 21st CENTURY. Consumer behavior insights.
- Slide 7:** THE NORTHERN GOLD CHALLENGE. Challenge from Norrlands Guld.
- Slide 8:** CHALLENGE. Strategic question: WHICH STRATEGY SHOULD PRIPPS BLÅ TAKE TO INCREASE SALES AND IMPROVE BRAND REPUTATION?
- Slide 9:** CONSUMER SEGMENT THE BRAT. Targeting young Swedish upper class.
- Slide 10:** CONSUMER SEGMENT THE SOCIAL FOODIE. Targeting social eaters.
- Slide 11:** CONSUMER SEGMENT THE HIPSTER. Targeting hipsters at festivals.
- Slide 12:** CONSUMER SEGMENT THE "DAD". Targeting fathers.
- Slide 13:** WHICH STRATEGY SHOULD PRIPPS BLÅ TAKE TO INCREASE SALES AND IMPROVE BRAND REPUTATION? Comparison of four segments (A, B, C, D).
- Slide 14:** WHICH STRATEGY SHOULD PRIPPS BLÅ TAKE TO INCREASE SALES AND IMPROVE THE BRAND REPUTATION? Graph showing reputation trends.
- Slide 15:** CHOSEN CONSUMER SEGMENT. Selection of the Hipster segment (C).
- Slide 16:** TRANSFORMATION. Brand transformation strategy.
- Slide 17:** THE NEW LOOK. Brand refresh guidelines: Younger appearance, humble to heritage, keep the iconic look, history as a face forward, adventure, freedom & strong, believe in the future.
- Slide 18:** THE NEW LOOK. Visuals of the new branding.
- Slide 19:** EPILOGUE. Does the "hipster" of 2011 still have the same attractiveness as it once had...? Graph showing attractiveness over time.
- Slide 20:** THANK YOU!

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