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STRATEGIC BRAND MANAGEMENT:  
MASTER PAPERS

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**A framework for generating loyalty  
in the alcohol industry: a case study  
of Heineken and Budweiser**

*By Peter Moane, Vladislav Galkin, &  
Alessandro Solmi*

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# Strategic Brand Management: Master Papers

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# SBM

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# **A framework for generating loyalty in the alcohol industry: a case study of Heineken and Budweiser**

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## **Abstract**

**Purpose:** The purpose of this study is trying to understand which elements are essential to obtain loyalty in the alcoholic beverage industry and how companies can focus their branding efforts on these drivers of loyalty.

**Methodology:** A literature review is conducted to identify the key drivers which can influence brand loyalty. These drivers are then analysed by researching two case studies, Heineken, and Budweiser. This is done via a mixed methods approach, first through quantitative, primary survey data to get consumer perceptions of both Heineken and Budweiser with regards to the four drivers and their success and points of improvements on these four drivers, and these data were used to create a radar chart. In conjunction, qualitative content analysis of 10 advertisements for each brand examines how these drivers are being utilised in their advertising campaigns.

**Findings:** Through the literature review, four key drivers for brand loyalty were identified - Brand Awareness, Perceived Quality, Brand Personality and Physical Attributes. The survey and the content analysis confirm that these dimensions are related to loyalty, even though brand personality represents an element of particular attention, as consumers tend not to perceive it. Both perceived quality and physical attributes were both positively portrayed in the survey and content analysis. Brand awareness should be emphasised by running global campaigns rather than local/national ones.

**Original/value:** This study creates a bespoke framework to assess and analyse specific drivers which impact upon brand loyalty in the alcohol industry.

**Keywords:** Brand loyalty, brand awareness, brand personality, physical attributes, perceived quality, alcohol industry.

**Paper Type:** Research Paper

## 1. Introduction

The concept of brand loyalty is of paramount importance in the field of brand management. Not only is it one of the adding value elements for brands (Melin, 2002), but it is also a generator of high profit levels, constant market share and stable liquidity for the company (Melin, 2002). Brand loyalty is also crucial because for companies it is less expensive to maintain a loyal customer base, rather than attracting new buyers (Joseph, Sivakumaran, Mathew, 2020). Finally, loyal customers tend to be less price sensitive, thereby providing firms with a way to face a fierce competition (Joseph, Sivakumaran, Mathew, 2020).

This last aspect of loyalty is especially relevant for industries in which the number of competitors is high, offering consumers a wide range of alternative products. One of such industries is the market of beers. To build a highly loyal customer base, beer producers should have clear in mind which are the factors that might induce consumers to become loyal to a certain brand of beer. These insights should then be exploited to develop a branding strategy which may induce buyers to make repeat purchases and become brand sensitive, i.e. to become involved in the brand and to focus more on the brand of the product rather than on its price when making a choice (Melin, 2002).

Since no framework for loyalty determinants in the beer industry is already available, we have performed a literature review regarding which may be the drivers of loyalty in the beverage industry in general and we have merged the outcomes of different articles to create a new bespoke framework, illustrating which elements could be the most influential ones for loyalty in the beer industry. Specifically, we have created a radar chart consisting of four aspects: brand awareness, perceived

quality, brand personality and physical attributes. After that, we analyse how the two biggest beer brands according to Kantar (2019) i.e. Budweiser and Heineken, relate in terms of these four elements. To do that, we submitted a survey to try to have a quantitative estimate of the four factors for each of the brands. We have integrated the results with a content analysis of the marketing campaigns of the two companies, choosing 10 ads for each of them. As a consequence, the structure of this paper will be as follows: a literature review will illustrate how he have connected elements of different loyalty frameworks to build our own bespoke framework and radar chart; then the methodology of our research will be introduced; after the results of the survey and the two case studies will be presented; a discussion of the qualitative and quantitative results will follow together with theoretical and managerial implications. An illustration of research limitations will conclude the paper.

## 2. Literature Review

### *Brand Awareness*

Brand awareness can be seen as the first step in the brand building process (Kapferer, 2012), and according to Urbanek (2002 cited in Świtała, Gamrot, Reformat & Bilińska-Reformat, 2018) is imperative in creating brand strength and competitive advantage. Brand awareness can be described as the creation of awareness of the brand for customers (Melin, 2002). In more cognitive terms, Keller (2006) describes brand awareness as “the strength of the brand node or trace in memory, as reflected by consumers' ability to recall or recognise the brand under various conditions” (p. 547). Other definitions by Keller (2006) and Thaichon & Quach (2015 cited in Fortes, Milan, Eberle & de Toni, 2019), focus on the knowledge and recognition of a specific brand.

There are generally three types of brand awareness which can generate awareness with customers: top of mind awareness, referring to which brands enter the mind of the consumer first; spontaneous awareness, which relates to all of the brands which come to the mind of the consumer; and aided or prompted awareness; which comes from specific prompts to seek the brands with highest recognition (Kapferer, 2012).

Brand awareness is an important part of getting a share in the customer sphere. Previous research mentions that the first brand which a customer remembers in a specific category is the product they are most likely to purchase (Melin, 2002). There is particular importance of spontaneous awareness of brands in both Business to Consumer (B2C) and Business to Business (B2B) contexts, and that spontaneous recollection of brands tend to be the consumers preferred brand (Kapferer, 2012). Previous literature states that brand awareness can be influential in future purchasing decisions either indirectly (Sharifi, 2014), or though increasing online brand awareness actually increases offline purchase intentions (Dabbous & Barakat, 2020).

In the context of brand equity, a high level of brand awareness can create a high level of brand value (Keller, 2006). Brand awareness can also be positively attributed to valuable image dimensions, “such as high quality, trust, reliability, closeness to people, a good quality/price ratio, accessibility and traditional styling (Kapferer, 2012, p. 21). Sponsorship is also a common method in building brand awareness, and can contribute to creating brand awareness, as well as recognition and positive good will (Kapferer, 2012).

