

A creative category

More success for beer mixes, shandy and co.

In the end, the decisive factor for the success of a beer mix beverage is above all its coherent, focused overall concept, which picks up on the spirit of the age and existing brand architecture (from the consumer's point of view) is taken into account. A new beer Cola-Mix in times of conscious nutrition must appear differently than in the mid-90s. And, conversely, it's doubtful that a natural cyclist would have caught on in the '90s. A look on the sales figures of the last ten years shows: Overall growth has stalled since the beginning of the new century. However, opportunities always arise where an attractive life context is occupied in a new or even more efficient way than before. Currently, this is happening in particular in the corridors of "conscious enjoyment", "identity grounding" and "being free without alcohol."

Who only came up with the idea of brewing beer, the purest foodstuff in German... country since 1516, to mix? Was it about more refreshment, less alcohol or an interesting taste?

According to legend, the answer is much simpler. The restaurateur Xaver Kugler had not expected such a large influx of guests on a warm summer's day at the beginning of the 20th century, and the super disaster loomed: there was not enough beer. Fin- dig as he was, he began to stretch his beer with water, the first beer-mixed drink was born. Since the thirsty group had to travel by bike, the

When the guests were on their way and they praised the "adulterated" beer for its refreshing effect, he simply called the drink Radler.

A similar story surrounds the creation of the "Russen" as a mixture of wheat beer and lemonade. It is said to have been created during the Räterepublik and to have been drunk for the first time at a meeting of the "communists", popularly known as Russians. However, it is unclear whether this was intentional (in order to keep a cool head during the political discussions) or also due to an impending beer emergency.

Either way, in the first half of the 20th century, beer-mixed drinks were mostly self-mixed from beer and water or lemonade, of which the guests knew only to a limited extent - but this was not always to their detriment and was sometimes even the better alternative.

Premixed from the bottle

While the term Radler has survived in southern Germany, Alsterwasser prevailed in northern Germany. The background is probably the significantly lighter color compared to beer, which was reminiscent of the water of the Alster. Some brewers even printed both names on their labels.

Regardless of the name, pre-mixed shandy in cans or bottles did not find its way out of the dilemma between original, pure beer and the refreshing and above all alcohol-free lemonade for a long time. It remained a rather functional thirst quencher if you couldn't or didn't want to drink alcoholic beer.

Beer Mix can also be fun!

In 1979, Clausthaler, the first non-alcoholic Pilsner, was launched on the German market and occupied its role as a motorist's beer more and more every year.

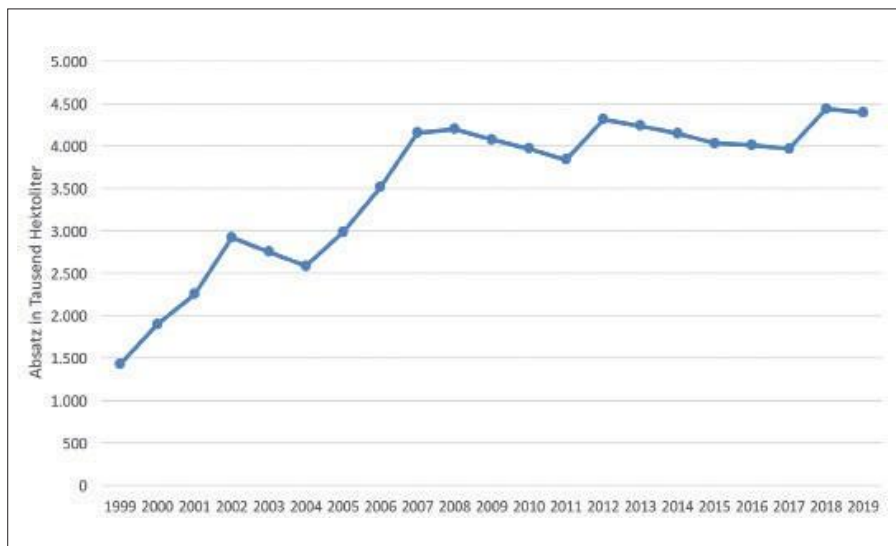


Fig. 1: Sales of beer-based mixed drinks by the brewing industry in Germany from 1999 to 2019 (Source: Federal Statistical Office)

This created scope for Radler to take on a new role that was not limited to alcohol reduction and the combination of beer and lemonade. Finally, the year 1996 was to permanently change the German beer mix landscape. Young, hip and cheekily staged, Mixery entered the market as a mix of beer and cola for teenagers in the process of growing up, and at the same time Desparados, a tequila-flavored beer with 5.9% alcohol by volume for long party nights, was launched. The beer mix category opened up completely new target groups. If one wants to speak of a uniform category at all now. While Radler or Alsterwasser was either a more adult alternative to lemonade and alcohol-free beer or a watered-down beer, Mixery and Desparados occupied very different usage contexts: Mixery offered young adults 16 and up a straightforward entry into the tart beer world through its very sweet cola taste. Desparados, on the other hand, with its South American flair, was aimed at mid-20s who could afford it and wanted to show it.

