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The challenges and opportunities of sustaining a brand through repositioning: The Jägermeister Case

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Abstract

Purpose: The purpose of this research paper is to examine the challenges of repositioning both in aligning the brand image with the brand identity and in sustaining the brand equity through creating consistency. This research is examined through the case of Jägermeister.

Methodology: A qualitative research method was conducted. Primary data was collected through a focus group and secondary data was collected through a case study of Jägermeister's repositioning in 2017. The primary data was used to gain an understanding of the individuals' brand image, and the secondary data enabled us to analyse the repositioning, its motives and further challenges.

Findings: The main findings of this paper are the importance of adopting a brand-oriented approach through repositioning as well as staying close to the brand identity, and proving the importance of reflecting on the identity through the image perspective. This contributes to a view of the brand orientation with an incorporation of the image, creating an inside-out orientation with an outside-in perspective. Our research also highlights the importance of communicating the brand consistently and developing the brand within the borders of the brand identity.

Theoretical and Managerial implications: For theoretical implications, we propose a framework allowing us to measure and map possible gaps between brand image and brand identity, based on *the corporate brand identity matrix*. We provide several managerial implications, one of them being the importance to review the identity through the image to address possible gaps through communication. Addressing image-identity gaps was proved necessary to create consistency within the brand.

Original/value: As the markets are constantly changing, brands are in need to contemporise the brand. This paper adds to the understanding of the challenges and opportunities of sustaining a brand through repositioning, as well as the repositioning strategy of premiumisation in particular. Further, the paper adds to the previous research on identity-image compliance by suggesting a new framework.

Keywords: Repositioning, corporate brand identity matrix, brand identity, brand image, Jägermeister

Paper type: Research paper

Introduction

Time equals a consistent change in our surroundings and time passing by is an indicator of the changes in our society as well as the market (Kapferer, 2012). The passing of time marks new generations of consumers and sets new prerequisites for brands which results in the disappearance of many brands throughout time (Kapferer, 2012). Therefore, the sustaining of a brand over time requires knowledge and consideration of the brand life cycle (Kapferer, 2012). The brand management process requires both working with the present state of the brand and the future of the brand (Kapferer, 2012). Furthermore, by including heritage in the brand identity a brand has an opportunity to create added value (Urde, Balmer & Greyser, 2007).

Jägermeister was founded in 1934 and the brand has ever since been famous for its iconic herbal liquor containing 56 botanicals (Jägermeister a, n.d.). Jägermeister is not only well-known for the infamous liquor but also for the iconic asset of its square-shouldered bottle and its unconventional approach to marketing (Jägermeister d, n.d.). Throughout Jägermeister's history of almost 90 years as a brand, there has been an urge to adapt and change the brand in order to sustain the brand and gain awareness among newer and younger generations. Repositioning can be seen as one of the routes of stabilisation of an older brand, meaning that the value proposition is adapted to current times by renewing the communication or creating a new view of the brand's position in the market (Kapferer, 2012).

Illustrated by a rejuvenation in the 90s, Jägermeister had a mission to change the image from an 'old man's drink' consumed at home towards an image of younger people drinking it at social gatherings (Homburg, Kuester & Krohmer,

2012). The rejuvenation was pursued by reviewing Jägermeister's marketing mix and launching a new campaign called 'I drink Jägermeister' (Homburg et al. 2012). More recently, namely, in 2017, Jägermeister once again repositioned by launching a new global position and an identity based on the characteristics of the brand's rich German heritage: spirited irreverence and product perfection. The new identity was carried out by communicating the campaign slogan "Be the Meister" to the millennial audience, empowering the target group to be the masters of their own lives (PR Newswire, 2017). By emphasising both the heritage and future at the same time Jägermeister makes an interesting case for understanding the strategies, process and challenges of repositioning, but also the general process of sustaining a brand (PR Newswire, 2017).

The purpose of this research is therefore to gain an understanding of the repositioning of Jägermeister by looking into the process and challenges of repositioning. Furthermore, the study aims to understand how the new identity matches the image by looking into the perception that the target audience holds of the brand and how Jägermeister can manage to sustain the brand. To reach the aim of the study, the following research questions have been constructed:

Research Questions:

- How did Jägermeister proceed in repositioning?
- Does the brand image align with Jägermeister's brand identity post-repositioning?
- How can a brand sustain brand equity after repositioning?

Theoretical framework

Brand Identity

The definition of a brand has been subject to decades-long disagreement and discussion between experts, leading to various definitions (Beverland, 2021; de Chernatony & Riley, 1998; Kapferer, 2012; Maurya & Mishra, 2012). According to Aaker (1991):

“A brand is a distinguishing name and/or a symbol ... intended to identify the goods or services of either one seller or a group of sellers, and to differentiate those goods or services from those of competitors.” (Aaker, 1991, p.7)

However, a brand is more than a name or symbol offering a point of differentiation. A brand is a carrier of meaning and associations that represent ideas and attributes (Gardner & Levy, 1955; Hoeffler & Keller, 2003; Aaker, 1996). A brand is a vision that provides direction and purpose by compromising the brand's key beliefs and core values. This vision is called brand identity (Kapferer, 2012; Aaker, 1996). Brand identity has been defined as a set of tangible and intangible characteristics that allow consumers to recognize the company as a unique entity (Abrams & LaPlante, 2008; Kapferer, 2012) and as a set of associations, representing what the brand stands for (Aaker, 1996). Further, it has been described as the internal identity of the brand (de Chernatony, 1999).