Brand awareness in the alcohol industry hasn't been extensively researched in previous literature, however, has been assessed in the context of other relevant industries. In the soft drink industry, Sultan,

Akram, Abdulhaliq, Jamal and Saleem (2019) conclude that spreading awareness about a brand results in the perception of increased loyalty and awareness among brands. However, it is important to note that awareness takes time to develop, and long-term strategies may be needed to develop sufficient awareness (Kapferer, 2012; Sultan et al., 2019).

Brand awareness has been previously used in underage drinking behaviour. According to Austin, Chen and Grube (2006) brand awareness and positive drinking expectations among youths can be related to media exposure. Indeed, a myriad of studies which also note that brand awareness has “been linked to alcohol advertising” (Gentile, Arterberry, Bender, & Costabile, 2019, p. 5).

#### *Perceived quality*

One of the most important brand associations is the notion of perceived quality (Melin, 2002). Perceived quality is the ‘perception of the consumer’ (Mitra & Golder, 2006). Aaker (2009 cited in Styliadis, Wickman & Söderberg, 2015) defines perceived quality in terms of the customers perception regarding a product's quality and superiority, considering its intended use compared to other available alternatives.

Many factors can influence the perceived quality of a brand by a consumer, ranging from the brand name, to the packaging of the product, to the price, and advertising campaigns as well (Melin, 2002). The price level of a product places the brand in a specific category based on perceived quality along with other dimensions such as performance and prestige (Kapferer, 2012). Brand with a heritage is an important concept in relating to the idea of prestige, and how heritage can create a unique value proposition for the consumer (Urde, Greyser, Balmer, 2007).

Research also implies that managers tend to think that consumers use price-perceived quality as a method of evaluating products. Managers can also increase price-perceived quality perceptions among customers through providing dissimilarity among brands, and matching products with a pricing strategy (Yang, Sun, Lalwani, Janakiraman, 2019).

Perceived quality is an important facet since it must live up to customers' expectations (Melin, 2002; Sultan et al., 2019). Indeed, brand awareness is an important factor which results in a perceived higher quality (Fortes et al., 2019; Melin, 2020). In previous research on sports drinks, there is significant correlation between the packaging and its importance on an individual's perception of quality (Vigstrand & Lundell, 2016). In the food sector, visual packaging directly impacts upon consumer perceptions of food product quality and brand preference (Wang, 2013) with sustainable packaging of food products having a positive impact on perceived quality (Magnier, Schoormans & Mugge, 2016).

In terms of perceived quality impacting on brand loyalty, Fortes et al. (2019) highlights that brand awareness and perceived quality are positively correlated, and that perceived quality is also positively correlated to brand love, which influences brand loyalty. Moving into the online sphere, Shanahan, Tran and Taylor (2018) specify that "higher consumer brand engagement and stronger brand attachment are driven by perceived personalisation in social media advertising. More precisely "perceived personalisation has significant influence on consumer brand engagement and brand attachment, each of which has significant effects on perceived quality and brand loyalty" (p. 61).

### *Brand personality*

Brand personality represents "the set of human characteristics associated with a

brand" (Aaker, 1997, p.347), i.e. how a brand would look like and how it would behave if it were a person. This means that customers can attribute human features to a given brand by observing the metaphorical and self-expressing application of it (Fortes et al., 2019). Brand personality may derive from what consumers associate the brand with and from the company's ideal image, i.e. how it would like to appear and be perceived (Farhat & Kahn, 2011).

In the field of brand management, this dimension is relevant because it is assumed that customers choose their brands exactly as they choose friends (Melin, 2002). This means that customers tend to opt for those brands whose personality is similar to their own, those ones with which they can identify (Farhat & Kahn, 2011), also because their quality perception of these brands tends to be better (Fortes et al., 2019). A brand with a strong personality allows the consumer to express his/her ideals, to describe which kind of person he/she is (Farhat & Kahn, 2011). This is also in line with Melin's (2002) idea of the brand as an image creator and Kapferer's (2012) one of the badge role of the brand.

Brand personality is also considered a driver of loyalty because it engages the customer with the brand (Goldsmith & Goldsmith, 2012). By engagement, it is meant the tendency of customers to develop an active relationship with brands, to feel emotionally involved with them (Goldsmith & Goldsmith, 2012). This is more common for those brands whose personality is strong and characteristic, probably because it eases the consumer's identification process with the brand (Maehle, Otnes & Supphellen, 2011). Finally, brand personality is also a promoter for brand awareness: consumers are more inclined to recognise those brands whose personality is almost unique and/or in line with their own one (Fortes et al., 2019).

So, considering that brand personality is positively correlated with perceived quality, self-expression, engagement and brand awareness, we considered it as an important driver of loyalty for the beer sector, especially if considering the role for self-image played by beer, e.g. men's desire to reinforce their masculine image (Kapferer, 2012).

### *Physical attributes*

Physical attributes are one of the main aspects that influence loyalty and brand preference. In terms of the beer industry, the product's main physical aspects include packaging, the taste of the product, and alcohol content.

Packaging is considered to be one of the determinants of perceived quality. In recent years, several self-service shops have been introduced in the retail industry, increasing the importance of packaging as the main identity and differentiation drivers (Gomez, Martin-Consuegra & Molina, 2015). The recent studies suggest that some people have preferences for the bottled package because the aluminium one may affect the taste of the beer and it can even be harmful to the health as it may absorb some aluminium parts (Thong et al, 2018). The packaging can also have a serious positive impact on the product's perceived quality (Catherine Prentice, Handsjuk, 2016) and influence brand preference. According to the surveys conducted in Mexico, the buyers of crafted beer place a significant emphasis on packaging and labelling of the product as it may improve the experience of beer consumption. People say that "if I am buying a cool packaging, I think I'm buying a more interesting product, more unique" (Gomez-Corona et al, 2016, p. 364).

