



# The Serious Business of Monkeying Around

MONKEY  SHOULDER®

100% MALT WHISKY MADE FOR MIXING

**aca**live

## Executive summary

Monkey Shoulder. Yes, it's Blended Scotch Whisky. No, it's not your run-of-the-mill dram. Not even close. Tradition? You keep it, Monkey Shoulder walks a different path. A blend of three single malts, and originally created to make the perfect Old Fashioned, Monkey Shoulder explodes onto the market place with iconic activations, brave messaging and singular appeal to an audience other brands would kill for. It's all part of this whisky brand's genetic make-up - irreverence, alternative thinking, playfulness and a preconception-breaking stance that's unique.

That attitude translates to the marketing strategy, too. Monkey Shoulder decided long ago that building the brand needed to be founded on concrete footings. Slow and steady wins the day, so talking directly to the on-trade and building trust with bartenders generated the word-of-mouth, grass roots support they needed.

Blinding strategy, because it worked. The brand's grown and established itself in the world's best bars. Now, the focus has shifted to get new consumers on board and drinking Monkey Shoulder. And, of course, there's no other way to do it than in the Monkey Shoulder way. What does that mean? Massive impact, HUGE engagement and a truly personal approach.

They realised - early on - that creating experiences that gave consumers the best memories to take away really worked. Fun, transgressive and ground breaking characterised the activity that Monkey Shoulder brought to the category and not a traditional whisky moment in sight.

Let's talk results. The Monkey Shoulder approach has netted accolades in 2014, 2015, 2016 and 2017. In each of those years, Monkey Shoulder has been voted the world's top trending scotch by drinks international reports. And they did it with our help.

**We are ACA Live.**

(285 words)





## Introduction

We, ACA Live, started working with Monkey Shoulder in August 2009, just 4 years after the brand was born. The brief was straightforward – deliver clear and consistent messaging and appeal to a wide range of people – non-Scotch drinkers, new drinkers and Monkey Shoulder fans alike. But over and above that it was our job to champion the brand and its pillars, bringing to life the world of Monkey Shoulder and establishing its personality for our audience.

## Monkey Shoulder's pillars

THE PRODUCT

MIXABILITY

WORLD  
PERSONALITY

BRAND  
AMBASSADORS

With those tools in mind, we developed marketing tools tailored to target channels and to roll those out into local markets, tapping into local audiences of premium spirit drinkers.





## Defining the audience

Our approach to defining our audience was straight out of the Monkey Shoulder Playbook. As well as a demographic breakdown, we wanted to hit people with a certain Monkey Shoulder attitude. So, men and women 25-35. But confident and liberal people with taste, looking out for something new, different and out of the ordinary. A freethinking group of adventurous new adults looking to explore the whisky category but tired of the fustiness and inaccessibility of traditional Scotch brands.

