

Bottom up

By Mannat Mundi

At a time when in India women could not even think of walking up to a bar to get a drink for themselves, Meet Lisa Srao went on knocking at the doors of distributors with her new brand that promised quality and fine blend of whisky. "People thought I was joking. I had every distributor laughing at my face. Many would not let us through the doors and some even came up with things like, 'Are you giving it to us for free?' In the male-dominated liquor industry it was tough for people to believe that a woman is trying to establish a brand identity. But I didn't give up," quips the liquor baroness.

Meet Lisa, who refused to be restricted by outdated notions like 'the alcohol industry is not a place for women,' and remained unfazed by the lack of welcome she found from the Indian alcohol industry.

Today she rewrites the rules of the liquor business

as the chairman and managing director of I Brands Beverages Ltd, a firm that she founded and started operating in August 2010. Her aim was to make products of international standard quality in terms of blend, design and feel. "It is what sets us apart," she says.

As a kid who grew up in the UK in the 1970s, Indian-origin entrepreneur Lisa Srao wanted to be a marine biologist. She didn't become one, but she still gets to encounter sharks, which are aplenty in the waters she's

plunged into: India's \$9-billion liquor business, which though relatively cleaner than it was during the years of the contractor system, is still pretty much a male-dominated industry.

She has been inspired by this industry due to her exposure to Double Dutch, a beer brand that her father launched in the UK.

Lisa enthusiastically shares, "Even though this industry was something that I had not always intended to get into, it is something I feel I thrive in today."

Blazing a trail
in uncharted
territory,
Meet Lisa
Srao's drive
and
motivation is
almost
contagious