The taste of the beverage is a crucial factor that influences the choice of the product. The studies show that in the soft drinks sphere, the taste is one of the main criteria for choosing a drink. The majority of

respondents claim that taste seriously affects their choice of beverage, and if they had to choose between the water or a soft drink, they would opt for the latter (Redondo, Gómez-Martínez & Marcos, 2014).

In terms of beer, there are not many studies concerning the influence of taste on consumer preference. However, some analyses of craft beer choice indicate that taste is an essential part of the product's physical perception. According to recent research, the most essential craft beer attribute is taste (Lerro, Marotta & Nazzaro, 2020), and sometimes this criterion can be of more value to consumers than packaging. People argue that even if the product has nice labelling and good package materials but bad taste, they would be looking for some better flavour next time (Gomez-Corona et al, 2016).

The alcohol content is another essential characteristic that influences the choice of a beer. People nowadays are shifting towards low-alcohol beverages, and there are several reasons for that. The main reason is that consumers are trying to decrease the amount of alcohol they drink due to the healthy lifestyle trend and weight management (Chan, 2019). Various sportsmen, young parents and other social groups prefer to stay sober while not rejecting the habit of beer drinking, so it is of high importance for the companies to have a light-beer option in their product line in order to meet the expectations of customers who do sports and try to manage their weight (Chrysochou, 2014).

## **3. Methodology**

The study's methodology implies the application of the theoretical knowledge found in the literature review discussing different aspects of loyalty in the alcohol industry.

The main drivers of loyalty are considered as brand awareness, perceived quality, brand personality and physical attributes. The impact of these factors will be studied on Heineken and Budweiser, which are the leading brewers in the industry - with Heineken brand value of \$5.3 billion and Budweiser brand value at \$15.6 billion (Interbrand, 2018).

The research takes the form of a mixed methods approach. The qualitative element of the research is carried out through qualitative content analysis, and in this case through a self-selected sample (Neuendorf, 2017) of 20 TV advertisements - 10 TV advertisements for Budweiser during the SuperBowl in the last 10 years, and 10 advertisements for Heineken during the Champions League within the last 10 years, taken from YouTube.

The qualitative content analysis follows the inductive content analysis procedure outlined by Elo & Kyngäs (2008). The process of this content analysis includes the open coding of the advertisements through manual note taking while watching the advertisements. This is then followed by categorisation and abstraction, where the open codes are defined as subcategories, and then are placed into genetic categories before being placed into the main category (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008), which are the four main drivers: brand awareness, perceived quality, brand personality and physical attributes.

However, for this content analysis, the process has been simplified to generate the open codes directly into genetic categories, and then into the main categories. An overview of our proposed content analysis framework can be seen in figure 3.1.

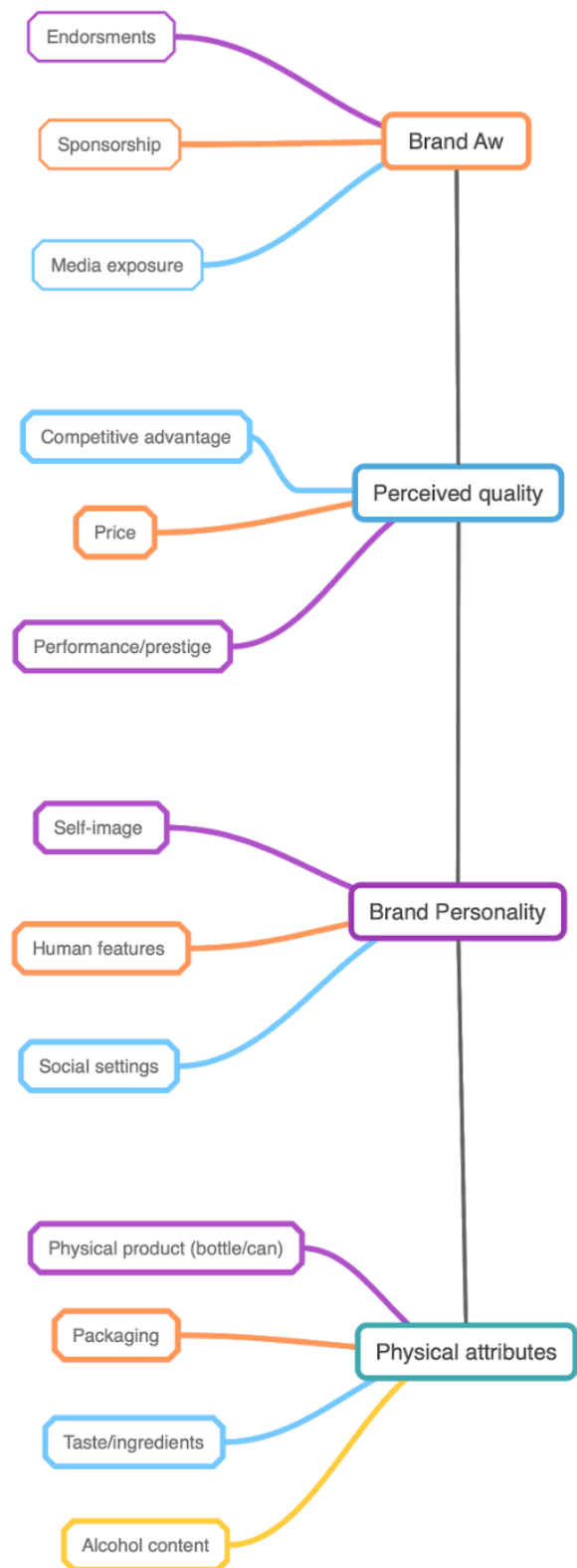


Figure 3.1: Proposed Content Analysis Framework

The following genetic categories have been created for each driver based on the literature review: sponsorship or partnership, media exposure, endorsements; creating the main category of brand



awareness. The genetic categories of price, competitive advantage and performance or prestige create the main category of perceived quality. Human features, social settings and self-image form the brand personality main category. Lastly, the genetic categories of packaging, taste and ingredients, the physical product and alcohol content derive physical attributes.

