

Outfoxing LISA's Competition in the International Market: Exploring the Country-of-Origin Image (COI) as a Firm's Resource for a Czech Beer Brand

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Abstract. In the fictional Central Asian country of Dalastan, LISA, a popular Czech pilsner brand, has enjoyed considerable market success since its launch. However, the brand's stable market position is now threatened by the entry of a direct competitor, the BRANEK brand. Facing this new challenge, LISA must strategically focus its positioning to sustain its market share. This case presents readers with the role of marketing analysts who assist the brand manager in navigating various strategic decisions. Through this experiential learning scenario, readers will explore different marketing opportunities and threats, discuss the usage of the Czech country-of-origin image (COI) as a resource for the brand, as well as assess the impacts on the strategic choices for LISA's competitiveness in Dalastan. The objective is to consider marketing and positioning choices that will reinforce LISA's desired positioning and values, ensuring its continued appeal in a dynamically shifting market landscape. This case study provides a practical insight into the application of strategic marketing principles in the international and competitive market of fast-moving consumable goods.

Keywords: brand positioning, country-of-origin image (COI), FMCG marketing, international marketing, competitive strategy, brand management.

Funding Acknowledgment

This teaching case was supported by COFECUB-CAPES program under grant number SH1014/23 D. The authors gratefully acknowledge the financial support provided, which was essential for conducting this study.

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Part 1: Meet the Fox

Alma Tulki, Carlson's brand manager of LISA, stood before the group of newly hired marketing analysts and commanded the room's attention. The conference room offered a clear view of the bustling brewery operations below. Alma kicked off the meeting by saying: "Welcome, everyone, you're joining us at a pivotal moment in LISA's journey. To understand where we stand today, it's important to know a bit about where we started. For those of you who are new to Carlson, we brew a variety of beers, and LISA is our fastest-growing brand. LISA was first brewed at the Novak family brewery in 1905 in the town of Pilsen. In our domestic habitat—the Czech Republic—LISA was a small player, occupying a modest niche, much like a fox with its own secure foxhole. It was a brand with potential but was restricted by fierce competition from strong local brands, which are plentiful in the Czech Republic. In 2014, Carlson purchased the brewery and introduced LISA to various markets across Europe and Asia. When we launched LISA in the vast market of Dalastan, something remarkable happened. Much like a species thriving in the absence of natural predators, LISA found the endless steppes of Dalastan to be an ideal environment for rapid growth."

Alma paused for a few seconds to ensure her message was understood, before she continued: "Here in Dalastan, LISA quickly filled a product gap that had long existed between local, mid-priced beers and expensive imports. This strategic positioning allowed us to draw customers from both ends of the market. From the very first year, our sales skyrocketed, growing at an unprecedented 40% annually. This growth was driven largely by our successful penetration into new bars and restaurants, where LISA rapidly became the top-selling draft beer." She went on to say: "However, as any fox in the wild knows, a new predator can drastically alter the landscape. In our third year, our competitor ZORA introduced BRANEK—also a beer of Czech origin, but with a different story to tell—to the Dalastanian market."

Alma then detailed the extent of the threat: "BRANEK's entry was anything but subtle. Represented by the butting lamb BRANEK, it abruptly forced its way into the Dalastan beer market. They launched with a highly effective advertising blitz across TV and point-of-sale locations, immediately capturing consumer attention. BRANEK priced itself strategically, matching the price of the popular mid-priced brand TAU, which allowed them to quickly gain widespread trials and achieve rapid consumer approval. Within months, BRANEK had cultivated a loyal customer base, aided by their aggressive sponsorship of summer music and culinary festivals throughout the country."

She continued: "BRANEK has positioned itself as the embodiment of Czech beer. And this brings us to the crux of our challenge: two Czech beers vying for dominance in the same market—a market that isn't large enough for both to thrive indefinitely."