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Change in Trend of Women Patronizing Bar/Pub in Mumbai

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Abstract: *This research paper reviews the acceptance of Women visiting Pubs and is based on a dramatic change in women consuming alcohol socially as a whole. The aim of this study is to find out what factors affect the women regarding their changed attitude towards consuming alcohol socially from the 80's to the present, i.e. in the 3rd decade of new millennia and to understand the possible reasons behind it. This paper also attempts to understand in stages how people in the society have changed their views on women consuming alcohol socially.*

From the questionnaire and subsequent interviews it was found that there is an increased acceptance amongst middle & upper classes in Mumbai with regards to women visiting the Pubs/Bar. Few responses also hint that the Alcoholic Beverage consumption amongst women was always a part of social life but in the closed doors during family get-togethers and even the heterosocial man of today has accepted and is fine with his spouse or adult daughter consuming alcohol within limit.

Keywords: *Girls' Night Out, Alcohol, Women, Socially, Drinking, Consumption, Beverage, Men, Society, Pubs and Bar, Mumbai.*

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I. INTRODUCTION

India, Hindustan, Bharatvarsh, Aryavrat – a land where goddesses are worshipped in all forms, where the tradition of “Swayamvar” prevailed; when most of the world was not even civilised. Yet today, if we have to discuss about Women consuming Alcohol in public, it would raise a lot of eyebrows. As per my previous research work ‘*Drinking Sensibly: A philosophical perspective on consumption of Alcohol*’, we discussed the harmful & beneficial effect of Alcohol, the role that it plays in our society and the importance of self-discipline while indulging in Drinking Alcohol. We observed that there is scope on research addressing the issue of Women consuming Alcohol in public and whether it is an accepted norm in our society or the society has still to come in terms with it. On the other side, the Western countries appear to have accepted this trend since early twentieth century. Women did have their own struggles there ranging from right to education, right to vote to a seat in places that were always considered to be Gentlemen’s prerogative.

Indian women started adapting this supposedly western culture since 1980’s, but the view of society on women consuming alcohol socially is still divided. This trend owes its growth to the increase in working women and their changing role in the society from being a Housewife / Homemaker to working in all the fields which were male dominated and being an entrepreneur.

Art reflects reality, and in India (especially in metropolitan cities), the changing trend in societies are shown in movies. In reflection, this trend has become a popular culture over a period of time. One may attribute this to Bollywood Movies of early 80’s for highlighting the trend where Women were shown visiting Discotheques. However, in reality only the elite women patronized such Beverage outlets.

The *Taj Mahal Palace Hotel* in Mumbai was home to India’s first nightclub, *Blow Up* that opened in the late 1960s.

Bar Patola in Mukherjee Nagar, New Delhi is touted to be India’s first women’s only bar. This two-storeyed pub has the ground floor dedicated to women with a special women’s only bar, which has chiller vibes, tasty food and good drinks. ‘*No more stags, no more men gawking at you while you’re chilling and being yourself, here’s a bar that’s going to let all girls let loose without fear of judgement!*’ is how they are marketing their outlet. In Mumbai, there are a few high-end Pubs like

- 1) *London Taxi* - Kamala Mills, Lower Parel.
- 2) *Rodeo Drive* - Marol Village, 13, Andheri-Kurla Rd.
- 3) *Glocal Junction* - New Link Road, Andheri Lokhandwala
- 4) *Mitron-Peninsula Grand* - Lokmanya Tilak Nagar, Andheri East
- 5) *Moonshine Café & Bar* - Fun Republic Mall, Andheri West
- 6) *Hitchki* - BKC, Bandra East
- 7) *Butterfly High* - BKC, Bandra East

and a few others that do offer 'Ladies Night Out' on a particular evening.