The second part of the research comes in the form of a quantitative survey on a Likert, 1-5 scale, which gains consumer perceptions of the two brands and their performance to the selected drivers of brand loyalty. The Likert scale provides respondents with a set of statements to respond to the level of agreement on a metric scale, and provides insights into respondent attitudes toward certain issues (Joshi, Kale, Chandel & Pal, 2015), in this case, the performance of Heineken and Budweiser regarding the four drivers of loyalty. The sample of the survey is derived from a non-probability convenience sample, where the sample is posted online to various channels and respondents could opt in to fill in the survey (Sue & Ritter, 2017).

The results from the quantitative survey then creates a radar chart which visualises the brand performance. The qualitative content analysis of the commercials will be compared with the quantitative survey responses to analyse current performance and give recommendations on how to increase brand loyalty for Budweiser and Heineken.

#### **4. Analysis and Case Studies**

##### *Survey Analysis*

The quantitative data of our study has been obtained by means of a survey administered to a sample of 173 respondents. Such a sample was composed of 52% of women and 48% of men. The majority of the respondents were 18-24 years old students,

coming from 26 different nationalities, most of them from Europe.

The survey consisted in four sections, aimed at measuring each of the four elements of our framework, for both Budweiser and Heineken, from the customers' perspective. The questions related to perceived quality, brand personality and physical attributes were formulated using the Likert-scale method, whilst the ones about brand awareness consisted in an open-ended question followed by a structured question. All the results have been standardised and expressed on a scale from 0 to 5, to create homogeneity across the answers. Each percentage (x) was multiplied by 5 and then divided by 100, according to the following proportion:

$$x:100=y:5$$

The first section was dedicated to brand awareness, which was assessed by adopting firstly the unaided approach and secondly the aided approach. In the former case, respondents were required to name the first three brands of beer that come to their minds. In the latter case, they were asked to pick from a sample of brands of beer the two they were most familiar with. It was found that Heineken spontaneous recall is quite high (3.15/5), whilst Budweiser's is low (0.5/5). In terms of aided brand awareness, Heineken scored 3.62, while Budweiser scored 0.67. The average of these results provides a brand awareness score of 3.39 for Heineken and 0.59 for Budweiser. Before concluding that Budweiser is unknown, it should be observed that almost all the respondents were Europeans, whereas Budweiser is a very popular brand in the US, as it will be discussed more in depth later.

The second section addressed the issue of perceived quality. For each of the brands, two Likert-scale questions asked respondents if they consider the two beers

to be of high-quality and if they find that the prices reflect the quality of the two beers. In terms of quality, Heineken scored quite positively (3.06/5), while the opinion for Budweiser seemed to be quite neutral (2.53/5). With regards to whether the prices reflect the quality of the two beers, consumers' opinion was positive for Heineken (3.4/5) as well as for Budweiser (3.14/5). The average of the two results provides a perceived quality score of 3.23 for Heineken and 2.84 for Budweiser.

The third section was aimed at estimating brand personality. Consumers were asked if they could imagine the two brands as persons and if they believe that the two brands are for people like them. Heineken scored neutral on first question (2.68/5), while it seems that consumers have difficulties in thinking about Budweiser as a person (1.95/5). With regards to the second question, customers' identification with Heineken appears almost neutral (2.46/5), while it is low for Budweiser (1.95/5). The average of the two results provides a brand personality score of 2.57 for Heineken and 1.95 for Budweiser.

The fourth section focused on the aspect of the physical attributes. The attractiveness

and relevance of the packaging, the importance of the alcohol content and the opinion about the taste were assessed. Heineken's packaging seems to be moderately relevant (2.96/5) and attractive (3.2/5), while Budweiser's one appears to be neither relevant nor irrelevant (2.68/5) and moderately attractive (2.94/5). Respondents showed a positive opinion for the taste of Heineken (3/5) and almost a neutral one for Budweiser's (2.45/5). The alcohol content plays a role in the decision-making process only for 48% of the buyers. These results are summarised in a physical attribute score of 3.05 for Heineken and 2.69 for Budweiser.

The four dimensions of our framework can be represented by means of a radar chart, like the following one.

As can be observed, the four dimensions are arranged to form a diamond. For each of them, each of the brands can score at least 0 and at most 5. The scores of the brands are then connected by a line: the blue one links Heineken's scores, whilst the red one links Budweiser's ones. The brand loyalty radar chart for Heineken and Budweiser can be seen in figure 4.1 below.

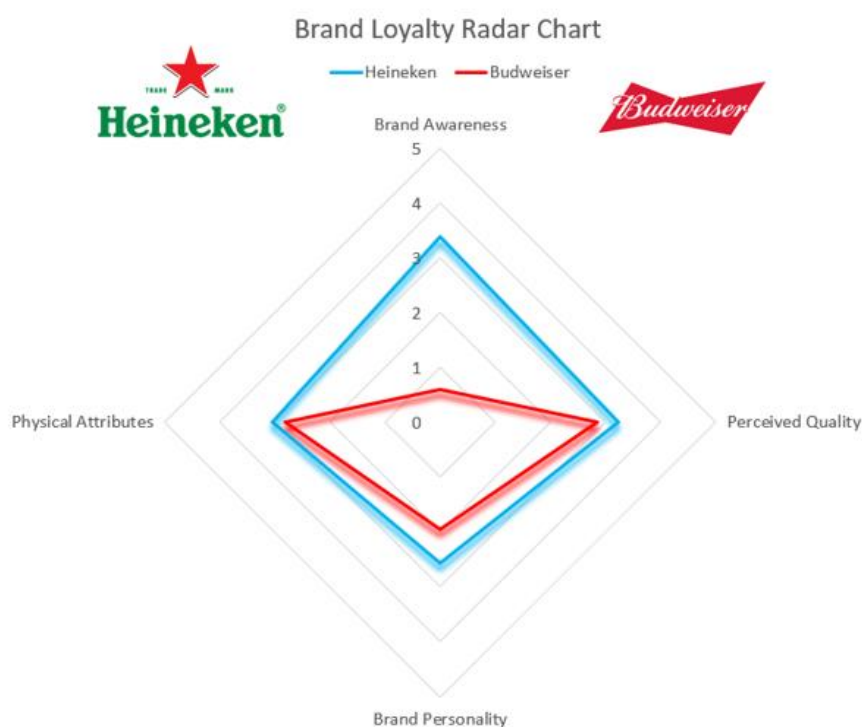


Figure 4.1: Brand Loyalty Radar Chart – Heineken & Budweiser

## Case Studies: Budweiser and Heineken

### Overview

In order to analyse the conceptual framework for brand loyalty, the two chosen brands, Budweiser, and Heineken, have been analysed through the chosen sample of 10 SuperBowl Advertisements and 10 Champions League advertisements for each brand within the last 10 years. The advertisements were viewed, and content analysis was carried out through the simplified process of coding into genetic categories, and then main categories as outlined in the methodology (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008).

