



BEN & JERRY'S HOMEMADE HODLINGS INC

Strategic Profile Report

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Executive Summary

In this document is a strategic profile analysis of Ben & Jerry's Homemade Holding Inc. There are four phases included which reveal a premium brand that is defined by their differentiation strategy from their decadent products and strong social mission. The core strategic insight is within the tension between their brand mission and their parent company, Unilever. This conflict can be considered a competitive advantage, but it is also a key vulnerability.

Key Insights

Ben & Jerry's strategic position is dominating the premium ice cream segment through their unique flavors and their activist social mission. Their primary strategic challenge is over brand autonomy and political activism conflicting with their parent company Unilever. The tension compromises their authenticity which drives their customer loyalty.

Their root cause of their operational inefficiency is the strategic misalignment. The constant pursuit of complex flavors overwhelms their supply chain. This results in high changeover costs, inventory waste, and fragility of their supply chain.

There is a planned demerger from Unilever by the end of 2025 due to the ice cream division's low 11.8% operating margin. There will be immense pressure from shareholders on Ben & Jerry's to cut costs and boost profitability drastically which puts their social mission at risk to be compromised.

The integrated solution suggested in this report is a social mission funded flavor. This limits new flavors to only two per year. These flavors would only use common base ingredients

and \$1.00 per pint will be allocated to the related social cause of that specific flavor. The goals of this approach are to protect autonomy, boost efficiency, and reinforce differentiation. The long-term success of Ben & Jerry's depends on their ability to transform their operational weaknesses into strategic assets to highlight their differentiation so they can flourish in the post-demerger market.

(Phase 1)

Company Overview

Ben & Jerry's Homemade Holding Inc is known as an iconic American Manufacturer of premium ice cream. They are specifically known for their bold flavors, chunk-filled products, and their strong commitment to social justice. This company has a more complex mission statement broken up to three parts which can be categorized into product, economic, and social goals.

Their product mission statement is "To make, distribute, and sell the finest quality ice cream and "euphoric concoctions" using wholesome, natural ingredients while respecting the Earth and environment (Ben & Jerry's, n.d.)." Their economic mission is to operate the company on a sustainable financial basis for profitable growth, increasing value for shareholders. Their social mission is "To operate the company in innovative ways that actively recognize the central role of business in society and use the business to make the world a better place (Ben & Jerry's, n.d.)" This company is a firm believer of Link Prosperity, which is the belief that as the company prospers all stakeholders, from employees to farmers to suppliers and communities, should prosper as well (Ben & Jerry's, n.d.). Their core values consist of progressive ideas include human rights, supporting social and economic justice, and protecting the environment.

Ben & Jerry's was founded in 1978 in Burlington, Vermont. The founders are two childhood friends named Ben Cohen and Jerry Greenfield. Ben & Jerry's operates in the premium ice cream segment of the frozen dessert industry. Unilever is a British Dutch multinational consumer goods company who purchase Ben & Jerry's in the year 2000. Their original acquisition agreement included a semi-independent board for Ben & Jerry's so they could maintain their social mission and brand integrity. This company continues to be a global leader in the premium ice cream segment and is a significant part of Unilever's portfolio. Their exact revenue is unknown since they are a subset of Unilever, but they continue to be a top player in the premium ice cream category. The company's operations span from manufacturing facilities, a global distribution network provided by Unilever, and numerous franchised "Scoop Shops" across multiple continents (Marketing91, 2025).

Strategic Position

Ben & Jerry's business level strategy focuses on differentiation. They appeal to a niche segment of consumers who are willing to pay a higher price for a unique product but also socially conscious consumers. Their differentiation pillars consist of their product and social mission. Their products are considered indulgent, chunky, and have unique flavors when compared to other brands. Their social mission involves activism and ethical ingredients which appeal to those consumers who values align with their social mission. They actively support racial justice, climate action, and LGBTQ+ rights. They contribute to these causes by sourcing ingredients from Greyston Bakery, who utilizes open hiring practices. They also implemented the Caring Dairy Program which appeals to the socially conscious consumer (Ben & Jerry's, n.d.). The corporate-level strategy is related to diversification. Ben & Jerry's uses their parent

company, Unilever, resources for global distribution and supply chain efficiency. This allows them to maintain scale while focusing on their unique mission.

Ben & Jerry have a competitive advantage due to their unique mission. This brand has a powerful reputation for authenticity and willingness to act on political stances. This is a rare and unique asset that creates intense customer loyalty. They are also committed to complex, costly ethical sourcing like their Caring Dairy program which ensures their high quality but also enforces their social mission. They are considered to be flavor innovators with unique flavors such as “Cherry Garcia”, Topped Dirt cake, Everything but the..., etc. This is what sets Ben & Jerry’s apart from their rivals.