## It's no fun without a challenge

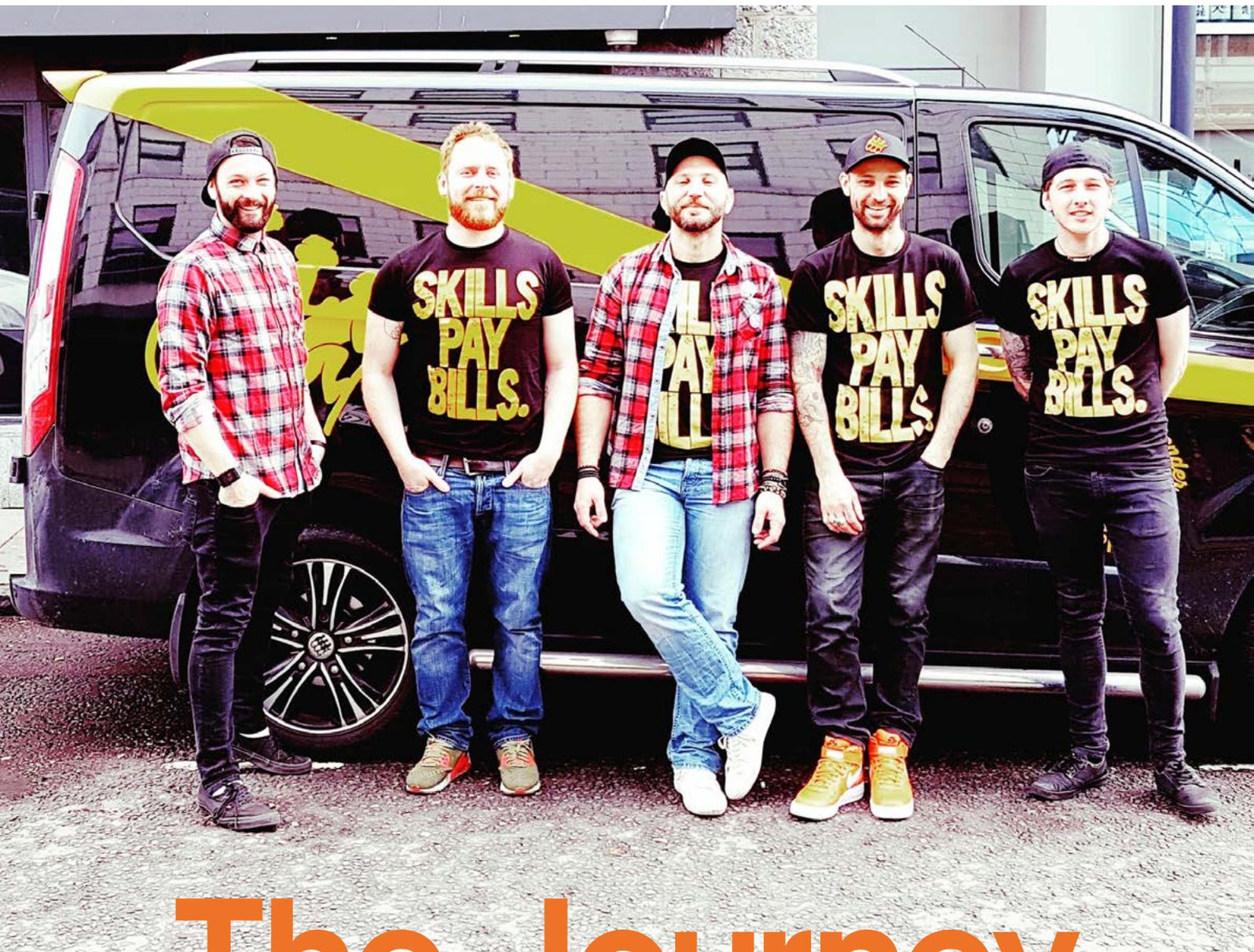
Back when we started working with Monkey Shoulder, traditional whisky brands set the rules. 'No mixing!' 'Straight up or on the rocks!' 'Nothing else!'

But Monkey's tagline is '100% malt whisky made for mixing'. The brand's pushing boundaries that the leather armchair set wouldn't dare to challenge. Seriousness just isn't part of the genetics of this brand. Monkey Shoulder's just as much at home in a Piña Colada as it is in an Old Fashioned. It's not comfortable in Tartan and crystal. So we decided to mix it up with local and global Brand Ambassadors working with next-generation bartenders all over the world pushing our message in the on-trade.

Monkey Shoulder's made for mixing.

