

# WEBB Banks' diversification and decentralization

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Chief Operating Officer Jose Castellvi at WEBB Banks

Focused on the “away from home” experience, WEBB Banks (WEBB) develops brands across the Caribbean, Central America and travel retail. A premium wine and spirits distributor, WEBB is said to act as an extension of its suppliers and “enhance the connections that travelers make throughout their journey; from their departure at the airport to their return home.”

In recent news, Southern Glazer’s Wine & Spirits has acquired WEBB Banks. The agreement, which closed at the end of March, will expand the distributor’s presence in the Atlantic and travel retail and strengthen its logistical capabilities to deliver products more efficiently to complex markets in the region.

As published in a press release, the business will continue to operate during the transition period under the WEBB Banks name and management team, led by Chief Executive Officer Andy Consuegra, Chief Operating Officer Jose Castellvi and Chief Financial Officer Juan Carlos Rodriguez. The team will report to Scott Oppenheimer, Southern Glazer’s President, East Region. The existing Southern Glazer’s Travel Sales & Export team and associated portfolio will transition to WEBB to ensure a complete solution for suppliers focused on the Atlantic Basin

“This acquisition provides another connection point for Southern Glazer’s and our valued suppliers who are looking for expert route-to-market capabilities across the Atlantic Basin. Combining the strength of our supply chain and logistics expertise, with WEBB Banks’ strong customer relationships

and knowledge of the market, makes this acquisition an absolute game changer for our suppliers.

“WEBB Banks has experienced tremendous growth over the past several years thanks to a collaborative company culture, strong strategic partnerships, and in-depth knowledge of the markets in their region. We’re excited to welcome their brands – many of which we already share – and their talented, experienced team into the Southern Glazer’s family,” said Oppenheimer.

## **A winning strategy**

Since WEBB Banks represents a wide range of established international brands that are well-known in many key markets around the world, the company considers the traveling consumer as an opportunity. During a previous interview with *Global Travel Retail Magazine*, Castellvi said that WEBB capitalizes on the success of its brands across US domestic markets – and the travel patterns of Americans – in order to also succeed across local markets in the Caribbean Basin. As an example, Castellvi referred to a leading brand in the WEBB Banks portfolio, Tito’s Handmade Vodka. Originally catering to the American traveler, Tito’s Vodka has become a favorite among tourists and locals alike.

Entrepreneurial in nature, the company values autonomy and is made up of a decentralized team. Calling the strategy a win-win, Castellvi commented this arrangement enables WEBB to better understand the local market and the expectations of its suppliers with local distributors.

“Our strength is a combination of our local team working in unison with our local distributor networks. This coupled with our strong suppliers’ relationships allows us to manage and adapt to constantly changing needs in very diverse and challenging regions.

“Our decision to add more local in-market personnel along with additional WEBB Banks support staff was instrumental in helping us grow our business and share within the Caribbean, Central America and travel retail during these challenging times,” he explained.

## **Travel retail and cruise market trends**

Describing the dynamics of the business, Castellvi points out that due to the close proximity of the Caribbean to the United States in many cases brand performance across the region is often a by-product of American success stories. In addition to the growth of Tito’s Vodka across travel retail and the cruise market reflecting its growth in the U.S., WEBB has seen progression within the liquor segment and the premium aged rum and American whiskey categories. Experiencing “phenomenal growth” with its Disaronno Amaretto and Disaronno Velvet, Illva Saronno S.p.A. remains committed to investing in both channels. WEBB has also been able to broaden the stories of brands like Bumbu Rum and Templeton Rye Whiskey to the “away from home” traveler.

From a new category perspective, the company is pleased with the reception of Skrewball Peanut Butter Whiskey. The new and innovative brand launched last year in Puerto Rico and has already taken off.

According to Castellvi, feedback from key customers within the cruise industry say business has bounced back to almost pre-pandemic levels. Considering the continued addition of new cruise lines, he believes there is opportunity for this channel moving forward.

## **Growing and reflecting**

Having become accustomed to facing existing hardships within the Caribbean and Central America, WEBB relied on the strength and experience of its management team to overcome the pandemic. Benefitting from the early re-opening of select markets in the Caribbean and its small team and in-market personnel, WEBB Banks doubled its business over the last two years. Looking ahead, WEBB is excited about the newly signed deal and upcoming changes.

“We have found a great partner in Southern Glazer’s, like us a family-owned company that takes pride in a strong company culture and diverse workforce and shares our values and commitment to building world-class wine and spirits brands.

“Together, with our market expertise and Southern Glazer’s strong industry relationships, superior capabilities and deep consumer and trade insights, we will significantly elevate the standard of services we provide to our valued suppliers, wholesalers, and retail customers,” said Consuegra.