The purpose of this research however, is to review the change in trend of Women in Mumbai Patronizing Bar/Pub from early 80's and New Millennium.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

- 1) (*Ginny Graver 2019*): Through this article we understand Alcohol Abuse and Pro-Alcoholism culture in the United States. Women in U.S.A. have increased their drinking habits more often due to personal reasons and lack of support by family; and while drinking for relaxation women didn't even realize that they had increased their drinking habit and were getting addicted to it. From 2001 to 2013, the prevalence of alcohol use among women in the U.S. raised to nearly 16%. During this period, the percentage of women who have had four or more drinks on a given day on a weekly basis shot up to 58 percent. Between their career and financial pressures, the need of kids and senior parents, adjusting to empty nests and aging bodies, life can feel like a high-wire act, and sipping something smooth can ease the strain - hence the indulgence.
- 2) (*Liana Fattore, Miraim Melis 2016*): In this research work, the author tried to analyse reasons for gender disparity in alcohol consumption from a socialist's point of view, historical background and development of Ladette* culture in Europe. The researcher observes that females do not consume alcohol on a daily basis, but when they do, it is quite heavy as compared to their male counterpart and it also states that women drink emotionally. Usually, females have lesser tendency to consume alcohol but their intake most of the times is heavy and is linked with more damaging effects than the males. However, recently an increase in female alcohol consumption is observed in most societies and cultures. This work also clarifies the distinction between "gender" and "sex" used interchangeably in most of the researches so far. "Sex" is a biological characteristic while "gender" refers to the adaptation of social, cultural and behavioural attributes by an individual hence the reference "female gender" in this research.
- 3) (*Arsalan Moinuddin, Ashish Goel, Sukhmani Saini, Ashutosh Bajpai & Rajesh Misra 2016*): This article reviews the changing trends of alcohol consumption from a gender point of view. Up until now, a consistent rise is seen in alcohol consumption amongst women but overall alcohol consumption is greater in males than that in females. But recently an increase in female alcohol consumption is observed in most societies and culture. The striking difference between the trends in Europe and Asia is perhaps the inferior surveillance system, a difference in culture and tradition, education, and female entry into the workforce. Women by far are more likely to be affected from alcohol abuse owing to the biological and sociocultural factors. The article summarizes the findings of some recent studies about alcohol consumption and emphasizes the necessity to combat this trend of emerging female alcohol consumption that the authors compare with an epidemic.
- 4) (*Adam Blahut Dec, 2014*): This research was based on Women's Drinking in public. It comments on the increased number of female drinkers during the middle third of the twentieth century i.e. post-Prohibition in US. Starting around 1933, a variety of sources showed increasing evidence that women were becoming both, sought after as customers and accepted as participants in this formerly male-dominated activity. Statistics indicated that, over the course of about thirty years, the number of female tipplers steadily grew until they began to rival the numbers of male drinkers. During the 1930s alone, there were ample evidences that more and more women drank in public and became socially accepted participants in this activity.

(*Ladette- a young woman whose social behaviour is similar to that considered typical of young men.)

III. RESEARCH PROBLEM

Don't we often come across women who drink but don't want to talk about it socially? Well, most of them hide their drinking habits from their relatives and only open up in front of a handful of people they are comfortable with. In all probability that has a lot to do with the much hyped and typical patriarchal Bhartiya Sanskriti. The social and cultural influence on the difference between men and women deserves careful and detailed attention. Men consuming alcohol is an accepted notion, while women need approval time and again. The gender gap is one of the few universal differences in human social behaviour. It is evident in most part of the world. Through this research, we analyse the trend of Women patronizing Pubs in Mumbai since the 1980's and understand the various factors responsible for the same.

IV. OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH

- 1) To understand why women of Mumbai patronize Pubs/ Bars in today's time and age.
- 2) To understand whether Social Drinking among women is accepted by society today.

Hypothesis

H1. There is a considerable change in the trend of Women patronizing Bar from 1980's & now.

H0. There is minimal/ no change in the trend of Women patronizing Bar from 1980's & now.

V. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN

A. Target Population

- 1) Customers patronizing Pubs/ Bar and discos
- 2) Professionals
- 3) Home-maker women

The questionnaire was divided into 2 sections. The first section includes the personal information such as the name, age and gender. The second section deals with the questions based on which the hypothesis is to be tested.

For this research study the data is collected with the help of random sampling. Though the questionnaires were sent to all age groups both Men & Women in Western suburbs of Mumbai, few Questions were specifically designed for women only as the aim of the research was to understand the perspective of Society towards women socializing in bars.

Type of research methodology: - Quantitative

Target Respondents: - People patronizing Pubs/Bar

Sample size: - 140

Geographical location: - Western suburbs of Mumbai.

