

Dark Spirits - UK - August 2012

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“Many women (and men) are currently being asked to make the large jump from non-users into a market with a demanding image and taste profile. Providing these potential users with a path of progression into more sophisticated whiskies, an approach used effectively by Johnnie Walker in the US, should help operators to make their offering more accessible.”

– Chris Wisson, Senior Drinks Analyst

In this report we answer the key questions:

- How can whisky attract more female users?
- Where next for dark and golden rum?
- What are the key opportunities for brandy /Cognac?
- How can the dark spirits market reduce its dependence on promotions?

Despite struggles in the wider alcoholic drinks market and the market being noticeably hit by the 2008/09 recession, dark spirits have proved to be a resolute category in 2012, expected to halt the recent decline in volume sales and achieving value growth through established segments such as whisky as well as growing ones such as dark/golden rum. Part of the success of these drinks can be attributed to attracting new users to the market, with a growing number of brands looking to position themselves as accessible by using strategies such as flavour innovation to provide less common user groups such as women and under-25s with a gateway into the market.

The market is likely to continue to broadly rely on two groups of users: firstly the core dark spirits lovers and purists who are the driving force behind segments such as brandy/Cognac and single malt whisky, and secondly the more flexible and adventurous younger users who are open to embracing new flavours and variants on dark spirits such as rye whiskey and spiced rums. As perceptions of dark spirits evolve and the distinction between sophistication and sociability blurs, brands which limit themselves to one segment of the market may risk isolation within one of the few burgeoning alcoholic drinks markets.

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