

# ANOTHER ROUND

WRITTEN BY CATH LYON



NEW  
FUTURE  
VALUE™

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# PROBLEM

Social attitudes to alcohol are changing in various markets and booze companies are having to adjust their marketing approach.

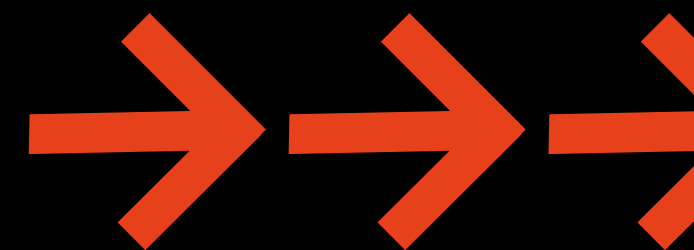
**An intelligent man is sometimes forced to be drunk to spend time with his fools.”**

**- Ernest Hemingway**

# SOLUTION

Listen. Learn. Innovate.

# HOW



Read on...

# WHY ANOTHER ROUND?

## ONE IN FIVE ↗ BRITS ARE NOW SOBER.

**Tighter finances** mean 46% can't go to the pub as often, with 67% finding drinks too expensive. In 2024, **more than 400 pubs closed in England and Wales** as people switched to spending Friday and Saturday nights at home.

Throw **taste changes, new tech** and **the planet** into the shaker and you've got a changing cocktail of a marketing landscape (served over ice). But, if you're a marketer in this industry who's tempted to turn to the bottle, don't despair! There's still one universal hope which you can cling onto: **that people still love to get together for a beverage.**

We've tapped into several research resources, including Mintel data, to shine a light on where opportunities lie. We also share creative examples

to inspire you to optimise, accelerate and innovate your way towards achieving new future value.

Follow @StrategiQ on LinkedIn [#NewFutureValue](#) to join the conversation.



**ASH THROWER**  
Client Director



# ZERO HERO

Given the turning tide towards sobriety in the UK and elsewhere, the growth in no-and-low alcohol products is no surprise.

**Health is a strong motivator for this change:**

## 52%

of no-and-low alcohol drinkers worried about **alcohol's impact on their sleep**.

## 75%

concerned about its effect on their **emotional wellbeing**.

However, there's still work to do in convincing people to choose no-and-low alcohol drinks for all occasions. Even for people with 'healthy' household incomes, **price is a major barrier to purchase**. This means most drink non-alcoholic options at home. As such, focusing on low-key occasions will make marketing relevant. For example, linking no-and-low alcohol drinks to **major sports events** and **meal pairings** can help build them into the ultimate night in.

Similarly, not all drinkers are convinced about no-and-low alcohol drinks being 'healthier' alternatives, with many worried about **sugar content**. So for those that can make 'reduced sugar' claims (drinks with an ABV lower than 1.2%), emphasising this in messaging and packaging could see benefits. Highlighting **quality and flavour** will also position these drinks as a 'treat' and make them a more likely choice for special occasions.

## DUTY HIKES

are one factor that inflated alcoholic drink prices in 2023/24. **53%** of adults are put off by the **expense of no-and-low alcohol drinks**.



## 55%

of drinkers say alcohol's **negative impact on wellbeing** encouraged their choice of non-alcoholic alternatives. No-and-low alcohol product marketing emphasising relaxation benefits holds promise.

## 43%

of adults are put off no-and-low alcohol drinks because of their **sugar content**. But only **25%** of dark spirits drinkers and buyers say alcohol-free versions deliver the same complex flavours.

## 64%

of people are enjoying no-and-low alcohol drinks **at home**. **18%** of buyers were prompted to buy a new white spirit for an at-home occasion by an in-store aisle end display.