Competitive Landscape

The premium ice-cream market consists of intense rivalry, substitution threats, and high buyer power. The threat of new entrants is considered a moderate threat. While it can be easy for a small, local person to start making ice cream, it would be exceedingly difficult for them to achieve Ben & Jerry’s scale. They would need to build large factories and efficient systems to move substantial amounts of ice cream involving costly cold chain logistics. It can also be a challenge to get a spot in large corporate stores with already established players like Unilever and Nestle. They also control many of the distribution channels. The threat of substitute products is a high threat since there are a vast amount alternative options such as gelato, frozen yogurt, candy, and low-calorie/diet desserts for the consumer to choose from.

The bargaining power of buyers is a high threat since there are low switching cost and many choices for the consumer. This is what forces the intense competition on quality,

innovation, and price. The bargaining power of suppliers is a moderate to high threat due to Ben & Jerry's ethical partnerships with Fair trade and Greyston Bakery, who have a high influence over price. These partners were chosen and officially announced to support their social missions, but switching to cheaper alternatives would hurt Ben & Jerry's brand image. Other dairy farms or basic ingredients have some influence, but they are often able to find other alternatives sources for these ingredients.

Competitor Comparison Table

Category	Ben & Jerry's	Haagen-Dazs	Talenti
Price point	Highest prices due to ethical sourcing cost	Higher prices. Slightly lower prices compared to Ben & Jerry's	High prices but still lower when compared to B&J/Haagen-Dazs but still considered premium pricing
Market share	Recognized globally and a top leader for their premium pint segment	Stronger global player but compete for #1 or #2 spot depending on the specific region	growth in the U.S. market within the gelato category
Product Strategy	Indulgent ice cream with chunks, swirls, topped, and fun which can be a narrative-driven brand experience. Stronger focus on non-dairy items	Focuses on pure and classic flavors with minimal ingredients, there is less emphasis on inclusions	Focus on texture of presentation. Italian style gelato texture with transparent plastic jars to highlight the layers within their products
Innovation	innovation driven by their social causes and their indulgent ingredient combinations with unique names	Seasonal releases but still focusing on core flavors. Also including new formats such as bars and bites	New flavor translations of favorite dessert turned into gelato. Unique layering of product in transparent jar

SWOT Summary for Ben & Jerry's

STRENGTHS

- Access to Unilever's resources, such as the global scale/distribution network
- Leaders in ethical and sustainable sourcing practices
- Brand Loyalty that is directly tied to social mission and authenticity

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WEAKNESSES

- Premium prices when compared to competitors
- Tension with Unilever over the autonomy of their social activism
- High fat/calorie content conflicts with health-conscious consumers/trends

OPPORTUNITIES

- Use digital marketing to engage their politically active consumers
- Expanding to non-dairy and lower-calorie options to expand for new growth segment
- Diving deeper into international markets to facilitate more growth

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THREATS

- An increase in competition from low-price private labels or artisanal brands
- Higher operational costs due to their complex, ethical supply chain requirements
- Growing global awareness of healthier alternatives, wellness, and weight management

The biggest strategic challenges for Ben & Jerry's are centered around their brand identity, which is built on their indulgent products and strong social missions. Their primary strength is their ability to adapt their product line by expanding to non-dairy innovations. They

do this without damaging their core elements of indulgence or social commitment which define their brand value. The largest threat they face is the combination of the consumer shift toward healthier substitutes. Their products have higher calorie count due to their indulgent flavors. Ben & Jerry's will have to balance the conflict between their identity of being an indulgent treat while expanding into the non-dairy sector to maintain their market relevance. There is also a persistent ongoing tension over their independence from Unilever, who pose a risk to their social mission which is the fundamental source of its competitive difference.

Strategic Issues

Their strategic issues include maintaining their autonomy, product/mission balance, and climate impact. How will Ben & Jerry's maintain their legal and operational independence from Unilever? This poses as an issue since there are recent conflicts over political stances with their parent company. They need to maintain their social mission to ensure their brand authenticity. How will they maintain growth when developing new products for the growing health-conscious market without sacrificing their indulgent quality that defined their original brand image? How will the brand meet their climate goals if dairy ingredients account for over 50% of its carbon footprint? This would require costly changes to their core supply chain (Ben & Jerry's. n.d.).

(Phase 2)

Operational Overview

Ben & Jerry's are highly committed to using Fair Trade certified and non-GMO ingredients from small scale farms, making their operational process highly complex. Their core operations involve making premium ice cream, non-dairy frozen desserts, and novelties. Their production process can be divided into three main phases: ingredient sourcing and preparation, manufacturing and freezing, and distribution and logistics.

