

## Indian beer market ready for new fizz

**BEVERAGES:** With consumers open to experimenting, manufacturers are introducing new sub-categories like low alcohol content and fruit-flavoured beers.

New Delhi: There's a fizz in the Indian beer market with beer lovers guzzling down more and more of the frothy drink and multinational beer majors introducing newer categories in the segment.

Different Strokes		
<b>LAGER:</b> Brewed using bottom-fermenting yeast that ferments slowly at a low temperature to create a smoother, mellow beer		
<b>ALE:</b> Uses top-fermenting yeast, is a more aromatic and fruity product		
<b>STOUT:</b> Dark and heavy, with roasted unmalted barley and, often, caramel malt or sugar		
<b>MILD BEER:</b> Developed as a sweeter and cheaper alternative to dark ales		
<b>BITTER:</b> Highly hopped for a more dry and aromatic beer. It is pale in colour but strong		
<b>DARK BEER:</b> Barley is kilned for a longer period of time which creates richer flavours		
<b>FRUIT BEER:</b> Fruit, usually berries, is added either during primary fermentation or later		
<b>WHEAT BEER (WEIZEN):</b> Malted wheat and barley are used for this German style beer		

With the consumers ready to experiment, beer manufacturers are developing sub-categories and adding to the existing mild and strong beer segments.

While Karan Bilimoria, the NRI beer manufacturer is sceptical of introducing mild beer in a country dominated by strong beer, he is bullish on alcohol-free beer and flavoured beer. "Flavoured beer has great potential in the country," he told Business Standard recently.

The company will soon roll out Cobra Alcohol Free Beer, Cobra Lower Calorie Lower Carb as well as Cobra Bite. Cobra Bite, a flavoured beer brand, includes natural fruit extracts and is available in sweet lime, apple and lemongrass flavours. Currently, the company only brews two brands, King Cobra and Cobra Premium Lager, for the Indian market.

Beer behemoth, United Breweries has also decided to join the bandwagon. "UB does see an opportunity in new beer sub-categories and segments. UB would like to cater to different consumer segments in the industry and to this effect, we will launch three new varieties of beer, including fruit flavoured and low alcohol brands," says Kalyan Ganguly, president & managing director, United Breweries Ltd (UBL).

Others like Dalmia Continental Pvt Ltd are happy to import non-alcoholic beer - Clausthaler - from Germany-based Raderberger Gruppe. Alcoholic beverages importer and distributor, Hema Connoisseur Collections, meanwhile, has introduced a German premium wheat beer Erdinger Weissbier in the country.

"Beer is a category which does not enjoy much brand loyalty, unlike other liquor categories. For us premium beer category is important and we see a great opportunity in growing in this segment," says Sundeep Kumar, director (corporate affairs and communication) at SABMiller India.

The premium beer segment grew at 5-7 per cent last year. This year the expected rate of growth is over 15 per cent. The company, which sells two premium brands Peroni and Foster's in India, plans to launch Miller Lite beer.

For the Danish beer maker Carlsberg, too, growing the super premium category, which it opened up in the country, is top priority. It plans to roll out the brand nationally this year.

"The local beer market has always been competitive but with the new breed of globe-trotting Indian, the domestic market is not only warming up to foreign brands but also willing to pay the price for a quality

product," says Pradeep Gidwani, managing director, South Asia Breweries Ltd, part of the Carlsberg group which also plans to take Palone, its beer brand, national this summer.

The country's beer market is estimated to be around 155 million cases a year and growing at 30 per cent annually.

According to industry experts, the growth for 2008-09 is likely to be in line with the growth of the preceding years fuelled by the reduction in additional customs duty on liquor. While there are nearly 70 distinct types of beers across the globe, very few categories are available in India.

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