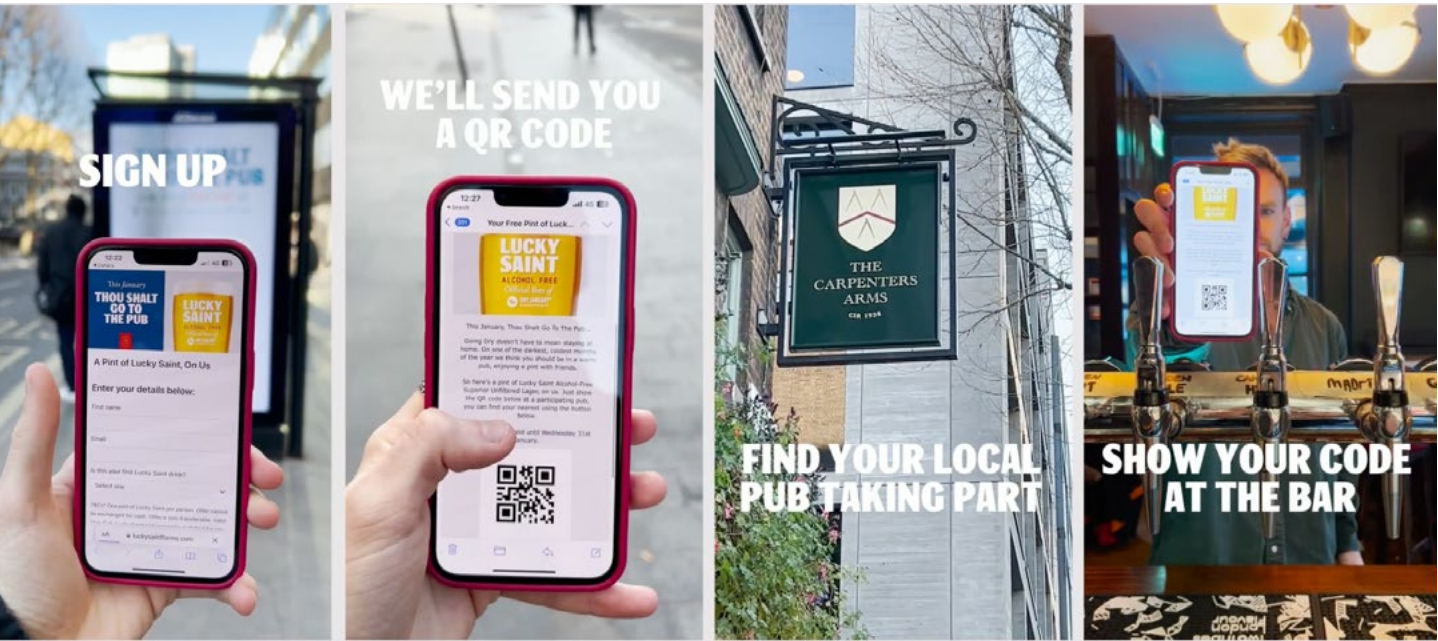
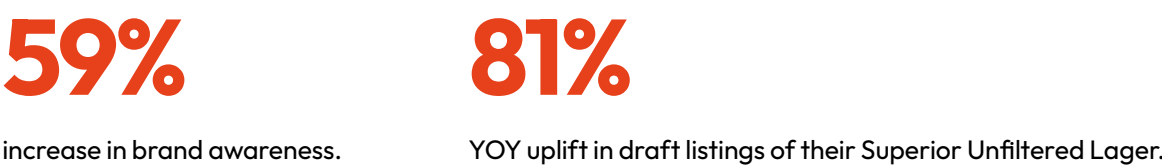
# LUCKY SAINT

## THOU SHALT GO TO THE PUB

Lucky Saint ‘Thou Shalt Go to the Pub’ was a bold campaign that flew in the face of Dry January, leveraging their hallmark pious tone. The brand decreed that Brits could still frequent their ‘**spiritual home**’ and partake in a pint or two of alcohol-free Lucky Saint Lager. Lucky Saint really put their pound where their pint is for this campaign, **with influencers, paid social, development of a tap map and proximity out of home advertising giving away free pints!**

This clever campaign drove footfall and appetite whilst **tapping into non-drinkers’ desires** to enjoy the pub experience and worries about increased venue closures.

The impact:



# DRINK RELIGIOUSLY





# MAN BEST FRIENDS?



**BrewDog's** loyalty programmes, [Planet BrewDog](#) and [Equity for Punks](#), leverage consumers' bargain-hunting instincts and the power of trustworthy recommendations. Tying closely to their B-corp status, BrewDog encouraged buyers to recommend products to qualify for promotional discounts and freebies. Few drinks brands have leveraged these 'savvy shopping' behaviours, despite the fact they've shown success elsewhere. E.g. [GlassesUSA.com](#) refer-a-friend scheme grew customer acquisition by 53% in the first year.

The brand announced that 2025 would see it be partnering with one of Europe's fastest growing independent podcast networks, Crowd Network ([Crowd](#)). They've assigned a different BrewDog beer to each podcast, aligning with content, placing product and encouraging hosts to enjoy the sponsorship sip. They also collaborate on cross-channel activity, including on social media. This is a smart move by both brands in creating an alliance that is perfect for extending their reach and position with their target audience.

## 37%

of drinkers have bought a new beer brand due to aspirational lifestyle imagery in its advertising.





# DRINKS WITH EXTRAS

Alcohol has gained a bad rep for negatively affecting people's wellbeing. But that hasn't stopped drinkers searching for beverages to help them unwind. Instead, they're on the hunt for ingredients that **promote relaxation**, without the after effects.

