

Consumer trends and drinking contexts

BEHAVIOURAL-ECONOMIC PERSPECTIVES | Being innovative is the goal of most companies. Those who are innovative set trends and move markets. Unfortunately, most innovations are flops that fail to establish themselves on the market. And many innovations only generate short-term hype and disappear from the scene after a short time. Identifying potential trends with sustainable lasting effect comes very close to the search for the Holy Grail: How can we say with certainty what consumers will want to drink tomorrow?

IT IS INCREDIBLY difficult to get out of the "here and now" to develop the "there and tomorrow". Ultimately, the so-called futurologists can only outline scenarios, some of which will be realised, but most of which will never come true. In addition, consumers can only judge how they or other people will behave based on their everyday experience to date: We simply lack the ability to imagine under what circumstances we will (continue to) do certain things in the future. What we are very good at, however, is categorising consumption occasions and contexts through the lens of our existing everyday life.

Why we drink what, when and where

As much as advancing digitalisation will change society and entire professional fields in Germany, one thing is certain for the future: we will still have to drink - in analogue form - if we want to survive. There are instinctive reasons for fluid intake that go beyond need and create a fundamental need to drink.

Authors: Dr Uwe H. Lebok, Andreas Putz, K&A BrandResearch AG, Röthenbach near Nuremberg

enable well-being. Such occasions are usually quite general in nature. For example, people consume more fluids, e.g. "after sport", "when it is particularly hot", "when sweating a lot", "when complaints such as headaches etc. are a burden".

However, a general drinking occasion such as "after sport" is based on a wide variety of sports and settings. Although the generalisation of such occasions or category entry points is understandable for consumers, it usually does not provide any emotional mental cinema or inspiring input for further beverage marketing strategies. Such occasions are usually too unspecific,

to create potency for certain drinks (or brands).

For consumers, the personal benefit is not just about the drink itself, but above all about the environment, when, where, how, why and with whom something specific is drunk. If the latter means after sport, after a forest run, race or marathon, drinks containing minerals in particular (mineral water or isotonic drinks such as Erdinger Alkoholfrei) are more likely to be considered. If "playing football together on the football pitch" is meant after sport, beer would certainly be a good choice.

comes to mind as a primary category. For "after-work parties in penthouse style", beer would feel too trivial for people who like this kind of setting. Cocktail-like (new) mixed drinks, on the other hand, could be given the chance to establish themselves as a trend in such an environment.

Behavioural economics as a starting point for trends

The good thing about drinks of the future: despite chat GPT and further digitalisation in everyday life, we still have to drink. Drinking is not digital. Drinking remains a vital necessity and can be

