



BENCHMARKING PRIVATE LABEL PRICE INDEX TO BRANDS

A CASE – GUINNESS vs ALDI IN THE UK



[James Stok](#) is an independent RGM, Pricing and Sales consultant having spent 25yrs in FMCG in senior RGM roles with Unilever, Birdseye, Fosters, Diageo, Coca Cola and Black & Decker.

February 2026

Private label dominance is a global phenomenon, yet nowhere is the competition more intense than in the UK. This surge is propelled by a "perfect storm" of macro trends: the aggressive expansion of Aldi and Lidl, a widening price gap left by major brands protecting margins during inflation, and a relentless volume of innovation from traditional retailers like Sainsbury's and Morrisons. Crucially, the quality gap has narrowed; premium private labels now frequently rival brand leaders in both formulation and packaging aesthetics.

This shifting landscape forces a critical strategic choice for retailers and brands alike. As the visual and qualitative distinctions blur, we must evaluate the efficacy of the "look-alike" strategy. Specifically, this study explores two pivotal hypotheses:

- 1. For Discounter Brands:** mimicking the packaging cues of category leaders is truly the most effective path to conversion.
- 2. For Branded Players:** Established brands should defend their territory when their visual identity is mirrored on the same shelf by demonstrating the value of each element of their packaging.

While "copycat" packaging often feels like the instinctive choice—a tactic evidenced by decades of shelf parity and high-profile trademark disputes—its actual impact on consumer behaviour requires deeper scrutiny.

Using a conjoint study from EPIC, I have analysed the **Aldi UK** launch of an Own Label 4-can pack of stout to compete with the brand leader, **Guinness**. Having worked in St James's Gate in Dublin for 6 and a half years, it is a category close to my heart!

NEWS

Aldi to launch own-label Guinness rival Mulligan's Stout

By James Beeson | 27 August 2025

It will roll out across the retailer's estate from 8 September

Aldi has unveiled Mulligan's Stout – a new-own label stout pitched as a cheaper alternative to Guinness.



The Guinness offering is a 4-can pack in the well-known black can with gold Guinness harp logo and retails at £5.63. The new Aldi product, under the brand of Mulligan's, is also in a black can with a gold logo, in this case a castle, and is priced at £4.79 (0.84 index to Guinness).

One of the **secrets to effective Revenue Growth Management (RGM)** is to be clear on how the decisions under each of the RGM levers **complement each other in order to deliver the desired category and business outcomes.**

What would the category and business objectives be for a retailer launching an OL product in this case? Being seen to offer better value to shoppers and causing some disruption in the category are 2 potential objectives which I will use for the purposes of this analysis, rather than trying to maximise the price point they can charge which may be more appropriate in other scenarios.

In order to achieve these objectives, what does this mean for **Strategic Pricing and Pack Price Architecture (PPA) decisions?**

On the second element, PPA, the choice made is to follow the key pack format of the brand leader in the category – Aldi launched a 4-can pack, following the Guinness entry pack format with the lowest absolute price.

In terms of pricing, given the assumed objective to offer better value and disrupt the category, the price point of £4.79 at an index of 0.84 vs the Guinness pack prices at £5.73 seems to be appropriate.

We then move to questions which can be more difficult to answer:

- is the price point aligned to consumer value perception and willingness to pay; or
- would other potential pack designs achieve a higher consumer value perception?

This is where **conjoint testing can play an important role**. The conjoint in this case tested various options for brand names, colours for the cans, logo colours and logo designs to see what the impact and importance of each was to the overall offering.

