

July 2018

Thoughts and trends from Imbibe Live 2018



Introduction

Butcher & Gundersen went along to Imbibe Live 2018, the premier on-trade drinks event, to see what the industry's finest had to offer.

Here are our top six highlights...



1. Gin, Gin, Gin, Gin... Gin!

It's no secret that Gin is the nation's current favourite tipple and this year the category turned out en masse. But while it's relatively easy to make, with so many products on the market using such similar botanicals and styles, it's very difficult to differentiate at product level.

Therefore, creating a unique positioning is best derived from a brand's story and personality, with the packaging reinforcing this, as the primary touchpoint to deliver its points of difference.

Our take:

Imbibe attendees are consumers as well as trade buyers, so a brand really needs to stand out to sell its product. This requires an emotive and engaging story as well as well-designed and well-executed packaging.



2. Cross-category

This year we saw a myriad of different cross-category collaborations; from bold fusions such as *Savanna Cross*, a cider/craft-beer, to more niche product offerings like the milk vodka/confectionery collaborations from *Cool'Em*, all served from their very own milk van.

There were also interesting cross-overs in design, such as *Drumshanbo*; beautifully combining the language of Japanese whisky and the apothecary style of gin, to reflect the infusion of oriental botanicals with gunpowder tea. The 'Hibiki-esque' blue bottle and crafted label really deliver this emotive story with the necessary standout.

Our take:

Cross-category collaborations can take on many different forms, but without a strong rationale, they can become more gimmick than sales driver.



3. Non-alcoholic

The trend for low-no-ABV continues to develop at pace, with brands clearly targeting the drinking-when-you're-not-drinking consumer by leveraging design cues from premium spirits.

Surprisingly not in attendance was *Seedlip*, the brand synonymous with this growing category, but there was strong representation in the form of *Sea Arch*, *Ceders* and *Borrago*.

Our take:

Expect to see more non-alcoholic entrants over the coming months as the category expands both in the UK and globally.



4. Convenient cocktails

It's not often that convenience has influenced design strategies for alcoholic beverages (despite being a macro-trend in most other FMCG categories).

That is until now; from RTD cans and bottles to pre-mixed cocktail bar-fonts, convenient cocktails are making waves.

We have to question some of the innovations on show, especially for the on-trade, when you consider that experience should extend beyond the drink. The cocktail bar-font, for example, lacks a certain theatre that might be expected when ordering a cocktail in a high-end bar.

Our take:

Great for festivals, nightclubs and other fast-footfall retail channels, but for city-centre bars and high-end establishments, we question the relevance.