Time Frame: - One Month approx.

B. Data Collection Methods

Primary data is collected: - Circulating questionnaire & Interview

Secondary data: - Research papers, articles, books, websites of school/college/organizations & news articles.

C. Data Analysis & Interpretation

- 1) Do you Consume Alcohol?

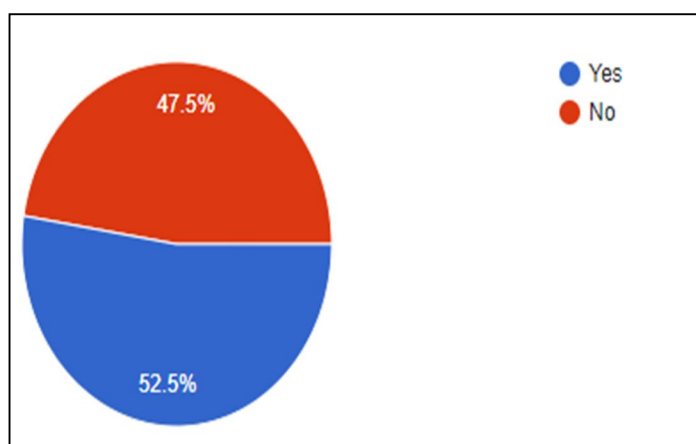


Figure : 5.3.1 Consumption of Alcohol

Through this response, we can see how many respondents consumed alcohol.

The red portion shows that 47.5% respondents don't consume alcohol.

The blue portion shows that 52.5% respondents consume alcohol.

2) *Have you visited Disco/ Pub/ Bar? If No, will you ever visit?*

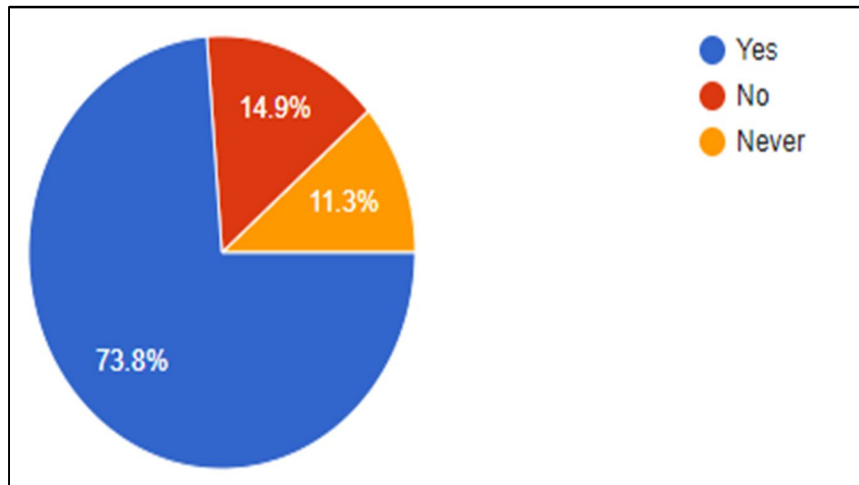


Figure : 5.3.2 visit to Pub/ Bar Interpretation

Through this response we can see how many respondents have visited Bars/ Pubs and whether those who have not visited so far, will they ever visit.

73.8% respondents expressed that they often visit the Pubs/Bar.

14.9% respondents said they have not visited the Pubs/Bar.

11.3% said they will never visit a Pub/Bar.

3) *How old were you when you visited Disco/ Pub / Bar for the first time?*

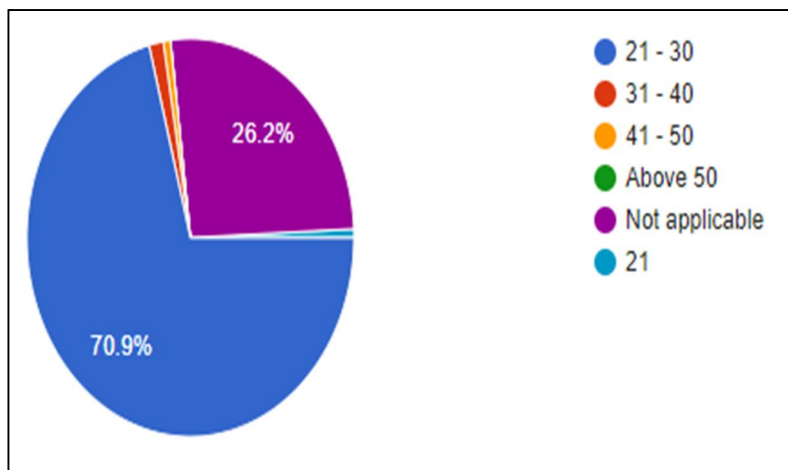


Figure : 5.3.3 Age of first visit

Interpretation:

70.9% respondents were Women between the age group of 21-30 when they visited Pubs/ Bar for the first time.

26.2% respondents were men and this question was not applicable to them.

1.4% respondents were women between the age group of 31-40 when they visited Pubs/ Bar for the first time.

0.7% respondents were women between the age group of 41-50 when they visited Pubs/ Bar for the first time.

*This data shows that most of the respondents who visited Pubs were between the age of 21 & 30, mostly those who were born in the early 1990's and thus hints towards establishing our hypothesis that the change in the trend began in the late 1980's.

4) Why do you visit Pub / Bar?

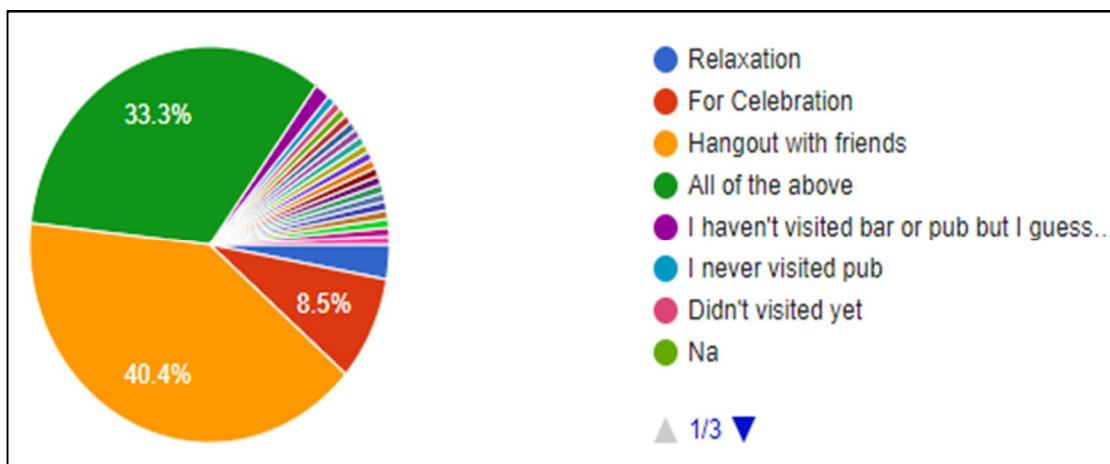


Figure : 5.3.4 Reasons of visit

Interpretation:

40.4% respondents visited Pub/ Bar to Hang out with friends & family.

8.5% respondents visited Pub/ Bar for Celebration.

33.3% respondents visited Pub/ Bar for Relaxation, for celebration & for hangout with friends

17.8% respondents haven't visited a bar/pub yet.

* This data hints towards Relaxation & Hanging out with friends as the main reason for people patronising Pubs.

5) How often do you visit Pub/ Bar?