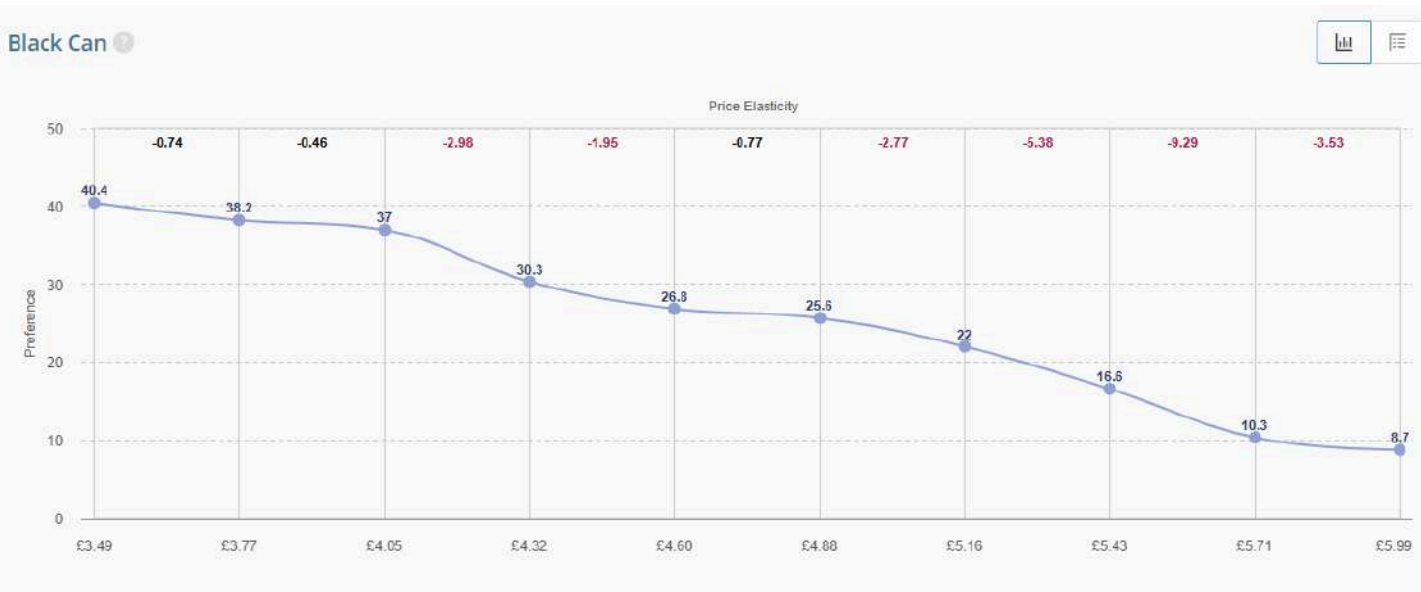
If you were in a beer store, which can design would you choose?



Product	Mulligan's Stout 440ml	Finnegan's Stout 440ml	Guinness Can 440ml
Price for 4 cans	£5.48	£5.99	£5.73

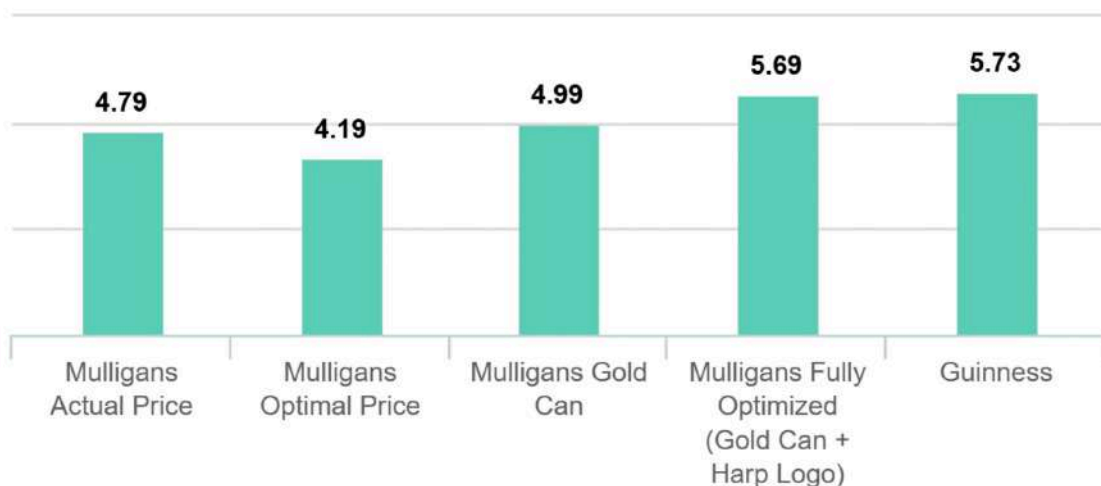
From the 2,670 consumer choices EPIC tested, a couple of key points came through loud and clear:

1. **The pack in the design launched does not justify the price index for shoppers:** the outputs of the research show consumers would be willing to pay £4.13, a price index of 0.72 versus the actual retail of £4.79 (0.84 index), **resulting in a lower than optimal volume share of sales for the new pack.**