The first phase of ingredient sourcing and preparation is considered critical. They have a partnership with Fair trade Cooperative for core ingredients like sugar, cocoa, and vanilla. Grayston Bakery is their specific vendor for brownies. They have strict quality control checks to not only focus on flavor but ethical sourcing standards. The next phase involves manufacturing and freezing products. The production process takes place in Vermont facilities but a few others globally. The manufacturing process begins with mixing base dairy/non-dairy ingredients, pasteurizations, homogenizations, and then added the "chunks and swirls" a crucial step to making their indulgent product. They put their focus on creating the perfect Chunk-to-Swirl Ratio. This step requires specialized machinery and perfect timing to ensure the "chunks and swirls" are added evenly also distributed without being damaged. This is important since this is a key differentiator of the Ben & Jerry's Product experience.

The final phase of distribution and logistics when finished goods are flash frozen then distributed via Unilever's global cold chain network. This cold chain network goes to grocery stores, convenience stores, and scoop shops all around the world. Their customer service involves asking about flavor availability, ingredient sourcing, and engaging with customers about their social mission initiatives. This is more often handled through their digital channels and

community events. Ben & Jerry's ensure fair wages and benefits for their employees. They support the more progressive employee centered culture.

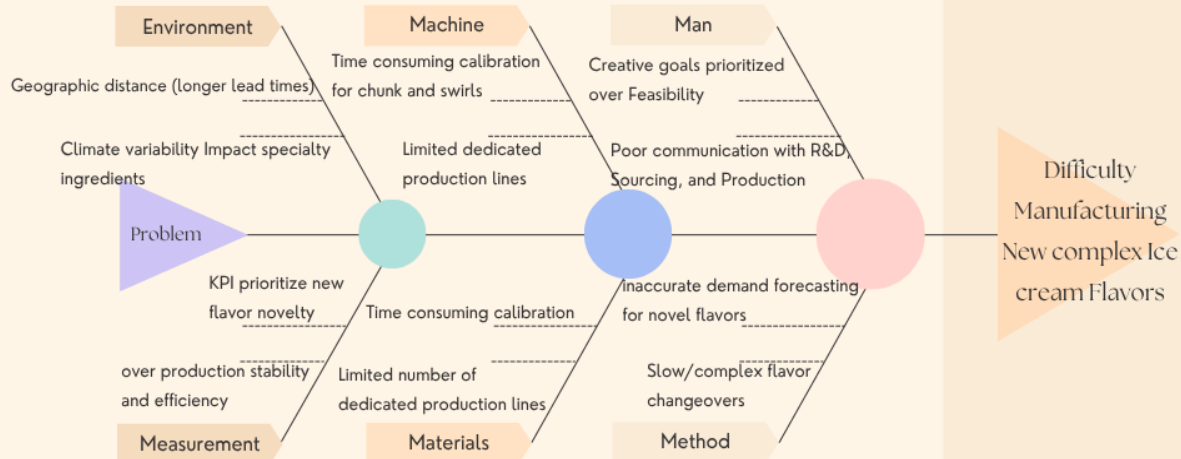
Operational Challenge

The main operational challenge that Ben & Jerry's faces is their flavor creations and specialized ingredient dependency. They are known for releasing innovative, complex, and often temporary flavors. This is a successful marketing tactic, but it puts a strain on their core supply chain and manufacturing operations.

Ben & Jerry's must monitor this complex supply chain on a large scale. The constant creation of new flavors and retirement of flavors leads to unpredictability of demand or inventory. New flavors require unique ingredient sourcing, packaging designs, forecast modeling, and production line retooling. This demand for new or limited-edition flavors could pose to be extremely difficult to predict. If they overestimate demand it leads to perishable inventory waste. Underestimating leads to scarcity for the consumer which causes frustration toward the brand. There is also an increased setup and changeover time due to switching product lines between different complex recipes such as moving from peanut butter base to a coconut milk base. If they want to change the chunk injection this takes a significant amount of cleaning time and retooling time. This process increases overall cost per unit and reduces overall capacity utilization.

These operational issues conflict with the goal of maximizing production efficiency. This increases inventory holding costs and logistical complexity. These issues also can lead to missed

Fishbone Diagram



sales opportunities when a flavor has a high demand but cannot be produced quickly enough for the consumer.

Root Cause Analysis

I used the Fishbone Diagram to determine the underlying causes of the flavor scarcity and complex bottleneck. This structure will help determine the potential causes into categories such as man, method, machine, measurement, and environment.

