

Thoughts from the Sovereign Qualitative Research
A discussion document

Top line

An almost universal impression of Sovereign was that it is simply a cheaper version of B&H. Although this immediately imbues the product with images of quality (from B&H) there is an inevitable down-side (linked to the 'cheaper' aspect) which implies that there will, as a consequence, be less of everything. A lessened reputation (compared to B&H), a slightly less smooth smoke (compared to B&H) and also less strong (than B&H).

The Price

The current (approx.) 50p price gap between Sovereign and B&H Special Filter is very motivating to smokers with £3.00 perceived as too expensive, where £2.50 is far more affordable. When describing it people refer to it as the 'cheaper B&H' - thus always positioning it as a mid-price range cigarette.

As a consequence of these 'borrowed' values consumers struggle to attribute any real value to the image of Sovereign - since Sovereign is really only a cheaper B&H it has no badge value of its own.

The Product

The cigarette itself is perceived to be largely the same as Special Filter, with some smokers sensing a certain 'acridness' of taste.

The Pack

Cigarette packs are still considered to be badges, albeit that the cigarettes themselves seem to be losing a large amount of the glamour and aspiration that used to be associated with them.

The current Sovereign pack, curiously, appears to be a bit of a throw-back since it is rather old and heavy looking. As such it doesn't make complete conceptual sense, with many smokers looking for the gold in the sovereign.

Although it is not liked on the advertising, the money-off flash is very effective in drawing smokers' attention to the pack on the gantry as it has a major appeal.

The Sovereign Lights pack was universally liked.

Promotion/image issues

The advertising, POS material and pack all combine to ensure that the overall image is not effeminate or weak.

The future

From this research we can clearly take out that Sovereign is perceived as a cheap B&H. As such we must be very clear that it is not a derivation of B&H as such, but is a standalone product.

In addition we must take into account how we can utilise this association to our benefit when launching lights.

Finally, it is paramount to accept that with this image Sovereign will be more popular with current B&H smokers than with smokers of other low-priced cigarettes - such as L&B. We should, therefore, consider running a few tactical, possibly regional, executions that take L&B on head-to-head.

SOVEREIGN

GETTING UNDER THE SKIN OF OUR SMOKER

DISCUSSION PAPER

1. INTRODUCTION

We already have a very strong understanding of who our target audience are from quantitative research (OmniMAS, INRA, TGI) and qualitative research (strategy / creative development).

In short, we know only too well that our smokers (and target smokers) are:

- Honest
- Unpretentious
- Hard Working
- Proud of their roots – they see themselves as working class even if they are technically middle class
- Aspirational
- Seek *value* as well as *values*

We know that they are *not*:

- Middle Aged
- Middle Class
- Middle England
- Like you or us

In short, we know them well but we can know them a lot better – this will be key given the potential JPS scenario and the desire to be a stronger brand versus L&B.

2. WE HAVE HIDDEN TREASURE

We have a great deal of knowledge about the Sovereign target (and potential target) within the Agency, which we have not fully merchandised:

- Mirror Group
- Foster's
- Dixons Group
- BskyB
- ITV

We also have within the Planning Department and other Account Groups well over a hundred years of experience of targeting this type of audience (for example, in my particular case, TV Licensing). Not only does this give us a great depth and breadth of knowledge, but also allows us to draw conclusions about how the audience has, and more importantly will, change (of the trend in Laddism).

3. WE CAN FURTHER HARNESS THIS TREASURE

Research has in the past tended to focus (perhaps unsurprisingly) on the brand, advertising or both. Whilst as a brand manager or an Agency we think about Sovereign for the majority of our week, our smoker thinks about their choice of cigarette for a matter of nanoseconds.

We need to undertake research that examines our smokers' lives, their values, attitudes, beliefs, how this translates into behaviour and how, as a result of this, Sovereign fits in, rather than research which focuses exclusively on issues surrounding the brand.

4. NEXT STEPS

Agency to present an audit of our cumulative understanding Of the Sovereign smoker and the potential smoker	April 1
Agency to recommend further research projects	w/c 5 April
Commission research	w/c 19 April
Research debrief	w/c 10 May

