



New Belgium Brewing Co

Competitive Analysis Report

New Belgium Brewing Company

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1. Executive Summary

In this report, I have conducted a complete brand analysis of the New Belgium Brewing Company's social media channels. In an age where online customer conversations can construct entire PR campaigns, it is of great importance to know what's being said about a brand over social media. This report identifies the positive feedback consumers are giving New Belgium's products as well as the questions and concerns being voiced over social media.

Another component of this report is a thorough competitive analysis. I have compared New Belgium's social media outreach to that of the top two most successful craft beer companies in American (New Belgium Brewing Company being the third). Through the use of tag clouds, screenshots, and pie charts, I have assigned numeric values and visual aids to determine how New Belgium well is competing over social media.

1.2.Brand Profile

New Belgium Brewing Company is an American brewery that operates in Fort Collins, Colorado. The organization was started in 1998 by Jeff Lebesch, an electrical engineer with a hobby of brewing beer¹. Over the past 14 years, the company has seen great success—particularly with the creation of the company's best selling beer, Fat Tire Ale. The company operates with a “open book transparency,” to encourage a trusting work atmosphere. The New Belgium Brewing Company purpose statement reads:

“To operate a profitable brewery which makes our love and talent manifest.”

The tag cloud below showcases some of the key words that are being said about New Belgium Brewing Company over social media.






¹ newbelgium.com/culture/our-story.aspx

1.2. Flagship Beer: Fat Tire Ale

As shown in the tag cloud, New Belgium's most often mentioned during discussions of one of their most popular beers, Fat Tire Ale. Fat Tire is an amber ale, with a distinct label bearing a picture of a bicycle. This product is a special asset to New Belgium for several reasons. Aside from being their best selling product and flagship beer, Fat Tire Ale—as well as other New Belgium beers—is sought out for its exclusive distribution. New Belgium does not currently distribute its products nationwide. Because of this limited distribution, New Belgium is often publicized when their products are made available in new states.

2. Brand Analysis

New Belgium Brewing Company has a very loyal consumer audience. Craft beer patrons tend to be more passionate about their beers of choice, and they also tend to be more respectful of the process behind making beer. These are the customers that New Belgium needs to consistently engage with on Facebook and Twitter to show their appreciation to their supporters. Here are some examples of positive discussion circulating New Belgium Brewing Company over Twitter. These examples come from Twitter users with follower counts in the thousands.

 foodsho Mark Moreno New Belgium Brewing's Tour de Fat Raises More Than \$500,000 for Nonprofit Organizations: ... bit.ly/YMoufy via @RMGTmagazine Nov 7 7:03pm ☆ Favorite ↺ Retweet ↻ Reply <button>Delete</button>	<table border="1"><tbody><tr><td>Following</td><td>3276</td></tr><tr><td>Followers</td><td>3018</td></tr><tr><td>Updates</td><td>31079</td></tr><tr><td>Sentiment (?)</td><td></td></tr></tbody></table>	Following	3276	Followers	3018	Updates	31079	Sentiment (?)	
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2.1. Customer Questions & Concerns

The overwhelming majority of social media conversations pertaining to New Belgium is positive; however, patrons often ask New Belgium via Twitter about their exclusive distribution. Customers who live in states that New Belgium does not yet distribute to will often complain or ask why their products are not available where they live. The following screenshots exemplify the questions and concerns of New Belgium patrons.