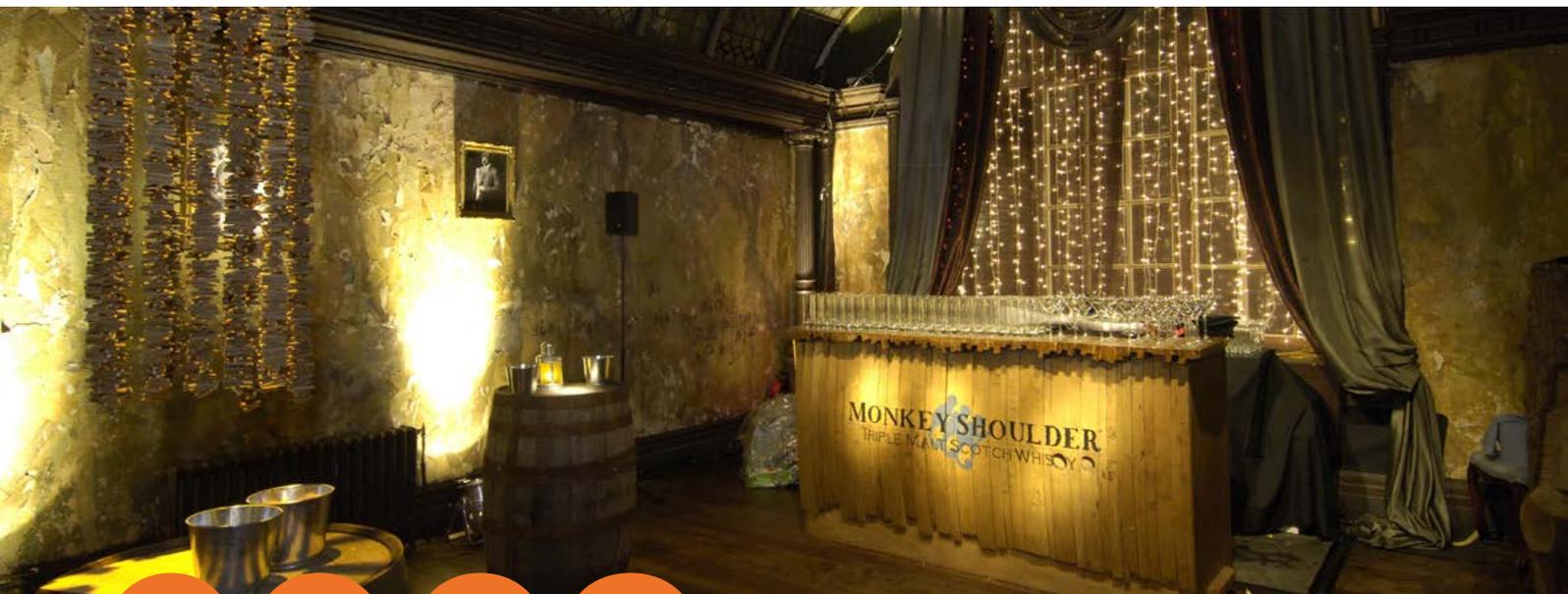
Old whisky is dead. Long live Monkey Shoulder!





# The Journey





# 2009

So this is where our journey started. Our first event, the first of many, was Monkey Shoulder's fourth birthday party.

## Happy birthday

Held at 33 Portland Place – a stunning 18th-century residence – we created a stunning 1920's-style speakeasy party for 500 guests, featuring live jazz, a private poker room, lounge bar and billiard room, all themed in a suitably Monkey style.





# 2010

## Do you glamp?

We did, at the annual bartenders' conference at Meon Springs Farm. We invited 40 of the industry's top high-flying bartenders and treated them to a glamping experience par excellence. But what's camping without some fun activities?

So that's what we did – a glamping experience, peppered with brand activities that turned bartenders into fans of Monkey Shoulder's attitude and product.





# 2010

Not content with just hanging out in a tent, we took it up a notch with our brand experience installation later in the year – *'The Monkey Shoulder Treehouse'*.

## Amping the glamp

The treehouse enhanced and pushed the brand's messaging to make it work even harder and was our first activation aimed at consumers. In a natural segue, we took the treehouse to some of the UK's major festivals including the *Big Chill*.

Monkeys and trees – well, it's a natural. Add some music and things began to heat up.





# 2011

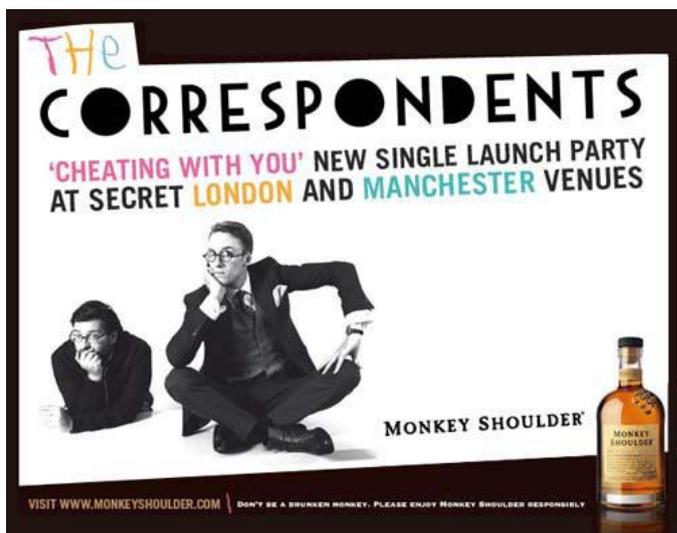
In 2011, ACA Live took the Treehouse and turned it into an immersive installation at one of the UK's favourite festivals: *Bestival*.

