While we accept the fact that a brand's success comes down to an array of factors, of which advertising is only one, its role in this instance is beyond doubt. The Bulmers story has already become part of marketing folklore. However to consign this unique case to a shelf would be premature. Even now the Bulmers brand seems to be gathering momentum, a remarkable achievement considering the market which it competes is in decline, and it is the only brand which is continuing to contradict the market norms. Year on year outperforming the competition and cementing the cider brand as one of the greatest Irish success stories in marketing history.

While the media giants seem to only have 'Magners' on their lips, its inception and subsequent success is only as a result of the solid brand credentials that Bulmers has laid.

In this case study, we will aim to show how Bulmers has used advertising to broaden its relevance, audience and usage occasions, while keeping the core offering intact.

What follows is a case study of how the Bulmers brand has, once again, evolved its advertising strategy and exceeded all expectations.

**BACKGROUND**
If we go back three years, the Bulmers brand was succeeding on many levels but the concern within Bulmers was that its dominance during the Summer months, while impressive, could only serve to limit the brands potential in the longer term. A strategy was therefore needed to broaden the brands relevance throughout the entire year. This became known as the 'Seasons' strategy. A platform that would prove so powerful and effective, its second wave is already in campaign and would be the very platform from which international success would emanate.

**RESEARCH TOLD US THAT...**
Towards the end of 2003, while extensive qualitative findings were broadly positive, certain consistencies were evident e.g. 'I drink it when it gets warmer, it’s a sure sign Summer has arrived'. (RG Research and Robin Challis)

Bulmers had become strongly associated with quite a specific set of consumption circumstances with a bias towards the Summer. It was apparent that we had created a very strong emotional connection with consumers and now had a Bulmers Icon Moment in the beer garden, on a sunny afternoon, with the eponymous Pint Bottle & Ice.

**MARKETING OBJECTIVES**
To make each Season as relevant as the next - counteract the seasonality issue i.e. “Bulmers is a Summer-only drink”
- To demonstrate the versatility of the product (functional benefit), especially in relation to ice, i.e. expanding the environments
- To change consumption behaviour i.e. move ‘Occasionals’ into ‘Drink most often’ by 2% points over 2 years
- To broaden our audience and increase the female franchise
- To achieve the seminal target of 10% market share of the LAD (long alcoholic drink) within 2 years (an ambitious target considering it was a declining market)

Whilst this icon moment was a key driver, to achieve a greater affinity with consumers and deliver additional share, it was felt Bulmers would have to change the factors that influenced buying behaviour i.e. give the consumer a greater set of variables to work with in relation to Bulmers.

**INSTIGATING GREATER ‘INVOLVEMENT’**
In order to get an understanding of consumer buyer behaviour we needed to know how the consumer interacts with the marketing mix. As described by Cohen (1991), the marketing mix inputs (now five P’s of price, place, promotion, product and packaging) are adapted and focused.
upon the consumer. The consumer then considers the product or service on offer in relation to their own culture, attitude, previous learning, and personal perception. He/she then decides whether or not to purchase, where to purchase and the brand that he or she prefers.

This model became a helpful aid in the planning process. Helping us discover that an important determinant of the extent of purchase evaluation is whether the customer feels “involved” with the product. Involvement is simply the degree of perceived relevance and personal importance that accompanies the choice.

We accepted the fact that where a purchase is “highly involving” (e.g. buying a car), the consumer is more likely to carry out extensive evaluation. Purchase of Bulmers (no matter how biased we were), was not a high-involvement one and therefore a simpler evaluation process was involved.

However, there was nothing to suggest that we could not turn a low-involvement decision into one that engaged them at another level.

Adding an additional layer to the brand could allow the consumer to become more involved and therefore re-evaluate the brands relevance within their life and hopefully lead to a change in behaviour i.e. “Just because it’s winter doesn’t mean I shouldn’t have a Bulmers”.

