

# Cheers to limited editions!

Drinks brands that are rarely seen and are difficult to acquire are coveted by customers despite sky-rocketing prices

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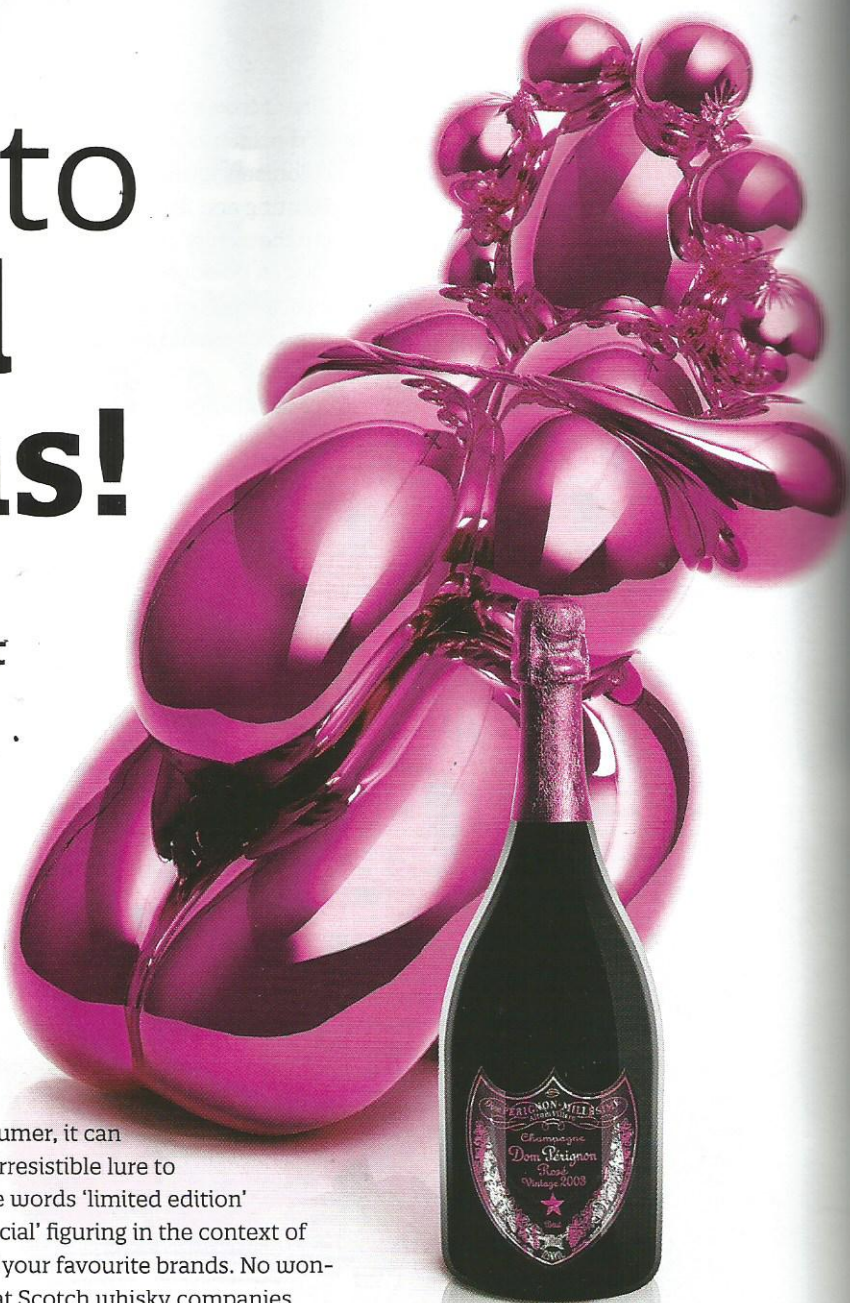
It was an auction that the art world will remember. On November 12, 2013, contemporary American artist Jeff Koon's Balloon Dog (Orange) sculpture was auctioned by Christie's in New York for \$ 58.4 million, becoming the most expensive work by a living artist sold at auction!