## Music be the food

With the all new 'Inner Sanctum', our experience-led bar installation, we invited guests to use our ingredients wall to create their own signature cocktail. Then we got our brilliant bartender to make it for them.

In the Treehouse, a DJ dropped massive tracks, we served food that complemented the whisky's flavours and we drove our message home with a branded whisky barrel trike, with on-board sound system, that did the rounds at the festival serving drinks to the masses. We got our samples, and our message, out to 3,000 new fans over three days.

Music really connected Monkey Shoulder and their audience so that's what grew our partnership with The Correspondents, a British Electro Swing duo with a rep for originality and style. They were our kind of people, so we supported their album launches and UK tour.





# 2012

It's 2012. We're working with the global team and we're getting down to business building and embedding the brand with bartenders and brand ambassadors all over the world.

## Is edutainment a word?

Our approach, though, is entertaining them but at the same time educating them about Monkey Shoulder.

So we set up Distillery trips, branded film shoots and the *Monkey Shoulder Social Club*, a platform for getting the Monkey Shoulder audience front and centre with the brand in all its glory. Rebel Bingo, spinning-top seats, new cocktails and live music in venues that span the divide between upscale warehouse raves and intimate speakeasies.





# 2013 & 2014

We focused our energies in 2013 and 2014 on enhancing the *Distillery Tours* and rolling out well-designed toolkits that consolidated the Monkey Shoulder brand in the eyes of our audience.

## It's all in the focus

For bartenders, we created engaging and immersive experiences for increasing our on-trade presence and bringing more advocates to the Monkey Shoulder brand.





# 2015

It's 2015 and we find ourselves now working fully globally with activations that span over 15 world markets.

## Champion of champions

Just a part of this is our work on *The Ultimate Bartender Championship*. 40 bartenders from 15 markets around the world all mixing, creating and fighting for bragging rights to be the world's Ultimate Bartender. It became an annual event that takes place anywhere from Spain to Russia, Canada, Switzerland and elsewhere, with a mission to make brand advocates of bartenders everywhere.





# 2015

It wouldn't be Monkey Shoulder if it isn't just a little bit twisted so this year we oversaw the creation of the world's first 'pop-down' bar.

## What pops up must pop down

We took an empty East London restaurant and gave it a full Monkey Shoulder Makeover. For three days this' became not your run-of-the-mill pop-up shop, but a full-on and fabulous pop-down bar!

Expert bartenders served creative Monkey Shoulder drinks in style from draught cocktails, slushy cocktails, mixed and pre-batched cocktails to Shoreditch's very particular clientele. It marked a subtle shift from our initial activity of on-trade consolidation to raising brand awareness with the new 'Liquid to Lips' strategy - a completely new approach for the brand and at the same time as a brand redesign. We were now working with a new colour palette and design, one that moved us away from the original jungle theme to something more modern.





# 2015

## Summer camp for bartenders

*Camp Monkey* hit the ground running in 2015, with a cheeky reinvention of the traditional American 'summer camp'.

It was packed with fun adventure and education, building a network of global loyal experts.

We started in Sweden with 33 bartenders from 13 countries, although in subsequent years this has grown to 40 bartenders from 26 countries.

We had treasure hunts, raft building, excellence seminars, foraging trips, pizza making and inspiration by the boat load.





# 2016

Monkey Shoulder doesn't do things by halves. If it's on, it's always on. That's the secret behind the *Monkey Shoulder Drinks Trolley*.

## Get on your trolley

Inspired by wrinkled tights, squeaky wheels and over-brewed tea served from trolleys in offices at 5pm, The Monkey Shoulder version did away with all that and replaced them with a playlist of hip hop, funk and pre-batched drinks. This 'always-on' campaign challenged the norm of standalone calendar events like whisky fairs.

