

# Bangalore: The Pub Capital of India

**Mukta Mohanty**

Student, Christ (Deemed to be) University

## Abstract

The nightlife of Bangalore is a much spoken aspect of the city. The factor that adds to its popularity is the varied number of pubs one can find in and around the city. If we look at the industry analysis, Bangalore is one of the first cities of the country to come up with and popularize the concept of pub and nightlife culture. With the relaxation of opening pubs, bars and restaurants till 1 AM in the morning, the pub culture seems to have become more vibrant in the city in the last two years. Bangalore being a hub of many IT companies and MNCs, has experienced a lot of population influx in the past few years. This influx has led to the acculturation of various aspects and traditions. The pub culture seems to have benefitted from this influx and acculturation. Bangalore, emerging as the 'Pub Capital of India' has a lot to owe to the amalgamation of various cultures and ethos. As a result, the culture of this city seems to be more standardised and globalised as compared to other cities. The presence of multiple MNCs in the city also results in an increased number of travellers that frequently visit Bangalore. Visitors hailing from places where pubs and clubs are a common sight also seem to frequent the city. In order to give them a 'feel at home' experience the city provides a plethora of such places that cater to the taste of these visitors. Various other factors such as the music, environment, food, beverages, etc. also play a major part in the popularization and propagation of this pub culture.



**Fig.1 : People immersing themselves in the ambience and music**

Sound, or music for that matter plays an effective role in shaping the perception and behaviour of the crowd. As is evident from Fig.1, good music (especially the ones high on beat) become one of the important aspects that people love to indulge in in pubs and bars. Usually whenever you cross by a club, you can hear from outside the beat of the loud music that is being played inside. Music, as we all know,

has a calming and relaxing element in it. One feels energized and hyped after listening to up-beat music. It is this nature of music that is fully utilized by the pubs and clubs to attract crowds. As per studies, people usually throng the pubs to relieve themselves of stress and use these places as an escape from their daily mundane lives. While going around the pubs in Bangalore, one can clearly decipher how music acts as a magnet for the crowds, specially the youngsters. A majority of the population ageing between 20-40 years usually loves and enjoys indulging in loud music. According to various studies conducted by French scientists, loud and upbeat music not only pumps up the energy level of an individual, but makes him/her drink more. Professor Nicolas Guéguen, who is a behavioural scientist at the Université de Bretagne-Sud in France, once said "We have shown that environmental music played in a bar is associated with an increase in drinking." The music played in pubs is like a dart that hits two targets. Not only does it attract the crowd, the hyped feeling it creates also leads to an increased consumption of alcohol, resulting in profits.



**Fig.2 : A social media ad for a neon party**

Social media has proved to be an out-and-out platform that best serves the purpose of advertising. It is this aspect of social media that has proved beneficial for the pubs too. Fig.2. is a screenshot of a social media advertisement of neon theme parties that various clubs organise. A number of clubs in Bangalore, such as BOOMRANG BarXsocial, Hammered, and some others organise such theme-based parties almost every week. Some of the clubs also provide other offers like free entry and/or free drinks for girls and couples, etc. In order to maintain a constant inflow of crowds, these pubs usually organise such parties on weekdays, especially on Wednesdays. Bangalore as a city, is a home to thousands of millennials. The establishment of a number of IT firms and MNCs in the city has led to the migration of a major part of the youth population of country. Students too come from different cities to pursue further studies. Keeping in mind the limited allowance that these youths are permitted, these pubs come up with deals/offers that cater

to their pockets. We all love things that come for free, don't we? Keeping up with the pace in which the world's advancing is very challenging, demanding and stressful too. Especially when you're at the initial stages of building your career and placed in a hustling and bustling city like Bangalore, this process becomes a bit more demanding. In order to maintain a work-life balance, the youth venture into various options of recreation. Pubs, clubs and such themed-parties become a go-to recreational sport in such situations.