Brand Image and brand reputation

Although closely related, brand identity may not get confused with brand image and reputation (de Chernatony, 1999; Kapferer, 2012). Gardner & Levy define the image as the ideas, feelings, and attitudes that consumers have towards a brand (Gardner & Levy, 1955). More

recently, brand image has been described as the current perception of a brand on the receiver's side, emphasising the time factor (Kapferer, 2012; de Chernatony, 1999; Aaker, 1996). Brand reputation, on the other hand, describes the receiver's assessment of a brand, formed by perceptions from different sources over time (de Chernatony, 1999). Identity precedes image, meaning that brand image is both the result and interpretation of the meaning, aim and self-image of the brand (Kapferer, 2012).

Sustaining brand equity long term

For a brand to stay relevant over time, the management of the brand must be focused on building and sustaining brand equity (Kapferer, 2012). Brand equity can be defined as “the added value endowed to the product in the thoughts, words, and actions of consumers” (Keller, 2006, p.546). M'zungu, Merrilees and Miller (2010) suggest a three-stage conceptual model of brand management for building and maintaining brand equity consisting of (1) adopting a brand-orientation mindset (2) developing internal branding capabilities and (3) consistent delivery of the brand.

The brand-orientation mindset is considered a key adaptation to manage the brand strategically since it is using the brand as a strategic resource (M'zungu et al. 2010). Brand orientation can be viewed as an inside-out perspective with the identity emphasised and seen as the guidance for the strategy, behaviour and culture (Urde, Baumgarth & Merrilees, 2013). Moreover, the second step of the model describes the importance of internal motivation and training to ensure the brand's competence for the external success of the brand (M'zungu et al. 2010). The last step pinpoints the importance of delivering the same meaning across all touchpoints to be

consistent and to create a stable image and identity (M'zungu et al. 2010). Consistent brand delivery enhances the brand's reputation among consumers, as well as the understanding of the brand (M'zungu et al. 2010). It is further stated how trust, reliability and credibility are increased by brand consistency (M'zungu et al. 2010).

Brand (re)positioning

Brand positioning is part of the brand identity and value proposition that is to be communicated to the receiver (Aaker, 1996; Kapferer, 2012). It may therefore be described as the implementation of brand identity (Aaker, 1996). Positioning means emphasising the distinctive characteristics differentiating the brand from its competitors and appealing to the receiver (Kapferer, 2012). Positioning and repositioning have been central concepts of brand strategies for several decades and are often mentioned to be utilised to increase brand relevance as well as differentiate the brand from competitors (Aaker & Shansby, 1982; Beverland, 2021; Trout, Rivkin & Ries, 1996).

Aaker & Shansby (1982) mentions how positioning enables a brand to focus towards a particular segment but also emphasises the risk it is linked to, as the focus on a specific segment requires the company to turn its back towards potential consumers. Another view of positioning is presented by Kapferer (2012) who emphasises the use of distinct brand aspects when strategically adjusting the brand. By using positioning as a brand strategy, both the consumer's and the stakeholder's perception of the brand can be shaped by the company's desire, for example towards being a high-quality brand (Aaker, 1991).

Park, Kim and Kim (2002) define repositioning as every active choice an

organisation makes that alters the perceived position of the brand. Brand repositioning is a useful strategy to adapt with time, thus enabling an organisation to sustain brand equity (Kapferer, 2012). Repositioning in specific consumer categories is essential to stay relevant, to follow new trends and the evolution of the market (Kapferer, 2012; Trout, Rivkin & Ries, 1996). Kapferer (2012) states that repositioning can be done every four to five years but emphasises that the means of the brand's communication can change constantly to mirror the evolution of the market. Successful repositioning relies on aligning the brand image with the new positioning and brand identity (Barbu, 2016; Kapferer, 2012). Barbu (2016) implies that consumers' past experiences and attitudes may harm the brand identity-brand image compliance.

Premiumisation

Premiumisation can be defined as upgrading the perceived quality or value of the product; it can therefore move the product between market segments (Schmitz & Fassnacht, 2020). In transforming brands, premiumisation is often used to contemporise brands with a legacy or heritage (Aaker, 2004; Kapferer, 2012). The literature on premiumisation is somewhat fragmented regarding how to transform a brand to become premium, although there is consensus about the benefits of premiumisation (Aaker, 2004; Schmitz & Fassnacht, 2020; Simon & Fassnacht, 2019). As premiumisation aims to add value to the brand by strategically changing the consumers' perception, brand positioning is a central part of the design.

