

German Beer Culture - a colourful series of images

German beer culture is such a colourful, unbelievably varied and inexhaustible series of images, emotions, personal ideas and expectations, themes – and sometimes even clichés – that it almost defies definition. Its many facets and nuances create very individual views of German beer culture; subjective approaches to this sophisticated concept influenced by personal experiences and attitudes.

Here are a few examples of what beer stands for, as perceived by the Radeberger Gruppe:

German Beer Culture: pure emotion...

Scarcely any other product in Germany is viewed as emotionally as German beer: It is the drink of the man in the street, Germany's national drink. While people in Germany accept price increases on all other goods, beer is sacred. Everything else can change – but not beer. Beer is the people's mood barometer and their anchor. It is consumed with extreme passion. Germany is the beer nation – and the Germans are justifiably proud of their great beer history and long-standing beer tradition. No other product is discussed with as much passion and emotion. German beer represents conviviality; it brings people together and forges links beyond social boundaries.

German Beer Culture: living regionality...

"Beer needs a homeland" is one of the beer industry's ancient sayings. Beer brands and varieties evolve from a specific regional mentality; from a region's individual taste preferences. A regional beer, therefore, also "tastes" of home, it has a grounding effect. And this is always the case. Yet the old motto must also be expanded upon in today's era of globalisation: "beer creates a homeland". The regional or local brand of beer often forms part of the identity of a town, community or person. Drinking a regional beer brand identifies you with your homeland, with your regional roots. This is particularly nice in major cities like Berlin, where "your" beer defines you and distinguishes you in the metropolis. Beer provides identity. Beer gives a person roots and expresses a particular attitude to life. It is for this reason that Germans nurture an especially close, emotional and passionate bond to "their" beers, the ones from their – spiritual or local – homeland.

German Beer Culture: uniquely diverse...

Germany has a broader range of beer brands and varieties than any other country. Almost 5,000 beer brands and 40 different types of beer provide the German beer enthusiast with an almost inexhaustible choice of flavours, attitudes to life and variety. A beer lover could try a different German beer every evening for almost 13 ½ years – and still not have sampled all of them. Although many self-styled market researchers predicted the imminent demise of this diversity years ago, these prophecies of doom have been belied by German beer drinkers. The Germans cling passionately to their beer diversity and actively cultivate it through their consumption habits.

German Beer Culture: perfectly kept beer...

One key aspect of living German beer culture is civilised, sophisticated catering. For many beer fans, the enjoyment of a well-looked-after, nicely-chilled, properly-stored and perfectly-drawn beer just can't be beaten. Meticulous maintenance and cleaning of bar equipment, large-scale investment in the catering trade by the breweries and – last but by no means least – training catering staff to effect the perfect presentation of the beer in the highest-quality beer glasses demonstrate that German beer culture is so much more than a hypothetical claim. It also proves that cut-price producers who don't put a penny into the demanding and risky catering industry are more interested in business than in preserving German beer culture...

German Beer Culture: passionate and vibrant...

Like cars and football, beer is a subject about which every German has something to say, something to add. Every German knows "something" about it. From old wives' tales – like the pesky beer belly, which doesn't, according to scientific evidence, actually exist –, to German breweries and their beers, the flavours of certain varieties of beer, product innovations, the emotional delineation of specific geographical areas by "their" beer types (see "Competitive conduct" Koelsch / Alt), the fast-paced change and development of the German beer market, and the attitudes to life conveyed by specific beer brands, these topics dominate many a sociable discussion over a beer and are debated and argued about in a highly emotional – and in many cases, fierce – manner. Beer is a popular topic and – in the best sense – one which is on everyone's lips...

German Beer Culture: trust and reliability - and brands...

German beer is considered to be one of the most reliable products – and not just because of the German Purity Law which specifically defines the ingredients for German beer and makes it a genuinely "pure" pleasure. Instead, beer represents consistency, continuity, a soothing presence and tradition. People have faith in "their" beer brand; they rely on being able to enjoy a certain, constant quality. They count on being able to buy their beer almost anywhere and at a certain familiar price. They place their trust in the power of their region and in the commitment of "their" brewery to this region. And they trust in the power of the brand, which stands for a distinct image, identity and attitude to life. For a clearly-defined taste. German beer culture is, therefore, also targeted brand management and consistency.

German Beer Culture: is ultimately the people who cultivate it...

German beer culture wants to be cultivated and appreciated – it wants to be celebrated. This is why those who feel committed to it are so important. These people make the difference. They are important building blocks in this model of German beer culture. What would German beer culture be without the landlord who presents his beers with love and with passion? What would it be without the master brewers who have created an unbelievable variety of beers using just four ingredients? What would German beer culture be without the commitment of consumers and breweries or groups of breweries to their region? What would it be without the highly-emotional customer who so enjoys talking and arguing about German beer – and who consumes it so passionately? And what would it be without the people who commit themselves to it day in day out? Who are constantly revitalising it – without forgetting its roots? What would it be without all the people who actively cultivate it, who are guided by it in their work and who continue to develop it in a targeted manner?

It would be soulless.

The business model of the Radeberger Gruppe: keeper of the German beer culture

All this; all these colourful, multi-faceted, personally characterised themes, standards, ideas and demands, questions – and so much more – have flowed into the unique business model of the Radeberger Gruppe. The Radeberger Gruppe sees itself as an active keeper of German beer culture, meaning that it identifies itself with the vast variety of beers on the market and is prepared to use its power, especially in competition with major global players, to preserve this variety wherever possible. This includes making an active, visible commitment to the regional autonomy of the brands and consideration for the regional mindsets which have decisively shaped and influenced these brands.

It also, however, includes a future-orientated, targeted, careful development of these brands drawing on their long traditions. This is the only way in which the successful brands of today will become the market-determining regional or national market players of tomorrow. It is also the only way in which these beer brands will be able to unleash their full potential in a highly-competitive beer market – and hold their own in the long term.

For this reason, for the Radeberger Gruppe margins are more important than mere volume: this is also living beer culture. In contrast to our competitors, we would rather cut capacity than sell it to the cheapest producers on the market, a tactic which actively destroys the German beer market's pricing structure. Sometimes German beer culture also means making tough decisions, the reasons for which become clear to the observer only upon second glance...

Unique business model

Thus the Radeberger Gruppe stands for a business model that – both in Germany and in other international beer markets – is completely unique. It epitomises a model of the "German beer culture" which will persist well into the future. It embodies a claim which demands exceptional performances from its employees, and which places totally unique challenges at the feet of everyone involved.

In this business model, all employees must contribute to injecting this unique business model with life – and this applies to all areas of our work. That it applies to our interaction with Radeberger Gruppe customers goes without saying. We must, however, ensure that we also apply the requirements of German beer culture to our interaction with our suppliers and business partners. Obviously this sublime standard should also apply "internally": when dealing with members of staff, in cooperation within a department, and in interaction between different departments and different sites. "German beer culture", therefore, is also a kind of company philosophy, a code of practice for both external and internal cooperation with and for one another. A beautiful, and yet difficult and extremely complex orientation for every member of the Radeberger Gruppe family...