Exotic soft drinks: More than shandy

While Mixery, often the first beer of its fans, and Desparados as a party beer were primarily about growing up, Schöfferhofer landed its next coup and a brilliant success with wheat grapefruit in 2007. Six months after its launch, Schöfferhofer Grapefruit passed the 100,000 hl mark. The novel and unusual combination of wheat and grapefruit attracted attention and convinced as a refreshing mix from the bottle. The unusually stringent use of orange colouring and position as a summery outdoor drink rounded off the concept. The category continued to develop.

Nothing is impossible - but only little successful!

The year Schöfferhofer Grapefruit entered the market marked an interim peak in mixed beer sales, following an impressive rally in the noughties. And the brand endured, which is more than can be said for many of the trendy drinks that followed.

Spurred on by the enormous market growth and the success of the nationally distributed Schöfferhofer Grapefruit brand, new fashion mixes were constantly being created. Beck's responded with a firework of variants, from Beck's Gold, Green Lemon, Level 7, Chilled Orange to Ice.

In 2010, Gaffel took another step as an addition to its alcoholic segment: Can Fassbrause bring growth? The success did not go unnoticed by the big players in the industry. In 2011, Holsten, Krombacher and Veltins followed suit and created a new segment on the beer shelf. As the term Fassbrause is not protected, the products differed greatly in colour, ingredients, taste and also alcohol content. The unclear positioning between healthy refreshing lemonade and alternative to the alcoholic Radler confused consumers. In national terms, Fassbrause remained a flash in the pan.

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Natural cyclists as new best practice

The one market for beer mix drinks no longer exists. Ultimately, it is a construct from the supplier's point of view: beer + mixer = beer mix market. From this perspective, there are countless possibilities, but very few of them work or have worked sustainably. For example, beer + cola (Mixery), tequila flavored beer (Desparados), wheat + grapefruit (Schöfferhofer) and, for some years now, Naturradler (Gösser/ Mönchshof in southern Germany). What is their recipe for success? And why have so many other mixes not worked at all or only in the short term?

With Mixery, Desparados and Schöfferhofer, the success factor was the credible focus on a specific context. A relevant moment in life, in other words, to whose specific requirements the brand offer intuitively provides the most efficient response.

Then this brand seems "made for the moment" and locks into the autopilot of its target group's buying behavior. Mixery provided the simple, because sweet entry into the beer world. Central to this was the formerly hip, cool and loud brand identity. In older target groups, on the other hand, Desparados attacked: somewhat sexy South America, spirits flavour, stronger than beer and a corresponding price point. That's something to impress the opposite sex in their early and mid-20s. The lime in the bottle also provided an interesting drinking ritual for long nights.

Schöfferhofer Grapefruit surprised with a unique combination of wheat and grapefruit at the launch and today plays the summer theme very consistently. A total package of colouring, exciting mix and attractive staging of the roof-top party. In this way, Schöfferhofer created an exotic, astonishing new staging of the classic Radler.

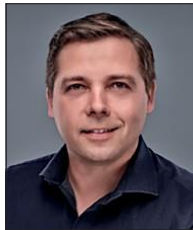
For a few years now, the original Radler has also been undergoing a steep reevaluation. Namely as Naturradler. The name alone is linked to the now established megatrend of conscious nutrition. But here, too, success is closely linked to stringent brand concepts. Gösser has been on a steady upward trend since 2015. Natural lemon juice, the slight cloudiness and shirt-sleeved Austrian holiday feelings à la refreshment after a hike are the most important signals to buyers here. Mönchshof stages the very striking monk in the logo and name, the supposedly traditional swing-top bottle and the manual cut into the lemon.

Success factors for beer mix

The mission of the K & A Context-Thinking® approach is to define search fields together with the target group and consistently from their point of view, to understand their emotional significance and to develop intuitively functioning brand answers. The fact that the right solution must always lie in the intersection of consumer contexts and brand fit is demonstrated - once again - by Astra. Astra Rakete goes the way of more alcohol and spirits flavor in St. Pauli style. For the hangover the next day, there is no Radler, but Kiezmische. The lemonade here is also fruity, cloudy, but just not "nature"!

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