### Brand Awareness

Budweiser is a global brand, and to increase recognition, the company creates tv commercials for one of the most watchable sport events – the SuperBowl, which attracted almost 100 million of viewers in 2020 (Coster, 2020). Such exposure lets Budweiser present itself to a huge audience, not to mention millions of views on YouTube, where people can enjoy and discuss the commercials. Budweiser's SuperBowl ads videos on YouTube for the years 2010, 2011 and 2012 recorded 76,040, 1,926,023 and 38,211 views, respectively. Interestingly, Budweiser did not make use of celebrities in these advertisements to endorse its beer.

On the contrary, one of the main sources of brand awareness from Heineken is the use of celebrities who endorse the product, particularly famous football players and managers. Sponsorship is also constant throughout due to the partnership between Heineken and the Champions League as a main tournament sponsor. Sponsorship is shown through elements such as the logotype, use of physical products like footballs, and also the screening of games which are viewed by those in the advertisement. Media exposure also

highlights the saliency and brand awareness of Heineken. The Champions League Final had a viewership of 380 million in 2014 and 2015 (Infogram, n.d.). In terms of YouTube viewership, Heineken received a large number of views on their respective campaigns. The #SharetheDrama and *The Last Tickets* campaigns recorded almost 900,000 and almost 300,000 views, respectively. Meanwhile, the Prep Talk advertisement received just under 540,000 views, and all mentioned advertisements included celebrities.

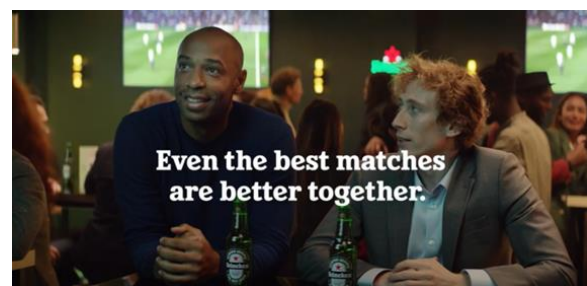


Figure 4.2: Heineken | UEFA Champions League | Better Together (2019, 00:56)

### Perceived Quality

Budweiser communicates perceived quality through performance and prestige of the brand and displays horses to symbolise power and reliability.



Figure 4.3: Budweiser: SuperBowl XLVII Puppy Love (2014, 00:48)

Commercials often illustrate the production process of the beer, where clean and technologically equipped factories produce

a high-quality product for its customers. The company also appeal to the customers by emphasising its American origins and its heritage. For instance, the ad for the 2011 SuperBowl was actually a tribute to the 9/11 tragedy, whereas the ad for the 2012 was reminiscent of the end of Prohibition and focused on Budweiser's presence since 1876. This is also part of a heritage positioning, even if the brand is also trying to respond to the latest trends, for example by highlighting the importance of 'green energy' in the production, claiming that renewable energy is one of the main sources for their brewery.

Heineken frequently provides a comparison between their own brand and alternative drinks, with those in the advert choosing Heineken over all alternatives, with Heineken being the choice of beer over other unbranded beers in the Champions League Final 2015 advertisement. Heineken tries to improve its perceived quality by conveying freshness by showing drops on the bottles presented in the ads. Intangible attributes are communicated by presenting Heineken as a support for high-suspense moments (#SharetheDrama campaign) and as the sole company giving customers the possibility to have free tickets with a VIP back-stadium pass for a Champions League match (*The last tickets* campaign).

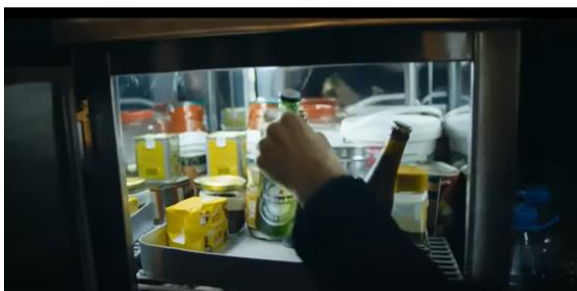


Figure 4.4: Heineken Champions League TV Ad 2015 (Full) (2015, 00:22)

Product performance and prestige are exploited as well. This includes advertisements stressing the importance of the Champions League as the premier event

over other sporting events in advertisements, with channel changes from one sport to the Champions League in 'The Prep Talk'. Heineken also portrays prestige through a sense of exclusivity in 'Open Your City', with a group attending a social event through a 'Heineken Invites You' invitation. Another interesting aspect of perceived quality is the act of enhancing performance, in which Jose Mourinho speaks from the rooftops, almost as a god-like figure, only after finishing his speech by taking a drink from a bottle of Heineken in 'The Prep Talk' advertisement. It is important to note that one of the key indicators of perceived quality in the literature, and in the content analysis - the price - was absent in all the ads.

### Brand Personality

Budweiser displays friendship as one of its main traits, and this is reflected in its commercials. One of the SuperBowl ads shows several home gadgets talking to each other expressing their feelings about how they want to watch the game with Budweiser, but they cannot do it. This case represents the friendship established between gadgets and the occasion where the Bud beer is suitable.

