

Creating customers

Finding new ways and places to sell alcohol,
and new people to buy it

"People have grown up on Pepsi and Coke, so the younger generation have a much sweeter palate. We are playing to that."

SAB Miller

"Heineken is what's next in Latin music and culture."

Heineken

"Africa remains the key opportunity for growing our outstanding beer business, and expanding spirits."

Diageo

"Women are an essential part of future growth for the beer industry."

Molson Coors



Alcohol Concern

Promoting health; improving lives



Alcohol Concern

Alcohol Concern is the national charity on alcohol misuse campaigning for effective alcohol policy and improved services for people whose lives are affected by alcohol-related problems.

Our work in Wales

Alcohol Concern opened its office in Cardiff in August 2009. Alcohol Concern Cymru is focusing on policy and public health in Wales, acting as a champion for alcohol harm reduction.

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Executive summary

In spite of its persistent claims that it has no interest in driving up alcohol consumption, the drinks industry's own documents make clear that this is in fact one of its main business aims. This is the case in the mature European and North American alcohol markets, and even more so in the countries described by SAB Miller as "developing markets...[where] per capita alcohol consumption continues to rise as disposable incomes increase" – namely Africa, Asia and Latin America. In these all-important newer markets, the industry pursues a two-fold strategy of making some drinks cheap enough for all but the poorest to afford, whilst also pushing its premium brands as status symbols for the emerging middle class.

To allow itself the space to do this, the industry has argued for minimal regulation by government, and has even worked to overturn restrictions imposed by national governments for reasons of public safety. Alongside this, the industry defines its own responsibilities to prevent the abuse of its products in the narrowest possible terms, with a great emphasis placed on the duty of consumers to drink responsibly.

To address the issues raised in this report, Alcohol Concern recommends the following controls be implemented in the UK, and we would also suggest that the principles embodied in them have a wider international relevance.

Recommendation 1

The regulation of alcohol promotion should be statutory and independent of the alcohol industry, and meaningful sanctions for non-compliance should be in place.

Recommendation 2

Where the promotion of alcohol is permitted, messages and images should only refer to the characteristics of the product: its origin, composition, strength, and means of production. Use of lifestyle images of drinkers or scenes depicting a drinking atmosphere should be prohibited.

Recommendation 3

Given the obvious conflict between the alcohol industry's need to promote the use of alcohol and the need to promote moderate drinking, alcohol producers should have no role in formulating information or policy relating to the safe use of their products. Messages about the safe use of alcohol should be drawn up by a body independent of the industry, and should be factual in nature and avoid ambiguous concepts such as "responsible drinking".

Introduction

What does the drinks industry want?

"Promotions don't aim to increase alcohol consumption."

British Retail Consortium, 2014¹

"[We are] continually seeking and seizing upon opportunities for future growth.... We do not believe our potential is limited to traditional beer occasions and consumption opportunities...Our goal [is] to create new occasions to share our products with consumers."

AB InBev annual report, 2013²

In his definitive treatise on what makes capitalism work *The Wealth of Nations* (1776), Scottish economist Adam Smith concluded that "to widen the market and narrow the competition" was the natural aim of any ambitious seller.³ Almost uniquely in the global economy today, the alcoholic drinks industry claims that its aim is the opposite of this – to maintain a static market and increase competition within it. Whereas producers of almost all other goods would agree that an increase of interest in and purchases of their type of products – be it cars, televisions, or mobile phones – is good for business for everyone; drinks producers maintain that they want to keep a lid on consumption. To cite just one recent example, in launching a partnership with Cheeky Bingo in April 2014 offering punters "free bottles of Lambrini to encourage trial", Halewood International still insisted they were simply seeking to "engage with our loyal customer base".⁴ This reticence about admitting their need for new customers is in spite of all the major players in the drinks market (as any sensible business would) having clear plans for expanding into new markets and, as AB InBev put it, "creating new occasions to share our products with consumers".⁵

This report examines the evidence for the drinks industry's claims that brand switching between existing adult consumers is its main objective. It looks at how the industry defines its own corporate social responsibilities, how it seeks to influence the regulatory framework in which it operates, and how it behaves when regulators give it a freer rein. It also considers how new drinkers are being brought on board in the UK and Europe; as well as in new African, Asian and Latin American markets, which many drinks companies based in the USA and EU see as a major source of future profits.

Corporate social responsibility – safeguard or smart marketing?

