

Abstract

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The craft beer market is becoming overly saturated, and the most effective way for breweries to differentiate their products is to rely on their branding strategies. According to various theories, place-based branding strategies, including the emphasis and integration of local heritage, history, and narratives, can create reinforced connections with the consumers, as well as an authentic brand identity. As such, emphasizing and integrating local values might help to gain recognition in this competitive market. A research interest took shape to segment the craft beer market by the different breweries' branding strategies and market positions, focusing on their conscious adoption of local values. Furthermore, as the neolocal movement is becoming more and more prevalent in the United States, this thesis aims to shed light on the emergence of this movement in the inspected Central and East European countries, namely Austria, The Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Romania, and Slovakia.

As a result, three distinct craft beer brewery profiles were identified through hierarchical clustering that show what "archetypical" brewery profiles are prevalent in the craft beer market. The primary data was acquired through an online survey where the participants were craft breweries from the countries mentioned above. These brewery profiles might be helpful for companies to develop future branding strategies and develop a comprehensive outlook on the current market. Moreover, the thesis also investigates the relationship between newly established brands and product innovation, local narratives in rural breweries, and the impact of COVID-19 on primary revenue sources.