

FOOD AND BEVERAGE

Creativity, empathy key to engaging with consumers: Mot Hennessy exec

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Globally, consumers are drinking more at home than ever before. Image credit: Hennessy

By SARAH RAMIREZ

NEW YORK As the coronavirus pandemic forced many consumers to stay close to home, it has changed behaviors and preferences around the premium wine and spirits market.

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During a discussion at the Future of Luxury eConference, an executive from LVMH's Mot Hennessy explained how wine and spirit brands have continued engaging consumers during the coronavirus pandemic. As in many sectors, the pandemic has driven online growth and consolidated shifting trends from years to months.

"Staying in is the new going out," said Erica Guries, director of competitive intelligence at LVMH's Mot Hennessy.

Future of Luxury eConference was produced by Luxury Daily

Virtual toasts

At the onset of the pandemic, when restaurants and bars were shut and flights grounded, consumers started drinking alcohol that they ordered online at home. The IWSR research found that online alcohol beverage sales in North America were growing at 3.5x the rate of earlier in 2020, and wine and spirits are growing 2x as fast as beer, citing a Drizly report ([see story](#)).

Months later, consumers are still looking to celebrate special and everyday occasions, in addition to looking for a sense of novelty to break up the monotony of quarantines. This has led to people exploring different categories and new-to-them spirits.



Beverage portability is growing in importance as consumers opt for more group activities outdoors. Image credit: Krug

Besides newness, Ms. Guries also explained that the growing emphasis on outdoor activities during which it is more difficult for the coronavirus to spread have also influenced consumers' beverage preferences. Outdoor occasions have further boosted the fast-growing hard seltzer category, as well as other canned options, as consumers opt for straightforward and portable drinks.

Another benefit of canned drinks is that individual servings reduce the spread of germs as people do not have to share glassware and bottles with their loved ones. Portable packaging is also important as restaurants look to include alcoholic beverages with takeout orders for consumers who are continue to avoid dining out.

As a result of the pandemic and other social disruptions, Ms. Guries argued that it is more important than ever for brands to have empathy. This can be expressed through memorable activities from brands, particularly those that are inclusive.

During the pandemic, LVMH has found success hosting online tastings and cocktail classes.

In a celebration of Pride Month, mixology experts from Chandon hosted a colorful cocktail class. Participants were taught how to make drinks inspired by the rainbow Pride flag using sparkling wines.

Champagne brand Mot & Chandon also debuted an Instagram series called "The Perfect Match," featuring an expert chef and a wine specialist to inspire consumers to cook something new at home ([see story](#)).



Parisian chef Yannick Alleno of Pavillon Ledoyen, stars in Moët & Chandon Instagram series. Image credit: Moët & Chandon

While Ms. Guries predicts that more people are going to feel comfortable going out and social occasions such as happy hour will resume, virtual events will remain important for brands. In the U.S., an estimated 75 percent of drinking occasions were already happening at home pre-pandemic.

Community support

It is also important for wine and spirits brands to emphasize social values as consumers want to support purpose-driven companies.

In June, LVMH's Mot & Chandon Champagne brand has kicked off a new social media campaign that aims to play up its heritage and the source of its wines. The #CareWithPassion Instagram video series included episodes that highlight the house's sustainability practices ([see story](#)).

LVMH Cognac brand Hennessy also launched an effort called Unfinished Business that supports small businesses

owned by Blacks, Latinos and Asian Americans who have been hit hard by the COVID-19 coronavirus outbreak and resultant national lockdown in the United States.

The program will allow small business entrepreneurs to register to obtain aid to meet their urgent needs. The platform will also offer access to information and educational content to help these minority-owned businesses maintain continuity in managing the economic crisis caused COVID-19 ([see story](#)).

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