**Fig.3 : The Bier Library microbrewery in Koramangla**

The concept of microbreweries has also become a huge part of the pub-culture in Bangalore. These microbreweries are also gaining popularity, thus pushing the city towards becoming The Beer Capital of the country. Bangalore's culture is somewhat cosmopolitan in itself. People enjoy going out and eating out. With a boom in BPO and IT companies in the country, especially in Bangalore, there has been a lot of influx of population from within the various states of the country. The 'drinking after work' culture has also come into prominence. Many clubs in Bangalore have now started brewing their own craft beers. Alongside selling branded beers, these clubs also provide the option of choosing among their own brewed beer, which are usually cheaper and healthier (Fig.3). Seemingly, people are increasingly switching from bottled beer to freshly brewed craft beers. The simple reason is that bottled beers contain a lot of additives whereas on the other hand, these microbreweries use traditional methods and ingredients while brewing, making them healthier, tastier and worth the money. The ambience of such microbreweries is also among the key features that attracts crowds. Microbreweries are usually wide expanses, having an open-air kind of arrangement like the Biergarten in Koramangla. The moderate climate of this place allows people to enjoy in such spaces. New brewpubs are coming up every now and then in Bangalore. In order to keep up with and ahead of the competitors, the patrons keep introducing new ingredients and variations in their craft beers, thereby providing good quality beers. As per studies, it has been established that the water in available in Bangalore contains suitable and enough mineral contents that favour the manufacture of beer. With the establishment of the headquarters of Kingfisher- one of the largest beverages selling brand in the company- Vijay Mallya introduced the concept of draught beers. Since then, microbreweries have been springing up every now and then in the city.



**Fig.4: Partygoers dance inside the i-Bar, popular with middle and upper class Indians, in Bangalore**

Not only urbanization, but an increasing affinity of the population towards tap beer and youthful ambiance (as can be seen in Fig.4) becomes one of the major reasons for the constant increase in the number of pubs in Bangalore. If we go by the books, one can assume that even the Karnataka government has a major hand in giving the city the identity of the pub/beer capital of the country. As per records, there has been an increase by fifty percent in the sanction of Retail Vend of Beer (RVB) licenses by the government over the past four years. As a result, the total number of registered pubs in Bangalore has spiked from 269 (as of 2014) to 406 in these four years. Experts attribute this rise to two major reasons. One of them being an increase in the popularity and demand for drought/craft beers and a youthful environment. The other reason is the continuous process of expansion and urbanization that the city has been going through since ages. As a result of this rapid urbanization, many establishments in the rural areas have transformed into pubs or a bar and kitchen/lounge. The rustic aesthetics of such places add to the ambiance which make them a great place of indulgence. Not only does Bangalore has a noticeable number of pubs, the city also makes seems to reserve one of the top positions when it comes to alcohol consumption. As per the records of the Excise Department the alcohol consumption rate in the city has seen a stark rise in the past few years. One of the officials said that an increase in population and expansion is the primary reason for this rise in alcohol consumption.



**Fig.5 : Families enjoy the varied cuisines served in the clubs**

The pubs in Bangalore act as a mirror that reflect the economic outlook of the city. The ever changing cultural landscape of the city is highlighted by the numerous global makeovers that influence the pubs. The crowd found in the pubs is no longer limited to just people looking to unwind after a long day, people also throng these places for other social involvements, for example, these clubs serve as a great place for celebrating special events. If you're pitching in for a deal and want to impress your client, all you got to do is set up an unofficial-official meet-up at one of these clubs. Families visit such places as most of pubs serve a varied platter of cuisines as well. These days family get-togethers have also become a common sight in the pubs, as can be seen in Fig.5. From Indian to Mexican, Italian, Chinese, Thai and a number of other cuisines are served. On careful observation, the environment in an around a pub changes with the passage of hour. Usually it is seen that these pubs are mostly quiet and muted during afternoon hours. These aren't much crowded; people with families and kids who primarily go for the food usually prefer visiting during the daytime. While some places play mellowed down and slow music, some pubs don't play music at all during the day. The scenario takes the 360 degree turn as evening approaches. Known for the city's nightlife, these pubs essentially add life to this nightlife. After getting the relaxation of keeping the restaurants and bars till 1 AM, the appeal of the nightlife has become for vibrant.



