

## CASE STUDY

Consumer product goods

# Product testing research for a global alcohol brand



## About the client

Established in 1943, our client is a manufacturer of liquor, industrial alcohol and fertilizers. With over 75 years of experience in spirits making, they are a major bulk spirits supplier and one of the most admired liquor brands in the world today.



Brand portfolio

15+ brands



Employees

1300+



Revenue

\$899 Mn



Areas served

85 countries

## Business challenge and objective

Our client wanted to launch a new whiskey in the entry-level scotch segment in India. Their target customers for this were regular whiskey drinkers above the age of 30, living in Tier I & II cities, with a monthly household income of INR 90 to 200K. They partnered with Netscribes to conduct an extensive product testing study with the following objectives:

- To evaluate if the new test blend is better or at least at par with two in-market competitor blends
- To identify the most preferred blend among the three test blends
- To understand the sensorial drivers of the overall likability of the blend
- To understand the price expectations and potential traction among whiskey drinkers for the test blend

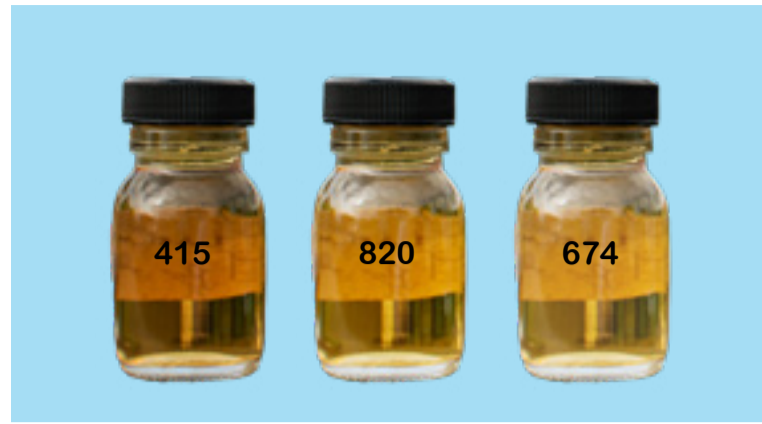
The client set the action standard that the test product must be significantly superior or at par at a 95% confidence level than the competitor blends on:

- Overall likability
- Overall taste

## Netscribes solution

The Netscribes team conducted a double-blind blend test using qualitative and quantitative methods. A quantitative survey process utilizing CAPI methodology was followed by a qualitative phase among select respondents to understand the consumer's perception of different whiskey brands.

All three test products were masked and were assigned product codes. Each respondent tested all three products i.e., 1 test blend & 2 competitive blends in sequential monadic format.



The respondent demographic was defined and a panel was curated. The study was conducted at the residence of the respondent across six major cities in India.

**Respondent panel design and distribution**

Panel design				Panel distribution - Quantitative					Panel distribution - Qualitative			
Panel Design				Panel		Entry-level scotch segment			Panel		Entry-level scotch segment	
No. of test products tested	3 products			Sub-Panel	Panel 1	Panel 2	Panel 3	Total	Coverage	Delhi NCR	5	
Placement Methodology	Sequential Monadic			Coverage	Delhi NCR	21	19	20		60	Lucknow	5
Exposure order					Hyderabad	21	21	20		62	Hyderabad	5
	1st	2nd	3rd		Mumbai	21	21	18		60	Mumbai	5
Panel 1	Test Blend	Competitor 1	Competitor 2		Pune	21	19	20		60	Pune	5
Panel 2	Teacher's Highland Cream	Test Blend	100 Pipers DUX		Kolkata	20	21	22		63	Kolkata	5
Panel 3	100 Pipers DUX	Teacher's Highland Cream	Test Blend		Total	125	123	121		369	Total	30