There are several approaches to implementing premiumisation. Simon and Fassnacht (2019) mention it can be done by releasing new products, upgrading the packaging of current products or marketing. According to Schmitz and

Fassnacht (2020), the trading-up strategy is an efficient premiumisation process which consists of more minor changes in the product design, for example; smaller-sized packaging, the packaging shape and the labels. Creating a lasting premiumisation in practice is a challenging process. Simon and Fassnacht (2019) emphasise the need for a strategic and systematic approach as well as an understanding of the longtime perspective to succeed. The authors further mention a need to realign functions such as design, communication and sales channels (Simon and Fassnacht, 2019). Premiumisation is not a new concept but has become more commonly cited as consumer trends indicate a higher demand for quality products (Shetty, Anand, and Raghavendra, 2021). Furthermore, the authors state the essentiality of premiumisation in the cases of legacy brands to stay relevant when customer demand changes (Shetty et al. 2021). A premiumisation strategy can be lucrative for brands in competitive and saturated markets as it can enhance a brand's long-term revenue streams (Schmitz & Fassnacht, 2020).

Brand identity matrix

To successfully define the corporate brand identity and successfully align and outline the elements of the identity the corporate brand identity matrix can be used as a tool (Urde & Greyser, 2019). The result of *the corporate brand identity matrix* can direct an alignment of the elements, for example, to sharpen the position and to create coherent communication (Urde & Greyser 2019). The communication and position are key tasks in the brand life cycle, for example, in repositioning a brand (Kapferer, 2012) Furthermore, from a managerial point of view, *the corporate brand identity matrix* also could be used in identifying 'gaps' between current and ideal identity in a change process (Urde, 2013).

The matrix includes analysing nine elements arranged in three layers, the internal layer, the external layer and the ones represented by both internal and external elements (Urde & Greyser, 2019). The layers are represented by value proposition, relationships, position, expression, brand core, personality, mission & vision, culture and competencies which are explained with their meaning in Figure 1 below.

External	Value Proposition What are our key offerings, and how do we want them to appeal to customers and other stakeholders?	Relationships What should be the nature of our relationships with key customers and other stakeholders?	Position What is our intended position in the market and in the hearts and minds of key customers and other stakeholders?
	Expression What is distinctive about the way we communicate and express ourselves and makes it possible to recognize us at a distance?	Brand Core What do we promise, and what are the core values that sum up what our brand stands for?	Personality What combination of human characteristics or qualities forms our corporate character?
	Mission & Vision What engages us (mission)? What is our direction and inspiration (vision)?	Culture What are our attitudes, and how do we work and behave?	Competences What are we particularly good at, and what makes us better than the competition?
Internal			

Figure 1 - The corporate brand identity matrix (Urde & Greyser, 2019)

Methodology

Research strategy

In this study, we have analysed Jägermeister's strategies for repositioning and sustaining a brand, and how it aligns with the perception of the target audience. We aimed to reach a deeper understanding of the phenomena and therefore chose to conduct a qualitative study (Bryman & Bell, 2017). The qualitative method was chosen to gather in-depth material on the case. In line with Bryman and Bell's (2017) recommendations, our method aided us in understanding the individuals'

social reality by understanding the individuals' perceptions. Since the study did not aim to draw any generalising conclusions a quantitative study was not relevant (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2019). We understand the limitations of our chosen method, the risk of subjectivity and unilaterality (Bryman & Bell, 2017). The risks were carefully considered and accepted due to the time constraints of the study.

Data collection

We collected both primary and secondary data. Primary data was collected through a focus group, secondary data was collected through a case analysis of the repositioning of Jägermeister. The method helped us with getting extensive descriptions of the individuals' thoughts as well as a detailed understanding of Jägermeister's changes (Bryman, Bell & Harley, 2019). A case study was chosen to enable a detailed collection of data on the Jägermeister organisation (Bryman & Bell, 2017). Bryman & Bell (2017) state that this method suits the study of examining specific events - in our case: the repositioning of Jägermeister - and the steps the brand has taken to implement the change. Furthermore, in line with Bryman and Bell's (2017) thoughts, the case study method was chosen because it is suitable to be combined with other research methods. We could therefore gather both primary and secondary data to analyse both the strategies of the repositioning as well as the individuals' perception of the brand.

We conducted one focus group session of 75 minutes with six individuals, conforming with Bryman and Bell's (2017) suggestion to include six to ten members in the discussion. The members were all students between the ages of 21 and 25, originating from five different countries, enabling several different

perspectives. Bryman and Bell (2017) argue that larger groups are linked to problems managing the focus of the discussion. We chose to have six members to ensure we could moderate the discussion according to our guidelines. The study aims to understand the individuals' in-depth perception and not draw any generalised conclusions, which argues for the choice of using a qualitative method instead of a quantitative method (Bryman & Bell, 2017).

