

Creating value remains key in the premium spirits brand experience

 By [Elizabeth Lee Ming](#)

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In challenging economic times consumers classically respond in one of two ways - choosing less expensive brands that allow them to buy more, or opting to buy less and trading up to indulge their tastes for aspirational brands.



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In 2018 premiumisation will continue and despite pressure on the pocket, consumers will still be willing to pay more for quality. But they are also looking for value and value is not only about price.

1. Value is about creating and augmenting consumer experiences

- **Providing immersive brand experiences that appeal to the senses:** In 2018 leading brands will continue to conceptualise great brand experiences that offer a connection point, create content and talk-ability and, importantly, allow the consumer to play a part – from pop-up displays to beautifully designed spaces to exclusive invitations to sponsored events. Look out for innovative uses of technology like augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR) to connect consumers to more authentic brand experiences.

- **Meeting consumers in the space they are in:** Despite high energy bars still being popular meeting points, cost-conscious consumers who are also worried about drinking and driving are turning away from clubs and opting to party at home. A growing trend sees brands 'coming to the party' with home tastings and experiences in a kit that adds value to entertaining at home. Trends towards concierge services that allow consumers to curate their own unique experience with the brand in the comfort of their own homes will grow in 2018.

2. Value is about anticipating consumer needs

- **It's craft-everything:** The desire for authenticity and for interesting alternatives to mainstream brands feeds South Africa's growing craft-culture. An explosion of craft gins, whiskeys and rums are pushing boundaries on flavour and creating their own brand stories. Moving into 2018 the big spirits providers will continue to look for opportunities to collaborate with smaller entrepreneurs to deliver refined quality and original craftsmanship to this growing base of consumers.

- **Rum is on the rise:** Following hot on the heels of the gin craze, rum is gathering popularity as an accessible, more affordable, versatile spirit option. High-end rums have even been described as 'the new whisky'.



- **Whisky will continue to win:** Innovative ways to enjoy whisky will be fuelled by trends in mixing, to create interesting cocktails and long drinks. Curious consumer palates will look for creative barrel finishes and aged whisky demand will continue. Whisky will also be top of mind for health-conscious consumers looking to curb calories.

- **Femin-omics into the future:** We will continue to see the active participation of women in driving alcohol trends and category growth in whisky, vodka and gin. Smart marketing to women will capitalise enormous opportunities for alcohol brands.

3. Value is about providing consumers with easier accessibility

- **E-commerce continues its trajectory:** In line with the global shift towards e-commerce, many more options for consumers to buy spirits online are likely to present themselves in 2018. Innovative solutions for home deliveries will increase convenience for consumers.

ABOUT ELIZABETH LEE MING

Elizabeth Lee Ming is the head of consumer experiences at Pernod Ricard South Africa. She is passionate about digital and CRM and driving thought leadership in consumer-centricity. With over 17 years' experience in marketing, she has worked in South Africa, the UK and the USA at a number of blue chip organisations.

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