



# Craft Obsession: The Social Rhetorics of Beer

*Jeff Rice*

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Denied access to traditional advertising platforms by lack of resources, craft breweries have proliferated despite these challenges by embracing social media platforms, and by creating an obsessed culture of fans. In *Craft Obsession*, Jeff Rice uses craft beer as a case study to demonstrate how social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter function to shape stories about craft.

Rice weaves together theories of writing, narrative, new media, and rhetoric with a personal story of his passion for craft beer. He identifies six key elements of social media rhetoric— anecdotes, repetition, aggregation, delivery, sharing, and imagery—and examines how each helps to transform small, personal experiences with craft into a more widespread movement. When shared via social media, craft anecdotes—such as the first time one had a beer—interrupt and repeat one another, building a sense of familiarity and identity among otherwise unconnected people. Aggregation, the practice of joining unlike items into one space, builds on this network identity, establishing a connection to particular brands or locations, both real and virtual. The public releases of craft beers are used to explore the concept of craft delivery, which involves multiple actors across multiple spaces and results in multiple meanings. Finally, Rice highlights how personal sharing operates within the community of craft beer enthusiasts, who share online images of acquiring, trading for, and consuming a wide variety of beers. These shared stories and images, while personal for each individual, reflect the dependence of craft on systems of involvement. Throughout, Rice relates and reflects on his own experience as a craft beer enthusiast and his participation via social media in these systems.

Both an objective scholarly study and an engaging personal narrative about craft beer, *Craft Obsession* provides valuable insights into digital writing, storytelling, and social media.

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