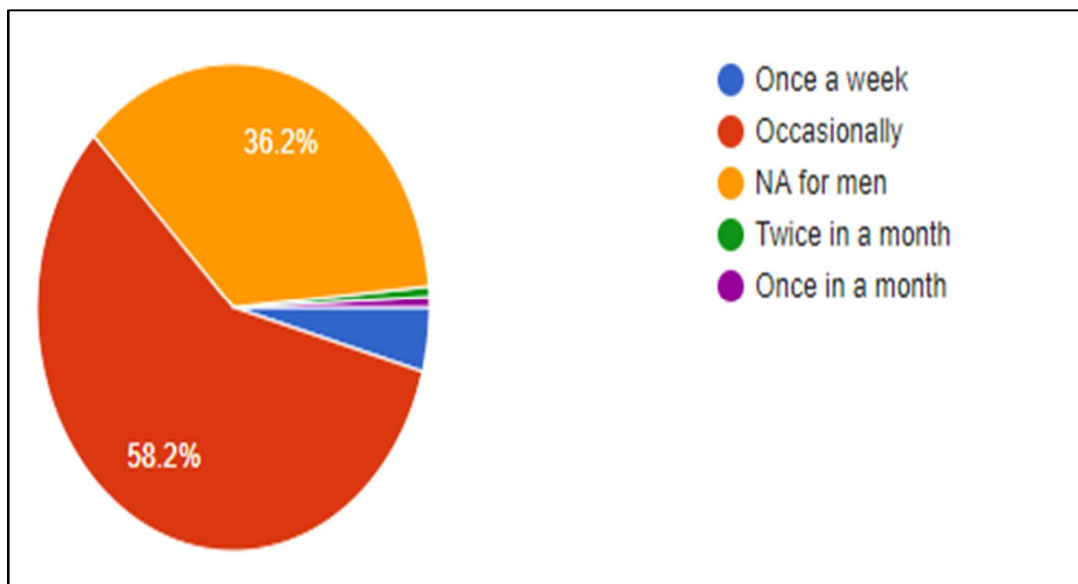


Figure: 5.3.5 Frequency of visit

Interpretation:

58.2% respondents occasionally visited Pubs/ Bar.

36.2% respondents were exception to this particular response as they were either Male and/or have not visited Pubs/ Bar.

Some of the respondents visited Pubs/ Bar twice in a month, and few of them visited Pubs/ Bar once in a month.

*This data shows that the frequency of visit to Pubs in Mumbai by Women is still on Occasional basis.

6) With whom do you visit Pubs/ Bar?

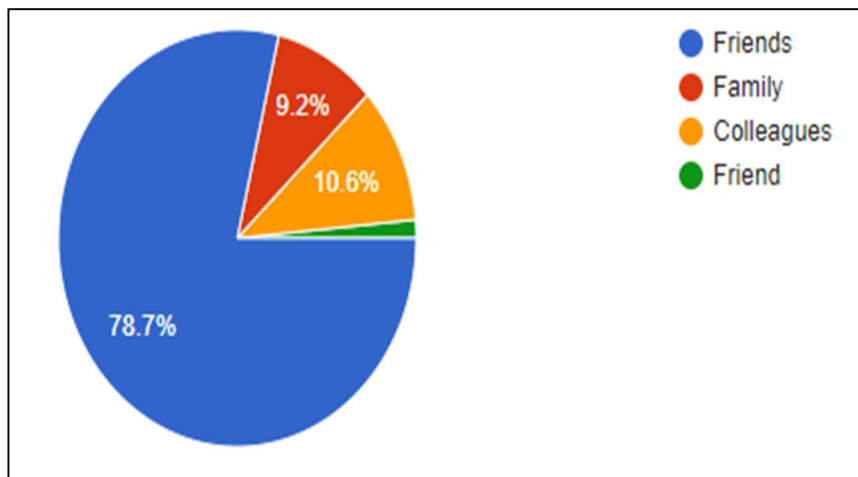


Figure : 5.3.6 along with whom

Interpretation:

78.7% respondents visited Pubs/ Bar with friends.

10.6% respondents visited Pubs/ Bar with their colleagues.

9.2% respondents visited with their family.

* This data also hints towards Hanging out with friends as the main reason for people patronising Pubs.

7) What kind of drinks do you consume usually in bar?