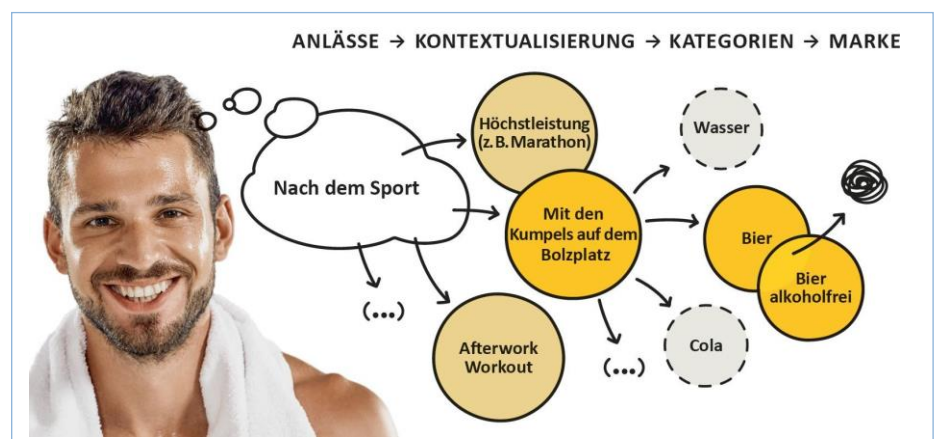


Fig. 1 Contexts shape beverage selection and drinking behaviour

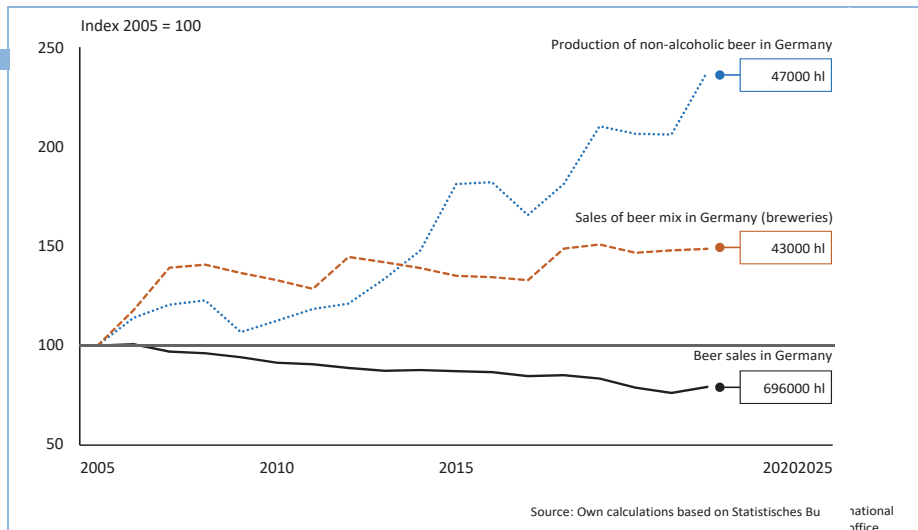


Fig. 2 Share of non-alcoholic beers in total beer sales/output

and continue to enjoy creatively designing the future, with many or fewer people. It is important to understand people holistically in their everyday context and not just to analyse bare figures or highly generalised, prototypical personas. The same person acts differently depending on the context. Finding and defining contexts

'their' target group: The context of the Opera Ball differs from the context of the Pegi da demonstration.

And the context of "going to the church congress together" is also different from "going to a punk rock concert with your mates". In each situation, interested visitors know how to dress, behave and behave differently - and from the context-based target group perspective, certain drinks are better suited to each of the occasions mentioned than others.

The following trends can be observed for beer and the brewing industry based on the realities of people's lives:

- 'No beer before four': alcohol-reduced or alcohol-free beers (and wheat) or the 'optimal' 0.0% solution. The trend towards non-alcoholic beers is likely to continue to be fuelled by less/no alcohol, the avoidance of control and embarrassing images in the social media as well as health considerations such as obesity (Fig. 2).
- Lean, less strong beers for everyone (and every woman) in different contexts. Bayrisch-Helle has opened the door with high drinkability and smaller, more accessible brews and is already finding a new appeal in its new appearance ('Come on, let's have another pint'). The basic idea of light beers is finding increasing resonance.

ahmer in summer beers, light beers and perhaps also opens up new opportunities for pilsners in milder variants or beers with new trendy flavours. The current preferences of younger consumers for AfG (fruity flavours, trendy herbs and -teas) could also show additional ways for new beer concepts (e.g. "Herbal beers").

- The trend towards newer mixed beer drinks is moving in a similar direction. On the one hand, significantly less alcohol is expected from shandies and the like, while on the other, the "mixing partner" of beers is supposed to promise additional functionality (e.g. energy) or add additional enjoyment contexts. Parallels with the current trend towards (light) alcoholic cocktails when using spirits are certainly conceivable.
- Occasion-focussed/tendentially stronger and more palatable beers such as Bock, Märzen, Kellerbier, Klostersud for 'special' occasions such as Oktoberfest, Christmas, with a hearty roast or the strong beer tapping at Nockerberg. As with high-proof spirits, this will remain a contextual niche in the foreseeable future. Even if such moments occur sporadically in people's everyday lives, such contextual references can play a central role in positioning and sharpening brands.

New drinks need new occasions

No matter how good a new drink tastes and how innovative it may be, without an attractive context that ties in with the world we live in

If it does not dock with the target group, it is highly likely to fail. Examples from other categories show how large and comprehensive the impact of relevant context marketing can be. Before reunification in the 1990s, fruit schnapps, herbs, brandy and grain were the predominant spirits in Germany. The German-born and Russian-speaking immigrants brought the uncomplicated, 'neutral' (and therefore easily mixable) vodka with them and gradually conquered the cheerful, uninhibited parties with their alcopop mix. Aperol and Limoncello were convincing.

with a Lake Garda and Amalfi coastal feeling first attracted the Munich chic crowd and are now popular throughout Germany.

'on trend'. But trends come, trends go - trends alone are fleeting, as many a product has experienced in the past!

There are also a number of examples of successful context branding for beer. Be it through the reference to certain dishes, events or locations or the use of product personalities such as Aventinus, Maxl, "Uri", Wulle, Schwarze Anna or Pülleken. This is a much more successful approach than talking about production processes, special hop varieties or spring water, which consumers quickly forget anyway. It is much more important that the appearance, flavour and image match the context and that the context and beer reinforce each other.

But beware: not every brand can do every context. And not every context is suitable for every product. In general, contexts are an outstandingly simple opportunity to position beer brands in the everyday lives of potential target groups. A Karpfen-Weisse or a Schäufelra Seidla define the context just as easily as an angler beer, snack beer, harvest beer, Wacken beer or crisis counter-pils.

The K&A ConBranding approach promises smart solutions for breweries of all sizes: not only can suitable contexts and the resulting target groups be found with manageable effort, but the market effectiveness of concepts, including customer-specific sales figures and taking competitors into account, can now be easily determined.