Bryman and Bell (2017) state that focus groups enable the members to probe each other's perceptions of the brand, resulting in a more complex understanding than a question-followed-by-answer interview. Furthermore, we chose to use a focus group to enable the individuals to state their prominent thoughts about the brand. This is in line with the purpose to understand the members' perception of Jägermeister (Bryman & Bell, 2017).

Empirical findings

The case of Jägermeister

Despite its long history and craftful maceration process, Jägermeister's global reputation before 2017 was strongly branded by its endorsement by students and partygoers (Klara, 2017; Nickalls, 2017; Roderick, 2015). Informally labelled 'the drink of bro culture (Page, n.d., cited in Klara, 2017), Jägermeister was often referred to in its shortened form as 'Jäger' by its young consumer base. The herbal liquor was strongly associated with a 'high tempo party' (Roderick, 2015), symbolised by the infamous 'Jäger Bomb', a drink consisting of Jägermeister and Red Bull. Through an increasing presence at music festivals, in-bar brand ambassadors and guerrilla marketing activities the brand supported its fun image among the young demographic (Publican's Morning Advertiser, 2013). With the emergence of

Fireball in the US, Jägermeister's popularity in its biggest market quickly started to decline, resulting in a drop of 15 per cent in worldwide sales revenue between 2013 and 2016 (Kell, 2015; Klara, 2017; Statista, 2017).

In 2015, Jägermeister launched a campaign to reveal a new side of the brand, focusing on the craftsmanship and depth of the brand and product (Roderick, 2015; Publican's Morning Advertiser, 2015). The campaign also introduced a Jägermeister-based cocktail, which was promoted through on-trade marketing (Publican's Morning Advertiser, 2015). In 2016, the bottle was redesigned to embody the "high-quality of the premium spirit Jägermeister even more" (Checkout, 2016, p.70).

In 2017, Jägermeister unveiled a new global positioning and identity (PR Newswire, 2017; ISBA, 2018). Drawing from Jägermeister's German heritage, the new positioning incorporated 'spirited irreverence and product perfection' (PR Newswire, 2017, n.p.). This apparent oxymoron implies a two-headed brand strategy, that divides the brand essence into 'Jäger' and 'Meister' (ISBA, 2018). This division allows the brand to both target its existing young audience through its irreverent, fun and adventurous side as well as a mature target group by creating awareness for the high quality and masterfulness of Jägermeister (ISBA, 2018). Visually, the repositioning was supported by a redesign of the corporate identity, switching from orange to dark green as the central colour, and orange and gold being reserved for accents (Mast-Jägermeister a, n.d.).

All of this was accompanied by a campaign labelled 'Be the Meister.' The campaign, targeted towards a younger

audience, also introduced the concept of the 'perfect shot', meaning the drink being served at -18° Celsius (PR Newswire, 2017; ISBA, 2018; Grocer, 2018). The new positioning was promoted globally in print, out-of-home and digital, as well as through in-store and on-premise bar activations (PR Newswire, 2017).

In addition, Jägermeister launched its first premium line extension named 'Manifest', a "super-premium herbal spirit" (Jägermeister, 2017, n.p.) exclusively available in selected upscale bars, restaurants, hotels, clubs and stores (Jägermeister, 2017; ISBA, 2018). Further line extensions were to be followed in 2019, with the launch of 'Scharf', a spicy product version, and 'Cold Brew', a coffee-flavoured variant (Jägermeister a, n.d.).

By diversifying the brand and product portfolio, Jägermeister aims at sustaining brand equity and increasing brand loyalty over a longer period (ISBA, 2018)

"When building a drink brands [sic] it takes a long time to establish a new drinking occasion. These typically take 3-5 years, so our approach is extremely long-term in that respect" (Lawrence, n.d., cited in Roderick, 2015, n.p.)

Focus group perception

Empirical results were also collected, as previously mentioned, from a focus group study on the 4th of October. The results from the focus group will be presented throughout the analysis.

Analysis

The repositioning and premiumisation of Jägermeister

Analysing the case of Jägermeister, the brand proceeded with a repositioning moving away from the previous position endorsed by only students and partygoers (Klara, 2017; Nickalls, 2017; Roderick, 2015). According to Aaker (1991), positioning can be used as a brand strategy to shape the consumers' perception of the brand. The repositioning aims at changing the perception of the quality and craftsmanship of Jägermeister's products while continuing to celebrate its previous reputation as a bold and unconventional brand (PR Newswire, 2017, n.p.). This is in line with Aaker (1991) and Aaker & Shansby (1982), arguing that repositioning can enable a brand to change the perceived perception, for example towards being a high-quality liquor brand, and enable the brand to focus towards a new segment.

Performing a strategy of premiumisation for a brand is an attempt to upgrade the perceived quality or value of the product; it can therefore move the product between market segments (Schmitz & Fassnacht, 2020). Simon & Fassnacht's (2019) theory regarding upgrading the packaging can be identified as a premiumisation strategy used by Jägermeister. The company carefully redesigned the bottle to communicate high quality and create awareness for its value (Checkout, 2016), which could be argued to create awareness for the overall increased value-perception of the brand the repositioning aimed to achieve.

