



Quality over quantity - the renaissance of the taste of beer

Beer trends For years now, beer sales have known only one direction - down. Small, intermittent increases can usually be attributed to external events such as long, dry summers or major sporting events such as football. It is all the more astonishing that the number of breweries in Germany is rising continuously.



Dhe Managing Director of the German Brewers' Association, Holger Eichele, even speaks of the of a "renaissance of beer and brewing". The presence of the topic of beer has also increased significantly in recent years - you can see magazines on the topic of beer on the newspaper shelves and shops in larger cities that explicitly focus on more or less exotic beers. How do these two developments fit together?

While in Germany, large brewers have increasingly standardised the taste of beer or pilsner and subjected all innovation to the great mantra of the Purity Law, there have been

Brewers in the USA were much more willing to experiment. They kept developing new, exciting beer styles and did not allow themselves to be shackled by time-honoured food regulations such as the Purity Law. This trend spilled over into Germany and fell on fertile ground there.

Target group Millennials and Digital Natives

While for years the German purity law and the "Unified taste" were central features of the German beer landscape, younger generations are increasingly questioning them. The also called "genera

tion Why" question traditional conventions: What are they good for and what exactly do I get out of them? And the restriction of the list of ingredients by the purity law leaves some answers to be found here ...

For a trend like craft beer to become relevant and establish itself, it always requires a suitable environment and adequate contexts - and these have been present in the food and beverage sector for years! Driven by the cosmopolitan and experimental generations of millennials and digital natives, more and more people are concerned with nutrition. For some, nutrition has reached the status of a kind of substitute religion.

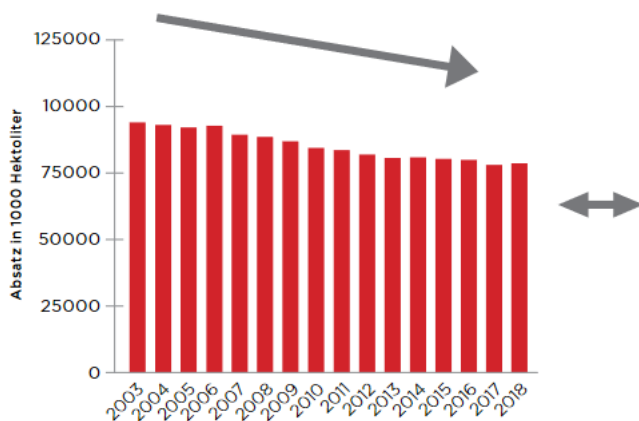
Various, partly also opposing developments can be seen in the context of nutrition: The rediscovered desire to cook for oneself is confronted with an increasing relevance of simple, ready-to-eat convenience products. Vegetarian to vegan diet meets explicit meat magazines such as *Beef* and the market for (protein-rich) food supplements is constantly recording new highs. In most cases, these trends are not a radical, fundamentalist change in diet. For example, the proportion of vegans and vegetarians is increasing slightly over the years, but ultimately remains at a low level. The fastest growing group are flexitarians and "conscious" eaters who are open to new issues, new trends, such as partially giving up certain foods during Lent, who like to try things out but do not want to be restricted.



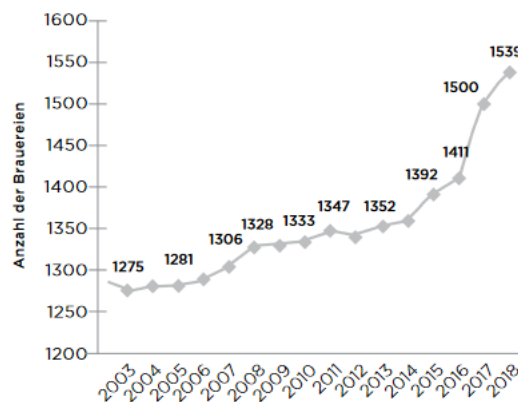
This openness to trial and error to the point of wanting new ideas has also opened up the market for new beer styles. While the central driver in the all-encompassing "craft beer movement" was still trial and error, this movement is slowly but surely coming to an end. The market is consolidating. Beer styles that want to persist and grow in the future must deliver easy access and occupy relevant contexts. Beer styles that are too exotic but not very drinkable will have a hard time in the future. They may encourage people to try them out, but have little chance of being permanently accepted as an adequate solution for contexts suitable for everyday use.

Despite declining beer sales, the number of breweries is growing

Beer sales in Germany



Number of breweries in Germany



Quelle: Statistisches Bundesamt.

Ideally, new styles tie in with existing contexts and provide an additional benefit. A prime example of this is the positioning of "Erdinger Alkoholfrei". The non-alcoholic wheat adds typical wheat cosiness to the context of "coming down together after sports". Erdinger thus revitalised the entire category of non-alcoholic beers and gave the starting signal for continuous growth and new innovations such as non-alcoholic beer mix drinks or zero-percent beers.



Drinkability and the story behind the beer

The first winners of the newfound interest in exciting beer styles are also emerging in the alcoholic market. More traditional beers such as pale, less bitter and darker cellar beers are celebrating growing importance in the beer market. Drivers of the craft beer scene like (Indian) Pale Ale, Porter or Amber Ale, on the other hand, have yet to prove themselves. However, the story behind the beer is at least as relevant as high drinkability. In this respect, small, "handcrafted" breweries clearly have an advantage over the large, established corporations. A small micro-brewery that has been growing out of a backyard for five years delivers a significantly higher potential for excitement than a corporation that now "also" produces craft beers in its brew kettles.

A positive example of successful storytelling and occupation of new contexts is the Störtebeker Braumanufaktur on Rügen. Here you can not only drink good beer, but also pack a typical island beer for your loved ones at home. Beer as an authentic souvenir to take home. The Pyras Brewery takes a different approach. It has chosen a typical, regional dish and created the ideal beer to go with it - the Schäufole Halbe, perfect for this one context. The Schimpfle brewery, on the other hand, focuses on a specific, promising target group of thirst quenchers with its Löschzweg - and is enjoying steady success.

Food trends

"I watch what I eat."

A balanced diet is important to me	69 %
In everyday life I make sure I have a varied menu	62 %
I pay attention to a healthy diet	61 %
I am happy to spend more for special quality	58 %
I would like to know as much as possible about nutrition	46 %
I actively deal with my eating habits	44 %

"The main thing is quick and easy."

I basically eat what I feel like eating	62 %
I want to have as little effort as possible when it comes to nutrition	35 %
I cannot improve my diet at all, every day is something else good or bad	29 %
I love quick ready meals and will not give up on them. Renounce	18 %
I often cook with fixed products	17 %
I am far too busy to eat healthily	14 %

Source: K& A Food Trend Study 2018.

The times of the one-size-fits-all beer are over, as the steadily declining sales figures for "standard Pils" impressively show. Although it will continue to play an important role as the "lowest common denominator" in the future, it can only offer real growth potential to a limited extent. In order to become or remain relevant, especially for younger, even less defined generations Y and Z, authentic individuality is needed. And each brand must define this for itself.

Author:



ANDREAS PUTZ,
Senior BrandConsultant, K&A BrandResearch.

Magazine: MARK 41 - 4/2019

Translation: DeepL (<https://www.deepl.com/translator>)