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U.S. tequila volume rose 6.8%, far ahead of 2.3% dollar growth

The four-week NielsenIQ retail snapshot suggested consumers bought more bottles but traded down through discounts, smaller formats or cheaper brands

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Tequila sales in the United States rose sharply in volume in the latest measured retail period, but the category’s dollar growth was much weaker, suggesting that the average value captured on each unit sold moved lower even as more product left store shelves.

Vinetur, a Spanish beverage industry publication, reported on Wednesday, November 18, that data from NielsenIQ's NIQ Full View: US Spirits Pulse showed U.S. measured retail tequila sales increased 6.8% in volume and 2.3% in nominal dollar value from a year earlier. The figures cover the four weeks ended November 7 and compare that period with the equivalent period a year before.

The gap between those two growth rates is notable. If dollar sales rose 2.3% while volume rose 6.8%, the implied average value per unit sold fell by about 4.2%, based on a simple ratio of value growth to volume growth. That measure does not mean shelf prices fell by 4.2%. It can also reflect heavier promotions, a shift toward lower-priced products, changes in package sizes, or a different mix of brands and product tiers sold during the period.

Even with that caution, the figures point to a clear pattern in tequila: consumers bought more, but the category did not generate revenue at the same pace. That differs from what suppliers and retailers usually want to see in premium spirits, where value growth often matches or exceeds volume growth because shoppers trade up to more expensive bottles.

The numbers reported by Vinetur suggest tequila still outperformed other major spirits categories in physical demand. Whiskey sales fell 5% in value and 5% in volume in the same four-week period, according to the report. Vodka was nearly flat in dollar terms, down 0.1%, while volume slipped 0.3%.

That leaves tequila as the strongest category among those cited in terms of unit growth, even though its revenue performance was more modest than its shipment pace might imply. The data add to a broader picture that has emerged across parts of the beverage alcohol market, where consumers continue to spend, but often with more caution about price and with closer attention to discounts and product choices.

The reported figures are based on measured U.S. retail sales, not the entire alcohol market. Measured channels typically track scanner-based sales at participating retailers, and they can provide a detailed picture of near-term consumer buying patterns. But they do not necessarily include every outlet where spirits are sold, and the snapshot covers only a four-week period rather than a full year.

No absolute sales totals in dollars or units were provided in the published summary, which limits how far the comparison can go. Without those figures, it is not possible to calculate the size of the market in the period or measure how much of tequila’s gain came from broad demand versus a smaller base than other categories. The original NIQ report was not publicly available in the materials cited, so the published account relies on Vinetur’s summary of the data.

Still, the divergence between tequila’s volume growth and value growth is meaningful because it shows a category that is expanding in shelf movement without seeing the same strength in revenue per unit. In practical terms, that can happen when consumers remain interested in tequila but become more selective about what they buy. They may choose less expensive expressions, respond to temporary promotions, or shift toward formats that lower the average selling value of each unit recorded in the data.

That pattern matters for producers and distributors because tequila has been one of the most closely watched spirits categories in the U.S. market for several years. Strong volume growth can signal continued consumer interest and steady turnover at retail. But slower value growth may indicate pressure on margins if brands need discounts or a lower-priced mix to maintain momentum.

For retailers, the same figures can send mixed signals. Higher unit sales may support shelf space and inventory decisions, but weaker growth in average value per unit can weigh on category revenue productivity. For suppliers positioned in premium and super-premium tequila, the data may raise questions about whether shoppers are holding back on higher-priced bottles or simply responding to short-term promotional activity.

The comparison with whiskey and vodka makes tequila’s position clearer. Whiskey’s equal 5% decline in value and volume suggests a category losing sales without a major change in average value per unit. Vodka’s small declines in both measures point to a more stable market with slight softening. Tequila, by contrast, showed demand growth strong enough to stand apart, but with signs that the quality of that growth, measured through dollars per unit, was softer than the headline volume increase suggests.

Because the figures are nominal dollar sales, they do not adjust for inflation or changing costs in the broader economy. That means value growth of 2.3% does not necessarily translate into stronger real revenue when input costs, transportation, labor, and retail pricing strategies are taken into account. It also means a drop in implied average value per unit may be more significant for producers if their cost base has not moved in the same direction.

The latest retail reading does not settle whether tequila is entering a longer period of slower value expansion or whether the gap reflects temporary holiday-season promotions and mix effects in early November. But it does show a clear split between how much tequila Americans bought and how much money those sales generated in measured U.S. retail channels during the four weeks ended November 7.