By 2010, the landscape was very different. There was no smoking in pubs for a start. The deregulation the government had brought in in 1990 with the Beer Orders meant that the Big Six's grip on the nation's pubs had collapsed; now there was a wide range of pub and bar groups and more free houses, and more and more of these were widening their consumer offering with food, posh soft drinks like flavoured sparkling water and an ever-growing wine and cocktail list. Consumers were encouraged to feel more and more empowered about the drinks they ordered at the bar, and they increasingly liked to broadcast their own sense of identity through the drinks they consumed. They were using this new tool called the Internet to find out what was available elsewhere, to expand the range of their tastes and increasingly to compare prices. They were travelling wider and further than their parents had, and this too informed their tastes. And the pub and bar environment was now becoming much more female friendly, with chains like All Bar One establishing light, open spaces where women could feel more relaxed, a world away from the traditional male, sticky-carpeted, dark and smelly public bar.

Pubs and bars also had to compete now against the home environment. When I started out in the business, almost 90 per cent of all beer was bought in a pub or club; now, less than half of it was bought that way and most beer was bought from a shop to take home or to the park. Supermarkets had entered the fray, and throughout the summer months would be running promotions to tempt consumers into the garden or the park to barbecue a few pieces of chicken into inedible black shapes accompanied by a box of beers. You didn't have to go to the pub now to meet people – you could share a beer with friends and family anywhere you liked. The pub had to work harder to draw people in and one of the key ways it could do that was to flatter and satisfy the desires of its particular demographic target consumer....

...I'd summarise this entire research exercise we conducted by referencing Harvard Business School professor Michael Porter, who outlined what he called the Five Forces that make up the competitive environment and influence the likely profitability of any consumer sector. It's well worth seeking out his book to examine how he defined those five forces: Competitive Rivalry, Supplier Power, Buyer Power, Threat of Substitution, Threat of New Entry.

What we were doing in 2010, therefore, was using strategic thinking such as this to explore the commercial landscape for the company and to evaluate whether there was an opportunity for a second premium offering to follow on from the first. Another way of using strategic thinking to evaluate your competitive opportunity is summarised really well by Cliff Bowman and David Faulkner in their book Competitive and Corporate Strategy.They came up with the insight that competitive advantage is more powerful than a cost advantage, because the strategic positioning which the former gives you provides a much stronger foundation for positioning your product in the market. Famously, they encapsulated this insight in their book as the Bowman Strategy Clock.

As you go around the clock, you can see how their insight makes such sense. At position one, where you have a low price and a low consumer perception of value, you're in a particularly weak competitive position, with price reductions virtually your only option. At two, value to the consumer is greater but your price is still low, so you are likely to see mass market products here, sold at a low price and offering the brand owner low profits per unit. By the time you get around to point five on the clock, you're in the sector where luxury and exclusive brands reside, offering a high quality product at a high price, very much the kind of point on the clock where our brand had sat. But as you continue your way around the clock, the consumer values your product less and less, making your high price point more and more risky.