This fishbone diagram reveals that the root cause of scarcity is not just a single issue but a systematic conflict with the company's creative, mission strategy, and its operational execution. There are two root causes that were learned from completing this analysis which are

strategic misalignment and single-source vulnerability. The strategic misalignment is due to the R&D process prioritizing creative flavor development without considering the operational difficulties and dependency it creates within the supply chain. The single-source vulnerability is due to the commitment to ethically sourced materials creating a fragile supply chain. If Fair Trade fails to deliver one small ingredient, it could cause that entire production of that flavor to stop. This would lead to flavor scarcity causing frustration with the brand. It is difficult for Ben & Jerry's to replace their supplier with another ethically compliant one.

Benchmark Comparison

	Ben & Jerry's	Haagen-Dazs	Nestle/Dreyer's
Primary Strategy	Flavor complexity, novelty, and social missions	Simple premium core flavors and high consistency	Mass market scale, efficiency, and diverse portfolio
Complexity Management	Frequent flavor rotation, complexity, and high SKU count	Low SKU count, infrequent rotation, and high stability	Moderate SKU count, use of common ingredient pools to reach scale
Sourcing priority	Fair Trade, non-GMO, small suppliers create high fragility	Quality core ingredients like milk, cream, and eggs	Cost efficient and global sourcing causes low fragility

Lead Times	Longer lead times due to sourcing and specialized products	Standard lead times due to simple products and commodity-based supply chain	Standard lead times due to leveraging global scale
Production focus	Precise Chunk-to-Swirl Ratios, high changeover time.	Simple products lead to consistency and clean processing	High-speed processing with continuous volume output

Strategic Implications

The operational challenge of excessive flavor varieties leads to their operations not being able to keep up. This can threaten the future of the company in three major ways such as: threat to their social mission and brand image, to their profits/market position, and threat to what makes them unique.

The threat to brand image and social mission could be caused by angry customers when a limited edition sells out quickly leads to customer frustration. This makes the brand look unreliable to their customers. They also have a commitment to their Fair-Trade suppliers and by constantly switching ingredients it causes instability and undermines their social mission which defines their brand. Their operational inefficiencies and the higher costs contradict their goal of sustainable business practices.

The operational inefficiencies are directly reducing profitability and eroding their market share. Their bottlenecks consist of long cleaning times and inaccurate sales forecasts which increases their overall Cost of Goods sold. Anytime a consumer cannot purchase their favorite flavor because its out-of-stock results in a sale loss. This becomes an opportunity for competitors to swoop in and steal market share.

Overall, this instability threatens this company's long-term competitive differentiation which is what makes Ben & Jerry's unique. Their competitive edge comes from their creative quality and authentic social actions. If any scarcity continues then consumers will start seeing them as unreliable rather than creative quality product leaders. If they want to secure their future this company should become more disciplined by R&D and supply chain working together, build resilient network of ethical suppliers, and stricter limit on the number of complex products they launch.

(Phase 3)

Company Financial Overview

Ben & Jerry's, Magnum, and Walls are part of the Ice cream Division of their parent company Unilever PLC. Ben & Jerry's financial analysis will be evaluated through the Unilever financial reports from 2024. In 2024, Unilever PLC had significant Underlying Sales Growth which was primarily driven by growth across all five business groups (Unilever, 2025). In their Ice cream division, it was indicated that there was performance improvement in the second half of 2024. Unilever plans to make their Ice Cream business a separate company by the end of

2025. This plan is intended to make the Ice Cream company independent, increasing success and value for this division.

Overall, Unilever's financial health is considered strong. Their Revenue was 60.8 billion for 2024 which was driven by a volume-led growth (Unilever, 2025a). In previous years (2022-2023) was driven by pricing. Their revenue for their Ice Cream sector was 8.3 billion for the year 2024. Ben & Jerry's contributed \$1.1 billion in revenue to Unilever in 2024. Their Net Income was 11.2 billion in 2024 which demonstrates stability and improvement due to their focus on increasing Gross Margin (45.0% in 2024) and their cost saving programs (Unilever, 2025a). However, their market capitalization was 107.4 billion for Unilever. Their Market capitalization is sensitive to the success of their changes such as the ice cream demerger. This is intended to simplify and improve the overall portfolio's profitability (Unilever, 2025b). Unilever stock trends are unpredictable but stabilizing. There is pressure on stocks due to their strategy concerns. The demerger announcement and focus on accelerating volume growth in 2024 are key initiatives which are intended to drive more stable long-term shareholder returns (Unilever, 2025a).

Key Financial Ratios

Unilever operating profit was 11.2 billion for 2024. The rate was 18.4% for 2024 as well. This profit margin measures their core operational profitability. This margin is considered very healthy for their consumer goods sector. The profit margin is a key indicator of a company's overall financial health including measuring operational efficiency and long-term sustainability. This margin allows for informed decisions about pricing, cost control, and investments/growth.