**Fig.6 : Pubs are a great place for socialization**

Human being is a social animal. One must've heard this phrase at least once in his/her lifetime. Not just frolicking and having a gala time gives one release from mental-stress, but also socializing becomes an important factor that keeps one afoot in this tedious-challenging-demanding world. Pubs play an important role as social institutions that function in a pleasurable and meaningful manner in catalysing socialization (Fig.6). The hospitable environment fosters social connections and interactions. The population of Bangalore is an amalgamation of individuals from different cultures of the country and the world. The pubs in Bangalore provide a platform where different cultures come together in the form of individuals. Pubs are a subject to sociological interests as they provide conducive environments where different forms of social and societal structures come to play. According to an article based on a study on pubs 'pubs helps to create, expand and strengthen social networks'. Nick Hatter, a life coach, in his interview with Men's

Health UK says, ‘fundamentally, the pub provides an element of belonging, community, and connection. These are fundamental human needs, which if not met, can make us mentally unwell’. Acting as venues for interactions and companionship, pubs also efficiently tackle loneliness. Pubs appeal not only as places where one can buy alcohol, they also appeal as places where social interactions can be organised in a meaningful and pleasurable way, which is somewhat difficult to do in homes.



Fig.7 : A page from the menu book of Uru Brewpark, Koramangla

‘Food may be essential as fuel for the body, but good food is the fuel of the soul’. This famous line by Malcom Forbes seems to have become one of the essential guiding principles of pubs. Not just alcohol, but almost every pub in and around Bangalore serves great food and a plethora of options from different cuisines. A lot of times I’ve heard people suggest pubs to others and say ‘they serve good food too’. It’s not just the food, people also look for good food when they go pub-hopping. Also, it has been observed that people prefer spending money in a pub than spending the same amount in a fine-dining restaurant. The reason could be that the pubs seem to have value for money as they provide a surfeit options in alcohol and food as compared to restaurants for a given amount of money. People like snacking while consuming alcohol. Keeping this as the basis, the menu of the pubs mostly focuses on food items that compliment and go well with alcoholic beverages (Fig.7). A wider range of options is available for snacks/starters as compared to that for the main course and desserts. Even the mocktails served in the pubs are no less when it comes to quality and flavour. In order to bring in more people and keep their customers satisfied, the pubs try to include food items that cater to every taste bud. From variations in vegetarian and non-vegetarian foods, alcoholic to non-alcoholic beverages, these clubs also serve a variety of salads for the ones who like keeping a check on their calorie intake.