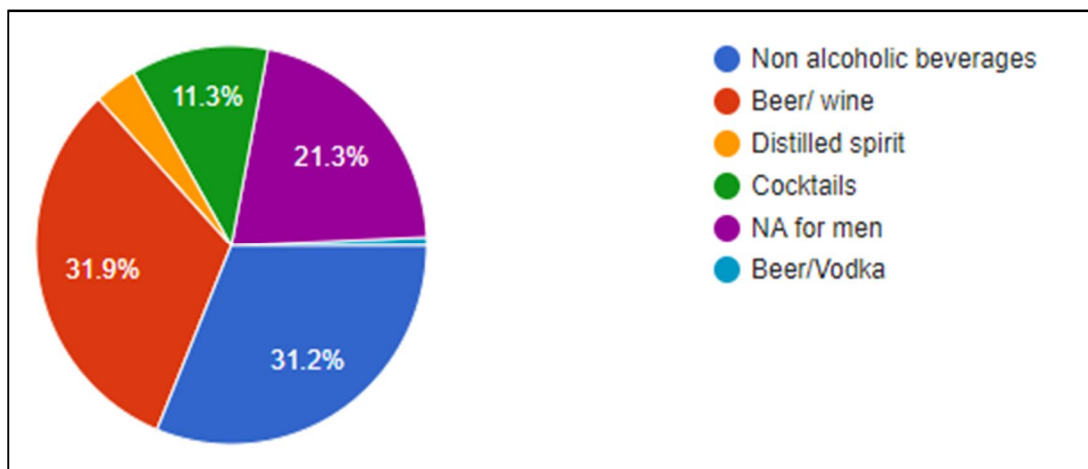


Figure : 5.3.7 Preference of drink

Interpretation:

31.2% respondents consumed Non-alcoholic beverages in Pub/Bar.

31.9% respondents consumed Beer/Wine in Pub/Bar.

11.3%. respondents consumed Cocktails in Pub/ Bar.

4.3% respondents consumed Distilled spirits like Rum, Gin, Tequila or Whisky in Pub/ Bar

21.3%. respondents were exception to this particular response as they were either Male and/or had not visited Pubs/ Bar.

*This data hints that most Women still prefer Mild Fermented Alcoholic beverages and the low preference of Distilled Spirits indicates that Intoxication is not the reason for consumption of Alcohol in most women.

8) Do you think Girls night out and Kitty parties are the same?

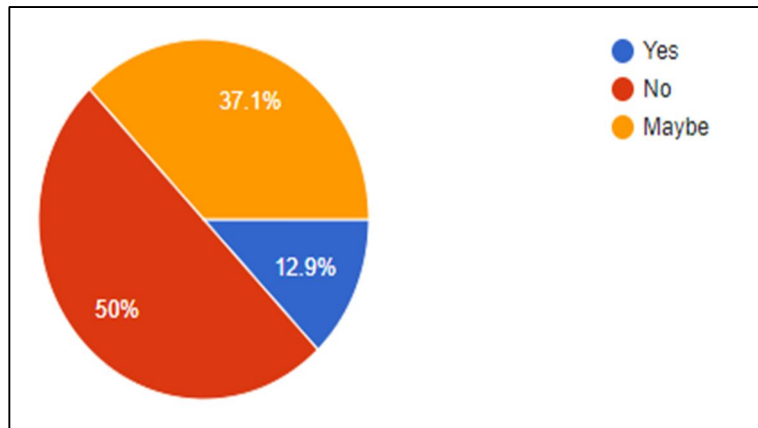


Figure : 5.3.8 Girls' Night Out and Kitty Party

Interpretation:

12.9% respondents think that the Girls Night Out & Kitty Parties are one and the same.

50% respondents disagree to this statement.

37.1% respondents think that Girls' Night Out & Kitty Parties maybe the same thing.

* Most of the respondents were well aware about the difference between Kitty Parties (which is more of a personal group affair) and Girls' Night out (which is social drinking amidst general people).

9) Do you think the financial status of a family influence the alcohol consumption among women?