Alongside lavender and chamomile, a growing attraction to 'functional' ingredients such as **adaptogens** and **nootropics** is forming. Currently a small part of the market, these products have attracted attention with their bold claims of naturally enhancing concentration, mood and energy.

By 2023, the global nootropic market is estimated to reach over

## USD 11 BILLION IN VALUE

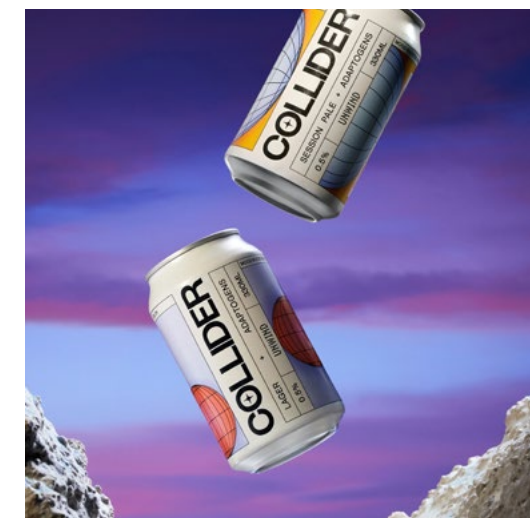
Whichever ingredients feature in your product, associating them closely with **emotional wellbeing** is key to driving purchases. Tying it to popular stress-relieving hobbies such as reading books, baking or cooking and gardening is one effective way this could be done.

Teaming this approach up with advice campaigns around moderate drinking could help reach a receptive younger audience. It has already proved successful for Diageo, with their focus on the '[Magic of Moderate Drinking](#)', and Jameson, who teamed up with the English Football league on '[Sip Wisely](#)'.

## KEEP AN EYE ON THEM...

### COLLIDER

[Collider's Unwind Lager](#) is an **adaptogenic beer** that's both 'mood boosting' and non-alcoholic. Infused with an Unwind Blend of L-Theanine, Lion's Mane and Ashwagandha and with a 0.5% ABV, it's the first drink of its kind in the UK. This is reflected in its 'out of this world' marketing which plays on space-like and punk themes.



### g.

Positioning itself as a wellness product over a drinks brand, [G Spot](#) was started by actor and **Sex Education** star **Gillian Anderson** after realising she was drinking too much sugar and caffeine. Made from natural, functional ingredients, the PR and marketing focuses on promoting taste, wellness and pleasure.



### DIAGEO

Launched with a hero film by **the makers of Guinness, Johnnie Walker, Tanqueri and Seedlip**, the [Magic of Moderate Drinking](#) puts 'enjoying responsibly' into action. By pausing for food, using measures or drinking water, it shows how people can 'savour every moment' of an occasion without compromising on having fun.





Now drunk by **27% beer lovers**, craft has officially entered the mainstream. This category is also equally popular across all ages and household income groups. Plus, although 70% of drinkers value familiarity with beer brands, there is still elbow room available for **disruptors**.



Mike and Mark's idea to make beer using **foraged ingredients and flavours** turned into a sustainability-focused drinks brand. Alongside making delicious brew with unusual tastes, they also **support their local community** by planting hedgerows and backing independent local pubs. All with as small a carbon footprint as possible.

With a big pink beast at the centre of their brand, [Wild Craft Brewery](#) has lots of potential to tap into customers' focus on sustainability and desire to find new flavours made from natural ingredients.



Self-defined as creating '**forward thinking beer**' which is balanced and drinkable, they celebrate the drink's ability to bring people together. Their marketing puts their team front-and-centre, marks out their status as a **responsible employer** who pays the living wage and genuine involvement in big social events such as International Women's Day.

This positions [Attic Brew Co.](#) as genuinely caring and responsible and helps build the brand story, something that's important for one in four craft beer buyers. Backed by their beer's many awards, this helps build a sense of the brand being trustworthy.

C\*LD  
TOWN°

With 63% of craft beer buyers saying location affects their choice, [Cold Town Beer](#) literally puts this at the centre of their brand (their name comes from Caltoun in Edinburgh). '**Brrrrrewed in Scotland**' is one of the brand's main USPs, as is the fact that they use the local natural water and barley in their beers.

They also put their product development in the hands of their fans. 'If you don't love our beers, we don't brew them again' is the headline claim. This helps **build a sense of community and exclusivity** that's rewarding and exciting for customers.





# BIG NIGHTS IN

With consumers' financial wellbeing and confidence yet to recover from the lows of 2021, shoppers are making fewer spontaneous choices and looking to get **value for money** wherever possible. Instead of heading out at the weekend, more customers are looking for ways to make their **at-home occasions extra special**.