Another premiumisation strategy used by Jägermeister was changes of colour, the design change from the usage of bright orange to dark green (Mast-Jägermeister a, n.d.) was used to communicate masterfulness (ISBA, 2018). The change is

a clear premiumisation strategy as it can be interpreted to upgrade the perceived quality and value of the product which can enable a brand to enter new market segments (Schmitz & Fassnacht, 2020). In the process of repositioning, Jägermeister launched the premium product 'Manifest' (Mast-Jägermeister, 2017). Demonstrating the usage of premiumisation as a strategy to change the focus of the brand towards a particular market segment (Aaker & Shansby, 1982).

Identifying gaps between brand identity and brand image of Jägermeister

According to Urde (2013), a key task in brand management is "the closing of 'gaps' between a current and ideal corporate brand identity" (Urde, 2013, p.759). Furthermore, such gaps can be identified by applying the corporate brand identity matrix (Urde, 2013). In understanding brand image both as the result and interpretation of the meaning, aim and self-image of the brand (Kapferer, 2012) and as the perception of a brand's identity (Kapferer, 2012; de Chernatony, 1999; Aaker, 1996), we suggest that one can compare the brand image and brand identity through *the corporate brand identity matrix*. Reviewing the brand identity through the brand image will help to identify gaps between the ideal brand identity and the current perception. Using the matrix as a toolkit will aid to answer the following questions, derived from Urde (2013): Do image and identity correspond? Are there gaps that need to be addressed? We are coining this novel adaptation of Urde's (2019) framework *The corporate brand identity review matrix*. Since successful repositioning relies on aligning the brand image with the new brand identity (Barbu, 2016; Kapferer, 2012), we suppose that the success of repositioning can be measured through the gap between image and identity. M'zungu et al. (2010) point out the importance of creating consistency

within both the image and the identity. Therefore, we suggest that closing the gap between the brand identity and brand image is necessary to create consistency within the brand.

Based on the Urde & Greyser corporate brand identity matrix (2019) we created our analysis and interpretation of Jägermeister as a corporate brand, applying secondary sources mostly provided by the company itself, as summarised in Figure 2. We then analysed the individual perceptions of the focus group participants and related the findings to the nine sections of the corporate brand identity matrix. The following section, therefore, aims at both understanding the brand identity and image of Jägermeister after repositioning, as well as at measuring the success of the repositioning through the gap between Jägermeister’s ideal identity and its perception among students.

Brand Core

The brand core is defined as “what it stands for and the enduring values that underlie its promise to customers” (Urde & Greyser, 2019, p. 84), serves as a hub, influencing and interconnecting all brand identity and reputation elements (Urde & Greyser, 2016). Jägermeister’s brand was found to be encapsulated in the oxymoron of “spirited irreverence and product perfection” (PR Newswire, 2017, n.p.) or “irreverent perfection” (ISBA, 2018, 00:06:34-00:06:39). The core values were thus found to be defined as bold, social, masterful and authentic (Jägermeister b, n.d.).

All students in our focus group study particularly confirmed the ‘social’ compartment of Jägermeister’s identity, associating the brand with social gatherings such as parties and get-togethers with friends. One participant in the focus group said “I almost always drink it with the important people in my life.” (Person 1). The group further agreed on the brand’s authenticity, rooting it in the brand’s consistency in history. Jägermeister’s self-image, encapsulated in the oxymoron of ‘irreverent perfection’ could only partly be backed by our focus group members’ perceptions. The brand was very well regarded as bold and unconventional, with one member summing up as follows: “Jägermeister is unapologetically Jäger.” (Person 5). The brand was also consensually associated with ‘freedom’, supporting the aforementioned core value. The ‘masterfulness’ was only partially perceived by the group. Few group members were informed about the crafting process and were therefore not aware of the product’s high quality.

External / Internal	Value Proposition High-quality spirits with an unmistakable flavour, for many different drinking occasions	Relationships Inspire customers, maintain respect for people and the environment, promote responsibility	Position The most successful herbal liqueur in the world and one of the most successful premium brands worldwide
	Expression Unique ideas & courage Dare to question boundaries	Brand Core “irreverent perfection” Bold, social, masterful, authentic	Personality Unexpected, modern yet timeless, daring, fun
	Mission & Vision “To offer you the best nights of your life”	Culture “Living our brand day by day” Stand up for one another, take unconventional paths	Competences 88 years of experience in producing a high quality spirit in a complex process of combining 56 different botanicals

Figure 2 - The Jägermeister brand identity matrix

Mission & Vision

Jägermeister's mission is to offer its customers the best nights of their lives (Mast-Jägermeister b, n.d.).

Most people in the focus group positively associated Jägermeister with nightlife and memory-making, supporting the mission statement.

Position

Jägermeister was found to position itself as “the most successful herbal liqueur in the world” (Jägermeister c, online, n.p.) and “one of the most successful premium brands worldwide” (Jägermeister c, online, n.p.), underlining the brand's popularity, reputation and premium positioning.

