

MOBILE

## Johnnie Walker Blue Label embraces mobile integration with smart bottle concept

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*Johnnie Walker smart bottle prototype*

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By JEN KING

Diageo, the distributor of Scotch whisky-maker Johnnie Walker, has unveiled an interactive smart bottle concept that when scanned by a smartphone will provide marketing materials.

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**Luxury Daily**

The spirits brand officially showed its concept, which may soon grace the sides of Johnnie Walker Blue Label bottles, at the Mobile World Congress in Barcelona after announcing the project in late February. The concept was developed by Diageo Technology Ventures and printed technology maker Thin Film Electronics ASA and may have potential in other sectors such as apparel and beauty.

"Diageo, the world's largest spirits manufacturer, will be one of the first companies to demonstrate OpenSense on its packaging for its Johnnie Walker Blue Label brand, to provide a direct line of communication to consumers via NFC enabled smartphones – even after the factory seal has been broken," said Jennifer Ernst, chief strategy officer at [Thinfilm](#), San Jose, CA.

"Many of today's conventional NFC mobile marketing solutions are not technologically advanced enough to create immersive or customizable consumer experiences," she said. "This can only be done when marketers understand the context of interactions between the consumer and product such as if the product is still on the shelf in-store or in use at the consumer's home.

"As mobility becomes ubiquitous, consumers want and expect brands to follow suit and deliver custom mobile experiences. According to a recent Cisco survey, 61 percent of mobile app users have a better opinion of a brand when it offers a good mobile experience. The impact is highest when tied with location-based uses, which are expected to reach \$50 million by 2019."

Diageo was unable to respond directly.

Mobile a go-go

Diageo Technology Venture was established in September of 2014 and aims to solve existing challenges through emerging technology. The smart bottle being developed is a prime example of the possibility mobile presents for packaging and marketing.

The connect bottle label, which functions as a more advanced QR code, will work to enhance the consumer experience through the use of printed sensor tags developed by Thinfilm.

Thinfilm's OpenSense technology is embedded into the printed labels and will track the whisky's journey from store shelves to the consumer's home in real-time. Also, the OpenSense sensor will be able to detect the sealed and opened state of each bottle.

If and when the bottle's label is read by a consumer's smartphone, data is sent to Diageo. Once data is received, Diageo will send personalized communications to the purchaser of Johnnie Walker Blue Label's mobile device.



### *NFC-activated smart bottle label on Johnnie Walker Blue Label*

These marketing messages can be deployed while the consumer browses a selection at a retailer or after the point of sale, depending on when the label is scanned. Marketing materials can include promotional offers, cocktail recipes and branded content from Johnnie Walker.

ThinFilm's OpenSense technology uses a smartphone's Near Field Communication capabilities to transmit the marketing materials as well as track bottle movements across the supply chain. Even if the factory seal is broken, the sensor will still be intact.

"OpenSense tags deliver thin, flexible, cost-effective protection with significant improvements over traditional NFC and RFID-based authentication," Ms. Ernst said. "Existing wireless authentication methods suffer from serious limitations. Some require expensive, proprietary readers that limit the scale of deployments.

"Others intentionally destroy the antenna when a product is opened, making it impossible to interact with the product after opening," she said.

This aspect provides Johnnie Walker a layer of security and will help protect the authenticity of its products. Given the high rate of luxury goods counterfeiting, this may be welcome advance by brands that face the challenges of competing with knock-offs, especially handbags and fragrances ([see story](#)).



© Diageo

### *Johnnie Walker Blue Label smart bottle*

Also, Thinfilm's OpenSense tags differ from conventional QR codes because they cannot be copied or electrically modified since they are encoded at the point of manufacture. QR codes have flaws since they are often difficult for devices to read, can be easily copied and do not support sensor integration.

In a branded statement Helen Michaels, global innovation director, futures team at Diageo said, "Mobile technology is changing the way we live, and as a consumer brands company we want to embrace its power to deliver amazing new consumer experiences in the future.

"We constantly experiment with the latest cutting edge technologies to enrich and enhance the experiences delivered by our iconic brands. Our collaboration with Thinfilm allows us to explore all the amazing new possibilities enabled by smart bottles for consumers, retailers and our own business, and it sets the bar for technology innovation in the drinks industry."

Embedded Video: [https://www.youtube.com/embed/7myP2\\_KLumc](https://www.youtube.com/embed/7myP2_KLumc)

*Diageo and Thinfilm unveil the connected smart bottle printed electronics technology*

If successful, the smart bottle prototype label will be employed on the sides of Johnnie Walker Blue bottles in the near future.

Integration at its finest

Consumers are extremely connected through many different digital touchpoints and it is up to retailers to use these opportunities to connect with their clients, according to a report from IDC.

The report highlights the top 10 critical decisions retailers must make for the upcoming year. It may help luxury brands better understand how they should adjust their initiatives to best accommodate the evolving consumer ([see story](#)).

"Thinfilm will provide brands a better understanding of the interaction between the customer and product, on an item level basis," Ms. Ernst said. "For example, if marketers understand where the consumer is in the buying cycle they can tailor the in-store message to encourage a purchase decision, and likewise the post-purchase message.

"By serving dynamic messages at the right time brands can create much more engaging experiences for customers."

Final Take

*Jen King, lead reporter on Luxury Daily, New York*

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