For marketers, focusing on reviews and recommendations is essential to prove a product's value:

**75%** of food and drink choices influenced by **the opinion of a user or loved one**.

Endorsements from individuals or organisations that consumers consider to be trustworthy and independent also make a powerful proof point.

Campaigns or product collaborations using influencers are effective:

**28%** of grocery shoppers buying **celeb-backed items** in the six months up to September 2024

Although these need to be handled with care:

**49%** of shoppers will be put off by **any controversy**.

Commendations and medals from quality and industry awards are also worth their weight in gold:

**50%** of shoppers choosing **winning food and drink products** over gong-less ones.

Publicising this **beyond the product packaging** across social media and traditional ads could prove effective for driving purchases, particularly for own-label items.



## 'ONWARDS' AND UPWARDS

Own-label products are winning in the face of consumer confidence in big brands dropping, including in sparkling wine. Out of shoppers surveyed in September 2024:

**17%** said they intended to **buy more own label bottles.**

## BURST BUBBLES

Champagne is losing its sparkle due to its higher price point and positioning as a 'special occasion' or 'gift' purchase. Despite having Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) status, brands are failing to communicate how their products are superior to cheaper alternatives. Activations that emphasise the premium value perception are essential, with [Moët & Chandon's pop-up personalised label shop](#) being one example.

## PARTY PREMIUM

At-home social occasions (hello house parties) are where the biggest opportunities lie for dark or white spirits brands. Ready-to-serve (RTS) and ready-to-drink (RTD) products from labels like [Absolut](#) are making it easier for drinkers to elevate their big nights in. Offering branded or unique serving glasses are also a great way of making these occasions feel like a treat, with 59% of dark spirits drinkers saying they created a more enjoyable experience.

## LOYALTY ROYALTY

Drinkers are on the hunt for bargains. They also want to be rewarded for their loyalty with discounts, with 43% shoppers buying more from a brand with a money-off scheme. Beyond saving money, these rewards also boost self-esteem, with 66% of loyalty scheme members feeling more valued. Combining these schemes with a subscription service (which [26% shoppers](#) are already signed up to) offers huge opportunities to build brand and protect margins.



# CELEBS ON THE WAGON

From wine to non-alcoholic agave, more celebs are jumping on the bandwagon of creating or endorsing beverage brands. These endorsements can have **a huge impact on brand visibility**. They're not as powerful as a prompt to purchase though, with only **6% of buyers influenced** to buy a new premium alcoholic drink by a celebrity endorsement or affiliation.

[Alex James' collaboration with Laithwaites](#) to create the Britpop English Sparkling Wine range earned good PR and social media coverage, with the range now extending to rose, elderflower spritz and cider.

[Betty Buzz](#) has grown from Blake Lively's personal project to create a premium soft drinks range, to a beverages giant that now includes cocktails range Betty Booze. Winner of various taste awards, it's now stocked by several high-end retailers. Of course her hubby Ryan Reynolds isn't doing too badly with [Aviation Gin](#) either.

Tom Holland's sobriety journey prompted his entry into the premium, non-alcoholic beer market with the [BERO range](#). Aiming to strike 'the perfect balance between pleasure and moderation', the first release sold out in hours.

Developed with Lord Byron Distillery in Australia, [Papa Salt Coastal Gin](#) has Margot Robbie as one of its founding members. Launched in London in June 2024, it was stocked exclusively by Harvey Nichols and is now sold in Tesco.





# BIG FLAVOURS, NO SUGAR

## 23%

of drinkers are willing to pay more for a product with an innovative flavour.

## 49%

would spend extra on beverages with a superior taste

Although younger and financially 'healthy' buyers are more likely to seek out something new, all customers will engage with **flavour-based brand activations**. Fruity, seasonal or inspired by films – buyers are big about trying new flavours.

Hazy, cloudy, unfiltered and citrus are a key taste in beer categories, including low and no. Seasonal variants of white spirits are a popular base for cocktails, such as 'christmassy' gins and vodkas. Coke Zero and Fanta have also generated brand excitement with limited edition 'mystery flavours'. Associations with sports events or film releases has been one way to capture attention, such as Robinsons' glittery Wicked cordials.