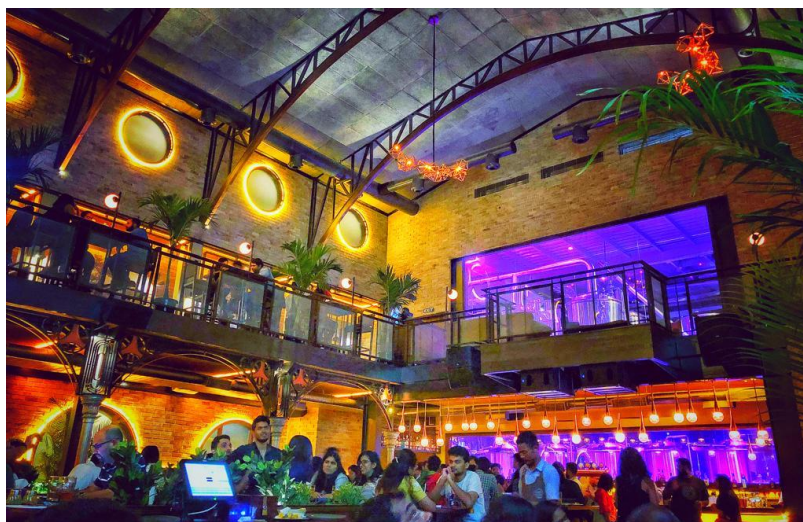
**Fig.1: United Breweries, Bangalore**

The brewing history of Bangalore dates back to as early as the 80's when United Breweries introduced the concept of craft beers for the first time in the country. This was also the beginning of the pub culture in Bangalore as well as in India. The early 90's gave momentum to this and Bangalore soon became the pub capital of India. United Breweries in Bangalore is the largest brewery in the country in terms of the market share. The Idiga community of Karnataka also has a lot to do with brewing history of the state. People belonging to the Idiga community have been traditionally brewing local spirits since the days of old. With the art of traditional brewing running in their veins, people belonging to this community emerged as huge business tycoons who owned bars and restaurants. On the other, the community residing in the Bangalore Cant area was the one that enjoyed having a jolly life. They had dances, balls, cinema halls and other such recreational avenues. A lot of American and British soldiers were stationed in these areas at the time of the World Wars. These soldiers needed some kind of recreational and relaxing escape in order to keep them on the move. It was this time when the brewing and other communities of Bangalore came together and offered a common venue for such frolicking activities in the form of clubs. Spirits such as rum, whiskey, etc. started being imported. This resulted in the creation of craft beers, one of those being famous India Pale Ale (IPA). In the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century, a growth in demand for alcohol resulted in the setting up of breweries in India. Gradually breweries like Castle Brewery, Bangalore Brewing Co., among a few others came up in the city. Later on these breweries, along with 3 others, were brought and clubbed into one as United Breweries by Thomas Leishman in 1915. 40 pubs had already opened up around the city in 1991, promoting the much-talked about pub-culture of Bangalore.



**Fig.9 : Urbanization leads to the popularization of the pub culture**

The diverse population of Bangalore is marked by the great deal of urbanization that the city has gone through (and is continuing in doing so). Urbanization and the growing pub-culture can be related to certain phenomenon that promote globalization. The multinational IT firms in the city bring in a lot of travellers from around the world. The travellers crave for things which they have experienced in their native places. To impart a sense of belongingness, the city tried to provide as many such experiences to the travellers as possible, pubs being one of those. The pubs mirror city itself- it is an amazing and attractive pool of cultures symbolized by sophistication, urbanization and high-tech living. The blending of different cultural ideas take place in such scenarios as is evident from Fig.9. The continuous process of urbanization accelerated this pub-culture as multiple places came up that could suffice the varied budgets and tastes. Rustic, unconventional, aesthetically pleasing ambiances and event-based marketing are some of the ways through which these pubs clear their paths of gaining prominence. Gradually, the concept of a gastro-pub also came into existence. Urbanization has led to a variation in tastes as well. These pubs provide a package to the vast diversity of choices when it comes to music, food, ambiance, drinks, etc.



**Fig.10 : People relaxing and socializing at clubs**



The number of pubs in India has been on a constant in the last few years. Cities like Bangalore account for this increase, as Bangalore houses more than 800 clubs in the country. In Fig.10, the people seen sitting in the bar are mostly the once belonging to the younger generation of the population of the country. Bangalore, being the IT hub of the country, houses many youths. It has been seen that these clubs are mostly frequented upon by working people, especially the ones belonging 25-40 age group. Pubs provide a relaxed and peaceful escape from the monotony of the hectic life. Since people treat these pubs as places for relaxing and rejuvenating, these pubs introduce and launch creative events of their own to keep the spirits high. In older days, people used to visit cafes where there would have a fun night. Be it hanging out with friends, a family get-together, or a date, cafes were the best option one could think of. The pubs have now replaced these cafes. In order to maintain the essence, these pubs have employed ways that don't let the spirit of the jolly-old cafes die out. For example, karaoke nights, special theme-based musical nights, bartending shows, open mic night and a lot of other things. These pubs also attract people through their space-design. In the above image, one can see how attractively the place and has been designed. Modern aesthetics, vibrant lights, neat and sophisticated environment, all add up to the attractiveness of a particular club.