The ice cream division of Unilever has a much lower profit margin of 11.8%, which is significantly lower than Unilever's rate of 18.4%. Unilever wants to demerge from its lower-performing ice cream division which would instantly increase their profitability. This move would structurally make the company look more profitable.

Their Return on Assets (ROA) is 16.0% which measures how Unilever efficiently uses its total assets to generate profit. The ROA being in this range suggests strong asset efficiency. ROA is a very important metric since it's used to determine a company's operational efficiency and profitability. This metric provides an insight into how the management can effectively convert their assets into profit. Unilever can effectively leverage their massive global manufacturing and supply chain footprint to drive operational earnings (Unilever, 2025b). Once they split from their ice cream division, the new management will have to watch the ROA carefully. The Ice Cream division will have to prove they can efficiently use its specialized cold-chain assets to keep ROA the same or higher even though it will be operating as a separate business.

The Return on Equity is about 56.0% in 2024 for Unilever. This number measures the profit generated relative to the capital invested by shareholders. ROA provides stakeholders with a clear picture of how a company effectively uses their resources regardless of how their assets were financed. Unilever ROA rate is typical rate for a well-established company. They can use their debt to boost the profits to return to their shareholders. They are essentially creating value for their shareholders. When Unilever separates from the ice cream division it will keep their ROA high, creating a simpler and more profitable portfolio. This new separate company will need a strong strategy and focus on high growth brands such as Ben & Jerry's to prove they can deliver attractive profits relative to their initial investments.

Key Financial Metric of Unilever

Metric	Result	Source
Underlying Sales Growth	4.2%	(Unilever, 2025a)
Underlying Volume Growth	2.9%	(Unilever, 2025a)
Underlying Operating Margin	18.4%	(Unilever, 2025a)

Competitor Comparison

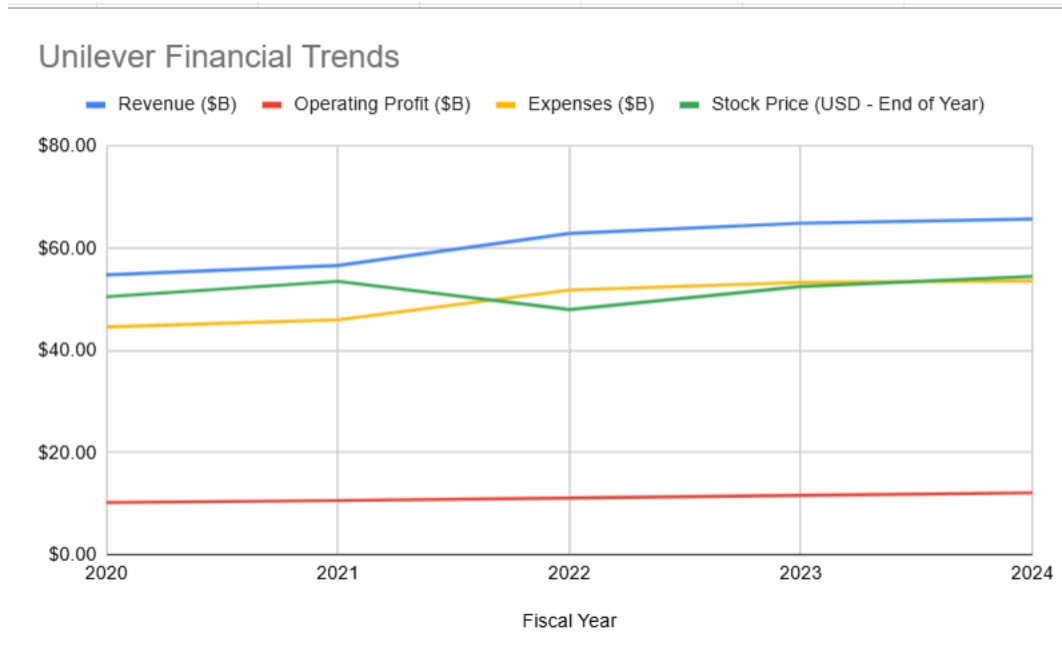
There is a notable challenge when comparing Unilever overall profitability of 18.4% to its ice cream division who operates at a significantly lower at 11.8% margin (Unilever, 2025a). When looking at other competitors like Nestle who operate on higher profits due to their products like coffee that have better margins. The demerger is meant to create a more focused ice cream company that is forced to cut costs and boost profits.

