

# Meet DUSK, the app showcasing the coolest bars in the UK and rewarding you for visiting them

As part of our quick fire questions series – or QFQs – we spoke to Sophie Abrahamovitch, CEO and cofounder of DUSK, about check-ins, showcasing bars and venues and how the business is revolutionising brand activations.

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DUSK was born during the early days of Facebook when people used to check into places, essentially advertising to their mates what they were up to. Like today on Instagram and TikTok, these social check-ins and tags were gold dust for hospitality venues; you always trust recommendations more when they come from a friend.

At the time, my business partner and I saw this as an amazing opportunity. We wanted to harness this and tap into conversations that were happening and incentivise them, like micro-influencer groups.

## Tell me about the business – what it is,

# what it aims to achieve, who you work with, how you reach customers and so on?

DUSK showcases the coolest bars across the UK; users can try their first drink free and get rewarded every time they spend at our venues.

After launching with check-ins, we quickly realised that they were on their way out and focussed on venues and alcohol brands.

We partner with some of the biggest names in the hospitality industry like Diageo, Bacardí, Greene King, Stonegate, and many more. Whether it's the launch of a new drink, or helping industry giants like Diageo drive large-scale sampling amongst 800,000 Gen-Z and Millennial drinkers, we work with a wide range of brands and partners to help them hit their goals amongst these 'unmarketable' audiences.

DUSK is revolutionising brand activation; providing a full-service platform that engages this key demographic through digital and data-led sampling, but in a way that feels cool and relatable to this audience.

## How has the business evolved since its launch?

As we refined our offering, we started focusing on brands and drink sampling-at-scale. We launched our discovery arm, helping people discover the best bars and pubs in their city and building curated guides for every kind of vibe from bottomless brunch to the best hook-up spots. Through working with more partners, the business has become a complete offering that caters to venues, brands, and consumers, all through a single app.

## What has been your biggest challenge so far and how have you overcome this?

It's no surprise that COVID was a really big challenge for us, and the entire hospitality industry. We had to completely shut down the app and didn't turn it on again until the rule of six had been lifted which was insanely tough; I thought I was going to have to let the team go or lose the business. But we pushed through and now the industry is back up and running, we're thriving.

# How does DUSK answer an unmet need?

*We're hitting three sweet spots for consumer, hospitality, and the drinks industry.*

For consumers, we're giving away free drinks to the best venues and helping people explore their cities – finding hidden gems or cool new openings they might not have otherwise discovered. We're an app made by people who love to go out: we walk the walk, talk the talk, and drink the drinks.

For hospitality, we're driving significant footfall into venues; once our users are through the door, we encourage them to spend more and can track that down to the penny, taking all of the grey areas out of marketing. It's super custom and bar managers and owners can call the shots about when they're super busy and when they need an influx of drinkers.

And for the drinks industry, we're able to help brands access a key demographic and get their product into the hands of Gen Z and Millennial drinkers, driving trials and securing brand loyalty. We've digitised brand activations at scale to an engaged audience, and that's something that was out of reach for so many brands until DUSK came along.

## What's in store for the future?

We're going to continue our UK takeover, driving bigger and better campaigns than ever before in even more towns and cities across the country. That means more free drinks, more offers, and growing our loyalty reward platform so you can earn points in every bar.

We've got our sights set on Europe and the US. DUSK NYC has a nice ring to it!

## How has the hospitality industry changed post-pandemic?

It's continuing to bounce back which is a massive relief. We shouldn't be surprised though; people are obviously making up for lost time and ready to

get back out there and enjoy themselves. I think everyone in the industry was holding their breath back in the early months out of lockdown so it's amazing to see.

One of the biggest differences we've seen is how far hospitality has come in terms of tech. It was an industry set in its way and as a result of lockdown and restrictions (QR codes really did have the glow-up of the century!) has had to completely modernise. They've adopted tech in a way they simply didn't need or want to before, which has been great for us.

## What one piece of advice would you give other founders or future founders?

Keep your team lean! I think there is a really dangerous narrative that a big team means success in start-up culture and people really glorify it, when adding team members just for the sake of it nearly always spells disaster. We're a small, dynamic group and have taken our time to build out in a way that has echoed the success of the business. I think it's a large reason why we're still standing today and more successful than ever.

Sophie Abrahamovitch is CEO and cofounder of DUSK

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