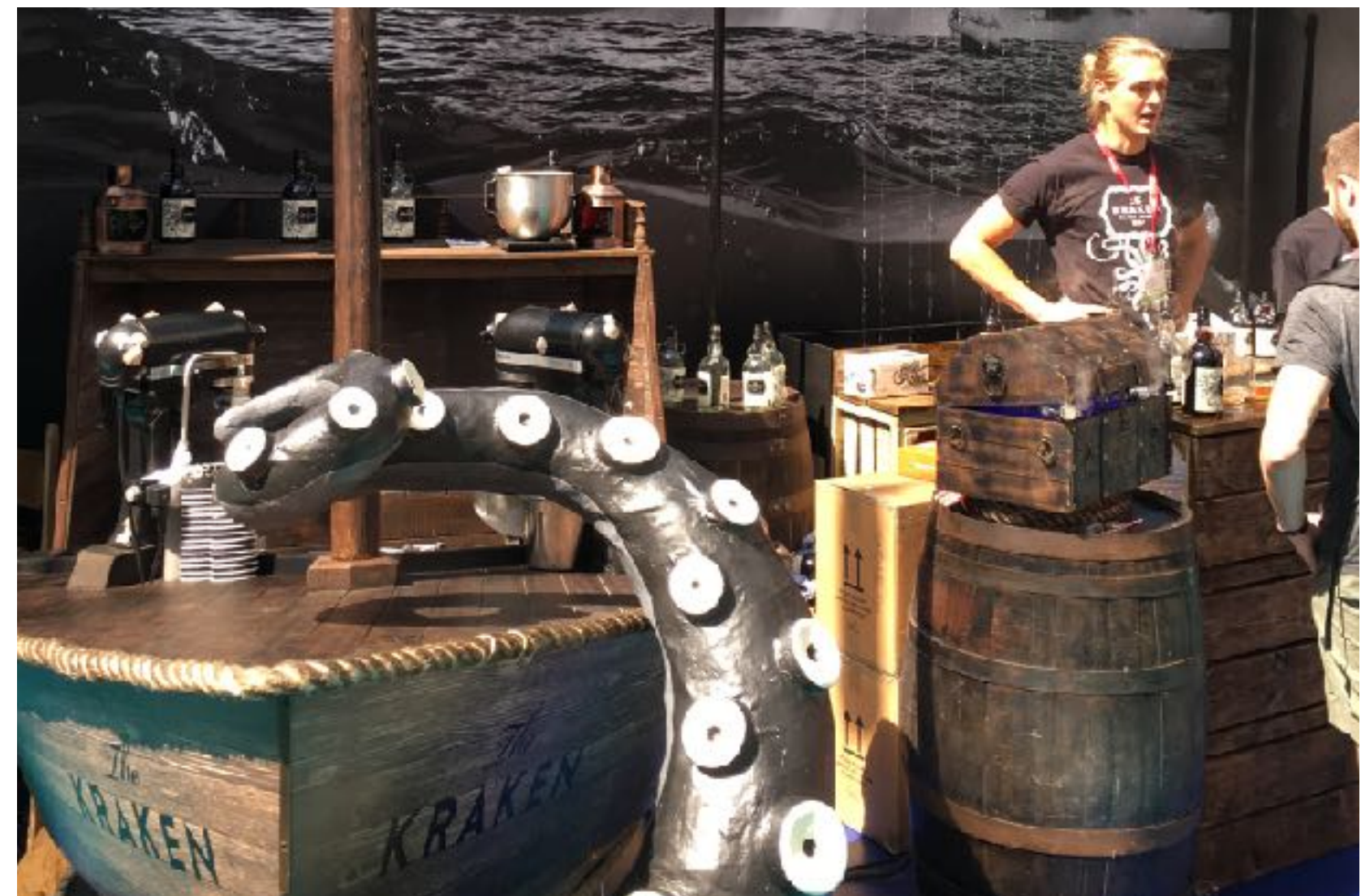
5. Innovation

Kraken spoke to versatility (e.g. cocktails). One of the busiest at the show, the unmissable tentacled bar area offered masterclasses in *Kraken*-based cocktails to deliver inspiration and education...and they certainly got us hook, line and sinker.

Having seemingly exhausted the options within the Rum category, *Kraken* have looked towards NPD innovation to keep the brand fresh; they served up their unique take on ice cream in the form of spiced rum flavoured, charcoal black scoops, as well as offering *Kraken* vaping at their aptly named 'Perfect Storm Bar'.

Our take:

Innovation is about staying current and compelling, but what to do when your brand positioning limits any attempts at innovating on liquid formulation or packaging? Look to the brand experience.



6. Provenance

Provenance is a fundamental element of many a brand story, but the trick for brand owners is to identify the right provenance story for their brand, and how to communicate it to consumers.

Penderyn use classically Welsh cues across its eye-catching range of whiskies to root it firmly in the heart of the Brecon Beacons.

Unusual ingredients and exceptional locations can be other ways to showcase provenance. *COEDO*, a premium Japanese craft brewery, could have better utilised their packaging to really push their unique provenance and positioning, but seem to have fallen short on this occasion.

Our take:

Turning provenance on its head to the result of the unexpected can be a solid strategic opportunity... Sake from Devon, anyone?



Your thoughts

Were you at Imbibe Live 2018?

We would love to hear your thoughts about the event, or any other observations you may have.

We look forward to hearing from you:

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Thank you

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