Women and alcohol

Contributed by BMRB
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According to TGI data, over the last twenty years the proportion of women (aged 18+) who drink alcohol has remained at a high level although it has shown a slight decline from 94% in 1998 to 87% today. However, frequency of consumption has seen a noticeable increase over the same period from 28% of female drinkers in 1988 consuming alcohol at least twice a week to todayâ€™s figures of 41% - a rise of 46%! To coincide with this, the number of female drinkers who agree that the point of drinking is to get drunk has reached an all-time high of 1.3 million, representing 6% of the female drinking population.

In relation to the categories of alcoholic drinks that women consume, bottled wine has always been the most popular alcoholic beverage for the group, with around 80% of female drinkers consuming it. Although despite an apparent stability in overall wine consumption levels, the frequency of it being consumed has seen some dramatic rises. In 1998, around a third of female wine drinkers drank at least three bottles of wine a month, today the figure is approaching 40% - with almost a million women drinking at least 10 bottles a month. Interestingly with the increased levels in frequency, there has also been a rise in overall acceptance that it is worth paying extra for quality wine â€“ 7.8 million agreeing in 2003 to 8.3 million today.

However, arguably the most significance category rise in terms of overall consumption is vodka. In 1998, a fifth of female drinkers consumed the product compared to today when approaching a third now drink it. One possible reason for this significant rise could be the widespread availability of cocktails in pubs, bars and clubs. Perhaps the perception of vodka has changed from it being traditionally viewed as a â€˜shortâ€™ to now being an integral ingredient in any cocktail or fashionable drinks concoction â€“ for example vodka is now regularly served with energy drinks. Further evidence to support this idea, is found when looking at where women consume drinks. For example when out at a nightclub, white spirits are the preferred choice for the majority of women with 16% of them agreeing they would consume them while clubbing, compared to only 7% who would choose wine. Whereas while at a pub or bar, the majority of women choose to drink wine (24%) with18% of women opting for white spirits. Interestingly, regular consumers of vodka are over three times as likely as regular wine drinkers to agree that they really enjoy going out to get drunk. Age could well be playing a factor here as regular vodka drinkers are also over three times as likely to be aged 18-24.

In relation to the number of brands women consume in each alcoholic drinks category, this is very dependent on overall levels of alcohol consumption. The women who consume the most alcohol, consume the most brands. Women who drink at least twice a week are 14% more likely than women who drink once a week to consume an average of over three brands per drinks category.

In addition to becoming increasingly important to alcoholic drinks advertisers in terms of their frequency and brand consumption, women who are regular consumers of alcohol are also the most likely women to amplify a brandâ€™s message through word of mouth. The women who have the highest levels of alcohol consumption, not only consume the most brands but also have the highest levels of amplification i.e. the more they consume, the more brands they drink, the more the product field is discussed and the more expert and persuasive that discussion becomes. Women who consume alcohol at least twice a week are 36% more likely to talk to many different people about alcoholic drinks, they are 57% more likely to know a large amount about the category and 60% more likely agree they are very likely to convince others about their opinions on the subject.

The importance of effectively influencing the influencers is extremely apparent. TGI analysis reveals that radio and cinema could possibly be the best ways to target regular female drinkers, as they are more likely to be in the heaviest 20% of consumers for both media vehicles. Although caution must be used when advertising to this group as around half of the group feel bombarded with advertising and over a quarter find it a waste of time. Although with efficient and effective targeting, they are the most valuable female group to the advertiser and getting them â€˜on boardâ€™ with your brand would pay dividends.

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