



How to Maximize Your Customers' Online Experience

In times of uncertainty, innovation can define success. The entire independent craft beer industry has had to pivot to a new business model overnight to compensate for lost on-premise sales - curbside pickup, delivery and shipping.

Strong business acumen is critical today and it's not enough just to make quality beer or give enthusiasts a memorable taproom experience. Now it is about finding unique ways to engage consumers without a taproom. The breweries that succeed will have invented another business model that will surely help them grow and prosper during the economic recovery ahead.

To help independent craft breweries maximize their guests' "new normal" experience and revenue during this tough time, here is a "Top 10" list to help with off-premise sales.

Top 10 Ways to Maximize the Online Experience

1. Have a good website – Simple, right? However, with as many brewery websites as we've visited, you may be surprised at how many are outdated. We've found quite a bit of brewery websites without something as simple as basic contact info. Take the time to revitalize your online presence and be sure to integrate a component that facilitates online ordering. Create an online experience that's easy on the eyes, builds trust with your consumer, and stays true to your brand.
2. Include all necessary information to order on social media – Pretty picture of your newest release? Check. Detailed description of the flavor profile? Check. Link to order? Don't forget the most vital part in converting a fan on social media from someone just swiping to someone swiping their credit card. Include the link and detailed instructions explaining where to purchase. Utilize each online platform correctly so that the necessary information appears on all mediums.
3. Avoid frustration with online stores – Now you've got the consumer to visit your online store. Your goal now should be to make the ordering process as streamlined as possible. Make sure your menu available for online purchase is easy to understand. The end user shouldn't have any questions to what beers are available for online ordering. Don't assume the consumer is familiar with all the nitty gritty details of each beer. Provide them with the beer name, style, alcohol content, size options, and pricing. Keep it straightforward and as few clicks as possible to get to checkout.
4. Selectively use pop-ups – While the tone of this may appear negative, these pop-ups and little reminders can be your best friend. After your user has selected "head to checkout," ask them if they'd like to add a couple of additional items with their order. "Would you like our limited-edition Virtual Drinking Buddy koozie with that 4 pack of lager?" "How about one of our newest brewery t-shirts?" "Maybe a sticker for a buck?" There's a reason sites like VistaPrint can move a ton of business cards. Maximize sales from online orders and don't forget the easy upsells.
5. Touch-free payment processing – Work with an online payment processor to eliminate the exchange of cash or credit card at delivery or pickup. While it is necessary to verify ID when providing your beer to the consumer, do everything possible to keep the experience touch-free as you follow CDC guidelines. And don't forget to include the opportunity to tip.
6. Inventory management – Know how much product you have on hand and integrate this information into your online store. Only advertise what you have available. Run out of your supply of Carole Baskin's Cool

Cats and Kittens Double Dry Hopped Sour IPA? Take it off your website. Additionally, don't allow guests to add product to their carts only to be told it is no longer available when they checkout. This is extremely frustrating to the consumer and may encourage them to simply visit another local brewery's online store.

7. Offer subscriptions – This is rare, but these are unprecedented times. Consumers' spending habits show that many purchase based on familiarity. Many reports also show increased alcohol consumption during quarantine. Use this to your advantage and offer monthly subscription packages, either for pickup or delivery, consisting of two flagship brands. Consider including a six-pack of your IPA with a six-pack of a seasonal for \$X each month. This is an automatic charge to your customer's card. Easy money and a happy customer who now has two of their favorite beers delivered each month. Once again, make sure you're attentive to inventory to cover all orders.
8. Reliable delivery – Make sure your guests are aware when their beer can be picked up or when it will be delivered. Don't be the 12-hour window cable guy - everyone wants to know when their beer will arrive, so provide accurate delivery windows. If anything goes amiss, stay in touch with the consumer. Some online ordering systems even provide driver tracking and map services. Also, once you make the delivery, or the customer picks up their beer, a sincere thank you will be remembered. Consider even throwing in a roll of toilet paper to make the experience even more memorable.
9. Stay connected to your customers – Only 13.9 percent of brewery staff are encouraging guests to sign up for their brewery's mailing list or rewards program. Always build your brand. In addition to social media, it should be your goal to stay in touch with your potential consumers in as many ways as possible. Semi-frequent emails serve as simple reminders to recipients that you're ready to serve them. Keep them informative, entertaining, and give that enthusiast a reason to visit. In addition, consider collecting your customers' cell phone numbers to send the occasional announcement via SMS. A simple text can be a powerful marketing tool to get that person to make repeat purchases.
10. Create a virtual community – In addition to Facebook Live happy hour with your brewmaster talking about your latest release, try to recreate a virtual community experience that is the essence of your taproom. Host virtual tastings, virtual trivia, virtual concerts, virtual anything! Brainstorm strategies that involve two-way communication, ideally video, to facilitate engagement. Consider pairing your latest release with a virtual tasting where those who purchase are given the opportunity to engage with your brewmaster or owner online as part of an exclusive experience. Consider the craft beer specific video chat site [Virtual Taproom](#) to host events for your brewery. Keep your community excited about your brand and they will be even more excited to visit once your doors open again. If you make any changes to your curbside and delivery options or add virtual events, be sure to share them with VCBG, so we can promote them.

Online Ordering Resources

1. 2ndKitchen
2. Arryved
3. Biermi
4. CraftCellr
5. Craftpeak
6. Craftshack
7. Square
8. Tavour
9. Toasttab

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