

IN MARKET INSIGHTS

Brief:

COVID-19 Beer Brand Buzz



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Overview

[CNN Business](#) said it best: Americans' thirst for alcohol has increased since the coronavirus pandemic began. While COVID-19 has stopped the restaurant and bar industries in their tracks and the economy is slowing to a crawl, alcohol sales are still buzzing. According to Nielsen, alcoholic beverage sales jumped [55%](#) in late March compared to the same time last year, and purchases are expected to increase as the crisis continues to unfold.

While sales of liquor are soaring, beer sales are also accelerating, with YOY sales up [34%](#). Most notably, consumer preferences, as indicated by what brands they are purchasing, may be a reflection of the times. In fact, the beers that saw the greatest increases since the pandemic hit the U.S. have been budget-friendly brews with fewer carbs and calories. Americans under stay-at-home orders who are facing economic uncertainty are clearly watching both their pocketbooks and waistlines.

In this brief, we've tapped into InMarket's data to rank the top ten beer brands that consumers are buying during the COVID-19 pandemic.

How We Did It

InMarket used permission-based, first-party, SDK-derived location data from over 50 million+ Comscore-verified active users to analyze foot traffic patterns and historical data.

We calculated the average dollar spend per device for each beer brand during February 2020 vs. March-April 2020, then calculated the percent difference between these two dollar amount averages. We then ordered the top ten beer brands from the highest percent change to the lowest percent change.

For more information about methodology or additional real-world recommendations around appropriate targeting, channel, content, and messaging strategies and tactics, visit [InMarket's COVID-19 InSights Center](#) or contact your InMarket representative.

Top 10 Beer Brands by Spend per Device

Based on InMarket Location Data from 50 Million+ Comscore-Verified Consumers



- In general, “budget” beers have moved to the top as favored choices during the pandemic. This trend is fueled by consumers seeking value while spending more and buying in bulk to avoid frequent visits.
- Economic uncertainty including record unemployment, pay cuts, and furloughs further fueled the move to value-based brands.
- A nationwide shut down of non-essential businesses—including gyms—means Americans are living more sedentary lives. Thus, low budget beers, which tend to be lower calorie, are good guilt-free options for beer enthusiasts. Consequently, the top 4 beers in terms of growth were all under 100 calories: Busch Light has 95 calories, Miller Lite has 96 calories, and Michelob Ultra has 95 calories.
- Budget brands like Miller Lite and Michelob Ultra are still outpacing craft beers (like New Belgium, and Goose Island) with double-digit growth—in contrast to craft beers’ single-digit growth. Craft beers, which typically earn 70% of sales from brewers’ tap rooms or at bars, are likely to suffer most until stay-at-home orders are lifted.
- Modelo and Corona, both of which are owned by the same parent company, are the only import beer brands. While already popular choices among consumers, this spike might be explained by panic-buying and diminishing supply: their parent company, Grupo Modelo, [suspended](#) production of beer until further notice, prompting shoppers to buy with a scarcity mindset.
- Busch Light’s unusually strong performance (44.41%), compared to other brands’ growth of under 20%, was fueled by a winter promotion that included \$1 rebates for every inch of snow across 7 states.

At InMarket, we analyze opted-in, always-on location data from 50 million+ Comscore-verified active users in order to understand real-world trends. These hyper-accurate SDK integrations with the world’s most popular apps also enable one-to-one brand engagement at precise moments that drive industry-leading campaign results.

To view additional Report Cards, please visit [InMarket InSights](#). To learn about how InMarket’s advanced segmenting and one-to-one in-store and out-of-store advertising programs can help you drive business, please [contact us](#) today.