“Lacking both clear meaning and supporting argument, conventional doctrines of social responsibility typically attract support on the basis of the label alone: few people are willing publicly to oppose that which is even nominally responsible.”

Elaine Sternberg, 2009⁶

Few major companies’ annual reports are considered complete these days without a statement of corporate social responsibility (CSR). In these, companies set out how they will engage with and benefit their broader ‘stakeholders’ – customers, suppliers, employees and their families, local communities, and the environment – in addition to giving their shareholders a financial return. CSR has been dismissed by some as “window dressing to deflect public attention from deeper shortcomings”,⁷ but there are few more enthusiastic proponents of it than the global alcohol industry. Barcardi describe themselves as “good corporate citizens”,⁸ whilst Diageo have an almost spiritual take on CSR.

“People celebrate with our brands – and by doing so become a link in a chain that connects rivers and fields, distilleries, breweries and vineyards, transport networks, the hospitality industry, communities and everyone who works in and around them. Our Sustainability and Responsibility Strategy encompasses the actions Diageo takes each day, and every day, to support every link in this chain. We call this celebrating life, today and tomorrow”.

Diageo, 2014⁹

The drinks industry’s promotion of CSR is hardly surprising, given the pressure it feels itself under to prove that its products, and the way they are marketed, are not the cause of the obvious alcohol-related problems in our society. However, the industry’s desire to continue to vigorously promote its products whilst also rebutting any criticism, has led to particularly narrow definition of

CSR. Overall, drinks companies’ CSR statements focus on:

- **Opposition to activities that are already illegal** – such as selling alcohol to children, or driving whilst drunk – which all of us could be reasonably expected to oppose. AB InBev, for example boast that they are “are adamantly opposed to alcohol abuse, including drunk driving and underage drinking”.¹⁰
- **Condemnation of activities to which a strong social stigma is already attached**, at least in theory – again such as drunk driving, and public binge drinking by young people. Diageo, for example, recently called for “more severe penalties for hardcore and repeat drunk drivers” in order to “get repeat drunk drivers off the road”.¹¹
- **A strong emphasis on the ‘responsible’ use of alcohol by consumers.** This term has a number of important functions:
 - The term ‘responsible’ is never defined but is also hard to refute. Almost no-one would describe themselves as a deliberately ‘irresponsible’ drinker or publicly advocate ‘irresponsible’ drinking. The use of this term immediately puts the drinks industry on-side with the public consensus on alcohol misuse, without committing it to doing anything in particular
 - ‘Responsibility’ is primarily assigned to the consumer of any alcoholic product, not its producers or retailers
 - Unlike terms like ‘moderate’ or ‘reduced’ drinking, ‘responsible drinking’ does not necessarily imply anyone should be drinking less alcohol – simply that they should drink properly
- **Avoiding mention of the inherent toxic qualities of ethanol**

The following table illustrates how some of the world’s biggest drinks companies view their corporate social responsibilities.



Company	Position on...			
	Underage drinking	Drink driving	Binge drinking	Consumer responsibility
AB InBev	"Alcohol may have negative health consequences for young people . ^a We promote programs that remind young people to respect the law and not drink when underage." ¹²	"We believe that proper enforcement ^b is the key to tackling this issue, whatever the specific level of [the blood alcohol] restriction." ¹³	"We would rather that consumers enjoy our products responsibly on a more frequent basis than misuse them on any occasion." ¹⁴	"Research shows the vast majority of consumers who choose to drink do so responsibly." ¹⁵
Molson Coors	"We support the passage and enforcement of laws making underage sales and purchases illegal." ¹⁶	"Molson Coors supports effective drunk-driving enforcement in our established markets." ¹⁷	"Drinking large amounts of alcohol over a short period of time is dangerous." ¹⁸	"We urge anybody who is drinking too much to please cut back." ¹⁹
Diageo	"We feel it would be inappropriate for us to engage with those under the legal drinking age, so we do not communicate to this audience directly." ²⁰	"Governments should set legal limits for drivers' blood alcohol concentration, take tough measures to enforce the law and impose strict penalties." ²¹	"There is a public debate about the irresponsible attitude to alcohol by some young adults over the legal purchase age. We share the concerns about the possible social and health impacts of [alcohol] misuse." ²²	"We recognise that some of our consumers cause harm to themselves and others when they drink irresponsibly." ²³
SAB Miller	"Laws preventing the access of alcohol to underage people should be strictly enforced." ²⁴	"[We do] not portray drinking and driving as acceptable behaviour in our marketing." ²⁵	"Drinking that involves rapid intoxication or intoxication for an extended period of time should be avoided." ²⁶	"Consumers are in the best position to judge the personal risks and benefits of drinking alcohol." ²⁷