Despite confirming the popularity and leading position within the market segment of herbal liquors in showing high brand awareness, affiliation and differentiation from other herbal liquors, the students in our focus group study had mixed perceptions of the brand as ‘premium’. One group member conversely perceived Jägermeister as ‘cheap’, which most other members would disagree with. Another student pointed out the production quantity as conflicting with their idea of ‘premium’, linking a premium position to a cut-down production volume. One participant stated that Jägermeister would have to launch another product in the upshelf category, interestingly before being educated about the existing super-premium line extension ‘Manifest’ (Jägermeister, 2017). However, later on, when ‘Manifest’ was presented to the group, the overall feelings of the focus group participants towards the product were mixed. While some participants perceived it as ‘elegant’, others thought it was ‘boring’ and that it did not fit their perception of the brand. Overall, the new product was mostly encountered with curiosity. This curiosity was to be found

also in the general perception of the premiumisation strategy and the perception of the quality of the product. When educated about the crafting process, recipe and heritage of Jägermeister, most group members anticipated a possible future change in their perception towards the ‘premium’ image of the brand: “I think it could become a premium brand, but for now, in my mind, I don't see it as a premium brand.” (Person 2).

Competences

This proposition is supported by the brand's competencies, rooted in the 88-year-long experience in “producing a high-quality spirit” (Jägermeister c, online, n.p.) in a complex process of “combining 56 different natural ingredients” (Jägermeister c, online, n.p.).

The focus group showed mixed awareness of the number of ingredients, with one individual stating: “I've heard it before but it's not something I knew.” (Person 4). However, the focus group showed high awareness of the natural origin of the ingredients, with all members of the focus group associating ‘natural’ or ‘nature’ with the brand. Interestingly the students also associated ‘healthy’ with Jägermeister. Most of the participants showed high awareness of the long history of the brand, oftentimes referring to the brand's ‘heritage’.

Value Proposition

Jägermeister's value proposition was identified as offering customers “spirits of the highest quality and with an unmistakable flavour” (Jägermeister c, online, n.p.) for “many different drinking occasions” (Lawrence, n.d., cited in Roderick, 2015).

As aforementioned, the high quality was not perceived by everyone within the focus group. However, the group fully agreed on the unique flavour. Asked about the associated drinking occasions, the group replied with a wide range of locations. The students named 'ski resorts', 'clubs' and 'student parties' as their mainly associated drinking locations. Only two students within the focus group considered drinking Jägermeister at home. One group member stated that they did not think of Jägermeister as a 'pub drink', which the majority of the group agreed on. The associated drinking occasions were also found to influence the 'premium' perception of the brand:

For me, a premium brand is something you would drink at a very fancy bar, where you get a cocktail or these really expensive drinks. So I wouldn't necessarily go for Jägermeister in a bar. (Person 2).

All participants stated to refer to the product as a shot. Nevertheless, when educated about the mixability of the drink, all participants were open to trying Jägermeister as an ingredient to a mixed drink at a bar, even though none of the participants was aware of existing cocktails or long drinks, other than the infamous 'Jäger Bomb'. Despite the repositioning efforts, Jägermeister still seems to be associated rather with a 'high tempo party' (Roderick, 2015) among our focus group.

Culture

Jägermeisters' brand core is said to be deeply embedded in its culture: "Living our brand day by day is an essential part of our corporate culture. We are bold, social, masterful and authentic. In everything we do" (Mast-Jägermeister US, online, n.p.).

Firmly rooted in its tradition as a family business, Jägermeister employees are empowered to stand up for one another and to take unconventional paths (Mast-Jägermeister US, n.d.).

Our raised material from the focus group does not provide enough data since the main focus of the session was based on the external perception of the brand rather than internal processes such as culture. Interestingly, however, one person in the focus group pointed out the consistency in Jägermeister's actions, stating: "You know exactly what you're going to get." (Person 4). This perceived consistency in communicating their brand identity matches with the culture as stated above, yet the single statement is not enough to draw conclusions. Further research would be necessary to evaluate the correspondence between image and identity within the cultural element.

Relationships

Jägermeister's relationships are based on three pillars: "respect for people and the environment" (Mast-Jägermeister US, online, n.p.), the inspiration of the customers, and the promotion of responsibility (Mast-Jägermeister US, n.d.; Jägermeister c, n.d.).

In our focus group study, most participants stated to 'trust' the brand. In addition to their stated trust, the participants also associated a high level of comfort and 'cosiness' with the brand, implying a respectful and familiar relationship. None of the participants regarded Jägermeister as an inspiration. The raised material from the focus group does not provide enough data on the responsible drinking behaviour of the participants. However, regarding the strong consensual association of Jägermeister with partying and the 'Jäger Bomb', it may be assumed that the actual

degree of responsibility may not match the degree aspired by Jägermeister.

Personality

In analysing Jägermeister's personality through brand communication, the following characteristics could be identified: unexpected, modern yet timeless, daring and fun (Mast-Jägermeister c, n.d.; Jägermeister b, n.d.; ISBA, 2018).