Financial Benchmark Table

Metric	Unilever Ice Cream Division	Haagen-Dazas (General Mills parent company)	Nestle Group
Operating Profit Margin (2024)	18.4% (Unilever as a whole)	16.5% (General Mills)	16.0%

Return on Equity (2024)	29.2%	31.3%	30.4%
Ice Cream Division operating profit margin	11.8%	Not publicly disclosed	Share 11.4% of the profit margin
Strategic Focus	Demerger to improve the 11.8% margin by cost cutting and aggressive growth	Focus on high-end, high margin, super-premium category	Divestiture to focus the group on higher-margin categories like coffee and pet care

Trend Analysis



Created on Google Sheets by Kailey Blakely

Interpretation

I will connect Unilever's overall financial performance and why they made the strategic decision to demerge from their Ice Cream Division. Unilever made the decision to separate the ice cream division was made due to the Underlying Operation Margin and Return on Assets (ROA) analyses (Unilever, 2025a). Their ice cream divisions' 11.8% margin was dragging down their overall group profitability. If they separated this division, it would automatically boost their portfolio's profit margin by removing this lower-performing segment. This strategic approach is aimed at simplifying their portfolio which will make their core business more stable and more appealing to high-margin investors.

Their ice cream division requires seasonal cold-chain assets that are expensive which inherently lower the overall ROA (16.0%) for the entire company. When Unilever separates from

the Ice cream division it will improve overall asset efficiency so they can shift their focus on faster growth, less logistically complex beauty and personal care categories (Unilever, 2025b). The Ice Cream division will have to stand alone to invest aggressively in dedicated cold chain innovation without competing for capital from the Unilever group.

The strength of this company includes a strong brand portfolio, operational simplicity, and Agility. The ice cream division has a strong brand portfolio is has a strong brand presence from names like Ben & Jerry's and Magnum. Ben & Jerrys is a powerful growth engine, and consumers are willing to pay more for its premium products. This makes this company attractive to investors. Unilever will be able to get rid of seasonal complexities involving dropping sales of ice sales in winter months. The remaining divisions will become simpler and more focused on it main product categories. This will improve the company's ROI for shareholders and allow them to continue its high efficiency. The demerger will allow Ben & Jerry's to gain more agility and focus, which will allow them to focus on marker trends. They can continue to develop plant-based options and direct-to-consumer models which will give them competitive edge.

Weaknesses and Potential Risks of the Ice Division demerged from Unilever. The cost that comes with separating IT systems, contracts, and establishing a new corporate identity could impact short-term earning negatively for both entities. The ice cream division will have to aggressively cut costs since their company is starting with an 11.8% margin. If they want to reach competitor levels of 17-19% then they must be very proactive and failure to achieve this rapidly will limit their valuation and ability to invest. Ben & Jerry's has a unique structure to protect their social mission but as a separate entity there will be increased shareholder pressure to prioritize profit over their social mission. This could potentially lead to brand erosion or

internal conflict. During this separation period it would be a great time for competitors like Nestle and General Mills to launch aggressive campaigns, especially in key places where they might be vulnerable due to the transitional chaos.

Forecast

Ben & Jerry's could have a difficult start at the beginning of this demerger from their parent company Unilever, but they have strong potential for long-term growth. They will face difficulties due to expensive, one-time fees to legally separate the business. They are also starting at a low profit margin of 11.8%. If they want to succeed management should immediately focus on making dedicated cold-chain logistics cheaper and more efficient. If their cost cutting is successful for the next 2-3 years, then their ROA will improve. Their ability to grow relies on two aspects; maintaining strong sales of brands like Ben & Jerry's and Magnum and being a smaller company allows them to focus/react to new trends. They can jump on trending areas of ice cream like plant based and direct-to-home delivery. This could potentially make them a leader in market growth. If they fail to cut costs and innovate quickly, they risk being undercut by bigger rivals with deeper pockets. However, if the company can execute their plan successfully their fast growth will justify its low starting profit margin to outside investors.

(Phase 4)

Ethical Challenge Overview

The obvious ethical challenge for Ben & Jerry's retaining their Brand Autonomy with corporate ownership involving their activist social missions. It is known that Ben & Jerry's asked for a separate board to continue their social missions. They wanted to remain transparent, keep

brand integrity, and continue their commitment to social justice. This is where Ben & Jerry's clashed with their parent company Unilever.

Ben & Jerry's social mission involves a commitment to actively supporting racial justice, climate action, and LGBTQ+ rights (Ben & Jerry's, n.d.). They want to use their "business platform to make the world a better place" (Ben & Jerry's, n.d.). This company was purchased by the multinational consumer good company Unilever since 2000 (Unilever, 2025a). Their original agreement during this merger was that Ben & Jerry's would retain their own semi-independent board so they could maintain their social mission. This structure created persistent tension between the two companies. This agreement would allow Ben & Jerry's board to take bold actions and even political stances that would align with their values, even if their topic is controversial to the parent company. Unilever attempted to block their actions which would violate their original agreement. Ben & Jerry's saw this as "silencing their voice".

