



**Category:** Corporate and Business Communications Campaign

**Company:** Weber Shandwick

**Entry title:** Rare Whisky 101: A Dram Fine Investment

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**Brief and objectives:**

We set out to position whisky (and specialist brokerage Rare Whisky 101) as a serious investment option for high-net-worth individuals, on a par with art, wine and classic cars. Our specific objectives:

- Attract private clients looking to buy or sell rare whisky, investors interested in buying into the secondary market for rare whisky
- Double web traffic
- Achieve coverage in the four daily UK broadsheets (FT, Times, Telegraph, Guardian)

**Rationale behind campaign, including research and planning:**

Working with Rare Whisky 101, we looked at global trends in the whisky market, and insights from their data and wider research that would grab headlines.

From numerous wealth reports, we found that “passion” investments such as art, cars and wine were on the up, but whisky wasn’t yet considered to be a legitimate investment asset.

The research also showed that Scotch malt whisky, widely considered to be the only credible single malt to collect, was actually up against competition from lesser-known Japanese distilleries. (In 2015, a 1960 bottle of Karuizawa set a new record for Japanese whisky sold an auction when it went for £77,000).

**Strategy and tactics, including the types and variety of media utilised, creativity and innovation:**

Throughout the campaign, we created tailor-made angles for broadsheet business pages, personal finance media, the whisky media, and luxury lifestyle media.

For the launch of each of financial report, we focused on a different angle based on its data and market insights: the little-known Japanese rare whisky market, whisky vs more traditional assets, (finding that the leading index for Scotch whisky had outperformed wine, gold, and many leading global equity indices) and the rise of whisky as a bone fide “passion pursuit”.

For each report, we built a media consumption profile, mapping stories to meet specific audiences. We targeted the rare whisky success story at broadsheet business pages, and created a story about on asset class comparisons for personal finance media. We focused

on distillery angles for the whisky media, and engaged luxury lifestyle media by positioning rare whisky as a passion investment for ultra-high-net-worth individuals.

We also created supporting content including a guide to how to invest in whisky, a Q&A, and a blog series comparing new whiskies to their older counterparts.

We added another creative strand to the campaign: it has long been suspected that the rare whisky auction market has been tainted by fakes and forgeries, but there has never been any evidence. Together with Rare Whisky 101, we came up with a plan to purchase a suspect bottle of whisky at auction and prove once and for all its authenticity or otherwise.

### **Implementation of tactics:**

Our tactics were executed through a media matrix to ensure that we were hitting different media at the right time to maximise the traction of our stories.

However, with our 'fake whisky' story we decided to go one step further. Once RW101 had purchased their suspect bottle of Laphroaig 1903, the bottled was subjected to six months of forensic tests. We chronicled these tests and the big 'reveal' in a short film, alongside a bank of new photography, and released the findings in a multi-media release in December 2016.

In March this year, we also began to branch out beyond commenting on RW101's data. We secured an opportunity for RW101 to partner with online whisky auction Whisky Auctioneer an independent auction expert, to help promote the sale of the world's largest known collection of rare Karuizawa whisky from Japan.

### **Measurement and evaluation:**

This was an investor relations campaign with a difference. We made the most of RW101's specialism in an intriguing new asset class with a multi-layered, creative activation – who knew there were fakes and forgeries in whisky as well as art? – that caught the imagination of journalists and investors while underlining the credibility, expertise and passion of the founders.

Our work directly led to business from investors in the U.S, Europe, Taiwan and Japan and sellers looking to sell their collections:

- FT coverage led a hotelier to ask for a valuation of a whisky collection worth £450,000; Rare Whisky 101 brokered the sale
- Herald coverage led a collector of rare Macallan to ask RW101 to move his bottles to the world's first private equity rare whisky investment fund. One bottle was acquired for £150,000; the most ever paid for a single 70/75 cl bottle
- After an FT feature, one collector contacted Rare Whisky 101 to sell his rare Macallan collection so he could follow the Ferrari F1 team around the world. The brokerage helped him realise his dream, selling the collection for €350,000.

Rare whisky is now regularly cited as a "passion investment" and a recent Lloyds Private Banking report showed that high-net-worth customers were increasingly turning to whisky as an investment, using RW101's data.

The RW101 story successfully positioned the company as the global expert on rare whisky. Since exploding the fake Scotch story, founder Andy Simpson has been approached by BBC

One to contribute to its Fake Britain series, and by C4 to take part in a programme on the counterfeit alcohol industry.

- 366 pieces of coverage, including the FT, Telegraph, Times, Daily Mail, Guardian, BBC, Scotsman, Herald, PA, AFP and Bloomberg
- The fake whisky investigation alone had a media reach of 3.7 million+
- The partnership with Whisky Auctioneer saw Rare Whisky 101 quoted in lifestyle and financial media in Canada, France, Netherlands, UK, Taiwan and the U.S.

The first annual report was downloaded 11,500+ times in 2016. The second annual report was downloaded 10,973 times in its first month of publication (February 2017) alone.

The website had a 234% uplift in visitors in February 2017 compared to the same point only two years previously, smashing our objective of a 100% increase, and Rare Whisky 101 now has consistently high unique visitors per month: up 18% YOY during Q1 2017.

### **Budget and cost effectiveness:**

Fees: £notforpublication

Given that RW101 do not engage in any other forms of marketing, we are confident that our media relations activity has had a significant positive impact on the company's revenues, through increased brokerage fees, but also through heightened brand awareness, in key markets worldwide.