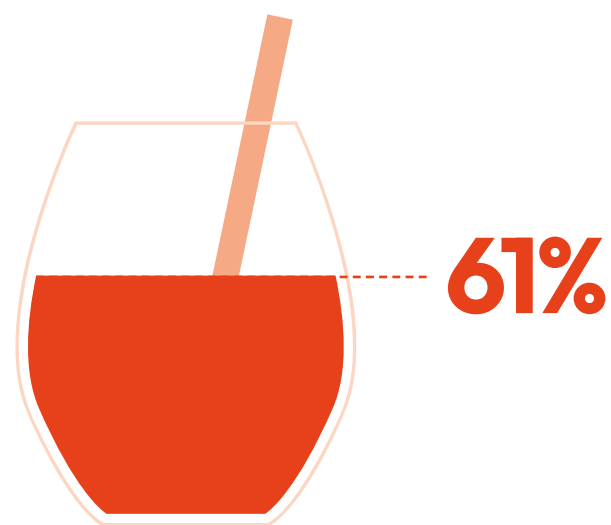
**However, customers don't want these flavours at the cost of their health.** Concerns about no-and-low alcohol beer being high in sugar already puts **45%** of consumers off drinking them, while **76%** prefer a pre-mixed drink with less sugar to one that includes sweeteners.

Emphasising any naturally low sugar qualities will tap into health-conscious buyers. **New advertising restrictions** on food and drinks high in fat, salt and sugar (HFSS) will also give low sugar beverages a clear path to differentiate themselves. However, any claims need to be made within the guidance of the ASA which classifies the terms '**reduced sugar**', '**half sugar**', '**zero sugar**' or '**reduced/low carbs**' as unacceptable.



# SHAKEN, NOT STIRRED

Squeezed household incomes mean fewer people are choosing to head out to bars and pubs. However, they still want to enjoy a **'premium' experience**, which is where RTD cocktails come in.



of people drinking RTDs at home instead of going out (six months up to Nov 2023)



2 IN 5

adults drink pre-mixed cocktails

**Whitebox**  
COCKTAILS

This brand leverages a sense of being **'premium'** from their packaging through to their PR placements, which include Esquire, Elle and the Financial Times. As the brand claims, "[Whitebox](#) is about fully enjoying the experience of proper, well made, high quality cocktails".

From product descriptions to photography, the branding makes clear that they don't scrimp on measures or flavours, which plays into customer's desires for a **premium at-home experience**. However, although they suggest ideal serving glasses, they don't offer branded options, which is a huge area of untapped potential.

**EDEN.MILL**  
ST ANDREWS

[Eden Mill Distillery](#) linked up with Lawn Tennis Association (LTA) for the second year running in June 2023. The brand sold its Wildcard gin and alcohol-free RTDs at **four LTA tournaments**.

The campaign also included an **on-trade activation** where visitors to pubs local to the venues could win tickets to the tournaments through scratch cards attached to all glasses of Eden Mill serves. **With 18% of shoppers buying a new drinks brand due to a sports event tie in**, it shows that these types of activations aren't just powerful for beer brands.



82%

of white spirits drinkers are looking for visually appealing glassware





**WHO'S GETTING IT**  
**RIGHT AND HOW?**



# ON THE TECH VINE

Some might be from the old world, but wine brands are leading the way in terms of marketing and customer experience tech. Mainly, this technology is helping buyers understand more about the products and make an informed purchase. This supports spend-cautious customers who are looking to get the best value wine for their at-home occasions, with **48% drinking still wine regularly with a homemade meal**.



**Sustainability** is another element that's top of mind for many buyers', with **74% of being more likely to trust a brand that promotes its environmental impact**. Using digital tools to make provenance and sourcing information more easily accessible will also drive their purchasing decisions.

Alongside industry awards, serving this information in an easily accessible way will enhance each wine's quality and value perception. As both **sustainability and awards** are in the **top four attributes** wine drinkers will pay more for.

To create **premium experiences**, tech is also proving useful. From limited edition packaging to storytelling, brands are finding lots of ways to innovate and enhance the wine drinking experience.

EU labelling rules mean winemakers are required to display their beverages' nutritional content and any added ingredients. Rather than adding this all to the physical label, it's possible to use an **e-label** which is accessed through scanning a QR code. Although the laws mean e-labels can't be used for marketing purposes, it's a great way of educating customers about a wine's provenance and quality.

**In-store touchscreens** with in-built digital wine assistants ask customers questions about their preferences to help them find the best available option. They can narrow down wines by colour, region, price and meal accompaniments, plus whether it's for themselves or being gifted. If needed, a bell can be used to summon a real-life advisor. Eventually, they could also integrate money-saving tips and loyalty discounts.