This ethical conflict was specifically highlighted during the brand's political stances on the Israeli Palestinian conflict involving Gaza. The brand planned to develop a special flavor to support peace and dignity for Palestinians. Unilever blocked the development of this flavor. Ben & Jerry's also attempted to issue public statements stating "immediate and permanent ceasefire" in Gaza. After this statement Unilever then threatened to dismantle the independent board and sue members to prevent any further release of these statements.

Unilever face pressure from their shareholders to prioritize their profitability (Unilever, 2025a). They wanted to maintain a non-controversial political stance across their portfolios. When Unilever blocks Ben & Jerry's board this degrades the board's authority which confirms

that Unilever has the final say. These situations create a reputational risk for Unilever, which could be viewed hypocritical since they previously stated their commitments to social responsibility. These disagreements have led to expensive and high-profile legal battles. These resources could instead be used for business growth and development. The stakeholders could view this controversy as a cause of financial uncertainty around Ben & Jerry's brand, which pressured Unilever's management to step in.

Leadership Response

Unilever consistently challenged the autonomy of Ben & Jerry's leadership over these previously stated instances. There is still a persistent conflict between these two companies over independence (The Guardian, 2025). The leadership unsuccessfully handled this tension since it continues to develop as the conflict over independence persists. Unilever has used their financial and corporate authority to suppress specific activists' actions of Ben & Jerry's (The Guardian, 2025). The financial power of Unilever ultimately allowed them to veto over action that could harm the overall group's stability or reputation (Unilever, 2025a).

Stakeholders viewed Unilever actions as necessary means to maintain stability and profitability of the corporation. Ben & Jerry's continued to maintain their social mission, which is a key differentiator continuing the tension with their parent company. The consumers have the potential to lose their trust due to these conflicts. This could make the companies appear unreliable or inauthentic in their activism. This could lead to consumer frustration or a decline in customer loyalty built on the Brand's activist image.

Ben & Jerry's leadership continues to maintain their brand integrity and social activism based on their original acquisition agreement. Ben continues to speak out on social media platforms like Tik Tok. Jerry resigned in September 2025 because he felt that their core social mission was being compromised. Ben Cohen decided to stay with the company to preserve their original mission. Ben uses social media as a direct line of communication with their loyal consumers which acts as a buffer against the parent company attempting to silence them on their political stances. Ben & Jerry want Unilever to free the company entirely by allowing them to be their own brand again since the demerger will make the ice cream division a separate but it will not end the corporate censorship. They believe this transfer will just simply shift the entity controlling and silencing them instead of granting the necessary operation freedom to honor their brand's mission.

Leadership Theory Application

The leadership model that would best apply to how Ben & Jerry's leadership should respond to these challenges is Transformational Leadership. This leadership focuses on inspiring others to rise above their self-interest for the good of the organization or society.

Transformational Leadership is built on four components idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration.

The founders of Ben & Jerry's established brand identity rooted in progressive ideas like social/economic justice and environmental protection. The response to the Unilever conflict should model their activism to maintain brand authenticity (Marketing91, 2025). They should create inspirational motivation to remind everyone of the company's core mission to "use

business to make the world better” (Ben & Jerry’s, n.d.). They should focus attention on the main core mission, not just the conflicts that arise with their parent company Unilever.

Intellectual stimulation by encouraging board members to challenge the status quo and develop innovation. These ideas could help maintain autonomy while being owned by a huge corporation like Unilever. They could create creative nonaggressive ways to finance their social programs. These innovative solutions could protect their independence from Ben & Jerry’s. Individual consideration can be accomplished by leadership ensuring that the employees in charge of the social mission feel supported. Leadership should act as a buffer against the demands of Unilever. This would keep the employee-focused culture strong.

Ben & Jerry’s have started some of these steps through their social media presence. If they continue to adopt this transformational leadership approach it could inspire everyone to view this conflict as a mission driven goal, instead of a simple business problem. This would shift the perspective to help unite employees, enhance customer excitement, and protect the brand’s unique competitive advantage (Marketing91, 2025).

Innovation Proposal

This innovation proposal focuses on addressing brand autonomy vs. corporate ownership by creating limited new flavor launches (Marketing91, 2025). These new flavors would be special temporary flavors by tying them directly to a fund and supply chain stream dedicated to the social mission. This would be limited to two flavors a year and \$1.00 from every pint sold would be directed to restricted funds to support social causes tied to the temporary flavor. These flavors would only use existing ethical suppliers and common base

ingredients to make the supply chain simpler, cut change over time, and cut down on wasted inventory from unique ingredients.

