

My brand Scots Gold

Melanie Broyé-Engelkes joined Ethimex, a London-based supplier of ethanol and premium spirits, a little over 18 months ago to create a proprietary range of spirit brands. She talks to Michael Eaton about its first launch, Scots Gold and its travel-retail development path

TRI: Tell us about your career history with Scots Gold and its associated companies—and your background in the travel-retail channel or drinks industry.

Broyé-Engelkes: Both sectors are actually new to me, although I did spend more than 10 years in the perfume and cosmetics industry where I held international positions in marketing, merchandising and business development for the Guerlain division of LVMH.

I then moved on and launched my own business, a new food distribution concept in partnership with Transport for London. That experience settled me into the entrepreneurial path and I took up the challenge offered to me by Charles Edge, who owns Ethimex. He asked me to set up and lead its branded business unit known as Charles Edge London.

How and when did Scots Gold start and what has been its development path? What was the inspiration and business USP?

Charles has over 20 years' experience in sourcing the best spirits and casks from around the world. His knowledge and relationships determined our choice to invest in new whiskies, in Scotland and Kentucky and to concentrate our brand development in the whisky category, which still offers space for new ideas.

While our whiskies are ageing, we are selecting blends to create a "whisky wardrobe", a range of high-quality Scotch whiskies linked to lifestyle concepts, in order to appeal to a broader customer base.

Our first creation, Scots Gold, is the equivalent of the iconic "little black dress"; an elegant and versatile Scotch blend of finest grain and more than 15 malt whiskies, with a high concentration of aged Highland malts. Sweet and spicy to the nose, it feels creamy and fruity on the palate, with a long and stylish finish.

Its distinctive taste has already been acknowledged through three industry awards

and accolades from whisky authors. It has also inspired the noted Japanese bartender Masahiko Endo to "dress up" Scots Gold in signature cocktails, each telling a personal story with a touch of humour.

What have been the highlights for you with Scots Gold—and of being a woman operating in what is traditionally a man's world?

To my surprise, the whisky industry has proved very open-minded and welcoming to anyone who wishes to share their passion—whatever your gender or level of knowledge.

Therefore, the past 18 months or so have been part of a continuous highlight. But I will fondly remember the Spirits Business award ceremony at the TFWA exhibition in Cannes last October when Scots Gold won gold and silver medals at the Travel Retail Masters.

When did the company make its first move into travel-retail and what progress has been made?

We entered this channel thanks to our business partner and friend Anthony Budd, owner of Diverse Flavours. Scots Gold fits perfectly into its product portfolio and Anthony's connections open a whole new opportunity to us. Scots Gold has benefited from amazing visibility on the Diverse Flavours stand in Cannes and we are proud to announce our first listing, at Cochin Duty Free.

What are your plans with travel-retail?

First, we want to establish Scots Gold in India and expand into Asia, then roll-out in the Middle East, the Americas and, of course, the UK. We are also finalising a new addition to our whisky wardrobe—a statement piece which is a lifestyle-driven trilogy of Scotch blends catering for various occasions. More will be revealed in Singapore this spring.

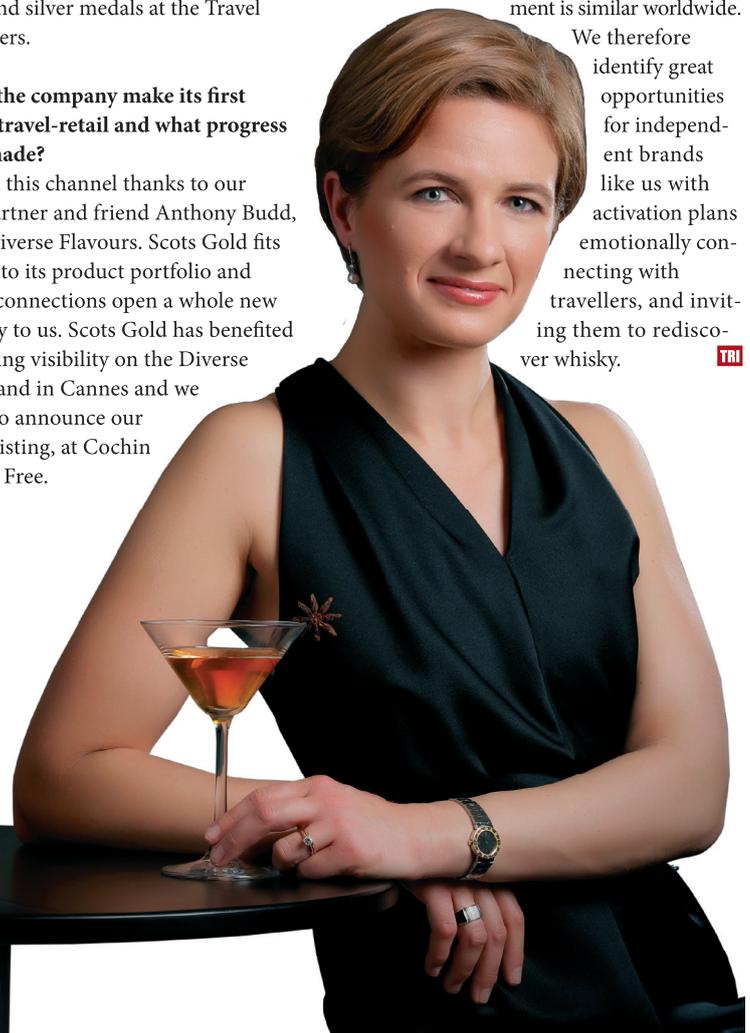
Whisky consumption in Asia/Pacific is split between standard blends and high-end single-malts. We offer a third option with approachable, yet sophisticated and innovative whisky brands showcasing uplifting personal stories.

Finally, how do you find the travel-retail market at present?

In the whisky category, the product assortment is similar worldwide.

We therefore identify great opportunities for independent brands like us with activation plans emotionally connecting with travellers, and inviting them to rediscover whisky.

TRI



Scots Gold recently secured its first travel-retail listing with Cochin Duty Free