3. Competitor Profiles

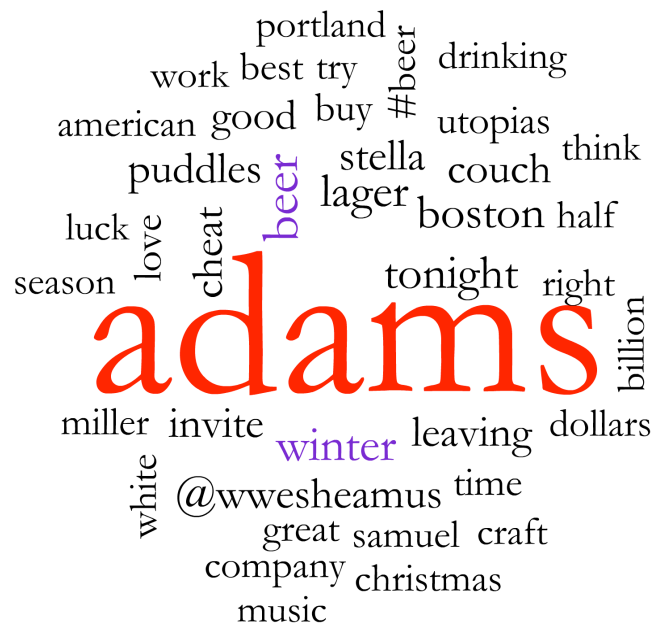
I have chosen two similar brewing companies to analyze and compare to New Belgium. I chose these competitors after careful consideration of annual profits, distribution, and relative popularity. I learned quickly that I would need to compare New Belgium to other craft brewers rather than larger, domestic breweries.

A useful resource in choosing which competitors to analyze came from a report published by the Brewer's Association², which is an organization that comprises 1,500 American breweries. This organization published a list of the most successful craft brewing companies of 2011 based on each company's beer sales volume. The top three companies were Boston Beer Company, Sierra Nevada Brewing Company, and my brand, New Belgium Brewing Company. As I began to research these top two brands further, I noticed some differences, but similar digital audiences, discussions, and influential topics.

² <http://www.brewersassociation.org/pages/media/press-releases/show?title=brewers-association-releases-2010-top-50-breweries-lists>

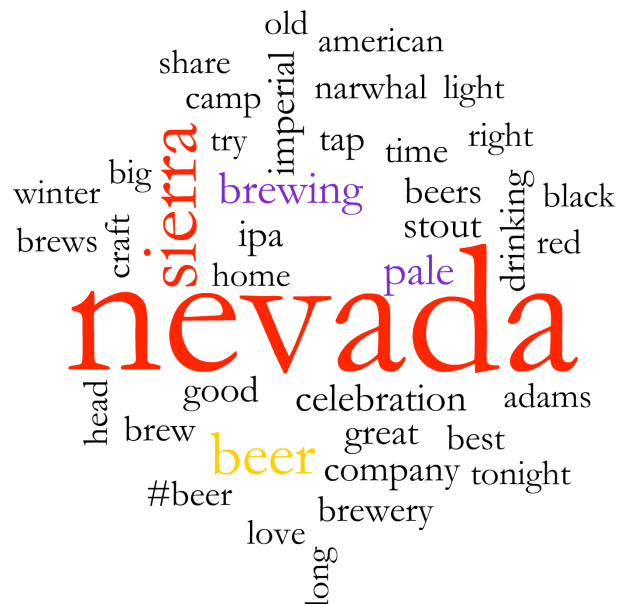
3.1. Boston Beer Company

This company was ranked number one on the list of the most successful craft brewing companies of 2011. The company is better known under the name of its most successful line of beers, Samuel Adams. This company has an annual revenue of over \$500 million, with an production output of 2.5 million barrels annually.



3.2 Sierra Nevada Brewing Company

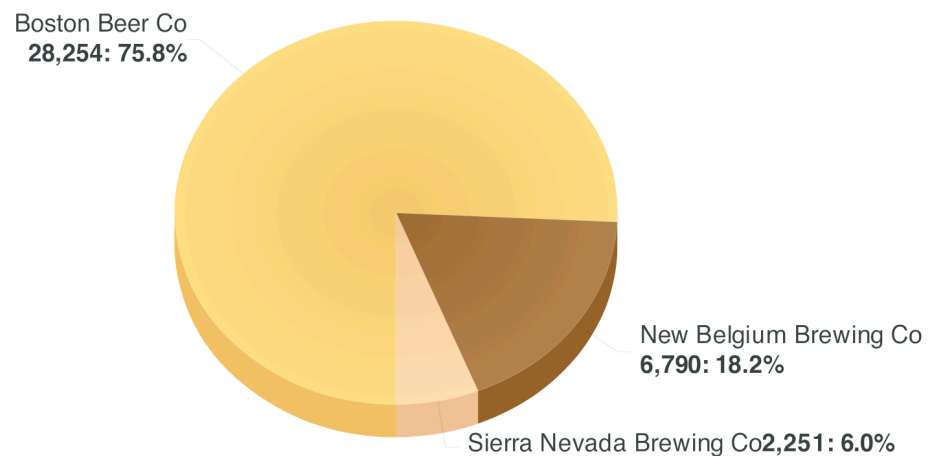
Sierra Nevada is the number two most profitable craft brewing company in America. Their flagship beer is the Sierra Nevada Pale Ale.