## Conclusion

The acculturation taking place at every stage in Bangalore as a result of the rapid urbanization has made many aspects of the city stand-out on the national front. The biggest and most popular among these being the pub-culture and nightlife of the city. The various aspects that made Bangalore the Pub/Beer Capital of India, are in some or the other way related to urbanization, expansion, and the constant influx of population. Also, this increase in the number of pubs in and around the city can be attributed to the lack of natural spaces, which in turn is a result of urbanization. The rapid construction of buildings and human structures in order to meet the needs of the ever-increasing population of the city has led to the transformation of nature-endowed spaces into human-made edifices. In older days, people use to withdraw to natural spaces to unburden themselves of their daily commitments. The intensification of urbanization has led to the expansion of human-structures into these natural spaces. It is in such situations that the pubs in the city emerge as places of loosening and lessening. The ambiance, the music, the food, the exposure, the stress-free conditions along with an open ground for social interactions, have made the pubs and the so-called pub-culture of Bangalore so voguish in the country.

## References

1. "Pump up the Volume: Pubs Profit from Louder Music." *The Guardian*, Guardian News and Media, 18 July 2008, <https://www.theguardian.com/science/2008/jul/19/medicalresearch.fooddrinks>.
2. Misulonas, Joseph. "Why You Should Play Music at Your Bar or Restaurant." *Accel Entertainment - Home Page - All States*, <https://www.accelentertainment.com/blog/why-you-should-play-music-at-your-bar-or-restaurant>.
3. Meng, Qi, et al. "Influence of Music on the Behaviors of Crowd in Urban Open Public Spaces." *Frontiers*, Frontiers, 9 Apr. 2018, <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2018.00596/full>.
4. Aadil Ahammed, Akshat Jain and Albin George. "Increasing Pub Culture in India." *Business Studies Journal*, Allied Business Academies, 27 May 2021, <https://www.abacademies.org/articles/increasing-pub-culture-in-india-10999.html>.