We wanted mobile sampling that would get to the people we needed to appeal to in a more intimate way, so hit the London coffee festival, office happy hours, wine festivals, retail launches and more. Monkey Shoulder now had true scale from festivals of 30,000 people to 30 co-workers at an office happy hour.

We ended the year at *London Cocktail Week* easily hitting our 'liquid to lips' mark of 50,000 samples in the year.





# 2016

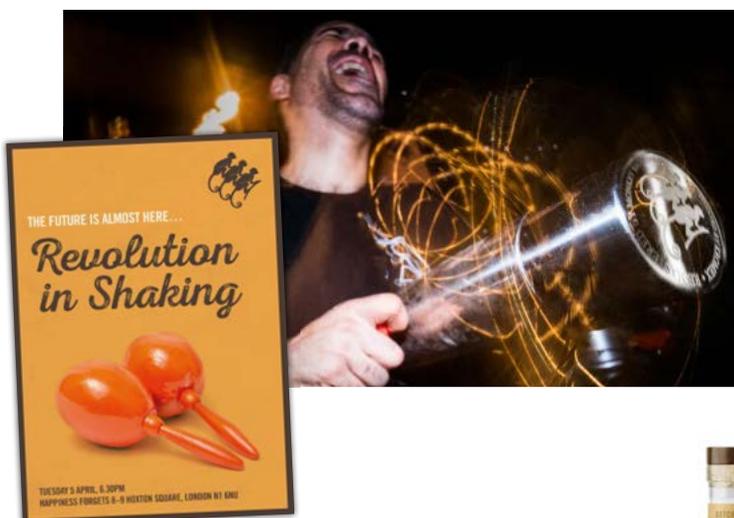
## Nobody move!

All the while we carried on working with *Ultimate Bartenders Championship* to make sure the Monkey Shoulder brand remained front of mind for the world's bartenders. But we also came up with 'SWAT' – *The Scotch Whisky Ambassadors Team* – what you might call special forces for sampling. This elite unit of bartenders and entertainers' mission was to, quite literally, 'hit' on-trade venues as a squad and offer disruptive sampling to the punters. Following a successful trial in the UK, we developed a toolkit to be activated in global markets.



## Remember the Konga?

Part of the theatre and part of the reward for bartenders was the return of the Konga. *The Konga Shaker* was a retro 1950's style cocktail shaker that Monkey Shoulder resurrected to be a signature of the SWAT Team Activity. It went down so well, we still get requests for them now.





# 2017

Targets dropping like flies. KPIs tumbling like dominoes. 2017 was a good year for us, for Monkey Shoulder, for bartenders and the millions of fans that love the brand.

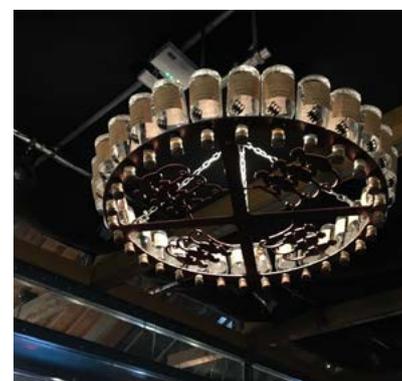
We started with a target of 80,000 samples but that was too easy. So our client upped the number to 100,000.

## Boom. Target acquired!

We scoffed, hit that target early and gave them a final result of 105,000.

We did it by hunting for new consumers through partnerships and deals, and ploughing new furrows in different environments like offices, music festivals and foodie fêtes.

*Taste of London* was a great example: the Drinks Trolley, the Vending Machine, the Monkey Shoulder Bar all in one place so that guests could get up close and personal with Monkey Shoulder.