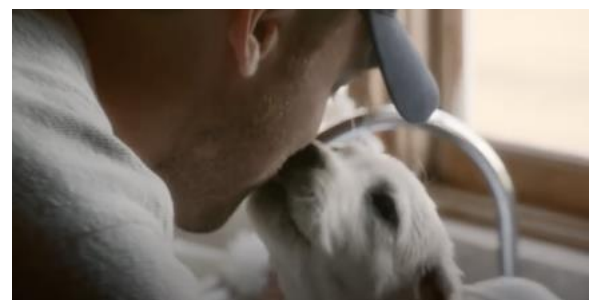


Figure 4.5: Budweiser Lost Dog Super Bowl Commercial (2015, 00:55)

The topic of friendship is also exposed in other SuperBowl advertisements, where the company portrays the story of a man and his dog, which gets lost in the city, but finally finds a way home, receiving a warm welcome from its owner. This commercial has had great success with its audience,

gaining 12 million views on YouTube and having been discussed in many tv shows in the US. Budweiser attempts to generate brand personality also in other ways. In the 2012 ad it tries to appear as an old friend returning after the Prohibition era, as a person that allows friends to gather at pubs, where men can reinforce their masculine images by drinking beer; in the 2011 ad, it endeavoured to be seen as able as a human being to feel sadness and to make a tribute to the 9/11 attack, inviting Americans not to forget that terrible day; and in the 2010 ad it positions itself as a product which allows people to feel part of a team and a community.

The stories of the Budweiser commercials prioritise warm human relations and sometimes beer becomes a tool to express them. In the 2018 SuperBowl commercial, the main character goes to work at the company factory early in the morning to produce a new consignment to help people who suffered from a terrible storm.



Figure 4.6: Budweiser's 2018 Super Bowl Commercial (2018, 00:22)

At the end, the character is having dinner with his wife and she looks at her husband with pride and respect. Thus, the company communicates such human traits as compassion and assistance, which easily resonate with the feelings of the customers. The SuperBowl 2017 commercial demonstrates one more trait that is considered to be the cornerstone of the American dream – the perseverance and ability to overcome hardships. Budweiser communicated this through a German brewer of the 19th century who decided to

go to America to establish his own factory, the original Budweiser factory.



Figure 4.7: Budweiser 2017 Super Bowl Commercial / "Born This Way" (2017, 00:27)

He meets a lot of obstacles on his way but in the end, he arrives at the continent and establishes a small brewing company that later becomes known as Budweiser.

The majority of Heineken advertisements revolve around some type of social settings, whether it be in a bar, in the living room with friends, or coming together with colleagues, to share emotional moments. Heineken is portrayed as bringing people together and the central aspect to socialising in the advertisements, it would not be the same without Heineken. The #SharetheDrama campaign permits Heineken to be perceived as skilful, fast and as a person that may induce people to feel brave enough to live dramatic moments. The *Last Tickets* campaign, instead, depicts Heineken as a dream realiser: the brand allowing people to attend a Champions League match and to meet their football heroes at the end of it.

The brand also, although seldom, replicates human traits in terms of fostering a sense of creativity and adventure in advertisements, such in the 'Open Your City' advertisement, where friends go on adventures through different settings to make it to a Heineken-invite event for the Champions League, or by creating a 'Do It Yourself' (DIY) TV to watch the big Champions League match from the middle of the ocean from the 2015 Final advert. In

the sample of advertisements, Heineken also portrays self-image in the eyes of customers, and ideals customers want to associate with the brand. Such ideals include the notion of teamwork to make sure everyone can socialise together and having the beer with you at all times - whether it be answering the call of Jose Mourinho or drinking a Heineken on top of a mountain.



Figure 4.8: Heineken - Open Your City | UEFA Champions League - Heineken Commercial TVC (2017, 00:49)

### Physical Attributes

In the Budweiser case, physical attributes of the brand are widely presented in its commercials. Packaging is considered to be of great importance in terms of physical attributes, and it is usually presented in bottle or aluminium can format. Bottles of the beer with distinct red Budweiser labels are occasionally shown more explicitly, and the good example of such demonstration is the advertisement with a brewer traveling to the U.S. to establish Budweiser. It emphasises the heritage behind the brand, pointing out the original design of the bottle, developed in the 19th century.



Figure 4.9: Budweiser 2017 Super Bowl Commercial | "Born This Way" (2017, 00:48)

In the ads from 2012, 2011 and 2010 Super Bowls, Budweiser logotype appears in an opaque image at the beginning of the ad and tidily at the end of it.

Besides packaging, another imperative dimension of physical attributes is the beer itself, how it looks like, how it flows to the cup and what ingredients are used to produce the product. The SuperBowl 2016 shows the production process of the beer underlining that Budweiser uses the brand-new up-to-date equipment and organic components to produce it for the customers. Moreover, the ad presents the physical characteristics of the product, its consistency and structure.

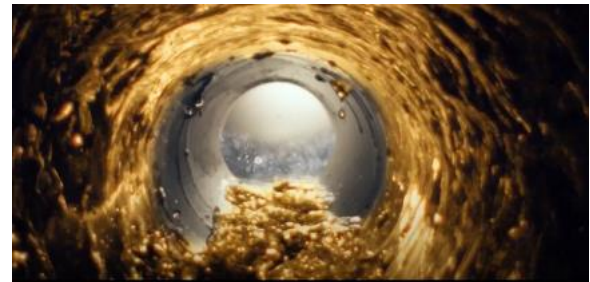


Figure 4.10: Budweiser USA 2016 Super Bowl Commercial (2016, 00:48)

All these images are intended to claim the highest quality of the product and urge people to try it. In all above-mentioned commercials the Alcohol content of the beer is never mentioned.

The physical attributes of the Heineken product are naturally an important part of their advertising campaigns. The physical product appears in all advertisements, but in bottle format exclusively. The logotype is also constantly used throughout the advertisements, both on the packaging and in other dimensions, such as social setting and in other visuals such as invitations and the use of logos. Heineken always presents its product in the iconic green bottle. The logo is clearly shown at the end of the ad next to the one of UEFA Champions League.