**Respondent Criteria:**

- Monthly household income: INR 90,000 – INR 2,00,000
- Regular drinkers of whiskey above the age of 30
- Most often used brand – the two competition blends
- Whiskey category consumption for at least five years
- Active on OTT platforms
- Must own a car and must select at least any two of the following attributes:
  - Travelled on a flight for a long-distance holiday
  - Visited retreats/resorts for holidays to relax
  - Have a credit card
  - Own a smartwatch

**Testing was conducted in three phases:**

1. Neat blend
2. 1:1 (diluted with water) blend
3. 1:3 blend

At each phase, respondent reaction to the following criteria was evaluated:

- Visual cues (color, appearance)
- Aroma
- Mouthfeel: Overall taste, smoothness, and aftertaste

For the 1:3 diluted blend, responses to these additional criteria were further registered:

- Likeability
- Strength
- Sweetness
- Bitterness

After each round, questions were then asked regarding:

- Brand identification
- Willingness to purchase
- Willingness to recommend
- Preferred price of the blend

Each blend was subsequently evaluated based on its performance. City-level insights and comparisons were also noted. Based on the responses, consumer preferences were profiled and insights were further generated on the following:

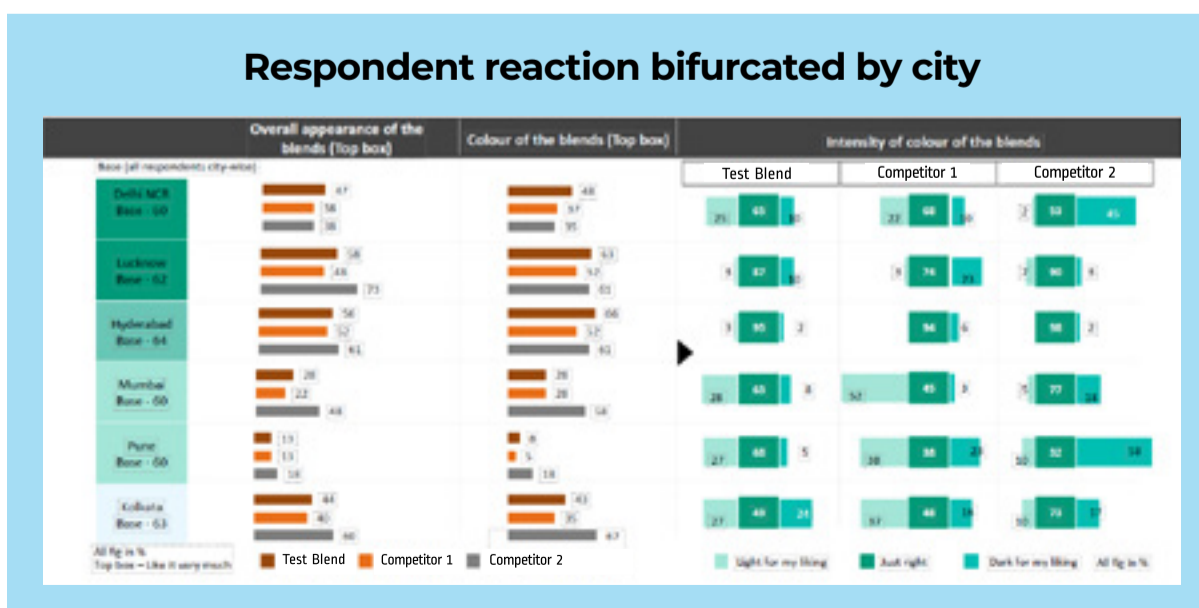
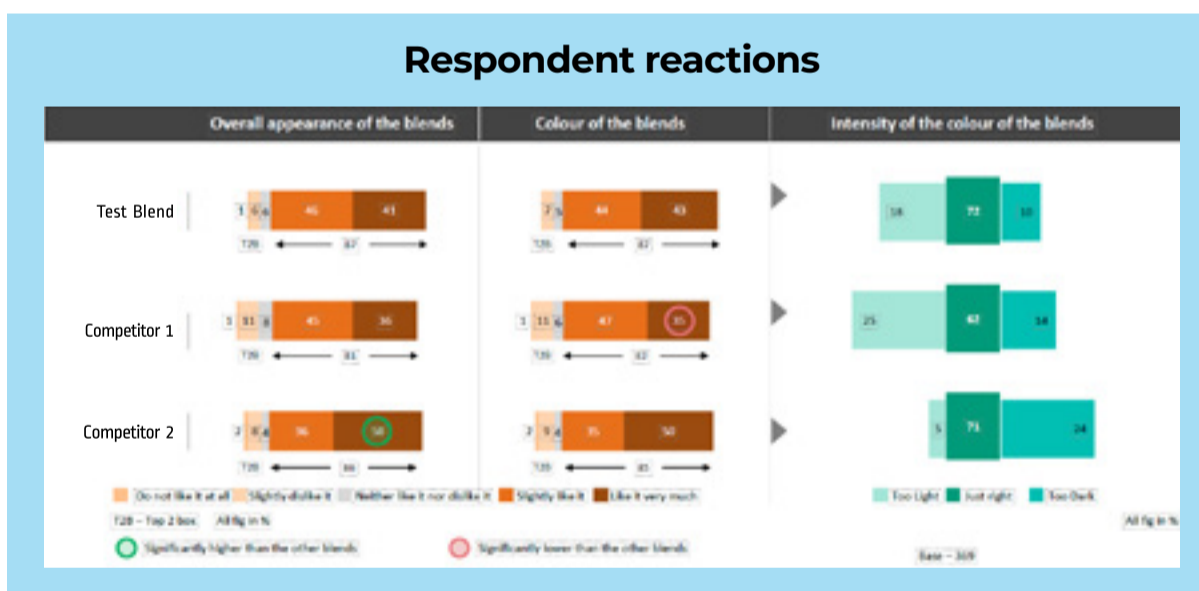
- Overall findings, performance against action standards, insights, and recommendations about the test blend
- Driving factor of the overall likeability for entry-level scotch blends
- Penalty analysis