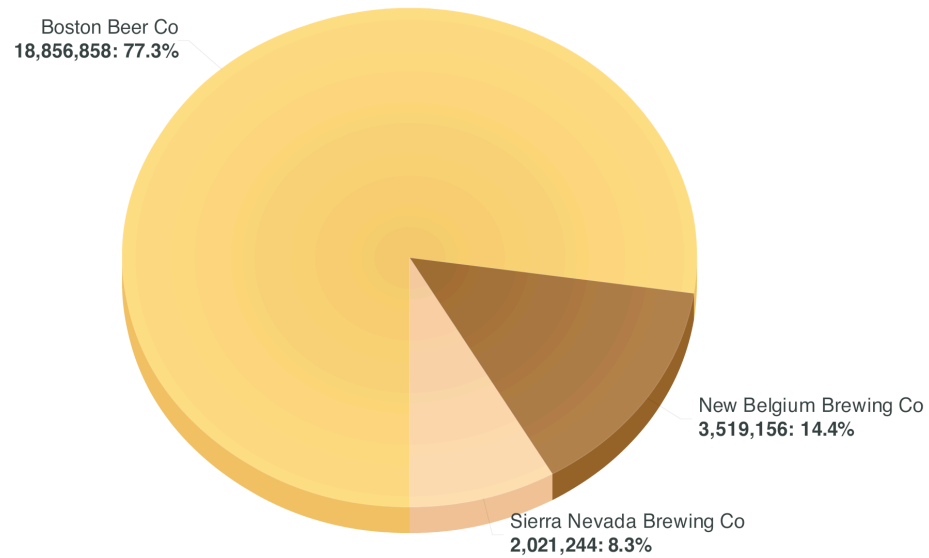
4. Comparative Analysis

The most comprehensive listening tool used in this analysis to compare Boston Beer Company and Sierra Nevada Brewing Company to New Belgium was Radan6. Using this program, the following charts were generated as a way of measuring each company's social media presence.

