

The Value of a Flight

By Andrew Coplon, Secret Hopper

Mid-pandemic, I visited my local brewery and was served my beer in a glass. Why is this important? For most of the past year, many of you served your beer in plastic due to the pandemic. It initially caught me off guard to hold a glass, in public, in my hands, and then it hit me. That simple feeling was providing me a dose of normalcy that I hadn't felt in so long. All because of a simple glass. The point of this?

Every touch point matters. The more engaged you and your staff are, the more memorable the experience, the more your guest will spend, the more they'll tip, the more likely they will recommend it to others, the more likely they'll return sooner.

Through most of the past 16 months, breweries kept service simpler and got rid of things like the (dreaded?) sample and flights. The goal was to reduce contact, increase speed of service, and simply make as much as you could to get through these weird times.

As the world starts to get ready for the new-new normal, you may ask yourself, should I bring flights back? The answer? As soon as you feel comfortable with it, yes.

Why?

Guests spend 25% more on visits when your staff suggests a flight. Let that sink in. This equates to an additional \$10.17 per visit.

First, all data used in this study (a total of 5711 unique brewery visits) references pre-COVID data.

Guests are suggested to start with a flight on 35% of brewery visits. When guests are encouraged to begin with a flight, they spend an average of \$50.05, vs \$39.88 when not suggested.

When a guest is visiting a taproom for the first time, we see that they are asked to begin with a flight on 38% of visits, slightly higher than the average. A guest who has visited a taproom before is asked to begin with a flight on 32% of visits. The increase in encouraging flights to new people can be attributed to the staff not recognizing the guest, and thus wanting to best introduce them to their brewery's beers via a flight. The conversation on whether to encourage flights to regulars can be saved for another article.

The logic behind this data? There is a twofold answer to this that involves both your beer and your experience. A guest who is able to find the right beer for them will spend more money.

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Think about going to a brewery for the first time, ordering a pint of something that you don't particularly enjoy. Are you motivated to order a second of the same or to take a stab at something else? How about the time you visit another brewery, begin with a flight, and your mind is blown by that Belgian Dubbel? You bet I'm going to order a pint of it.

The second component to flights triggering a bigger spend is based on engagement. When a guest orders a flight, this represents a huge educational opportunity for you to swoop in and teach that person about your brewery. This is your chance to not only help them find what they enjoy most, but to go above and beyond.

Let's walk through the flight process – this ties directly to our [30 Second Conversation](#) formula for maximizing engagement during even the shortest encounters.

1. **Have you visited before?** If you don't recognize a guest, begin your encounter by asking "have you visited before?" A "no" answer most likely means they haven't tried most of your beers, at least in the taproom. This person could be a prime contender for a flight.
2. **Offer guidance.** This can include "What's your favorite style of beer?" "Looking for anything in particular?" "What do you typically drink?" This is your opportunity to get to know a little bit about your guest's tastes. A flight may be the best option to introduce them to more of your beers. Suggest it!
3. **The delivery.** Don't just simply sling a wood board with a few tasters at the guest. Announce to them what they are being served. Let your guest know the order in which their selections have been arranged. "Here's your flight. It goes left to right, starting with our lager, IPA, Belgian Dubbel, then stout." If they don't know what they like best, they'll have trouble ordering it again.
4. **Education.** Now is when you can go above and beyond. Teach the guest about each beer. "Our brewmaster modeled this saison after those he tried while backpacking around Europe." "This pale ale uses 100% Virginia grown ingredients." "We brewed this beer to raise money for fighting sexual harassment in craft beer." Educate on both the beers being served and the story of your brewery. Let your passion shine through and leave the guest not only enjoying the beer, but also feeling like they learned something.

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While there may be certain factors about your service model that make serving a flight less than ideal, in situations where it is possible there is both financial and relationship value in doing so. Busy Saturday afternoon with a line at the bar? Perhaps offer pre-determined flights featuring your flagships or most popular offerings to quicken the decision-making process. Bringing in an extra employee to help with prepping the flights could also be beneficial. The extra value from these tabs could easily cover the added labor cost.

To close, I'd like to go back to the value of flights for first-time guests to reinforce the bottom line value to the business. The first-time guest who is encouraged to start with a flight spends \$50.40, vs \$41.35 when not suggested. We're in the relationship business. Take the time to invest in your guests and benefit your business at the same time.

And one last thing, when a guest is encouraged to start with a flight their average tip is 32% higher (\$9.41 vs \$7.12). Guests are willing to spend more when they feel connected. This will help your servers feel a little less persecuted.

Actual Data:

	Flight Suggested by Server	Flight Not Suggested by server	Flight Suggested Guest Spend (\$\$)	Flight Not Suggested Guest Spend (\$\$)
First Time	38.44%	61.56%	\$50.40	\$41.35
Visited Prior	31.79%	68.21%	\$49.69	\$38.74
			1.43%	6.31%

This research was collected through Secret Hopper, based on 5711 non-paid brewery visits, studying spending trends among men and women across various age ranges. The average brewery tab studied includes 1.95 guests. The sample set includes nearly a 50/50 mix of men/women.



Contributing Author

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Andrew Coplon is the Founder of Secret Hopper and Craft Beer Professionals. He is passionate about the growth of beer and helping businesses be more successful.