## Results delivered

The Netscribes team delivered an in-depth report detailing the results of the survey and key insights based on the gathered data.

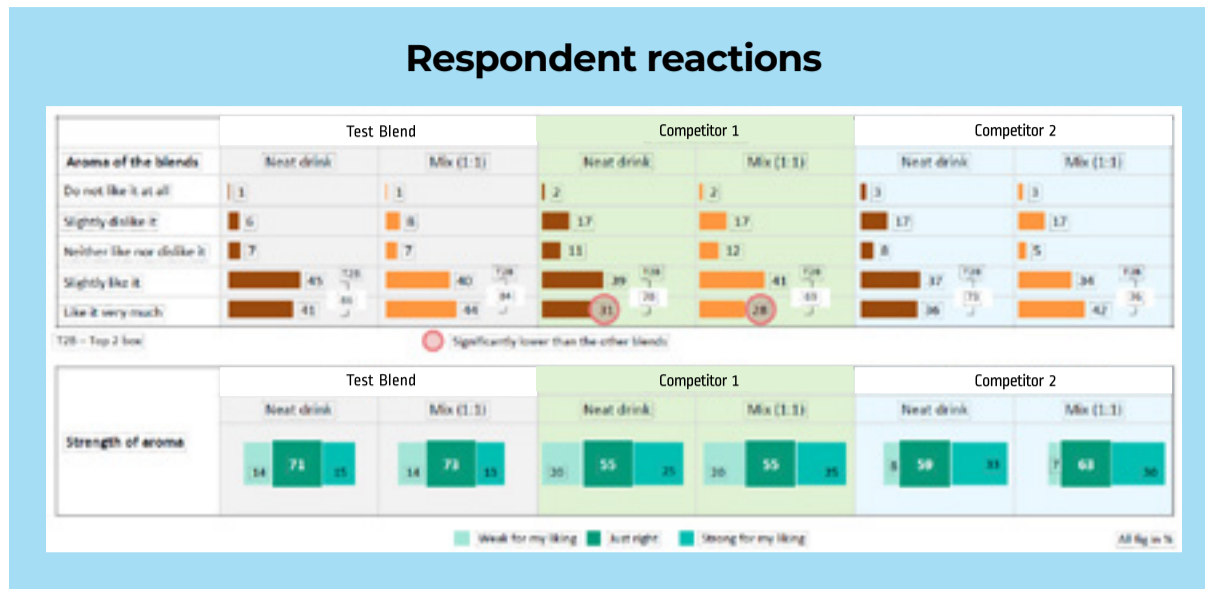
### Visual evaluation:

While the color intensity was perceived as relatively light for the test blend, the golden color was liked by a majority of the respondents.



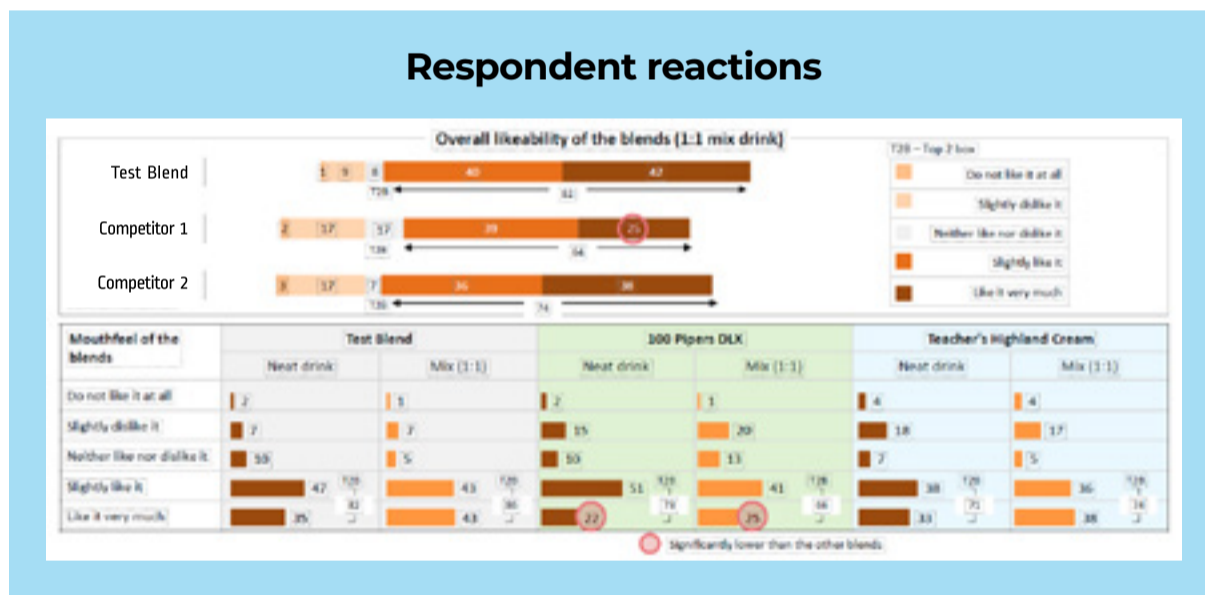
### Sniff evaluation:

The test blend has an edge on sensorial cues; its aroma topped the other two blends at both neat and 1:1 dilution stages, with consumers citing its aroma strength as the most balanced.