5. “Culture of Bangalore.” *Wikipedia*, Wikimedia Foundation, 3 Dec. 2022, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Culture\\_of\\_Bangalore](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Culture_of_Bangalore).
6. Dhvani Desai / TNN / Feb 3, 2019. “With over 60 Breweries, There's No Doubt Bengaluru Is the Original Pub Capital: Bengaluru News - Times of India.” *The Times of India*, TOI, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/bengaluru/with-over-60-breweries-theres-no-doubt-bengaluru-is-the-original-pub-capital/articleshow/67806507.cms>.
7. Travellingcamera. “Why Bangalore Is Also Known as the Pub Capital of India & Why You Should Explore It's Pub Culture.” *PHOTO JOURNEY* by *Www.Travellingcamera.com*, Blogger, 23 Nov. 2018, <https://www.travellingcamera.com/2018/11/explore-pub-culture-of-banglore-city.html>.
8. *In Bengaluru, Beer Is the New Coffee* / *RJ Brewing Solutions*. <https://www.microbreweryindia.com/in-bengaluru-beer-is-the-new-coffee/>.
9. Bagchi, Shrabonti. “In Bengaluru, Beer Is the New Coffee.” *Mint*, 13 Apr. 2019, <https://www.livemint.com/mint-lounge/features/bengaluru-s-new-gold-rush-1555049666270.html>.
10. Lakshman, Srivats Venkat. “Pub Capital of India: Bengaluru Sees 50% Rise in 4 Years.” *IBTimes India*, IBTimes India, 24 July 2018, <https://www.ibtimes.co.in/pub-capital-india-bengaluru-sees-50-percent-rise-pubs-4-years-775881>.
11. H.M., Shruthi. “Bengaluru Sees 50% Increase in Pubs in Four Years.” *Return to Frontpage*, 22 July 2018, <https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/bangalore/bengaluru-sees-50-increase-in-pubs-in-four-years/article24490251.ece>.
12. Thurnell-Read, Thomas. “‘If They Weren’t in the Pub, They Probably Wouldn’t Even Know Each Other’: Alcohol, Sociability and Pub Based Leisure.” *International Journal of the Sociology of Leisure*, vol. 4, no. 1, 2020, pp. 61–78., <https://doi.org/10.1007/s41978-020-00068-x>.
13. Cooper, Edward. “Going to the Pub with Friends Is Crucial to Building Male Friendships, Study Finds.” *Men's Health*, Men's Health, 8 June 2021, <https://www.menshealth.com/uk/mental-strength/a35837401/going-to-the-pub-mental-health/>.
14. Yang, Keming. “Tackling Loneliness.” *Loneliness*, 2019, pp. 184–203., <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315148410-9>.
15. “Beer in India.” *Wikipedia*, Wikimedia Foundation, 27 July 2022, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beer\\_in\\_India](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beer_in_India).
16. World, Editorial-Brewer. “Indian Beer History and Current Trends.” *Brewer World-Everything about Beer Is Here*, 14 Dec. 2021, <https://www.brewer-world.com/indian-beer-history-and-current-trends/>.
17. Elmqvist, Thomas. *Urbanization, Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services: Challenges and Opportunities: A Global Assessment: A Part of the Cities and Biodiversity Outlook Project*. Springer, 2013.
18. Burton, John A. *Nature in the City*. Danbury Press, 1977.
19. S., George T J. *Askew: A Short Biography of Bangalore*. Aleph, 2016.
20. Thompson, Victoria. *City of Shadows*, Thorndike Press, a Part of Gale, a Cengage Company, Waterville, ME, 2022.
21. Pani, Narendar. *Bengaluru, Bangalore, Bengaluru: Imaginations and Their Times*. SAGE, 2010.
22. Stallmeyer, John C. *Building Bangalore: Architecture and Urban Transformation in India's Silicon Valley*. Routledge, 2013.

23. Travellingcamera. “Why Bangalore Is Also Known as the Pub Capital of India & Why You Should Explore It's Pub Culture.” *PHOTO JOURNEY* by *Www.Travellingcamera.com*, Blogger, 23 Nov. 2018, <https://www.travellingcamera.com/2018/11/explore-pub-culture-of-banglore-city.html>.
24. Dineout. “Drink up: Top 10 Pubs with Best Happy Hour Deals in Bangalore.” *Dineout*, Dineout <https://www.dineout.co.in/Blog/Wp-Content/Uploads/2019/07/168.Png>, 28 June 2017, <https://www.dineout.co.in/blog/drink-top-10-pubs-best-happy-hour-deals-bangalore/>.
25. Dhawan, Sareeka. “Four Stunning Pubs to Visit in Bangalore.” *YourStory.com*, 22 Dec. 2016, <https://yourstory.com/mystory/1e11c76a14-four-stunning-pubs-to-visit-in-bangalore>.
26. News, STV. “‘Vertical Drinking’ Rules Pour Confusion over Pub Covid Plans.” *STV News*, 4 Aug. 2021, <https://news.stv.tv/scotland/vertical-drinking-rules-pour-confusion-over-pub-covid-plans>.
27. Gadge, Kasturi. “Bengaluru: The Bier Library Microbrewery in Koramangala: Review.” *Architectural Digest India*, Architectural Digest India, 11 Feb. 2019, <https://www.architecturaldigest.in/content/bengaluru-bier-library-beer-bar-review/>.
28. Bangalore. “Prestige UB City - Canberra Block in Vittal Mallya Road, Bangalore: Cityinfo Services.” *Cityinfo*, <https://properties.cityinfoservices.com/prestige-ub-city-canberra-block-vittal-mallya-road-bangalore/t2pikim/pjd>.