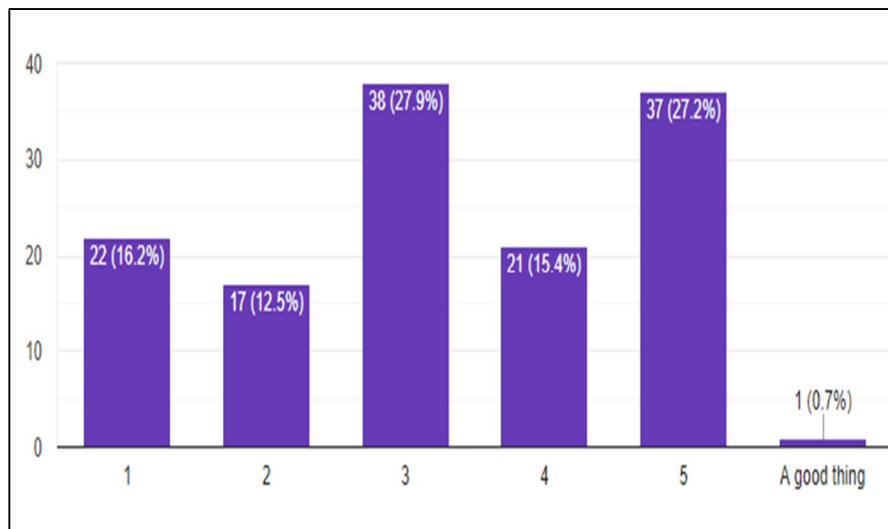


Figure : 5.3.9 Financial status influences

Interpretation:

16.2% strongly agree to this statement that financial status of a family influences the Social Drinking among women.

27.2% people completely disagree to this statement; they don't think that the financial statement of a family influences the Social Drinking among women.

27.9% do not completely agree.

15.4% do not completely disagree.

* It is not convincingly clear whether the financial status of a family influences the alcohol consumption among women.

10) Do you think the Pubs/ Bar trends have changed from early 80's till now?

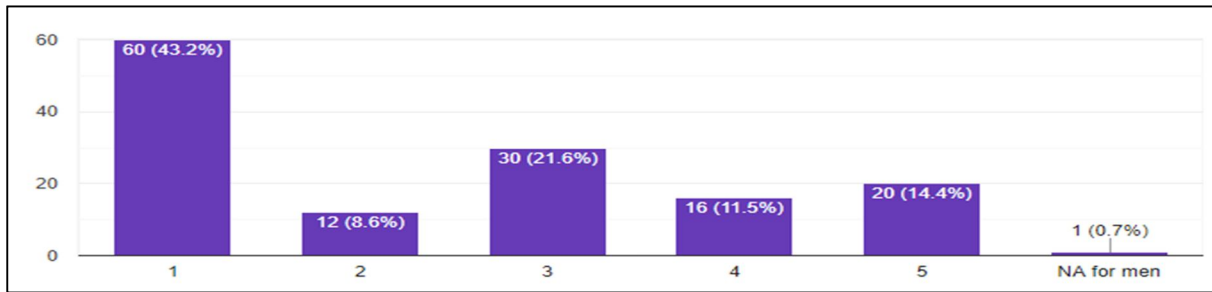


Figure : 5.3.10 Change from 80's till now

Interpretation:

43.2% respondents feel that the Pubs/ Bar trends have changed from early 80's till now.

8.6% respondents feel there has been a slight change in the trend from early 80's till now.

21.6% respondents were not sure about the changes in trends of pub/bar.

14.4% people who completely disagree with changes in the trends of Pubs/ Bar from early 80's till now.

* Responses do hint towards the change in Social Drinking trends among Women since 80's.

11) Do you feel that society has accepted and are comfortable with Social Drinking among Women? (Only for Females)

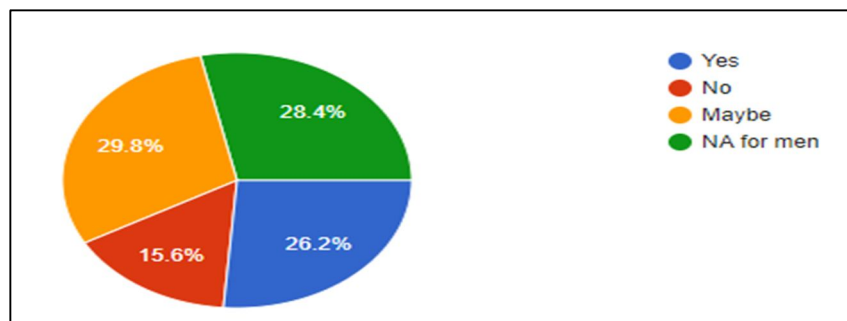


Figure : 5.3.11 Acceptance of Social Drinking among Women

Interpretation:

26.4% Females feel that Society has accepted the trend and is comfortable with it.

15.7% Females feel that Society has not accepted the trend and is not comfortable with it.

30% Females were not sure whether the Society has accepted the trend. 27.9% respondents were men.

*It is not conclusive whether the Society has accepted the trend of Social Drinking among Women.