But before art history was created, in a prescient move, Dom Pérignon joined creative forces with Koons in June 2013. Their unique collaboration resulted in the unveiling of a limited edition called Balloon Venus. Koons came up with packaging which is unveiled to reveal a limited edition bottle of either the Dom Pérignon Rose Vintage 2003 champagne or the Dom Pérignon Vintage 2004 (depending on your preference). The manually-assembled and hand-polished champagne holders in hot pink (for Rose Vintage 2003) and yellow (for Vintage 2004) were inspired by Koons' sculpture Balloon Venus, Koons' take on the 25,000-year-old fertility symbol, Venus of Willendorf. Each piece can be ordered online and costs \$ 20,000.

What is exclusive is dearly coveted.

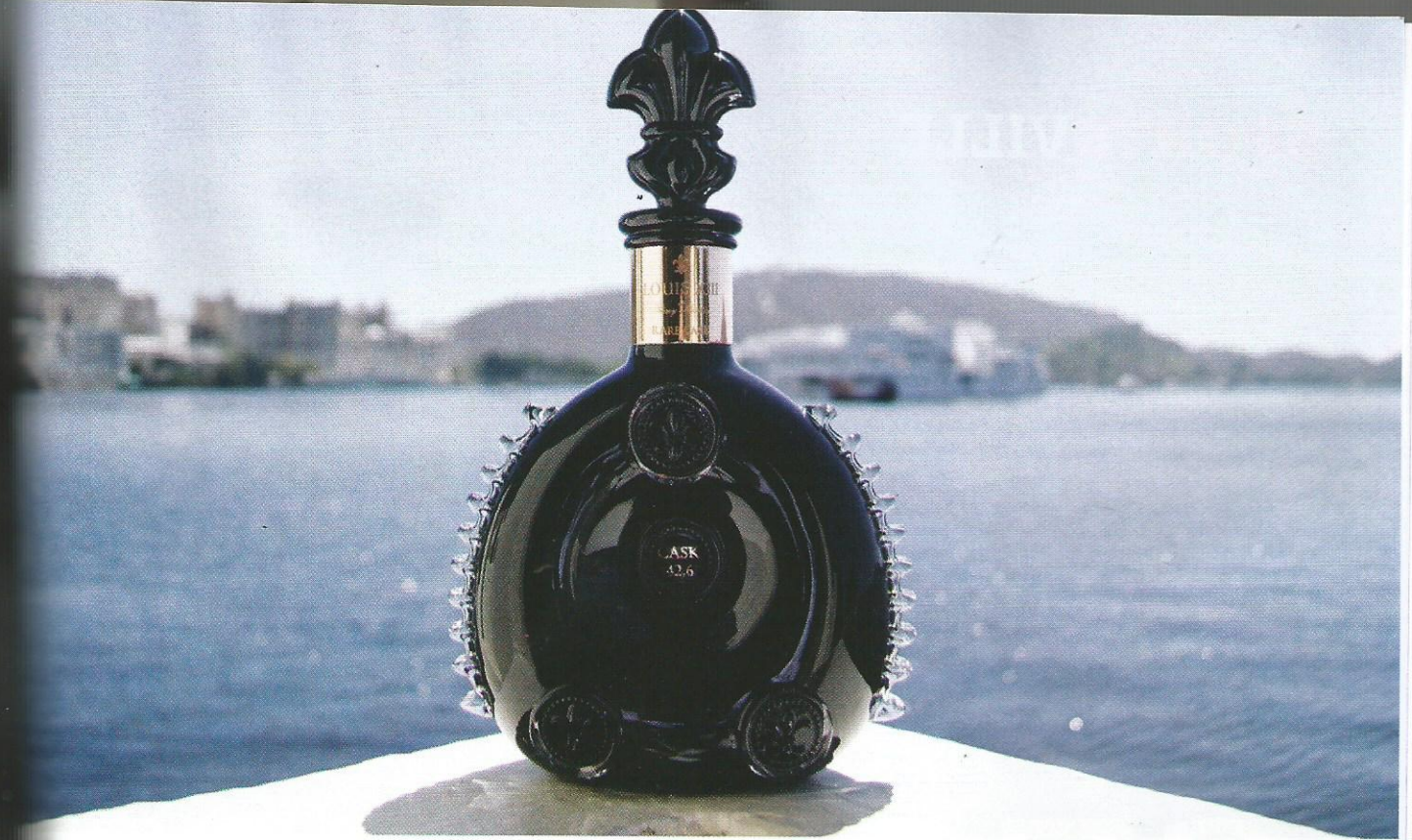
As a consumer, it can be an irresistible lure to see the words 'limited edition' or 'special' figuring in the context of one of your favourite brands. No wonder that Scotch whisky companies or major champagne houses spend millions of dollars setting up expensive visitor centres? It allows their most ardent fans to make a pilgrimage to, in a sense, the place of birth of their favourite brands. Quite often, you'll also find that certain products are only available for source at the distillery shop.