Proposal Overview Table

Goals	Benefits	Risks
<p>Maintain Brand Autonomy: being able to independently fund and execute social missions</p>	<p>There will be a link between purchase and social impact. This would increase trust and customer loyalty.</p>	<p>If they reduce the new flavors releases this could reduce their “fun” factor or market buzz which could reduce consumer interests</p>
<p>Address Operational Inefficiency: by reducing frequency of complex specialized flavor launches</p>	<p>This would reduce change overtime, inventory holding costs, and unpredictable demand forecasting.</p>	<p>There could be a conflict with shareholders challenging \$1.00 per pint to reduce their profitability.</p>
<p>Meet Climate Goals: use of non-dairy bases for limited flavor launches</p>	<p>Dairy ingredient account for over 50% of the carbon footprint and non-dairy product would address this issue</p>	<p>Non-dairy market growth could be slower than expected. This could cause them to fail to meet scale or meet their target goals.</p>

Strategic Alignment

This innovation proposal supports Ben & Jerry's differentiation business-level strategy and reinforces their competitive advantage. They differentiate themselves from two key factors: product and social mission. This proposal would strengthen this by dedicating funds to social mission funds and requiring the suppliers to be within the ethical sourcing network. This would confirm the brand's commitment to social and economic justice. This would allow their mission to be transparent and harder to replicate by competitors.

If the R&D teams focus their efforts on a few higher-impact product launches that align with operational needs, then this would shift their product differentiation. This shift would strengthen their commitment to social and economic justice (Ben & Jerry's, n.d.) also their reputation for authenticity (Marketing91, 2025). This program would provide a clear, trackable, and financial mechanism for the social mission. This would transform their operational cost challenge into a strategic asset. Reducing the operational fiction would support the economic mission of "profitable growth" but still protecting Ben & Jerry's brand integrity.

(Phase 5)

Personal Reflection

I found that completing this strategic profile report on Ben & Jerry's was very insightful when diving into the complexities of corporate strategy, especially this situation with a strong mission driven brand who operates under a very large multinational corporation. I discovered that there is a delicate balancing act with a company's social mission and their need to make

money to continue to run efficiently. Strategy is about finding a balance to manage these trade-offs every single day.

Most Challenging & Rewarding Phases

The most difficult phase was Phase 3: Financial Analysis. When comparing this phase to others where I was able to focus on Ben & Jerry's directly but during this phase the company's financial results were buried inside its parent company, Unilever. I could not access the specific and detailed profit/loss statements for Ben & Jerry's.

The biggest challenge in this was the scarcity of data. I only had publicly reported numbers of Unilever entire Ice Cream Division. I used general financial ratios to infer Ben & Jerry's specific situation. This required me to carefully interpret and estimate numbers such as the division's low profit margin to explain the brand unique operational complexity. This taught me that working with real-world financial analysis means working with incomplete information and drawing conclusions from limited data. I had to work with the information available to be to complete this phase of the strategic analysis.

I found that the most rewarding phase was Phase 4: Ethical Challenges and Innovation Proposal. I finally was able to put all the pieces together by looking at the central conflict such as mission vs. profit or complexity vs. efficiency using them to find a feasible solution for Ben & Jerry's.

The Social Mission Funded Flavor idea was rewarding since I was able to find a solution for their ethical and operational issues at the same time. This solution allows for independent funding sources while creating a strict framework for reducing complexities within the flavor

production process. It felt great to find a solution that honored the brand's mission/history while allowing for financial success.

Growth in Analytical Skills

I believe I was able to improve my analytical skills through connecting all four phases of this business analysis of Ben & Jerry's. I discovered that they have great competitive advantages such as their unique flavors and social mission. They also have daily operational tasks such as machine cleaning time and spoiled inventory. I realized their ethical sourcing is a great differentiator but creates weakness due to reliance on single-source ingredients.

I found the ability to translate limited financial data into a powerful narrative explaining the corporate decisions made recently. I used ROA and Operating Margin to explain the corporate decisions such as the 2025 demerger. During the final phase I was able to demonstrate my ability to develop solutions to address major problems within the Ice Cream division of Unilever.

Professional Utility of this Portfolio

I was able to demonstrate my critical thinking and strategic abilities throughout this strategic analysis which I will be able to use when applying for jobs. This report is a clear indication that I can handle a large project like this to conduct a deep analysis then turn it into a clear strategic plan. I could potentially use the executive summary and innovation proposal to give an employer a quick insight into how I understand and handle complex business situations to propose an achievable plan.

During my discussion on Transformational leadership and ethical conflict it demonstrates that I am aware of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) also the importance of managing all stakeholders. I can use this for roles that require Brand Integrity, sustainability, and ethical governance knowledge. I can potentially use this to contribute to discussions about ethical leadership and brand reputation. This portfolio is more than just a report on Ben & Jerry's it's a deep dive involving critical thinking which is used as a learning experience to bring to any strategic challenge within my future career.

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