

Light beer losing market share to other beverages

By Duane D. Stanford, Bloomberg

At a beer industry summit last month, Ed McBrien, distribution chief for MillerCoors, compared himself to a typewriter salesman in an iPad age.

McBrien was sketching out plans to resurrect light beer, a \$50 billion market battling to stay relevant as makers of craft beer, wine and spirits increasingly steal customers from Molson Coors Brewing Co., SABMiller Plc and Anheuser-Busch Inbev NV.

Light beer is ceding ground as cabernet-loving Baby Boomers and Millennials weened on exotic cocktails seek more complex flavors in their brews. High unemployment among light beer drinkers also has prompted some to drink less or switch to cheaper brews. In a bid to return the froth to light beer, the U.S. joint venture between Molson Coors and SABMiller last week unveiled new advertising for a key brand, Miller Lite.

If the companies can't revive the brand, "we've got big trouble ahead of us," said Bump Williams, whose BWC Co. advises more than 100 beer retailers and distributors. "Light beer has become a commodity."

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