The drinks industry has been at pains to stress that, unlike most other businesses, heavy consumption of its products is not what it wants. According to AB InBev, "no company benefits when its products are misused".²⁸ SAB Miller, however, have recognised that this presents something of a paradox: "Two objectives are vitally

important to both UK brewers and society. One is to promote the growth of the beer industry...and the other is to reduce the prevalence of problem drinking. At first glance, these goals might seem mutually exclusive".²⁹ And occasionally it does become clear that this is a circle the industry cannot square:

a. Original emphasis added by AB InBev

b. Rather than reducing blood alcohol limits for driving

- Diageo state that people drinking irresponsibly is “not good for them, for society, or for our reputation”.³⁰ At the same time, the Morning Advertiser and Diageo’s joint campaign Spirit Revolution advises publicans on “the art of upselling” and how to “increase spirits sales in your pub”. Amongst the advice offered to landlords is to urge drinkers who order a single measure of spirits to “make it a double”³¹
- Carlsberg UK say they are “committed to the promotion of responsible drinking and ensuring that our consumers are fully informed when making their choice.”³² However, in 2011 they used their trade website to urge off-licenses to “create stacks of your promotional beers” and “site stacks away from the beer fixture to drive impulse purchase.”³³
- JD Wetherspoon have said that they “ensure that, at all times, the customer is reminded of the need to drink responsibly”,³⁴ but when they opened Britain’s first motorway pub in 2013 (on the M40 at Beaconsfield) the company’s chairman stated that “if an individual comes in and orders a whisky or pint of beer, we are not going to ask whether they are driving. You wouldn’t do that in a village pub and we won’t be doing that here.”³⁵

“The alcohol industry’s conflict of interest is so marked that a number of independent health bodies, including the World Health Organisation, take the view that the industry should have no role in policy formation or health promotion with respect to alcohol.”

Rob Poole, 2011³⁶

Given the clear conflict between the industry’s need to drive sales and its professed desire to promote sensible drinking, it is not surprising that researchers have identified a “strategic ambiguity” in industry-funded campaigns on responsible drinking. The nebulous messages in such campaigns appear to encourage sensible drinking whilst not giving any clear idea of what that is, and at the same time presenting positive images of brands and companies, and actually promoting and normalising drinking.³⁷



Increasing just one single spirits measure to a double per day could generate an additional £880 of sales per year



Offering pitchers of simple drinks is an opportunity to sell more spirits and gives drinkers different sharing options, which will result in more profit for you

Next month: MORE ADVICE TO GROW YOUR SPIRIT SALES

(1): TNS Omnibus Research 2012
(2): Diageo/PMA Survey 2014
(3): CGA Total On Trade Volume MAT March 2014

“Make it a double” – Diageo promoting responsible drinking

Hands off – industry attitudes to regulation

“The UK has some of the most effective self-regulatory codes to ensure alcohol is marketed responsibly.”

Portman Group, 2012³⁸

“As good corporate citizens, we believe that well-constructed self-regulatory codes can be more effective and credible than government regulation and legislation. Self-regulatory codes allow for speedy resolution of issues without compromising legitimate advertising and promotional needs.”

Barcardi, 2014³⁹

Like the tobacco industry before it,⁴⁰ the international drinks business has long emphasised its ability to put its own house in order without further interference from governments. Behind this is the oft-stated belief that the industry will suffer if its products are misused, overused, or used by those who should be avoiding them – children in particular. The following statements by four of the world’s biggest brewers give a flavour of the industry’s enthusiasm for managing its own affairs.

