

OPEN Up to Cans



Open Up to Cans Research White Paper

*Research confirms significant consumer preferences
for aluminum beverage containers.*

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In today's beverage market, packaging is more important than ever. Shipping and storage costs, innovation and branding, sustainability and taste—all must be carefully considered by brand owners when choosing package materials. Can manufacturers believe that the aluminum can delivers the most advantages for beverage containers, and it turns out that consumers agree.

Consumer Research

The Can Manufacturers Institute (CMI) is the national trade association of the metal can manufacturing industry and its suppliers in the United States. Early in 2015, CMI commissioned consumer research to determine preferences and perceptions of beverage packages. Research included both qualitative and quantitative methods using representative samples of adults. The findings confirm and provide insight into the aluminum can's status as the leading beverage container in the key areas of taste and product integrity, innovation, performance and sustainability.

Research was conducted by **FoodMinds**, a Chicago-based food and nutrition consulting company. The research focused on three primary perspectives of the can-drinking experience: 1) sensory, 2) personality and 3) need state—the inner and outer triggers that influence an individual's purchase or usage decision. Research was conducted as follows:

- 1. Sensory.** This portion of the study evaluated the sensory perceptions and overall preference for beer, soft drinks and ready-to-drink (RTD) tea from glass bottles and aluminum cans. Drinks were tasted from neutral sample cups as well as directly from the containers. The sensory study was conducted at a central location, and included 195 beverage consumers.
- 2. Need State.** Based on an online survey of a representative sample of U.S. adults (1,152 individuals, aged 18 and over), this part of the study investigated the use of cans, plastic bottles and glass bottles for 16 alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages. Consumer preferences were sought to identify the relationship between beverage packaging and need states/usage occasions.
- 3. Personality.** The study supports the hypothesis that the look, feel and interaction that consumers have with canned packaging contributes to a rich drinking experience and brand relationship. The research also defined category profiles to characterize the physical and emotional benefits that consumers have with their favorite canned beverages. For the investigation of personality, a research panel of 25. The research panel completed visual metaphor exercises designed to unlock the full character of their relationship and experiences with their brand of canned beverage. Additionally, respondents worked through projective questions and exercises that spurred retrieval of thoughtful and creative descriptions of their experiences with their favorite canned drinks.

From these three distinctive pieces of research, numerous proof points emerged in which aluminum cans were the preferred beverage container. This data can be organized into four categories, which encompass all the attributes of a superior beverage package: **taste, innovation, performance and sustainability.**

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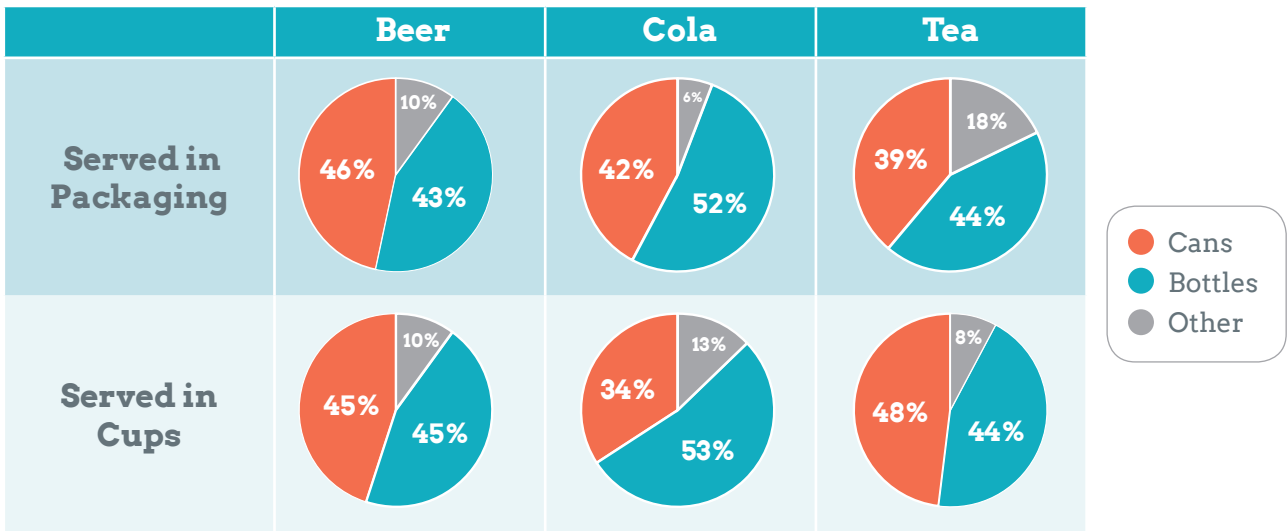
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Taste.