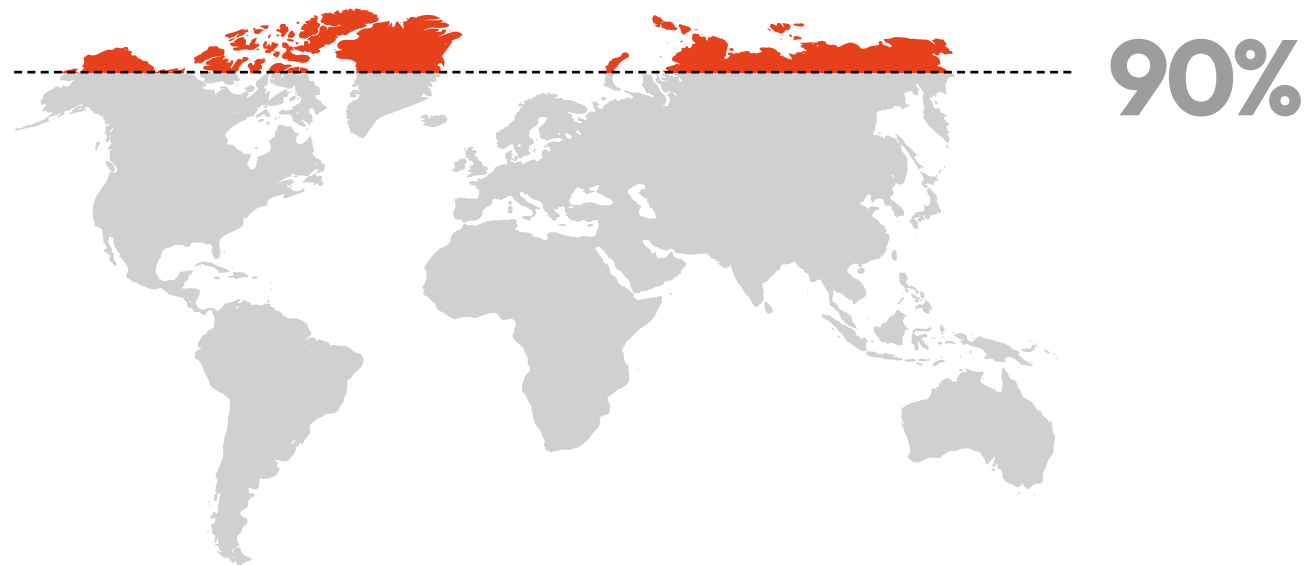
Ignis the winemaker used **AI technologies** to design bottle labels which narrated its brand story. Each label is numbered and forms part of a narration around the connection between the fire and wine which links them all together. Buyers can see where their own label fits into the project by scanning a QR code on the bottle. This tells the brand story and creates a sense of premiumisation and exclusivity.





# DRINK GREEN

Climate change is having a major impact on the winemaking world. Not only are **90% of the traditional growing regions at risk of disappearing by 2100**, but the warmer temperatures and increased droughts are already changing wine flavour profiles.



It's also front-of-mind for customers, with **85% of adults expecting UK regulators to make sure any drinks sold meet sustainability standards and 79% choosing beverages with sustainability claims some of the time**. It's also a priority in terms of spending, with **54% of drinkers prepared to pay more for a sustainably-produced wine**.

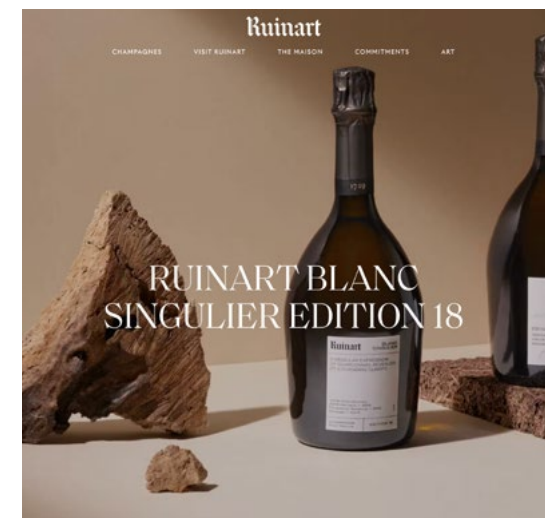
The environmental impact of packaging is an equal priority for buyers. Incorrectly, **71% of customers believe glass wine bottles are a more sustainable option than plastic bags-in-boxes or bottles**. While canned formats are gradually gaining appeal, with **40% of wine drinkers now considering them a favourite**, awareness of its green credentials still needs to be raised.

## WHEN IN ROME

When in Rome was one of the first to champion canned wine and has a badge marking out that these packages produce four times **less carbon dioxide** than glass. This sits alongside other sustainable packaging options such as paper wine bottles and bag-in-box designs.



The Ruinart Blanc Singulier Édition 18 Champagne was released to highlight the impact of **climate change** on the final product. Messaging emphasises the unusually warm temperatures of the vintage year, 2018 and this weather's impact on the aromas and tasting notes.