aim to “lead on best practice in alcohol social responsibility”,⁴⁶ it has attracted regular allegations that it focuses excessively on comparatively minor issues of labelling and naming of drinks by smaller companies outside its membership, whilst turning a blind eye to the pricing and marketing practices of major players. According to James Watt of Aberdeenshire brewers BrewDog (against whom three complaints have been upheld by the Portman Group), the organisation is “funded by the big boys to look after the interests of the big brewers. They should be going after the big guys who sell 24-packs in the supermarkets for £9.99”.⁴⁷ This sentiment was echoed (albeit it in much more measured terms) by C&C Group (owners of Tennet’s beers and a number of popular ciders, and also supporters of minimum unit pricing) who left the Portman Group in 2014, stating that the group had “moved away from its founding principles and is now dominated by large multi-national drink companies with an agenda at odds with the wider UK industry”.⁴⁸ In this context, the following two fairly recent decisions by the Portman Group’s Independent Complaints Panel are interesting to consider. The first related to Absolut vodka,⁴⁹ owned by Portman Group

Company	Position on regulation
AB InBev	“The Anheuser-Busch InBev code is about ensuring responsible communication and providing evidence to concerned supervisory bodies that self-regulation works effectively.” ⁴¹
Molson Coors	“We follow the letter and spirit of industry self-regulatory codes that are consistent with our commitment to responsibility. We are also an advocate for global standards and self-regulation.” ⁴²
Diageo	“We hope [the Diageo marketing code] inspires all our stakeholders to continue to work together with us, to deliver responsible alcohol marketing and effective self-regulation across the industry and the globe.” ⁴³
SAB Miller	“We’re a strong supporter of self regulation because we believe in collective action to raise standards and promote best practice across the industry.” ⁴⁴

Within the UK, much of the drinks industry’s self-regulation is carried out by the Portman Group – made up of nine of the world’s biggest brewers and distillers, who together hold more than half the UK alcohol market.⁴⁵ Despite its stated



Date of complaint	September 2012	October 2012
Product	Absolut London vodka and souvenir drinking glass	Laverstoke Park Farm ale and lager
Product imagery	A group of historical cartoon characters created by Jamie Hewlett, who previously provided artwork for the band Gorillaz 	A cartoon image of the brewery's owner, former Formula 1 World Champion Jody Scheckter, drawn by his son, and used on other produce from the farm 
Nature of complaint	"The campaign is based on a series of cartoon characters in a graphic novel style, a genre that has a strong niche appeal amongst under-18s."	"The childish nature and colouring of the products label and logo can be misconstrued and appeal to under-18s."
Complaints Panel verdict	Complaint rejected: "The Panel acknowledged that because the characters were historical, based on a broad age range, and so closely associated with London fashion, that the characters would not resonate particularly with under-18s."	Complaint upheld: "The Panel felt the image looked like a child's drawing; and whilst it would be unlikely to appeal to older children, it would be likely to have a particular appeal to younger children."

member Pernod Ricard; the second involves Laverstoke Park Farm,⁵⁰ a privately owned organic brewery in Hampshire.

Following this judgment, the Portman Group sent retailers an Alert Bulletin asking them not to re-stock Laverstoke beers unless their label was changed,⁵¹ allegedly leading to the ending of deals worth £230,000 in total to Scheckter with Waitrose and Sainsbury's.⁵²

There has also been an effort by all the major international drinks companies⁵³ through the umbrella body Global Actions on Harmful Drinking, to push self-regulation in emerging markets as "an alternative to detailed legislation".⁵⁴ SAB Miller, for example, recently responded to proposals by the South African government to ban alcohol advertising by claiming that "good self-regulation will be nullified".⁵⁵ Nor is South Africa the only example of the drinks industry actively seeking

to block or circumvent regulation by national governments. During the FIFA World Cup in Brazil in 2014, a long-standing ban on drinking in football stadiums was suspended in order to enable the sponsors AB-InBev to promote their Budweiser beer; and the same things is set occur during the 2022 competition in Qatar, where it is currently illegal to drink alcohol or be drunk in public.^{56 57}

"There is an important need to build upon the beverage alcohol industry's advanced self-regulatory marketing standards in many developed countries, and to apply relevant best practices to help establish effective marketing self-regulation in the developing world."

Global Actions on Harmful Drinking, 2014⁵⁸



“As a way of avoiding legislative measures, the alcohol industry developed voluntary self-regulatory codes on marketing practices, which have no clear sanctions associated with their violation. Research studies have found significant violations of such self-regulatory codes in many countries globally.”