SEASONS STRATEGY
We knew from past experience that any change in direction needed to be firmly rooted in the brands provenance.

Complication has never been part of the marketing mix with Bulmers. What was needed in this instance was not a seismic shift but rather a platform from which we could deepen the relationship of the brand (increase involvement) with the consumer. Following our brand interrogation, the orchards significance became more apparent.

CONNECTION MOMENT
Climate and the seasons play an integral role in the production and cultivation of the orchard. For example, the onset of Spring instigates an awakening of sorts within the orchard, when the apple blossoms etc. Highlighting the importance, power and relevance of the seasonal changes on the product could allow the brand to credibly move out of the Summer stereotype and live naturally throughout each season and throughout the myriad of drinking occasions in a consumers 12 month cycle.

THE IDEA - ECHOING OUR LEARNINGS FROM THE BUYER DECISION MODEL
The creation of our TV commercials, each depicting a season, gave the brand a presence across the entire year. Most importantly it gave consumers timely reminders that Bulmers was a brand that played a role in a great deal more occasions and activities than they had ever thought possible. Showing consumers alternative locations of where Bulmers could be enjoyed would also hopefully trigger a different response in purchase behaviour.

This seasonal strategy also sat perfectly within the brands unique ownership of ‘Time’.

THE MEDIA STRATEGY
The media strategy mirrored our objective to increase awareness of the brands relevance outside of the Summer season. TV and outdoor were selected as lead media as they presented the best opportunity to visually communicate the orchards change through its seasonally affected lifecycle.

The primary objective was to recruit from all adults LAD-35 while ensuring that we did not alienate the existing loyal Bulmers customer base of men LAD-35.

The positioning of TV commercials was crucial to success. Appearing in Movies and Drama throughout the year would reach both male and female audiences.

The ‘Seasons’ sports strategy was developed in tandem to retain the key male LAD-35, while increasing the brands relevance to them in the more difficult autumn and winter seasons. This strategy led to a significant presence in all key sporting events (e.g. Premiership, Rugby, Golf etc).

National outdoor (48/96 sheets) and T-Sides in Dublin (A key focus for the ‘Seasons’ media campaign due to population density) were also heavily utilised to communicate the changing seasons for Bulmers.

THE RESULTS
N.B. The publication of detailed results which were made available for judging purposes has been restricted due to confidentiality.

Bulmers continued growth to 10% of the LAD market in Ireland, achieving our market share objective in one year rather than the two years targeted.

In 2004 Bulmers were hit by the smoking ban which dramatically reduced footfall on-trade in Ireland. Bulmers counteracted this by increasing advertising expenditure in 2004/05 period and grew market share to 10% for the first time in its history during a very difficult trading period. An increase of 6 percentage points or 150% overall since 1996.
Grand Prix Winner  
(Gold: International Campaign)  

London Calling:  
How Magners Cider took the UK capital by Storm  

INDUSTRY SPECIALISTS ADVISED AGAINST IT, BUT MAGNERS IS NOW ‘THE’ ALCOHOLIC BRAND IN LONDON AND ITS SUCCESS IS DIRECTLY RELATED TO YOUNG EURO RSCG’S ADVERTISING.

Researching the market before entering the UK, industry specialists gave their professional opinion to C&C, ‘Don’t do it’, claiming that it was a declining market which held little or no potential. Roll on 18 months and Magners is now the alcoholic brand in London with the latest predictions that sales figures would triple by the end of the year.

Magners Irish cider has become the talking point on an International level. A brand that has defied industry analysts views and in a relatively brief period of time catapulted itself to legendary status.

However this entry would be futile if we could not credibly link the advertising to this success.

What follows is how communications for Magners Irish Cider has contributed to the brand’s International ascendancy, helping it shake up markets it enters with a style and clarity that expresses its brand credentials and unique selling point of the pint bottle over ice.