D. Interview Questions

Working women and Females associated with serving Alcoholic Beverage Service were interviewed and following questions were asked-

- 1) Do you consume alcoholic Beverages?
- 2) Does your family approve your Drinking in Pubs?
- 3) Have you been to other countries and what differences did you observe as compared to Mumbai?
- 4) Do you agree with this statement 'Clear spirits like Vodka & Gin are Women's Drink'?
- 5) Do you feel whether Alcohol has the same effect on women as compared to men?
- 6) Is there a change in trend of Women in Mumbai, Patronizing Bar/Pub from early 80's and New Millennium?
- 7) What do you feel about your particular community's view with regards to Social Drinking among women?
- 8) Why do you visit Pubs and do you think Mumbai offers decent number of Pubs for women?
- 9) Is there anything else that you would like to express about Social Drinking among women?

VI. RESULT AND CONCLUSION

After analysing the data received through questionnaire and subsequent interviews with few women who partake in consuming alcohol socially, Serving or Training Service of Alcoholic Beverages, following observations were made:

- 1) In western countries like U.S. and European countries, not much gender bias was observed at least in terms of Social Drinking among Women.
- 2) In Thailand, the Tourists were found to occupy some of the Pubs in Pattaya, whereas in Bangkok the locals patronising Bars did not show any inhibitions towards the fair sex and would come very close in comparison to the trends in Mumbai.
- 3) 'Clear spirits like Vodka & Gin are Women's Drink' was found to be a misconception, as those women who consumed Alcohol socially had decent knowledge about what they were consuming and had their own preferences. Mild Alcoholic beverages like Beers, Wines & Cocktails were preferred more.
- 4) It is recommended from a public health point of view to study the female drinking pattern as some scientific study suggested that Alcohol would be more harmful for Women than Men because of their anatomical structure. However, the respondent felt that the ratio of Men getting drunk and creating public nuisance was more than Women.
- 5) Drinking often is associated with social norms and cultural practices. There are different mind-sets and practices in various cultures and religion. For instance, communities like Parsis and Catholics have accepted females drinking alcohol but only in exclusive groups of females and not in larger public groups.
- 6) 'Socializing with friends and Relaxation' was found to be major reason why women patronize Pubs/ Bars. Most women believe that they also have the right and should have their 'Me time' without any inhibitions and without being judged as they also play the role that is expected from them just like Men. Few women also expressed that Mumbai needs some 'All Women' Pubs.
- 7) In Mumbai during the 1980's in the Chawl system and Gaothans (Hamlets) few Women sold Alcohol from their Household; that trend was found to be quite common in other Western countries too and such places that were run by Women and sold Alcohol without licence are called 'Shebeens'. This depicted the hypocritic nature of men where they had no issue buying alcohol from such places but women consuming alcohol would be considered characterless.
- 8) Female Bartender which was unheard of in the 1980's changed with Shatbhi Basu (Alumnus of IHM Mumbai, 1980 batch) becoming India's first woman Bartender of India. This led to almost all the high-end Pubs in Mumbai having at least one Female Bartender in recent times. A lot of women specialize in Training Service of Alcoholic Beverages lately.
- 9) The Hypothesis that '*there is considerable change in the trend of Women patronizing Bars from 1980's & now*' is proved by the responses and subsequent interviews. As the respondents expressed during the interviews that Drinking among women would not be even discussed in their household in the 80's, their Husband would allow them to drink only Wine or Beer and that too in their presence and never in public; but now they have accepted their daughter consuming alcohol with their friends. Some respondents also expressed that the number of working women has increased dramatically and there has been a definite rise in their disposable income which is one major reason for this change. Most women and men who supported this trend associated it with Gender equality & freedom. The rise can also be attributed to the reduced gender disparity, for instance, rise in the acceptance/ preference of girl child in the cities.
- 10) In general however, Women Drinking alcohol in public is still considered a taboo in various strata of society in Mumbai. A lot of women who did consume alcohol did not express it openly. In fact few women expressed in the interview that the number of women consuming alcohol could be more than what we have received in our responses.

The topic still has a vast scope for study such as Sociological, Physiological, Psychological and Political etc. can be discussed separately and in great detail.

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