Large wine making brands such as Villa Maria are increasingly shifting their messaging and values towards **sustainability-first**. This includes in their product ranges, such as EarthGarden organic. However, there is still work to do to raise awareness and emphasise the premiumisation value.





# SPILL THE TEA

With such tight rules and regulations, it can be difficult for alcohol brands to make a big PR splash. For some, leveraging crisis comms has proved useful for generating excitement and conversation around both big and disruptor brands. For others, it's caused serious damage to their reputation over just a few hours.

Whether it's taking aim at competitors or responding to a manufacturing mistake, the way drinks brands have approached their **crisis communications** has either enhanced or degraded their value. Whatever the size of a drinks brand, these incidents have proved why it's essential to have a thorough plan for dealing with or taking advantage of these key moments.

Days Brewing ran an [OOH advertising campaign](#) which called out beer brands which made **unsupported claims**. It took aim at Madri Excepcional with, "We have zero budget to pretend we are brewed in Spain" and at BrewDog's 'find the gold cans' competition of 2021.

Rumours of the [Guinness shortage](#) shortly before Christmas 2024 being an elaborate stunt to get customers supping in pubs were dismissed by owner Diageo. Instead, they said an increase in younger drinkers meant they couldn't supply demand. It may have boosted sales of competitor beverage Murphy's by 632%, but it also gave customers a useful **brand 'nudge'**.

When 120 people, including children, fell ill in Belgium after drinking [Coca-Cola](#), the beverage giant **failed to react**. Withdrawing 2.5 million bottles of its products from shelves, it then refused to provide an explanation to the Belgian health ministry. It also didn't offer a public response until almost a week later, which still didn't give a clear, transparent explanation, **causing major damage to the brand's reputation**.

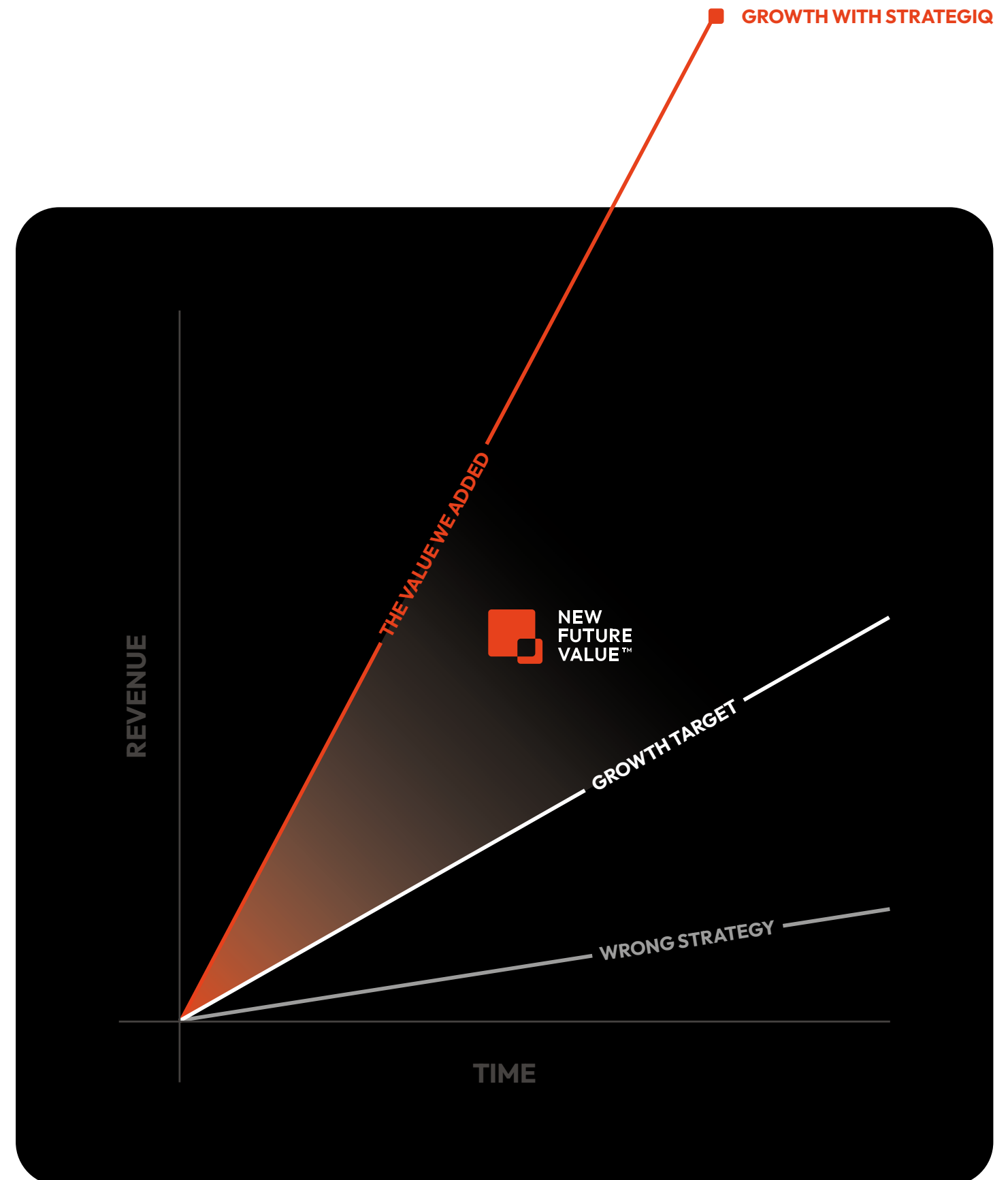
From misleading product claims to employee disputes, BrewDog has kept plugging on through a sea of negative press. By taking a stand against these accusations, the brand has reinforced its **punk, anti-establishment positioning**. Although the PR response broke many of the standard rules (and not all to the beer maker's benefit), the brand has managed to turn most crises into opportunities to galvanise their community.