During our focus group session, the participants agreed on Jägermeister being unexpected, referring to the brand and its campaigns as 'different'. As discussed before, the participants of the target group both referred to the brand's heritage and the brand fit with modern settings such as festivities. One participant pointed out that he/her did not perceive Jägermeister as trying to be 'trendy', indicating timelessness. As discussed in *Brand Core*, Jägermeister is being perceived as daring. The 'fun' characteristic was mutually agreed on as one of the most expressive traits of the brand.

Expression

Drawing from the brand core, Jägermeister's expression is formed by unique ideas and courage, driven by the attitude of daring to question boundaries. (Jägermeister c, n.d.).

In our focus group, most participants had not seen a Jägermeister commercial before. Out of those who had, the perceptions of Jägermeister's commercials were divided into two sets: One participant stated that they remembered the brand's commercials as 'fun' and 'different', while another stated: "I haven't seen a lot of, like, commercials for Jägermeister. And when I've seen it, it's been just, like, 'we exist.'" (Person 5). However, most

participants generally perceived the brand as bold, implying that the overall perception matches the expression.

Mapping the gaps between identity and image

In reviewing Jägermeister's brand identity, we compared the nine elements of the identity matrix of Jägermeister to the perception of the focus group. We then mapped the results on the matrix by using colour codes. When gaps were identified, we marked the individual element in red. When no gaps were identified, we marked them green. Where data was missing, we marked the element grey. The suggested framework helps measure the identity-image compliance and helps identify the gaps that need to be addressed to create consistency in aligning identity and image.

In the case of Jägermeister, no gaps were identified in the internal elements, as well as in the elements of expression and personality. However, a gap has been identified in the brand core, leading to further gaps in the value proposition, relationships and position. The participants of our focus group discussion did not perceive the core value of 'masterfulness'. This links to a further lack of perceptions of the brand as being 'premium', 'high quality' and 'versatile'. Reminiscing about the aforementioned 'Be the Meister' campaign that kicked off Jägermeister's repositioning, aiming at inspiring the consumers to be the masters of their own lives, we identified that Jägermeister was not yet perceived as an inspiration. Further, the focus group did not perceive the brand as promoting responsibility.

In Figure 3 below *the corporate brand identity review matrix* is applied to the Jägermeister case, identifying and mapping the gaps between brand image and identity.

External	Value Proposition The quality and versatility of the brand have not been fully understood.	Relationships The brand is not yet regarded as an inspiration and promoting responsibility.	Position The brand is not yet perceived as a premium brand.
External / Internal	Expression	Brand Core The core value of masterfulness has not been fully understood.	Personality
Internal	Mission & Vision	Culture	Competences

Figure 3 - The corporate brand identity review matrix of Jägermeister

Sustaining the Jägermeister brand through the conceptual model

With the developed identity and strategies for repositioning, an interest in how Jägermeister can sustain brand equity has risen. Furthermore, the perceptions of the target audience create an interest in their perception and involvement in the brand. According to M’zungu et al. (2010), the first step of the conceptual model for building and managing brand equity is adopting a brand-orientation mindset. Looking at the Jägermeister case, the new global position is related to the heritage and core values rather than following market trends, demonstrating a clear inside-out perspective (PR Newswire, 2017; Urde et al. 2013). In addition, Jägermeister also represents the brand orientation by using the brand as a guiding star for its strategy, for example in the campaign slogan ‘Be the Meister’, following the brand core of “spirited irreverence and product perfection” (PR Newswire; Urde et al. 2013).

The second step of the conceptual model of brand management is the internal motivation and activation of the brand (M’zungu et al. 2010). Within our study, the internal activation of the brand could not be measured since we did not interview employees at Jägermeister. Therefore it is complicated to evaluate the second step. However, in analysing the perception of internal elements of *the corporate brand identity matrix* both mission & vision and competencies aligned with Jägermeister’s identity. Therefore it could be argued for Jägermeister’s success in internal motivation since the brand succeeded in delivering the internal elements to the external target audience.

For Jägermeister, to sustain the brand equity long-term, the third step of the conceptual model is to be consistent within the branding and to create a stable image and identity (M’zungu et al. 2010). With the new position, Jägermeister strives to achieve a consistent brand image by, for example, changing its position on the global market at the same time instead of one market at a time, and by changing the visual identity in accordance with the new brand identity (Mast-Jägermeister a, n.d.). However, in the case of Jägermeister, delivering a consistent brand can be difficult even after realigning the global identity. Since the brand is following a two-headed brand strategy in communicating to be both the bold brand associated with nightlife and a brand associated with high quality and craftsmanship (ISBA, 2018), receivers may be confused about the brand identity, as is the case within our focus group.

Discussion

As a result of our analysis, we have created a four step-model for sustaining a repositioned brand long-term.

