

FOOD AND BEVERAGE

ReserveBar's focus on innovation, partnerships fuels growth

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ReserveBar specializes in online sales of premium, reserve spirits, luxury champagne and fine wine. Image courtesy of ReserveBar

By SARAH RAMIREZ

As premium wine and spirits sales have increasingly migrated towards ecommerce, online spirits retailer ReserveBar continues to differentiate itself with unique partnerships and an elevated customer experience.

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Founded in 2013, ReserveBar is primed for further growth, having successfully closed its Series B financing round in July. The retailer is also keeping its brand values at the forefront, announcing in August its plans to commit more than \$5 million through 2024 to its Spirited Change Initiative supporting minority and women-owned brands in the beverage alcohol sector.

"ReserveBar has earned the reputation of being not only the established ecommerce leader in luxury and premium spirits but also as the destination for special limited editions, new launches and compelling content," said Kate Zaman, vice president of partnership marketing at [ReserveBar](#), New York.

In this Q&A, Ms. Zaman discusses recent developments in the wine and spirits sector, why experiential marketing remains relevant and what is next for ReserveBar. Here is the dialogue:



Kate Zaman

With partnerships with brands as diverse as The Macallan and Epicurious, how does ReserveBar identify potential partners and the best way to collaborate with different companies?

When we pursue innovative partnerships, it's through the lens of whether the partners are innovative, on-brand and luxury or premium.

These partnerships include "content-to-commerce" partnerships content that incorporates ecommerce via our cutting-edge technology and "Ecommerce Everywhere" joint ventures, whereby ReserveBar teams up with spirits brand sites, other ecommerce sites, event partners and luxury gifting brands to allow their customers to purchase spirits, wine and Champagne through technology integrations.

How has COVID-19 impacted the wine and spirits industry, from both experiential and ecommerce standpoints? COVID-19 has increased customer awareness surrounding online purchasing taking what would have been a five year or more "awareness curve" and shrinking that into one year.

Likewise, beverage alcohol brands have learned that experiential marketing is not or should not be conceptualized in a vacuum. Rather, through the use of technology integrations, like those offered by and in connection with ReserveBar, consumers can purchase product through traditional on-premise event experiences as well as via virtual events.

Whether you are searching for your first bottle or working on expanding your palate, our latest article, The Basics of Exploring Wine, will have some useful tips for you | Visit our Cocktail Lounge for more information: <https://t.co/7WApImLbaY> pic.twitter.com/ictS3n6gYW

ReserveBar (@ReserveBar) August 20, 2021

Upscale experiences are at the core of ReserveBar

Congratulations on the recent Series B financing round. How does ReserveBar plan to use some of this funding? In general, we will be using it to scale our business. The growth that we have experienced to date has been organic, without us having accessed the private equity market previously, so this funding will be used to accelerate our scale.

Approximately a third will be spent on expanding our technology, a third on increasing our headcount especially in the realm of new business segment expansion, and a third will be allocated toward marketing.

What impact has the Spirited Change Initiative had so far? What is next for the program?

The **Spirited Change Initiative** is ReserveBar's commitment to providing greater, more equitable access to emerging spirits brands created by Black, brown and female entrepreneurs.

Like many industries, the spirits industry is dominated by white males, so as part of this initiative, ReserveBar is taking actionable steps to identify and uplift diverse communities and business owners. We provide assistance in digital marketing advice, consulting and industry networking, all without any associated fees.



Since July 2020, ReserveBar has supported 62 Spirited Change brands. Less than 5 percent of wine and spirits brands are owned by women or people of color. Image credit: ReserveBar

Through this commitment, we've received interest from emerging industry leaders, like Fawn Weaver, founder of Uncle Nearest; strategic investors such as Southern Glazer's Wine & Spirits; and celebrities and cultural movers such

as Mary J. Blige, Sean "Love" Combs, Kevin Durant and Rich Kleiman.

What are your priorities for the rest of the year, and what challenges do you expect ReserveBar and the industry to face?

ReserveBar will continue to hire great people, who are as dedicated, resourceful, smart and socially conscious like the team members we currently have. We intend to maintain our innovative leadership, and continue to make bold strategic moves, including potential acquisitions, if they opportunistically arise.

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