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Media Alert

A BROWN CHRISTMAS? WHISKEY AND BROWN SPIRITS SALES MAKING A COMEBACK, NIELSEN REPORTS

While sales trends have typically favored white spirits in recent years, brown spirits¹, led by whiskey, appear to be making a comeback. U.S. sales growth for whiskey and brown spirits is outperforming the growth rate of the overall spirits category in 2008, according to The Nielsen Company.

- Whiskey growth rates have been rising steadily this year, with whiskey dollar sales increasing nearly \$85 million or 4.4 percent in 2008, up from 2.3 percent a year ago². By comparison, dollar sales growth for spirits has largely remained unchanged³. At the same time, whiskey volume, while declining a year ago, is now showing growth.
- The brown resurgence is being led by Bourbons, doubling its dollar growth rate of a year ago, but is also boosted by gains from the Canadian Whiskey, Blended Whiskey and Irish Whiskey segments.⁴
- Whiskey sales increase sharply at the back end of the year, with weekly dollar sales in November and December as much as double the annual average and share of total spirits increasing by five percentage points to more than 35 percent. Consumers spend more on brown spirits as the temperature drops and during the Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year holidays.
- Despite the struggling economy, ultra-premium products, with an average price of approximately \$45 per bottle⁵, continue to record the strongest growth rates among brown spirits.
- Whiskey sales are trending upward in 27 other countries around the globe, recording double digit growth in 12 countries, including Venezuela, Russia, Netherlands, Poland, Mexico, Turkey and Bulgaria.⁶

"Brown is back," said Danny Brager, vice president, Beverage Alcohol, The Nielsen Company. "Consumers and bar managers tell us that brown's 'mixability' and rich taste, along with increased consumer knowledge are contributing to the brown spirits comeback. It's critical that retailers make sure their in-store promotional and merchandising efforts take advantage of whiskey's winter seasonality."

About The Nielsen Company

The Nielsen Company is a global information and media company with leading marketing and consumer information, television and other media measurement, online intelligence, mobile measurement, trade shows and business publications (Billboard, The Hollywood Reporter, Adweek). The privately held company is active in more than 100 countries, with headquarters in New York, USA. For more information, please visit, www.nielsen.com.

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¹Brown spirits include all whiskeys: Bourbon/Straight, Blends, Canadian, Scotch, Irish, etc., as well as Cognac/Brandy. White spirits include Vodka, Gin, Tequila and Rum, even if such categories might include aged - - and hence brown - - variants.

² Total U.S. food, drug and liquor stores, 52 weeks ending 10/20/07 and 11/15/08.

³ Spirits dollar sales growth decreased from 4.2 percent in 2007 to 4.1 percent in 2008, in the 52 weeks ending 10/20/07 and 11/15/08.

⁴ Total U.S. food, drug and liquor stores, 52 weeks ending 10/20/07 and 11/15/08.

⁵ Total U.S. food, drug and liquor stores, through 8/23/08.

⁶ "What's Hot Around the Globe: Insights on Alcoholic Beverage Categories" The Nielsen Company, July 2008.