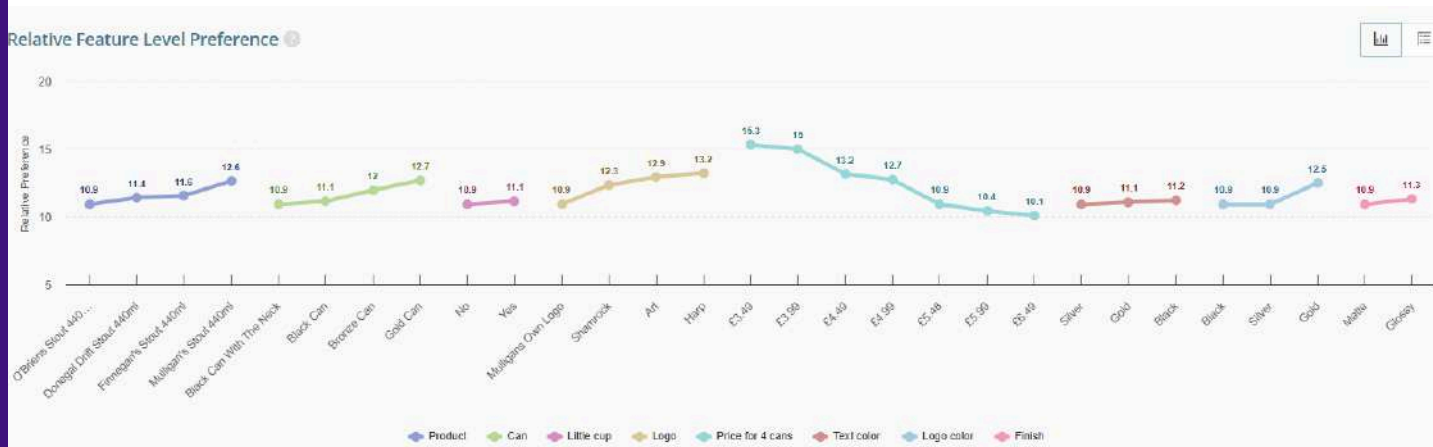


2. **The winning combination** (Fully Optimised) would have been using the Mulligans brand, a gold can with a variation of a harp logo also in gold. Consumers' willingness to pay would be £5.69, a 0.99 price index to the Guinness pack. **This could have increased volume share of sales by a third.**

Strategic Price Index Optimized



Looking at each packaging element tested in turn:



- a. **Brand name:** a good choice was made to go with 'Mulligan's' which performed better than all other names tested
- b. **Colour of the can:** Black was only the 3rd best option of the options tested – Gold was the best performing colour and would have increased volume share by nearly 15%.
- c. **Logo colour:** gold was a good choice and came through as the most effective colour for a logo
- d. **Logo design:** the Castle was relatively weak out of the options tested. Having a variation of a harp design was the strongest, with the test showing it could have improved volume share of sales by up to 21%.

For Own Label brands, being able to trial and understand that simply following the key cues from a brand leader's pack is not necessarily the optimum approach in order to drive desired outcomes is a valuable outcome. It also suggests that there is the opportunity to disrupt a category differently – by using a different balance of price index and quality of offering – **by being closer to the pricing of the brand leader** with an offering which drives a higher willingness to pay.

For a brand owner, it can be tempting to respond before knowing the likely impact of the OL launch. Before responding, it would be helpful to understand which elements of the brand's pack design add most to willingness to pay and understand the potential impact if they were replicated by Own Label, and so may be worth more time and effort protecting if needed.

And as in any market, there will always be competition and new developments. **The challenge is always to better meet consumer and shopper needs** through an improved product offering and ensuring your packaging plays its full role as a key element of this.

Overall, both Private Label brand owners and Brands need to understand the value of packaging cues. Private Labels want to ideally simplify their artwork with only the most important cues. Brands need to valorise their existing asset and then protect it before its copied and its power is used against its creator.



Predicting Value.
Powering Decisions.

EPIC Insights provides expert-led product and pricing conjoint software that delivers actionable retail, wholesale and food service insights in just **7 business days**. By combining a cutting edge research

platform with deep domain expertise, EPIC empowers global leaders like **Coca-Cola, L'Oréal, Kraft Heinz, and PepsiCo** to make precise, data-driven commercial decisions at scale.

To meet with one of our experts visit

EPICINSIGHTS.IO