

CIPR Pride Awards

Category: 13 - Best Use of Digital PR

The Scotch Malt Whisky Society Twitter Tasting

Strategy

Home to the world's finest selection of single cask, single malt whiskies, The Scotch Malt Whisky Society is an internationally renowned membership organisation. Bottling from 126 malt whisky distilleries, only the very best whiskies make the grade following a rigorous approval process by the Society's esteemed tasting panel. Offering a unique experience for whisky aficionados across the world, from the novice to the connoisseur, the Society is constantly looking for new ways to reach its members and target whisky enthusiasts.

With global appeal and an actively engaged audience of enthusiasts, the online whisky community is thriving. Armed with a brief to tap into this captive market, Weber Shandwick hatched a plan to take the Society's traditional whisky tasting to a virtual world.

Implementation

Weber Shandwick set-up a whisky tasting event through the online social media platform Twitter.

Weber Shandwick organised three simultaneous tastings in the Society's prestigious members' rooms across the UK (London, Edinburgh and Leith). A focused engagement strategy was undertaken with bloggers and traditional media to ensure that awareness of the Twitter Tasting was generated. Key whisky bloggers and leading national news, features and drinks writers (from Spectator to Scotland on Sunday) were invited to attend the event in the venues and form the 'expert panel' for the evening.

An invitation was then sent to all Society members via Twitter detailing the date and the time of the tasting. Weber Shandwick used its established network of bloggers to help publicise the event through their blogs and 'Tweet' about the tasting in advance. Leading whisky and luxury drinks bloggers were also identified and Weber Shandwick maintained regular contact with them through email and Twitter prior to the events to drive as much traffic to the Twitter feed as possible on the night and encourage people to take part.

Members in the UK and around the world were invited to order the whiskies selected for the tasting so they could join in and engage in the conversation online.

On the big night, Society 'ambassadors' (proper whisky buffs) hosted the tasting at each of the three venues to provide specialist information on the single cask, single malt whiskies and ensure that the conversation flowed and that momentum was maintained throughout the event.

A designated 'tweeter' was appointed at each venue to capture 'tweets' from the expert panel and a live twitter page was projected onto a large screen for the panel to interact with and feedback to the crowd of whisky aficionados who joined in the online tasting. The tweeter captured the huge range of comments describing the varied whisky taste sensations and descriptions throughout the tasting, responding to feedback from others online and answering questions.

Creativity – what makes this campaign stand out?

The Twitter Tasting gave whisky lovers from across the globe an exclusive insight into this internationally-renowned, private members' organisation and its remarkable whiskies for one night only. The interactive element allowed people to fully engage with the Society and other whisky lovers through the live Twitter feed, bringing the tasting and the Society's whiskies to life and reaching new audiences. It also helped to strengthen existing relationships with key media contacts and bloggers.

Evaluation and measurement

The campaign was evaluated against the following objectives:

- Engaging with new audiences online
- Generating a buzz about the Society online

Cost-effectiveness

The work was carried out as part of Weber Shandwick's ongoing retainer and the only expenditure incurred by the Society was the cost of the whisky.

Final results against objectives

Weber Shandwick's Twitter tasting had global appeal, whetting the appetites of whisky lovers across the world, helping to reach new audiences and create online buzz around The Scotch Malt Whisky Society.

The tasting attracted a large number of guests to log on. Coverage was achieved in national press titles (including The Spectator and Scotland on Sunday) and across leading whisky blogs, including the Edinburgh Whisky Blog.

Total Budget

The work was carried out within a £5K budget and this covered Weber Shandwick's time to plan and execute the event.