# 2017

## Breaking the ice with a Claw

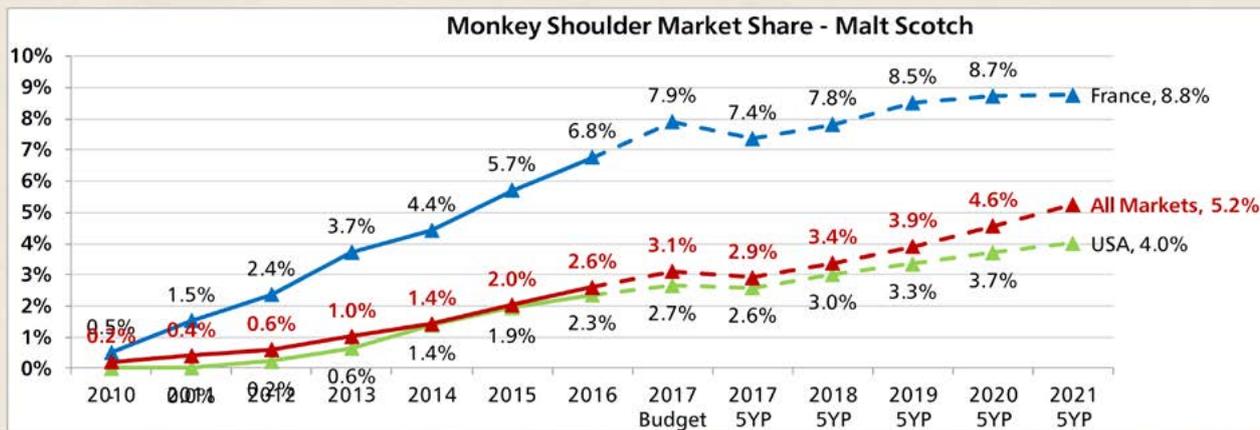
Not just a talking point but a real boon for bartenders was the return of *the Claw*, an ice server that emulates the action of the fairground claw machines.

Just part of our ongoing campaign to make bartenders' jobs easier and give them cool tools to do it with. We just can't make enough of them.

## Going global

Following the guidance in our toolkits, both the Drinks Trolley and SWAT were adopted by global markets including the Baltics, Spain, France, Canada, Russia, Netherlands and South-East Asia.





# Conclusion

Monkey Shoulder doesn't like to sit still. It continues to be the innovator, the challenger and the disruptor, creating more interest and increased appetite for Monkey Shoulder with bartenders, consumers and brand ambassadors.

## Monkey Shoulder, the choice of a new generation

For the world's leading bartenders Monkey Shoulder is the preferred choice. It fuels their imagination for creating better cocktails, it rewards them with activations and loyalty programs that affirm their belief that it's versatile, cool, always on trend and leading the way in the marketplace. It's a brand they like to serve and a brand they like to drink so that's a win/win.

Consumers and brand ambassadors alike hold Monkey Shoulder in great esteem for their creativity and individualism. But over and above, they love the face-to-face activations. They're inspired by the way the brand has carved its own way in this most traditional of marketplaces. They've stamped their own personality on its forehead. These discerning audiences like the fact that the brand is pushing boundaries with its forward thinking, youthful, innovative and engaging activations.

We, ACA Live, have worked closely with the Monkey Shoulder Brand Team using a very considered approach. We've used our long experience in BTL methods to accurately target and engage with their core audiences. Because of that, Monkey Shoulder has now become the marketing leader in Blended Whisky and has been voted the world's top trending scotch four years in a row – 2014/15/16/17 by drinks international reports – over a survey 100+ of the world's best bars.

We thank you for your consideration.

(2,258 words including executive summary)



## But don't just take our word for it...

“ Over the last number of years Adam and the team at ACA have played a pivotal role in taking Monkey Shoulder to new heights both in the minds of the trade and consumers alike. Their work ethic, creativity, and delivery against key objectives while ensuring we consistently push boundaries, remaining nimble and agile in execution makes working with ACA a pleasure and an incredibly rewarding experience. I look forward to continuing to work together into the future breaking down preconceptions and introducing many more consumers into the category. ”

Conor Neville – Brand Manager Esoteric Whiskies

“ Adam and the team at ACA exemplify what it is to be first choice business partners going and beyond to understand our brands on a deeper level. They have played their part every step of the way along the exciting journey Monkey Shoulder has embarked on within the UK working alongside our brand teams in shaping strategy whilst continuously ensuring excellent delivery. ”

Jonathan Cornthwaite – Head of Whisky, William Grant and Son's



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