Another important physical attribute is the alcohol content, which is portrayed in Heineken advertisements through the bottle. It is clear to see whether the brand is Heineken, Heineken light or Heineken 0.0%. However, there are little to no references regarding the distinct taste or ingredients of the product, although the advertisements focus on the experience of drinking Heineken, and show the brand being consumed.



Figure 4.11: Heineken | UEFA Champions League | Better Together (2019, 00:18)

## 5. Discussion and Conclusion

### *Discussion*

Previous studies have shown how brand awareness is a crucial factor for brand loyalty and to build a strong brand (Melin, 2002; Urbanek, 2002 cited in Świtłała et al., 2018). Top-of-mind brands are the most frequently chosen (Melin, 2002) and this also happens when awareness is generated in the online world (Dabbous & Bakarar, 2020). Our survey revealed that Heineken is a top-of-mind brand since its score on unaided recall was high. The same cannot be said for Budweiser, which was almost never mentioned by respondents. This, however, could be caused by the European bias of our sample. Brand awareness can also be assessed through the aided approach (Kapferer, 2012). In this case, the survey results highlighted an improvement of the scores for both the brands, even if Budweiser's one was still low for the same above-mentioned reason. Sponsorship is a common way to create awareness.

(Kapferer, 2012). This explains why Budweiser and Heineken invest so much in the sponsorship of SuperBowl and Champions League and why the latter also makes use of celebrities to endorse its offerings. Therefore, if we observe the data of the survey taking into account the European bias, and if we look at the outcomes of the content analysis with a focus on the huge number of views, we can conclude that both the brands enjoy a high brand awareness. This is reflected in the high numbers related to their brand equities (Interbrand, 2018). Considering the robust positive relationship between loyalty and equity (Asif, Abbas, Kashif, Hussain & Hussain, 2015), it can be said that brand awareness is a strong driver of loyalty.

Perceived quality is another impact factor which impacts upon brand loyalty. When first looking at the survey results, respondents were more positive about the perceived quality of Heineken than Budweiser. This also coupled with the survey results where Heineken was perceived more positively than Budweiser in terms of brand awareness and packaging, previous literature is supported in the importance of perceived quality on customer perceptions (Melin, 2002; Aaker, 2009 cited in Styliadis, Wickman & Söderberg, 2020), and also that packaging (Magnier, Schoormans & Mugge, 2016; Vigstrand & Lundell, 2016; Wang, 2013) and brand awareness (Fortes et al., 2019; Melin, 2020) are also factors. The respondents considered the pricing of the brands reflecting the quality of the product. This supports previous research that the price plays a role in the perceived quality of a product (Melin, 2002; Kapferer, 2012). However, price was absent in the content analysis, and something which brands did not focus on. This may be attributed to aspects such as advertising regulation or advertising approach - for example, the EU is establishing directives to control advertising (Ghauri & Cateora, 2014).

The content analysis provides more insights into perceived quality of both Budweiser and Heineken. Both brands are proficient in portraying their brand via performance and prestige, in line with Kapferer (2012) view of the importance of those two factors in consumer perceived quality. Budweiser also uses their heritage to create a unique value proposition based on their history, mentioned by Urde, Greyser and Balmer (2007). The brands also emphasise their product as an alternative to others in advertising, which is an important part of the Aaker (2009 cited in Styliadis, Wickman & Söderberg, 2020) definition of perceived quality, and also cites the brands creating a competitive advantage by being the brand of choice (Urbanek, 2002 cited in Świtła, Gamrot, Reformat & Bilińska-Reformat, 2018). The brands also use the packaging to provide a sense of high quality, such as freshness, encompassing previous literature on the use of the packaging in perceived quality (Magnier, Schoormans & Mugge, 2016; Vigstrand & Lundell, 2016; Wang, 2013).

Brand personality is considered to be one of the significant factors that affect the loyalty to the brand among customers. The literature review implies that brand personality represents the human traits that a brand would have if it were a person (Kapferer, 2012). These characteristics are vital because people tend to choose brands as they choose friends (Melin, 2002), and when buying a brand, the customer expresses the ideals that are in line with his or her outlook. Moreover, it allows to engage customers with a brand and cause spontaneous recall, which can be crucial for the number of sales. The survey of more than 150 respondents from Europe showed higher results for Heineken than Budweiser, although both companies are widely presented in Mass media. This can be attributed to the fact that Budweiser is known as an American company, while in Europe, people feel more engaged with the

'local' brand, and thus rate its brand personality as more preferable.

In terms of TV advertisements, both companies represent such brand personality traits as friendship, loyalty, fun, perseverance and craving for adventures. The characters of commercials are not afraid to explore and overcome difficulties and they are always ready to help their friends and the society they live in. All these appealing traits help to establish positive relations with customers, increase engagement and reinforce brand awareness.

Physical attributes represent the tangible added value of the brand (Kapferer, 2012) and include packaging, flavour/taste, and alcohol content. Packaging influences the perception of the quality of the product (Gomez, Martin-Consuegra & Molina, 2015), while taste can be considered to be one of the main drivers of buying a beer (Redondo, Gómez-Martínez & Marcos, 2014). The alcohol content is gaining its importance due to the growing popularity of a healthy lifestyle that makes customers count the calories even from the drinks (Chan, 2019). In terms of packaging, both brands demonstrated similar results – customers are more neutral to this criterion. At the same time, Heineken taste scored higher than Budweiser, indicating the preferences of European customers. The alcohol content, printed on the package, is important in decision making for almost half of the respondents, which proves the notion of the growing trend for sports.

In commercials, companies often demonstrate glass bottles, proving customers' disposition to opt for glass rather than aluminium packages due to health reasons. Heineken presents its iconic green bottle in social settings to point out its unique design and emphasise the social context it should be used in.