For any beverage, taste is the primary attribute on which it will be judged. It follows that a large portion of the research focused on consumer perceptions and preferences regarding taste.

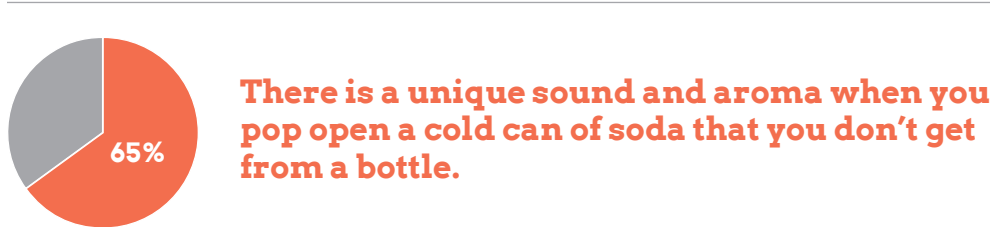
The results confirmed that, as a beverage package, cans contribute unique sensory characteristics to the drinking experience while protecting the flavor and carbonation of the beverage, guaranteeing consumers have a high-quality drinking experience. In addition, whether consumed from a sample cup or directly from the can or bottle, drinks were equally preferred.



For consumers, the container type plays an important role in their beverage choice. In fact, among frequent consumers of canned drinks, 74 percent say that the container plays a “very” or “extremely important” role when they choose their beverage. That’s because cans do more than act as a neutral vessel for the beverage. Consumers believe that cans actually enhance the taste experience. Relative to a plastic bottle, 69 percent of consumers said that a chilled beverage can feels colder and more refreshing.

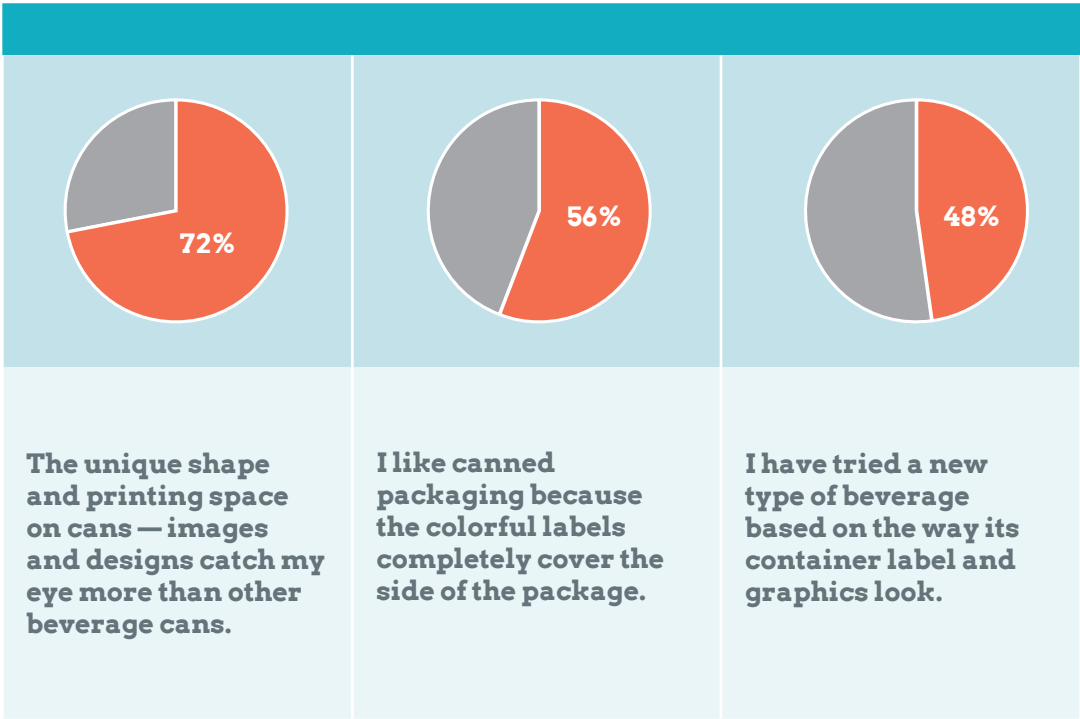
This preference holds true for consumers of canned soda, tea and beer alike—including craft beer, a category in which taste attributes are particularly valued and scrutinized. These discriminating consumers say that for craft beer, cans protect the unique, cold, fresh, crisp flavors and carbonation that they prize. In addition, 85 percent of craft beer consumers agree that cans effectively block out the damaging effects of light, helping to preserve flavor.