# CREATING NEW FUTURE VALUE

It's clear that opportunities in the drinks industry are there for the taking. So how do progressive brands optimise, accelerate and innovate their marketing efforts to realise new future value?

**WE'VE PUT A FEW IDEAS TOGETHER THAT WE'D LOVE TO REFINE WITH BRANDS THAT ARE PURSUING GROWTH AND FUTURE VALUE.**





# OPTIMISE <sup>70</sup>

ACCELERATE

INNOVATE

## OPTIMISATION IDEAS:

- 01 Are you optimising your in-store/venue presence? With stats indicating that nearly 20% of buyers are motivated to buy by an aisle end display, it's worth considering how you can optimise that visual merchandising opportunity through innovative design, live and digital experiences and promotion.
- 02 Is your brand associated with a feeling? Research can establish peoples perceptions as a basis for brand development and marketing strategy. That intangible asset of brand essence & narrative is potent and can be built upon for the long term adding increasing value to you and your customer.
- 03 Do you have a loyalty program/subscription service or community to gather people to? 66% of loyalty scheme members feel more valued. Simply running automated nurture campaigns through segmentation of your database can improve retention and spend rates considerably.



# ACCELERATE <sup>20</sup>

## ACCELERATION IDEAS:

- 01** With 50% of shoppers drawn by award winning beverages, are you entering awards and winning, do you need help to establish a winning formula? Awards is one of the top four attributes drinkers will pay more for (sustainability being one of the others).
- 02** 28% of shoppers buy new brands due to event tie-ins. Look to leverage seasonal, sporting and cultural events (even popular movie launches). Consider a campaign to align with multiple touchpoints increasing saturation to bring your brand awareness front of mind. But make sure the synergy is authentic.
- 03** With 75% influenced by a recommendation, social engagement is gold. Enhance your brand experience and organic reach by launching weekly 'Friday-feels' chillout playlists on Spotify, or something a bit more upbeat for a Saturday house party that people can share and comment on social, increasing your organic reach.



OPTIMISE

ACCELERATE

INNOVATE 10

# INNOVATION

## IDEAS:

- 01 Where could technology either enhance your customer experience or provide efficiencies to make your business more profitable? Are there AI applications you have yet to explore that could provide advantage? Now is the time!
- 02 Would your product benefit from innovation? Are there ways you could enhance the health benefits of your offering or emphasise wellbeing/ relaxation aspects and use those in promotion? Taking a customer-centric approach to product and brand development has been proven to show dividends.
- 03 Where is there scope for forming new alliances and partnerships in the market? Should you be considering producing white label product for own label brands? Can you capitalise on the premium drive through collaboration? Are there influencers you should be working with? Think outside the box.



# ABOUT STRATEGIQ

StrategiQ partner with brands to realise New Future Value.

We do this through our **70.20.10** program to **Optimise**, **Accelerate** and **Innovate** strategic omni-channel marketing campaigns that deliver increased sales at an accelerated pace.

We focus 70% of our attention to **Optimise** what you do, 20% to **Accelerate** growth through insight and 10% to identify areas for **innovation** that will elevate your business.

If you'd like to explore what we could do for your business please email [enquiries@strategiq.co](mailto:enquiries@strategiq.co) or call us on [+44 020 4574 6531](tel:+442045746531).

STRATEGIQ®



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