

Survey Says.... Beer!

In our column a few months back titled *Guess What? Your Customers Are Talking About You*, we looked at why knowing what customers expect from your store is critical to being a successful retailer. In the absence of first hand customer feedback about your store however, third party information or national survey data can be a valuable resource.

One well recognized third party resource, the Gallup Poll, released its annual results in July and reported that again beer beat out wine and spirits as Americans' preferred alcoholic beverage. According to the poll, 40% of drinkers say they prefer beer, compared with 34% choosing wine and 21% selecting liquor.

Gallup also reported that, most men identify beer as their beverage of choice, whereas about half of the women surveyed tend to select wine. When it comes to age, adults from 21 to 49 favor beer while older adults 49 and up favor wine.

Other results found that geographically, beer enjoys its greatest popularity in the Mid-West, and that from an education level standpoint; wine is far more popular among people with at least some college background than it is among those who have not attended college.

Interestingly, beer has been the top-ranking alcoholic beverage every year since 1992 (the poll's inception) except in 2005, when wine edged slightly ahead of beer. Spirits have consistently ranked third in each survey.

Making the Trends Work In Your Store

Survey data is great, but how can it help to increase your business? Some retailers such as *99 Bottles* in Seattle, Washington, have fully embraced the popularity of beer by adopting a business model that is all about beer. We recently stopped in to meet with the owner's Craig and Tiffany Adamowski, to check out how this selling approach works.

Walking into the store, there is not a wine

or liquor bottle in sight, because *99 Bottles* only sells beer, hard cider and mead. Surprisingly, *99 Bottles* sells very few six packs or case quantities, as seen in the photo below, in which a majority of their inventory is being sold as single bottles (12 oz., 22 oz., 750 ml).

How Can Your Brewers Help?

Going "all beer" might be too extreme for many retailers; however using the popularity of beer to your advantage may still require giving beer a greater prominence in your store.

The good news is that many of the national and regional craft brewers now have representatives that are actively calling on On and Off Premise stores, and many of these brewers can provide displays and educational beer resources to help sell beer.

For example, in the Mid-West, *Boulevard Brewing*, based in Kansas City, Missouri, supplies fantastic displays for their award winning "Smokestack Series", which are well designed and look great in your store.

With 70 percent of consumers making their buying decision while they are in your store, it is easy to see why a display like these can catch your customers' attention and help you capitalize on the popularity of beer.

Out-of-the-Box: Branding Your Mix and Match

This month's Out-of-the-Box tip comes from Rob Miller of *Goebel Liquor, LLC* in Wichita, Kansas, which boasts an inventory of over 1,200 beer brands in bottles, cans and kegs. Rob's store is committed to keeping a constantly rotating selection of micros and imports. They have an "A+" rating on BeerAdvocate.com.

Rob purchases blank white six pack sleeves like many stores supply, but they take it one step further by branding what



they call "pre-built" mixed six packs of seasonal beers from around the United States.

Basically, *Goebel Liquor, LLC* glues a logo'd sheet to each side of the blank white carrier showing the season or theme and the price. Some examples Rob sent along were: Rob's Hand Picked 6, Spring 6 pack, Summer 6 pack, Oktoberfest 6 pack, Winter 6 pack, Irish 6 pack, and the 6 pack of the month.

Rob tells us that this program works well because people coming into his store can be overwhelmed by the 1,200 plus beers they have available to mix and match. Offering a branded mix and match, lets his customers grab a pre-mixed 6 pack of seasonal beers for \$8.00.

Rob notes that the program is so popular that most customers come back and buy full cases of their favorite branded mix and match selections. In fact *Goebel Liquor, LLC* sold over 80 cases last year by using this technique.

Are You Thinking Out-of-the-Box?

How innovative is your store at selling beer? We would like to know. If you have promotions that go beyond refilling the cold box, we would like to hear from you and share your "out-of-the-box" thinking with our fellow *Beverage Network* readers.

E-mail me at mkuderka@mcbasset.com with your successful ideas for selling beer, along with your contact information. If we write about your program in our column we will send you a free copy of The 3rd Edition of *The Essential Reference of Domestic Brewers and Their Bottled Brands*.