Results will show, in the selected markets in this case study that it is no coincidence once the advertising campaign aired, the effect was immediate. An Irish cider suddenly became a phenomenon in market places that are deemed some of the most competitive in the world.

To think that this is simply a fad would be a mistake, Magners Irish Cider has continued its upward climb in these markets resulting in competition reacting to such degrees that R&D has been fast-tracked with release of products, closely mimicking Magners.

Not only similar products being launched, but nearly identical advertising campaigns to ours are also airing. Imitation being the sincerest form of flattery and a vindication of the success of this Irish brand’s advertising strategy.

To jump to the results section at this stage is tempting but the journey which we embarked on to achieve these dramatic figures is just as important.

But here are a few to whet your appetite:
- No.1 Long Alcoholic Drink (LAD) on-trade packaged brand in London
- No.1 LAD on-trade packaged brand in Scotland
- No.1 LAD on-trade packaged brand in Northern Ireland
- Magners is now a £100 million brand

BACKGROUND
Magners is now available in 17 countries worldwide and is already the leading brand of cider in Boston, New York, Northern Ireland, Holland, Belgium as well as Scotland.

In Scotland we carried out extensive research in early 2002, feedback was promising enough leading to an initial Glasgow launch in March of that year. Magners then rolled out across Scotland in the Summer of 2004 accompanied with the Magners ‘Seasons’ advertising campaign.

However, for the purposes of this case study to best illustrate our communications strategy the recent launch in London will be our primary focus. Its success over the past 18 months has lead to unprecedented media attention and has driven the share value of the company and propelling the brand onto a Global stage. We will also highlight the results of the successful Scottish launch which just preceded London.

Having a clear and defined brand proposition which stretches across all our activity, no matter the market, still allows us to take into consideration subtle cultural differences within these markets.

SO LET’S LOOK AT LONDON…
Marketing Objectives for London
- Build brand awareness and generate sales
- Become the number one bottled alcoholic brand within 4 years
- Make each season as relevant as the next (learning from our Bulmers experience)
- Position ourselves as a premium LAD
- Research told us that...

“...The London market is likely to prove more challenging but not insurmountably so”

“Distance and its effect on time and transport costs shape how Londoners do drinking”

“Over-choiced consumers who have learned to speed, decode and super-edit their way through accelerated culture, avoiding the clutter and evading the superfluous” Source: RG Research

STRATEGIC SOLUTION
In reality this told us a brand which placed such a premium on ‘Time’ and ‘Heritage’ was exactly the antidote that these ‘over-choiced’ consumers needed.

Our Seasons campaign which was designed to re-enforce the importance of time within another world, the orchard, could serve to propel these consumers out of the monotony of being rushed and into an aspirational zone of ‘Lazing on a Sunny afternoon’.

INSIGHT
Irrespective of economic or cultural differences, people will adopt and crave an ideology that opposes the routine and habitual.

THE CONNECTION MOMENT
The orchard is more than just a place; it’s a sanctuary whose natural consistency is refreshing.

BRINGING OUR IDEA TO LIFE THROUGH MEDIA
Even though research had told us that the London audience were possibly the most cynical and hesitant in the world, due to their over exposure to brand messages, it is very difficult to be cynical about something that is rooted in a product truth.

The media marketplace in London is a
circuit and as such warranted a radical, innovative and completely integrated strategy to achieve maximum impact with our ‘Seasons’ TV campaign acted as the lead media. This activity would communicate both the emotional and functional benefits of the Magners brand to the key target market.

Due to the frenetic nature of the London market the media brief was to create ‘Shock and awe’ while remaining true to Magners and the integrity of the ‘Seasons’ campaign. In essence we had to:

*‘Bring the Irish orchard to the concrete jungle’*

This strategy is one of heavy, sustained attack in highly concentrated areas. Prior to launch, Magners had near zero distribution in London. Our approach was to drop high impact, highly visible advertising into new areas to build distribution in pubs and bars quickly.