As for Budweiser, it tends to display the production process and the liquid beer



itself, implying that selected ingredients lead to the perfect taste of the product. Heineken, on the contrary, inclines to show the process of drinking, rather than focus on ingredients. Moreover, the 'green brand' places a huge emphasis on its alcohol content which may symbolise that Heineken is more concerned on the health issue of its customers.

### *Theoretical Implications*

This research is one of the first studies that investigate the drivers of brand loyalty in the alcohol industry, focusing on the beer sector. By merging the results from previous analysis of loyalty determinants in other industries, we have created our own framework for the alcohol sector. Such a framework identifies brand awareness, perceived quality, brand personality and physical attributes as main loyalty inducing factors. These dimensions can then be arranged in a radar chart to measure each brand's loyalty.

### *Managerial Implications*

Managers can utilise our framework to assess the level of loyalty of their brands and to determine which courses of action to take to improve their status. This is especially relevant for beer brands.

Looking at the survey results, we may suggest Budweiser and other non-European brands to invest in global campaigns to enhance their awareness even outside their country or continent.

Considering the data of the survey and the outcomes of the content analysis, it seems that the marketing campaigns to foster brand personality are not really effective. Instead, they look aspirational, i.e. well rooted within the organisations but not perceived by customers (Greysier and Urde, 2019). Since brand personality is of fundamental importance for loyalty, companies should not tackle it superficially,

but make concrete efforts to make the audience perceive the human traits of the product, and possibly to generate a personality with which consumers may identify.

## **6. Limitations and Future Research**

There were some limitations to the research at hand, which can provide some context for future research. The sample survey taken for the data collection was mainly from European countries, with only a small number of respondents residing outside of Europe, which may have led to results resembling a European sample more than a global sample. For future research, a more global, representative sample, particularly in the United States when assessing American brands such as Budweiser, may provide a more representative data set. To exemplify, in the below figure, Budweiser (blue) has received a lot more google searches than Heineken (red) in the United States, so providing a more rounded global sample may provide differing findings.



Figure 6.1: Google Trends. (2020). Budweiser Heineken Comparison United States

A second limitation comes in the selection of brands, in which only two brands were selected for this analysis - Heineken and Budweiser. The use of a more diverse sample of brands would provide a broader understanding of the beer alcohol industry as a whole, and of popular beer products in other regions, such as Tiger Beer in Asia, may provide differing insights.

A third limitation in this research comes from the smaller size of the sample used for the qualitative content analysis. Only 20

advertisements in total, 10 for each brand, were selected for analysis. For future research, both the use of a larger advertising sample, as well as analysing other forms of media such as social media, may provide fruitful insights into the four drivers of brand loyalty in other mediums.

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## Appendix 1: Survey Questionnaire

This survey is aimed at understanding the degree of loyalty enjoyed by various beer brands. Such a degree of loyalty is assessed by addressing questions related to four drivers of loyalty: Brand Awareness, Perceived Quality, Personality and Packaging. Thank you in advance for your time.

Please, specify your gender

- Male
- Female
- Prefer not to say
- Other...

What is your age?

- 18-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55-64
- 65+

What is your nationality?

- 

What is your current employment status?

- Employed
- Unemployed
- Student
- Other...

Please, can you name three brands of beer that come to your mind?

- 

Among the following brands of beer, please pick the two you are most familiar with

- Carlsberg
- Heineken
- Guinness

- Budweiser
- Peroni
- Corona
- Paulaner

Please, indicate your level of agreement with the following sentence: "Budweiser is a high-quality beer", where 1 indicates "totally disagree" and 5 indicates "totally agree"

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

Please, indicate your level of agreement with the following sentence: "Heineken is a high-quality beer", where 1 indicates "totally disagree" and 5 indicates "totally agree"

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

Please, indicate your level of agreement with the following sentence: "the price of Budweiser reflects the quality of the product", where 1 indicates "totally disagree" and 5 indicates "totally agree"

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

Please, indicate your level of agreement with the following sentence: "the price of Heineken reflects the quality of the product", where 1 indicates "totally disagree" and 5 indicates "totally agree"

- 1
- 2

- 3
- 4
- 5

Please, indicate your level of agreement with the following sentence: "I can imagine Budweiser as a person" on a scale from 1 to 5 where 1 indicates "totally disagree" and 5 indicates "totally agree".

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

Please, indicate your level of agreement with the following sentence: "Budweiser is for a person like me" on a scale from 1 to 5 where 1 indicates "totally disagree" and 5 indicates "totally agree".

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

Please, indicate your level of agreement with the following sentence: "I can imagine Heineken as a person" on a scale from 1 to 5 where 1 indicates "totally disagree" and 5 indicates "totally agree".

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

Please, indicate you level of agreement with the following sentence: "Heineken is for a person like me" on a scale from 1 to 5 where 1 indicates "totally disagree" and 5 indicates "totally agree".

- 1
- 2
- 3

- 4
- 5

Please, indicate your level of agreement with the following sentence: "the design packaging of Budweiser is important to me", on a scale from 1 to 5 where 1 indicates "totally disagree" and 5 indicates "totally agree"

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

Please, indicate your level of agreement with the following sentence: "the design packaging of Heineken is important to me", on a scale from 1 to 5 where 1 indicates "totally disagree" and 5 indicates "totally agree"

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

Please, indicate your level of agreement with the following sentence: "I find Budweiser packaging attractive" on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 indicates "totally disagree" and 5 indicates "totally agree"

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

Please, indicate your level of agreement with the following sentence: "I find Heineken packaging attractive" on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 indicates "totally disagree" and 5 indicates "totally agree"

- 1
- 2



- 3
- 4
- 5

Does the percentage of alcohol influence your choice in purchasing beer?

- Yes
- No

Please, indicate your level of agreement with the following sentence: "I like the taste of Budweiser", where 1 indicates "totally disagree" and 5 indicates "totally agree"

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4

- 5

Please, indicate your level of agreement with the following sentence: "I like the taste of Heineken", where 1 indicates "totally disagree" and 5 indicates "totally agree"

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

Thank you very much for your attention. If you have any other comments, please feel free to add them below:

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