

Gosling's rum expands its global footprint

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Malcolm Gosling: Gosling's US marketing push is producing results

Gosling's rum is being sipped as far afield as Shanghai and Sydney, as Bermuda-based beverage blender expands its global appeal.

The company's marketing drive in the US, where Gosling's sold 83,000 cases of rum in the last fiscal year, is making steady headway.

Speaking after Gosling's received a massive publicity boost with a feature-length article on the firm in *Fortune* magazine last week, Malcolm Gosling, one of the co-owners of the family business told *The Royal Gazette* yesterday that the company's progress was hard-earned and a team effort involving other family members, Nancy and Charles Gosling, and staff.

Mr Gosling spends much of his time in Boston, spearheading the firm's marketing efforts in the US, and *Fortune* featured one of his more unusual marketing efforts - announcing to a room full of sellers

that "there are two things Bermuda men are known for" before pulling down his trousers to reveal... Bermuda shorts and knee-length socks.

Mr Gosling said that was something he'd been doing for years in events where he was one of many speakers given a few minutes to make a sales pitch. "When you are introducing a brand into a market where it is little known, you need to do something to grab a little attention," he said.

Gosling's wants to grow steadily and retain its status as a family business selling a quality product and has no desire to rapidly build up its sales into the millions of cases or to be taken over by a multinational, Mr Gosling said.

The two-century old company first started selling overseas in the early 1980s when it sent its first case of rum to the US, but embarked on a serious marketing effort to raise awareness of the product in the US from 2005, aided by Glen Kelley, of Kelley & Co.

Since then, steady growth has been achieved, not only in the US. "Canada is doing fairly well and our exports to the UK are expanding quite rapidly," Mr Gosling said. "Our product has just landed in Australia, New Zealand and China, and we have some customers in Germany. It's not happening overnight."

Sales have risen steadily over the years and the company sold 110,000 cases in the fiscal year through March.

So how did Gosling's rum end up being shipped to China?

"A hotelier in Massachusetts was transferred to run an operation in China, and wanted to get some of our product over there," Mr Gosling said. "Our focus is not to attack the general consumer market there - our product is too expensive for that by the time it lands there - but to focus on western-style bars in Beijing and Shanghai in particular."

Gosling's brings in rum distillate from Caribbean islands where sugar cane is grown, including Barbados, Jamaica and Trinidad. The imported material is aged and blended in stainless steel tanks at the company's Dundonald Street headquarters.

Mr Gosling said there were no plans currently to set up operations outside Bermuda as the company expands.

"We're not going to be a million-case brand," he said. "We want to grow in a controlled fashion. We don't want to do anything that would sacrifice the quality of the product."

"If you haven't got a good product in the bottle, then you're going to have a tough time growing. The flavour profile of our rums seem to resonate with the people we are targeting."

"Our Black Seal rum is synonymous with Bermuda and has been for 150 years. That gives the product integrity and we want to hold true to the heritage."

Protecting the brand is part of strengthening it and for that reason the company has taken action over the years to protect its trademarked dark 'n' stormy cocktail, which is made with Gosling's rum and ginger beer.

At numerous establishments around the world, Mr Gosling has informed bar tenders of the breach of trademark, when they have come up with a drink made with a different kind of rum. There are other variations as well.

"I have had somebody in a bar in the UK make a dark 'n' stormy for me with lavender-infused ginger syrup," he said. "He went off to make it and came back 20 minutes later with a martini glass. It tasted like perfume! In many cases, people add a significant quantity of lime juice. But the only time I get really concerned about it is when I see a competitor promoting the dark 'n' stormy, using their product. They are then capitalising on the investment we have made."

One rival rum maker had done exactly that, causing Gosling's to send them a cease and desist order.

What Mr Gosling really wants is that people asking for a dark 'n' stormy in any country will be served with the same thing as they would get in Bermuda.

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