Put simply in London, ‘If the punters ask for it the landlord has to get it’. So through our advertising campaign we had to ensure talkability, thereby triggering consumer call for brand.

Our seasons TV campaign, due to its immediately arresting visuals and highly evocative music tracks enabled us to achieve significant cut through, however we then needed to build on these visuals and bring our strategy to life.

Making the Irish orchard actually live and breathe within the London concrete jungle.

**CONTINUOUS ADVERTISING**
In order to overcome the negativity that existed in regard to cider and give permission to an audience to drink cider and even more so over ice, significant media investment and TV media weights were appended to our Seasons TV advertising campaign.

This was supported by continuous mainstream outdoor, radio and ‘Seasons’ press campaigns.

**INNOVATIVE APPROACH TO MEDIA**
In collaboration with our media arm MPG (London), we developed creative outdoor executions to leverage the brands ‘natural apple’ proposition by turning Waterloo Underground station into a virtual orchard by buying every poster site on the concourse. This original initiative not only created a visual feast but took an artificial man made structure and naturalized it thus bringing to life the Magners brand values e.g. Craft, Tradition, Nature, Time and heritage.

In style press such as FH and Arena we created 3 page seasonal pull-out gatefolds, again bringing our orchard into an unexpected environment and making the audience think twice.

The supposed cynical London audience would find it very difficult to argue with the Magners way of doing things. By bringing our insight to life and thereby giving this cynical audience who were tied into the habitual a refreshing snippet of a landscape that was far more engaging and motivating then where they presently were i.e. standing waiting for a train to take them to their 9 to 5. An image that would not immediately be forgotten, but stay with them throughout the day.

To dramatize even further the contrast of the natural Magners world with that of the synthetic urban environment we created a media first with a 96 sheet poster which dispersed real apple blossoms. These showered down on passing human traffic resulting in scenes that were intended to stir a reaction in people, resulting once again in positive talk around Magners Irish cider.

We also created another media first, this time at Heathrow airport, taking a banal setting and refreshing it dramatically. We dressed the entire length and breath of the well known Heathrow tunnel with authentic visuals of the Clonmel orchard, giving the appearance that you were in fact in the orchard itself.

**FURTHER INTEGRATION THROUGH SPONSORSHIP**
This became another vital layer in our ‘Seasons’ strategy, deepening our relationship further with the consumer. We had to, as in all our markets; ensure that our brand proposition came true to Magners and the integrity of the ‘Seasons’ advertising campaign acted as the lead media. This activity would communicate both the emotional and functional benefits of the Magners brand to the key target market.

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**RESULTS**

N.B. The publication of detailed results which were made available for judging purposes has been restricted due to confidentiality.

- C&C estimates that Magners accounts for 75% of the current growth in UK cider sales.
- No.1 bottled alcohol brand: outselling bottles of Stella or Budweiser, the previous category leaders in London, after just 12 months (well ahead of target)
- Every £1 spent on advertising in Scotland delivered £23 worth of sales
- Packaged Cider is growing fastest and now accounts for 21% of total GB cider sales (May 06)
- Magners is the No. 1 Packaged Cider brand in GB with 74% share (May 06)
- Magners is the No. 1 Packaged LAD in Scotland with 23% share and 45% share of Cider sales
- Magners is the No. 1 Packaged LAD in London with 18% share and 29% share of cider
- Magners brand success has been key to driving the C&C share price from £2.26 from initial stock market quotation to £6.58 today (25th August 2006)

**IN SUMMARY**

“Advertising has been at the core of Magners phenomenal entry onto the International scene. Overcoming the cider markets poor imagery and inertia has been achieved by clear messaging, coupled with excellent production values within the ‘Seasons’ advertising campaign alongside a heavy media investment and real innovation in consumer communications. It is our intention to continue this advertising strategy over the coming years as we establish Magners Irish Cider as a force within the International drinks market”

Maurice Breen,
Marketing Director Bulmers Ltd