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From Brewery to Brand: Learnings from Inside a Craft Beverage Business

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The LB Brewers immersion in Goa gave the cohort a working view of what it actually takes to build a craft beverage brand in India, from the science of brewing and the mechanics of a working plant to distribution, regulation and brand-building. Sessions with the brewing team, Plant Head Dhawal, marketing lead Sarika and co-founder Ishan Varshnei traced the full journey of a beverage - from raw ingredients and fermentation to a bottle on a shelf and a category in a consumer's mind.

Key Learnings

- Product before marketing: a strong product has to come before strong marketing. LBB was built around perfecting the liquid first and understanding it deeply, then building the brand around it - marketing can create awareness, but the product has to be good enough for people to come back.
- Scaling manufacturing is a balancing act: brewing capacity, fermentation tanks, bottling and canning speed, cleaning cycles, storage and dispatch all have to grow together. Strengthening only one part can simply create a new bottleneck elsewhere.
- Brewing is a precise, engineered science: fermentation converts sugars into alcohol over roughly 14 days, different yeast strains behave differently (some settle at the bottom, ale yeast settles at the top), and different beer styles are routed through different filtration paths, using a plate-and-frame system, before bottling.
- New categories require patient consumer education: Borécha's growth from a handful of cases to thousands showed how much sampling, explaining and repeated shelf visibility a genuinely new product category like kombucha needs before consumers even understand what it is.
- Distribution is earned one outlet at a time: demand is first created at a few outlets, a distributor's confidence is built, and wider expansion follows only after that trust is established.
- Regulation shapes the business as much as production does: finished alcohol moves into a bonded warehouse regulated by Goa's Excise Department, where a government Excise Officer verifies stock

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before any shipment - including a Transportation Permit and duties for interstate movement - before it can leave the facility.

- Competition can grow a category instead of shrinking it: more brands can mean more consumer awareness, more exposure to the product, and pressure on every player to keep improving quality.
- Sustainability is built into daily operations: an in-house Effluent Treatment Plant converts operational waste into water reused for farming, and solid organic waste is repurposed as cattle feed.

Most Valuable Insights

The most valuable insight of the day came from Ishan Varshnei, who described the ability to learn as an entrepreneur's most important skill. A founder does not need to know everything on day one, but needs to learn enough about every part of the business - product, operations, distribution, compliance - to ask the right questions, understand the advice being given, and solve problems as they arise. It reframed entrepreneurship as less about arriving with the perfect idea or existing expertise, and more about the discipline of continuously learning and adapting.

The second insight came out of the plant tour itself: how much of a beverage business runs on regulatory discipline rather than production alone. Every case of alcohol leaving the facility passes through an Excise Officer's verification, with dedicated documentation for interstate movement and duties accounted for before dispatch. It was a reminder that running a beverage business in India means running a compliance-heavy operation just as much as a manufacturing one.

Practical Applications

- Treat product, marketing, operations and distribution as one connected journey rather than separate functions - understand a product's complete path from raw material to shelf before trying to scale any single part of it.
- When testing a new or unfamiliar product category, budget as much effort for consumer education as for the product itself; sampling and repeated exposure often matter as much as product quality in the early stages.
- Build distribution trust incrementally - prove demand at a small number of outlets before asking distributors and retailers to back a wider rollout.

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- In a regulated industry, learn the compliance and documentation process early. It will shape how quickly, and where, a business can actually scale.

Speaker and Session Highlights

Harshal, Brewing Team

Harshal walked the cohort through the complete brewing process, from ingredient selection and yeast behaviour to fermentation, filtration and bottling, showing how the same basic process is adapted to produce different beer styles and alcohol strengths.

Dhawal, Plant Head

Dhawal introduced kombucha as a fermented tea beverage made using a SCOBY (Symbiotic Culture of Bacteria and Yeast), explaining how yeast converts sugar into alcohol and bacteria convert that alcohol into acetic acid, giving kombucha its characteristic acidity and probiotic properties.

Sarika, Marketing

Sarika gave a practical, ground-level view of building a new beverage category, covering door-to-door selling, consumer education, SKU design for different consumer needs, and the sustained work of keeping a product visible and available.

Ishan Varshnei, Co-founder

Ishan tied the day together with an open conversation on passion, product quality, distribution, competition, building an asset-heavy business and the changing role of a founder as a company scales - returning throughout to the idea that a founder's most valuable asset is the ability to keep learning.

Emerging Themes

- Product quality as the real foundation of a brand, with marketing built around it rather than in place of it.
- Scaling as a coordination problem across many linked systems, not a single lever to pull.
- Category creation as an exercise in patient, repeated consumer education.

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- Regulation and compliance as a core operating discipline in the alcohol industry, not a background formality.
- Distribution as something earned incrementally, outlet by outlet.
- Learning, more than expertise, as the entrepreneur's core skill.

Closing Reflection

The LB Brewers immersion showed the cohort that a beverage brand is built long before it reaches a shelf - in fermentation tanks, filtration lines, excise paperwork and the daily discipline of proving a product's worth one outlet, one customer, one conversation at a time. Going from brewery to brand, the day made clear, is less about a single big idea and more about a founder's willingness to keep learning at every stage of the journey.