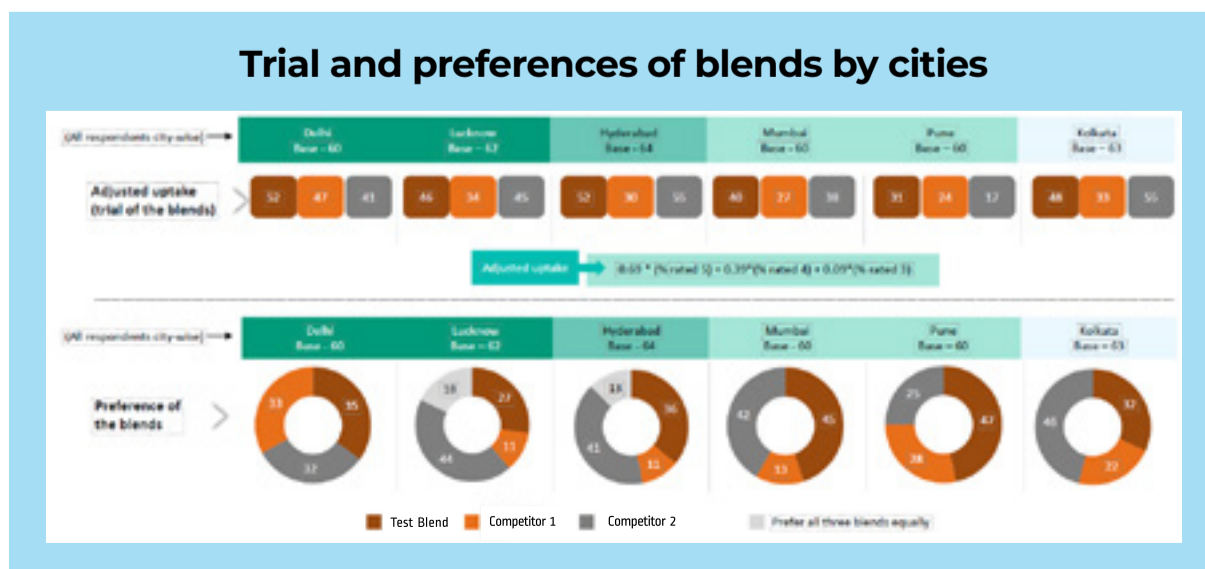
### Mouthfeel evaluation:

- The test blend outperformed the competition on mouthfeel and overall likability, regardless of the first exposure to the blends.
- After 1:3 mixing, the test blend performed the best on taste/aftertaste, smoothness, and optimum strength along with optimum balance in its mix of sweetness and bitterness.



### Overall likability of blend: Key findings

- In entry-level scotch, smoothness, aftertaste, and mouthfeel were the key drivers influencing the likeability of a blend.
- Taste-based cues are more important than visual and olfactory cues in determining overall likability. Though aroma is not a driver of likability it's a hygiene requirement.
- Smoothness needs to be optimized as smoothness in a diluted drink is a preferred state but if the neat drink is found to be smooth it tends to be detrimental to overall likability after dilution



## Consumer preferences and overall likeability for blends

The overall likeability of test blend was higher than the other blends at the consumption phase



### Penalty analysis:

Among entry-level scotch, whiskey consumers have severely penalized instances of high harshness in the 1:3 dilution drink, and instances of strong aroma at both neat and 1:1 dilution levels.



### Performance against action standard

	Test Blend	Competitor 1	Competitor 2
Overall likeability	83	64	74
Overall taste	83	65	75

Top 2 Box – Slightly like it/like it very much



## Benefits

The insights obtained from the extensive study equipped the client with the following:

- An extensive overview of consumer preferences for scotch whiskey across various parameters
- A keen understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of their product
- A comparative competitive analysis against market competitors
- The perception of whiskey-drinkers on different whiskey brands and their association with other lifestyle brands
- Impact of consumer lifestyle, demographics, and region on product preference and category consumption tendencies
- Understanding a premium entry-level scotch at a competitive price point
- Tailormade recommendations by the Netscribes team that included tips for market launch in the different cities, suggestions for product modifications tailored to each market, and an optimum, competitive price

Define the market viability of new offerings and identify the most profitable ones with Netscribes' [consumer insights](#) solutions.

To schedule a consultation for your next market research,  
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