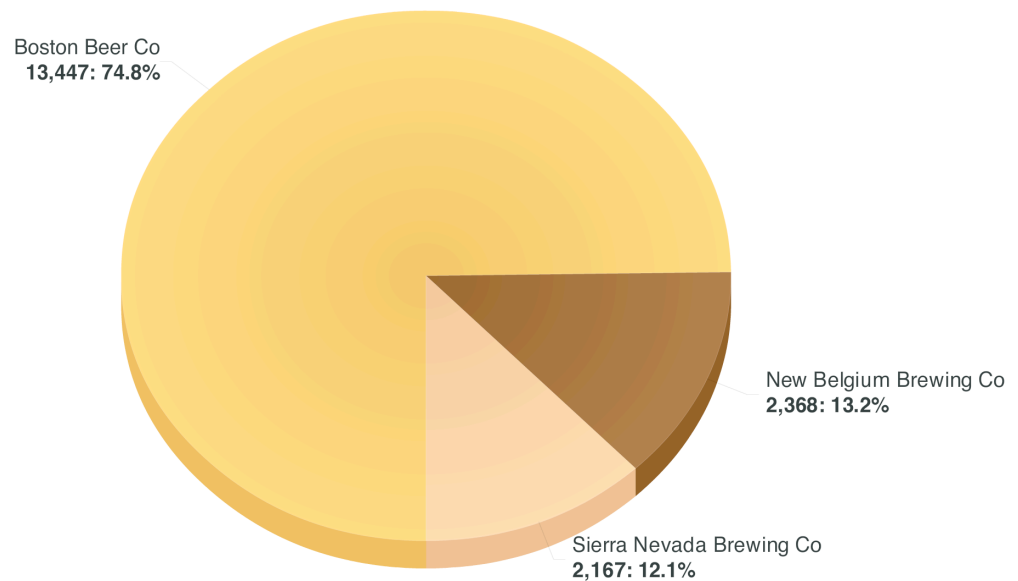
4.1. Total Number of Posts



4.2. Twitter Followers



4.3. Total Likes and Votes



4.4 Data Analysis

Based on the charts from section 4.1., it is clear that Boston Beer Company has highest social media following and influence, with significantly a higher number of posts, Twitter followers, and Facebook likes. However, while Sierra Nevada has higher annual sales than New Belgium, Sierra Nevada scored lower than New Belgium in each area measured in this report: total posts, twitter followers, and total Facebook likes.

5. SWOT Analysis

5.1 Strengths

- **Loyal audience:** Conversations surrounding New Belgium over social media channels are overwhelmingly positive.
- **Twitter:** The staff in charge of operating New Belgium's Twitter account is doing great work. They are responsive and informative. There is true audience engagement happening over New Belgium's Twitter.
- **Continuous expansion:** New Belgium is growing in sales each year. From 2005 to 2012, the company has nearly doubled their numbers of barrel output per year.

5.2 Weaknesses

- **Lack of distribution:** The company has not made their products available in every state. This accounts for the majority of questions and concerns on Twitter and Facebook.

5.3 Opportunities

- **Additional locations:** As New Belgium continues to expand, it would be advantageous to open an additional brewery on the east coast. Sierra Nevada Brewing company expanded in this way and has made their product available to many more consumers.
- **International sales:** If New Belgium opened up an additional brewery on the east coast, this would make less ground to cover for international distribution. I noticed tweets from Europe, Asia, and even Australia asking if Fat Tire would ever be available overseas. The demand is there.

5.4 Threats

- **Product Quality:** While New Belgium's products are met with outstanding positive feedback, I did see tweets where customers questioned if they were drinking a bad batch of beer (claiming the quality of beer was poor). This can be deadly to a craft beer company where product quality and consistency is everything.

- **Competition:** There is a lot of competition for craft breweries in America, nearly 2,000 different breweries distribute their own line of beers. New Belgium holds the number three spot right now, which is outstanding; however, without continual expansion of distribution and breweries, the brand is sure to move down on that list.

6. Recommendations

New Belgium has a customer base that is very fond of their product. Rarely do they deal with issues such as poor customer service, spoiled products, or other issues that other retailers may experience complaints about over social media. What New Belgium needs to do is to continue to treat their customers with respect and admiration. As I have stated before, most people who are drinking their beer are people who take the time to appreciate the quality of the product, as well as what it takes to make craft beer.

I also recommend that New Belgium continue their efforts to minimize their carbon footprint, and connect with other environmentally friendly organizations. This is a very good ethos appeal for the organization. Sierra Nevada has made a very powerful name for themselves as a leader in eco-friendly practices.

7. Methods and Keywords

In this report, the main listening tool I used to monitor each brand's social media efforts was Radan6. This program was incredibly useful as a one-stop-shop where information from the major social networks was pooled together into one place, and exported through charts. I also used Twitter to capture screenshots of specific tweets that weren't showing up over Radan6.

In order to establish consistency with with Radian6, I used the same criteria for each brand's search. I would choose two to three variations of the brand name, followed by the flagstaff beer for each brand. Also, I set the variation level of the search results to the half way point; that way even if the searches were not an exact match to the keyword, it would still pick up results.

New Belgium: "New Belgium Brew" + "New Belgium Brewing" + "New Belgium Beer" + "Fat Tire Ale"

Boston Beer: "Boston Beer" + "Boston Beer Company" + "Sam Adams" + "Samuel Adams"

Sierra Nevada: "Sierra Nevada Beer" + "Sierra Nevada Brewing" + "Sierra Nevada Pale Ale" + "Sierra Nevada Indian Pale Ale"

