

From prohibition to post-COVID, Brown-Forman: past, present and future



With the support of Brown-Forman's GTR team, Jack Daniel's launched its global ad campaign, *Make It Count*, in fall 2020 and generated awareness via a mixed media strategy

Since 2020 marked Brown-Forman's 150th anniversary, the company took the opportunity to reflect on its history and celebrate its long list of achievements. Overcoming major challenges such as global and domestic conflicts, natural disasters and material shortfalls, Brown-Forman survived to become one of the world's leading wine and spirits companies. Looking back, Aude Bourdier, Vice President Managing Director, Global Travel Retail, Brown-Forman, notes that its greatest threat was the Prohibition Era and the United States' nationwide constitutional ban on the production, importation, transportation and sale of alcoholic beverages. To date, Brown-Forman is the only American spirits company that has been in continuous operation before, during and after prohibition. She comments that in the same manner, Brown-Forman will weather this pandemic and maintain and expand its leadership role in the global spirits industry.

Taking advantage of this "downtime," the Brown-Forman GTR team has continued to follow the company's business philosophy of focusing on long-term planning. With the inevitable recovery of international travel and commerce in mind, the team has developed tools, mechanisms and practices and implemented advanced schooling to capitalize on future opportunities. Although pre-COVID-19 Brown-Forman considered the critical development of its employees as the key to its success and

provided a number of online sources to facilitate brand education, with the onset of its shutdown, the company accelerated and intensified its training curriculum. From marketing principles to e-commerce opportunities, the curriculum covers a diverse range of topics and fosters team building among all levels of employment.



Aude Bourdier, Vice President Managing Director, Global Travel Retail, Brown-Forman, says that similarly to overcoming prohibition, the company will weather this pandemic and expand its leadership role in the global spirits industry

Described as one of the brand's most ambitious and comprehensive marketing efforts to date, Jack Daniel's launched its *Make It Count* campaign in fall 2020. Global in scale, the ad campaign required a significant investment and generated awareness via print, TV, OOH, social and digital media in all major cities around the world. With Brown-Forman GTR as a notable contributor of the campaign and its impact, Bourdier reports that it's been a resounding success and offers an enormous amount of potential post-COVID-19.

[Brown-Forman GTR's role in *Make It Count* represents a main asset that we will fully leverage with our travel retail partners. To start, the team specifically tailored aspects of the campaign to impact our target audience in the arrivals and departures areas of international airports and on-board airliners. An indicator of the campaign's success is the trial run we conducted at London Gatwick International Airport in December, where our Jack Daniel's executions were seen on digital screens by some half-million travelers within a mere two-week period,]" she says.

With consumers spending more time at home due to lockdown, Brown-Forman believes that the current DIY cocktail trend plays to the strengths of its portfolio. In addition to Jack Daniel's, many other of its leading brands including Glendronach, Wood Reserve and Chambord present qualities that are appealing to consumers. Recognized for their brand integrity, credibility and authenticity, such names are also in demand because of their versatility and mixability.

“If you look on the back-bar of practically any drinking establishment in the world you will see the familiar spherical shape of a bottle of Chambord. The ubiquity of this tasty French liqueur is a tribute to its contribution of fine cocktails around the world,” shares Bourdier.

This summer, 20th Century Fox will release the third instalment of its *Kingsman* series: *The King’s Man*. Brown-Forman’s Glendronach *Kingsman* edition is the latest malt to join its portfolio and the second Glendronach single malt whisky to be released in conjunction with the franchise. In collaboration with the series’ director, Matthew Vaughn, the company created a 1989 vintage, limited-edition to celebrate the final chapter of the trilogy. Proving to be as popular as the franchise, the VP says that the limited-edition is “flying off the shelves” where available.

Announced last year, as a response to the pandemic, Brown-Forman donated \$1 million (USD) to COVID-19 relief funds. With employees in more than 150 countries, the company identified community and industry needs and supported multiple locations, agencies and organizations. Top of the list: Restaurant Workers Community Foundation, United States’ Bartenders Guild and One Louisville received initial contributions.

“From the onset of the pandemic, Brown-Forman has made the health and well-being of our employees and their families our top priority. The company has strictly adhered to the health protocols enacted by local governments at all Brown-Forman locations around the world and adopted remote workplace practices, which safeguard our employees as they continue to engage in the necessary business engagement and productivity,” concludes Bourdier.