Soda drinkers also believe that cans protect the taste experience. Consumers feel that the integrity of the can protects soda’s carbonated bubbles—a primary element of the soda sensory experience.



Innovation.

The research revealed a key finding: the 360° graphics on cans sell brands. Because cans offer a wrap-around canvas, every inch is available for eye-catching visuals. Cans deliver a unique branding experience that the consumer appreciates, encouraging them to step outside of their comfort zone to try something new based on graphics alone. In fact, 48 percent of consumers say they have tried a new type of beverage purely based on the look of its container label and graphics.



“With the unique shape and printing space on cans, images and designs are more eye-catching than other beverage containers.”



Performance.

For consumers, cracking open a can signals a transformation. Relative to plastic bottles, cans more effectively signal a cold refreshing drinking experience. One study participant stated, “The sound of opening a can...the hisses and crackles when you flip the tab...it’s a release of energy.”

With their portability, cans perform best for consumers looking to satisfy social need states—laid-back social occasions like tailgating or barbecues—as well as emotional and physical need states like the desire to fit in or be more alert.

Need State	Cans	Bottles
Comfort/Looks & feels familiar	40%	Glass 29%
Tailgating	38%	Plastic 26%
BBQ/Picnic	36%	Plastic 30%
Spending time at a friend’s house	32%	Glass 27%

Research also showed that cans facilitate daily consumption. In categories where cans dominate, and even in categories where cans are not the most frequently consumed container, cans tend to be consumed more often by frequent daily users. For example, in the all-important soft drink category, 29 percent of daily consumers chose cans, compared to 25 percent for plastic bottles. Similar preferences were shown across the domestic beer, craft beer, ready to drink tea and malt beverage categories.

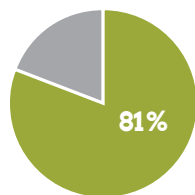
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Sustainability.

Time and again, the research showed that the sustainability of beverage packages is important to study participants. Aluminum cans are infinitely recyclable—something no other beverage package can claim. This fact makes cans the most sustainable choice for a large percentage of consumers.



The infinite recyclability of cans matters to me

More specifically, aluminum cans are preferred over both glass and plastic in terms of recyclability and low environmental impact.

	Cans	Bottles
Easy to recycle	47%	Plastic 23%
Made of recycled material	35%	Plastic 27%
Lowest environmental impact	30%	Glass 26%

With their easy recyclability, cans make consumers feel good about doing something positive for the environment.



Conclusion.

Based on the 2015 research commissioned by CMI and conducted by FoodMinds, the aluminum can offers a superior beverage container in the areas most valued by consumers. For the key attributes of taste and product integrity, innovation, performance and sustainability, nothing beats the aluminum can.

For additional information, visit smartcansolutions.com. If you would like copies of the full research documents or would like to learn more, email openuptocans@cancentral.com.

Can Manufacturers Institute (CMI)

CMI is the national trade association of the metal can manufacturing industry and its suppliers in the United States. The can industry accounts for the annual domestic production of approximately 124 billion food, beverage and other metal cans; which employs more than 28,000 people with plants in 33 states, Puerto Rico and American Samoa; and generates about \$17.8 billion in direct economic activity. Its members are committed to providing safe, nutritious and refreshing canned food and beverages to consumers.



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