Controlling access to a product becomes another variable, therefore, for liquor brands to create the exclusivity element. You'll find, for example, that there are several products which are only available in duty free shops at airports. Diageo's key launch in global duty free over the last three years has been a portfolio of three



Scotch whiskies under the umbrella of the Johnnie Walker Explorers' Club Collection. These unique whiskies, exclusively available in travel retail outlets, constitute the first series of the Collection, the Trade Route Series—inspired by the adventures of the Walker family while journeying to all corners of the world. The most luxurious blend from the Trade Route Series is the Royal Route, which takes its inspiration from the road travelled by kings, from the Far East to the Mediterranean. Johnnie Walker has millions of fans around the world and which of them will pass up a chance to buy such a tempting new blend?

If you don't happen to be travel-



ing through international airports very often, don't you worry, a few exclusive societies and buying clubs in India have made access to the finer things in life easier. One such example is the India chapter of Scotland's Scotch Malt Whisky Society (SMWS). Says Ashwin Deo, the head of SMWS India, "This is a product which is available in a very, very small number and only to members or to certain five star hotels which stock our brands. If a brand for you represents luxury, then SMWS is the next step up, as we have no brand names for our whisky." Each whisky sold by SMWS comes in a numbered bottle with an enigmatic name like Angels on Horseback. The uniqueness of the proposition lies in the fact that each whisky is what is known as a Single Cask Single Malt, so it's Single Malt whisky only drawn from a Single Cask, and each cask is unique, only yielding a limited number of bottles (200 to 800). A big draw for members is the fact that they are drinking a whisky which will never be made again. Can there be a bigger lure than that?

Adds Neelesh Hundekari, Partner at AT Kearney, "Exclusivity is a great lever to increase prices for brands," a point soaked up by newbie wine makers, Krsma, based near world heritage

## REMY'S LOUIS XIII RARE CASK 42,6 COSTS \$22,000 PER BOTTLE.

site Hampi in Karnataka. Krsma has just released a small batch of Krsma Cabernet Sauvignon, priced at Rs 1,500 a bottle (in Karnataka). Remark Krishna and Uma, the co-founders of Krsma, when questioned about the premium asked for this wine, "We have our own vineyards and are thus able to control the quality of the grapes far better than others." I'm sure Krsma hopes that although it's a steep price to pay, it's going to draw attention and cachet to the rest of its wine range.

Agrees Rukn Luthra, Managing Director at Remy Sula India, "As a practice, no company can afford to overuse the rare/limited edition term. And it's definitely helpful for your entire portfolio." Remy is no stranger, of course, to introducing exclusive products while recognising the increased purchasing power of the Indian consumer. Remy, in fact, had the global launch of only the second ever Rare Cask in its Louis

XIII range, the Louis XIII Rare Cask 42,6 (a limited edition of the regular Louis XIII Cognac), in 2013 in Udaipur—only 738 decanters were released. Cellar master Pierrette Trichet identified the unique quality of this cask in 2009, but waited several more years to become certain of her choice. Housed in a black crystal Baccarat decanter, each bottle is priced at \$ 22,000.

A customised product for a specific target audience or customer is rarer, but again a champagne brand crops up here—Canard-Duchene, which has recently developed a Smooth Rosé: a new sec pink Champagne for lounge bars and ski resorts that's housed in a white bottle. "The idea is to be more seductive for new and younger consumers," says Alexis Petit-Gats, Managing Director at Canard-Duchêne.

Do you prefer your wines still rather than sparkling? You'll find that every still wine has a year listed on the bottle (it's vintage, that is made from grapes grown and harvested in a single specified year). Wine connoisseurs pay great attention to the vintage, as wine has good years and bad. Whisky has similar fans, with customers looking to buy rare whiskies based on their year of bottling. Tulleeho to that! 