The first step of the model is to define the adjusted brand identity through the *corporate brand identity matrix* (Urde & Greyser, 2019). The second step consists of reviewing the nine elements of the corporate brand identity matrix through our newly developed *corporate brand identity review matrix* to identify gaps between the ideal brand identity and brand image. Data on the brand image can be collected through a focus group or by using another method of image research. The third step reaches to close the gaps between image and identity which involves defining possible strategies to address the aforementioned gaps. When identity and image are aligned, there is consistency about what the brand represents. The challenge then is to keep delivering this consistent brand (M'zungu et al. 2010), as argued for by the fourth and final step in the conceptual model. The solution to the challenge of consistency is therefore summarised in always staying close to the brand identity. In case of another repositioning, the model restarts from the first step.

In the case of Jägermeister, we first defined the identity based on secondary data (See figure 2). We then identified and mapped the image-identity gaps through *the corporate brand identity review matrix*. We discovered that the adjusted brand core of Jägermeister has not yet been fully understood by the participants of our focus group, leading to image-identity gaps mainly found in the external elements of Jägermeister's brand identity. As shown in our analysis, the participants were not fully aware of the new positioning of the Jägermeister brand. Interestingly, it seems as if the long-term reputation still has an

influence on the current brand image of Jägermeister, even five years after the repositioning. Our data suggest that this may be rooted in the ambiguous nature of Jägermeister's double-headed strategy. Since we cannot draw generalising conclusions from our focus group, it is difficult to derive implications for the brand. Nevertheless, to address the gaps between image and identity, Jägermeister will have to educate more about the product quality, resulting from the elaborate crafting process and the versatility of drinking occasions to change the brand's undesirable image-identity gap.

Conclusions

In conclusion, Jägermeister presents an evident case of sustaining a brand long-term by repositioning and crafting a new identity. The case highlights the importance of adopting a brand-oriented approach and staying close to the brand identity but also proves the importance of reflecting the identity through the image perspective. This contributes to a view of the brand orientation with an incorporation of the image, creating an inside-out orientation with an outside-in perspective. This perspective goes in line with Urde, Baumgarth and Merrilee's (2013) combinations of brand-orientation and market-orientation. With the consistent change in our surroundings and time passing, the prerequisites in the market will change, requiring constant brand development. In this development, our research highlights the importance of communicating the brand consistently and always developing the brand within the borders of the brand identity.

Theoretical implications

The paper has proposed a framework allowing us to measure and map the gaps between brand image and brand identity, based on the corporate brand identity matrix (Urde & Greyser, 2019). We have named this framework *the corporate brand identity review matrix*. Furthermore, our study suggests a four step-model for sustaining a repositioned brand long-term, in which the framework of *the corporate brand identity review matrix* is included.

Managerial implications

Even though following a brand-oriented mindset, we suggest that a brand manager has to constantly review the identity through the image in order to address possible gaps, as suggested in the theoretical implications. Carefully developing the brand is essential to sustain brand equity. However, we suggest that the brand should always be developed within the borders of the brand identity. In the case of Jägermeister, our research identified a current misunderstanding of the repositioned brand core values, leading to further image-identity gaps within the value proposition, relationships and position.

Limitations & Further research

Our research was limited by both time constraints and word limitations. The chosen method creates risks of being subjective and unilateral. The study is therefore hindered to draw any generalising conclusions. Therefore, we recommend conducting further research using a quantitative method in line with Bryman and Bell's (2017) recommendations. For further research, we recommend conducting similar research with larger empirical data collections on brand perceptions. Collecting data on the brand image, focused on every single element of Urde's (2019) *corporate brand*

identity matrix, would allow the creation of a *brand image matrix*. Analysing the brand image independently from the brand identity, and then comparing it with the identity could create an even deeper understanding of the gaps between how the brand is perceived versus how it wants to be perceived. Furthermore, the creation of a new framework and model establishes limitations to the validity and accuracy of the suggested model, as it has not been peer-reviewed yet. Furthermore, the *corporate brand identity review matrix* must be applied to further cases in order to prove universal applicability.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

Focus group guide

Introduction - 3 minutes - Present Jägermeister as a company and about our research

Topic 1 - Product and context - 15 minutes - How would you describe jägermeister as a product and in which context would you describe it in?

Topic 2 - Perception - 15 minutes - If you had to describe the Jägermeister brand in three words, what would they be? Why do these words come to your mind?

Topic 3 - Product Line Extensions - 15 minutes - Do you remember seeing a Jägermeister marketing activation recently? Where? What did it communicate?

Topic 4 - Marketing - 15 minutes - How do you perceive the products? How do they match with your perception of the Jägermeister brand? Manifest, Scharf (Hot), Cold Brew Coffee

Showing the focus group a “Be the meister” campaign (2017) - What do you see? Does it match your perception of the brand? -

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rtPkkPENmys>

Showing the focus group a newer “Be the meister” campaign (2020) What do you see? Does it match your perception of the brand? -

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=88A67KTJnCo>

Topic 5 - Overall image - As an overall image, would you say that Jägermeister succeeded with going towards a more premium brand?