

# Consumers' Changing Preferences



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**H**ow best and in how few words can one describe the new drinking trends getting popular in India and who are patronizing these trends? The short answer is – the millennials are popularizing craft beer, flavoured and new world whiskies, sparkling wine and wine cocktails.

The answer reflects the insight about the new drinking trends, shared by liquor manufacturers, importers, F&B people and consumers. One major reason behind these trends is that the Indian consumer, particularly the millennial, has started experimenting with drinks before firming up his/her drinks choices. Unlike the 'follow-the-herd' mentality of

the previous generations, the millennial becomes a discerning consumer by his/her own experimentation with Indian and imported products.

How dominant is the influence of the millennials in starting the new trends is remarkably expressed by Manish Dayya, General Manager – Novotel Hotels and Resorts, Mumbai Juhu Beach.

"It's the millennials' world and everyone else is just living in it. The millennials have developed a new set of criterion to determine products they support. It's all about the experience – either their own or someone they trust." However, some industry people feel the experimenting millennials are less loyal to brands.

Beer in India is generally identified with the youth. But thanks to the new trends, "Everyone from the age of 25 years onwards is now open to the idea of drinking whisky. They are now trying all kinds of whiskies – as sipper or in cocktails," says Tanvi Rustagi, Founder of The Whisky Works, an online whisky-knowledge platform.

Ahmed Rahimtoola, Sr VP – Marketing, ABD, echoes Tanvi's words, saying "the growth and salience of the whisky category coupled with that of the premium segments suggest that the country is witnessing a massification of whisky."

Growing experimentation with whisky has also made whisky versatile for the Indian consumer who is becoming fascinated with flavoured whiskies, whisky in cocktails and the new concept of whisky-food pairing. Now, whisky is a more versatile drink than ever before.

"The popularity of flavoured whiskeys has spread at a blazing speed. Jägermeister and Jack Daniel's have already responded with spiced variants, along with many other spirits producers. Bartenders too have started creatively infusing their own spices in various types of whiskeys which is appreciated by guests," says Suhash Bose, Operations Manager, Vivanta By Taj – Panaji.

In India, the American whiskeys have found strong support from the millennials who love bourbon and have started drinking rye. Analyzing the impact of this trend, Satpal Chaudhry, COO, Khoday India, says, "Whisky brands coming from the USA and Japan will be more in demand as they have started gaining popularity over the Scotches from Scotland. In near future, Indian Single Malts may also be on par with imported Scotch whisky."

A lot is also happening in the world of beers in terms of the new trends. Prominent beer trends are greater appreciation for rich taste, new flavour profiles and superior quality. The result of these trends is that "the Indian beer consumer is fast evolving into an aspirational and discerning individual," feels Mahesh Kanchan, Director Marketing, Carlsberg India.

Craft beer is finding great favour among the aspirational

and discerning beer lovers. It's due to this support that Rahul Singh, Founder, Beer Café, calls the current times as "the age of craft beers!"

How popular are craft beers, one gets the idea when Suhash says, "Bars and restaurants have greatly increased their number of craft beer taps. Drinkers also enjoy the great variety of styles and flavours. Many people never want to taste the same beer twice. This desire for extensive experimentation has helped sustain the category and its many new breweries."

Indians are also growing crazy for wheat beers, "Consumers are moving from lagers (domestic and international) to wheat beers. A brand like Hoegaarden is moving so fast. In fact even in microbreweries, consumers are going for wheat beer," says Deepak Rawat, F&B Manager, Roseate Hotels & Resorts, Aerocity, New Delhi.

In the case of wine, a good development is that it "is being rapidly accepted across segments and is not looked upon as an elitist drink as was the case a few decades ago," says Yatin Patil, Director, Vintage Wines.

Yatin gives credit to the millennials for initiating new trends in Indian wine consumption. "Baby boomers and Gen X principally consume wine as a straight drink. But the millennials are defining a new trend in wine consumption through wine cocktails like Sangria, Spritzers, and wine coolers," he says.

Apart from the millennials, people in general "are also now talking about wine more than ever before. They are slowly getting to a point where they are no longer intimidated by sommeliers. Curious consumers are looking to expand their palates. They're reading stuff on the Web and even enrolling in wine-education courses," says Sumedh Singh Mandla, CEO, Grover Zampa Vineyards.

Among wines, sparkling and reserve wines are recording high growths. Many producers are now focusing on sparkling wines. Sumedh attributes the growth of sparkling to the success of some affordable products, like Prosecco in Italy and Cava in Spain, which are presented with a 'cool' image and not as cheap substitutes for Champagne.

The reserve category has also seen most number of launches over the last year. "Though serious wine drinkers primarily prefer reserve reds, which are barrel-aged, now reserve whites are also showing promising growth," says Sumedh.

A future wine trend could be slushies which were a popular trend in the west in the summer of 2016. "Last summer wine slushies were the perfect recipe to pin on your 'Wine & Dine' board on Pinterest in the western part of the world. All it takes is blending wine, fruit, and ice into a refreshing frozen drink," says Manish. ☺