Ce Zhang et al., 2013⁵⁹

In the UK and elsewhere, self-regulatory codes have been found to be far from adequate in protecting consumers. One study of five beer adverts popular with Brazilian teenagers found that all five were in breach of Brazil’s code of marketing self-regulation, including one which went against 11 of the 16 guidelines in the code.⁶⁰ Similarly, in the UK Alcohol Concern’s Youth Advertising Alcohol Council⁶¹ has had complaints upheld against adverts for Fireball Whisky,⁶² and against the “Let there be beer” campaign by a consortium of major brewers, although not before it had already been widely broadcast.⁶³

“It’s disappointing that young people have to monitor the practices of a multi-million pound industry, but we are pleased to see the ASA have taken young people’s concerns seriously. Unfortunately, these four complaints are just the tip of the iceberg. Young people tell us that they regularly see adverts, both broadcast and online, which go against the letter and the spirit of the codes around alcohol advertising.”

Alcohol Concern, 2013⁶⁴

“The alcohol industry has undermined or ignored codes for the self-regulation of alcohol advertising and failed to enforce these codes when challenged to do so.”

John Bailey et al., 2011⁶⁵

Perhaps conscious of current criticisms of international companies believed not to be paying their fair share of national taxation, drinks companies have tended to avoid public pronouncements on how their financial affairs should be regulated. One exception is Molson Coors, although their motives are open to question. The company have said that they “support reasonable taxes on beer and other alcohol beverages”, adding that they “also believe that while all categories of alcohol beverages have inherent risks, drinks with [a] higher concentration of alcohol carry additional risks that may justify higher rates of taxation”.⁶⁶ It is worth noting here that, unlike some of its main competitors, the Molson Coors portfolio currently includes no wines, spirits or similar drinks that could be said to have a “higher concentration of alcohol” and therefore “carry additional risks”.

Creating new customers

“Drink like a lady” – getting women drinking

“Women are an essential part of future growth for the beer industry and can no longer be ignored.”

Molson Coors, 2011⁶⁷

“Two things above all else lay at the heart of Bailey’s historic success: first, the perception that it was the choice of modern, aspiring, progressive women, achieved through the great marketing campaigns of old; second, we had brilliant, groundbreaking innovation at a product level.”

Diageo, 2009⁶⁸

Whilst, traditionally, women have consumed less alcohol than men, shifting social attitudes have meant that drinking by women (both at home and in bars and restaurants) has become a great deal more normal and acceptable.^{69 70} In its search for growth, the drinks industry has been keen to ride this trend and also to increase it – with an abundance of alcohol marketing specifically targeted at women in recent years. The industry’s efforts to get more women buying more of its products have taken three main routes:

- Concepts of **female camaraderie** and fun with friends
- The appeal of **comfort and luxury**
- Attempts to create and promote **products that appeal particularly to women** in terms of their design and packaging, or by being in some way ‘light’ – lower in calories, less alcoholic, and/or less gassy

“Lambrini is the perfect social lubricant – a light, easy to drink, affordable (wannabe wine) that gets their nights out or in off to a good start. They’ll drink bucket loads of the stuff and still manage to last the duration...Drinking starts early! Early afternoon at the weekend or straight after work Monday to Friday, meeting your girly mates and getting on it is the only way forward.”

Lambrini creative brief, 2005⁷¹

Perhaps the most well known of the ‘female camaraderie’ brands is Halewood International’s popular perry (pear cider) Lambrini. The drink was launched in 1994, and its producers claim that they “stand for everything that is fun, fabulous and female, and we always will”.⁷² The appeal of the brand was recently exemplified by a tie-in between Lambrini and the female-orientated gambling website Cheeky Bingo. Lorna Tweed from Lambrini said that “Friday night online bingo is a perfect match for our consumers to enjoy nights in with friends”, whilst Danny Mahon of Cheeky Bingo, asserted that “Cheeky players love to get together, have fun and chat online, just like Lambrini girls!”⁷³



Alcohol for a good laugh...



...and a good read



The brand that has most consistently sought to promote itself to women via concepts of comfort and luxury is the Diageo liqueur Baileys Irish Cream. The company's 2008 "Listen to your lips" advertising campaign sought to remind consumers of the "sensual pleasure" its alcoholic drinks range can bring,⁷⁴ a theme that was taken to new heights in 2013 with the launch of Baileys Chocolat Luxe.

"This rich, indulgent liquid is truly a phenomenon in chocolate – turning the sensory experience of eating chocolate into a decadent drink. Baileys Chocolat Luxe is a ground breaking innovation fusing real Belgian chocolate with alcohol."

Diageo, 2014⁷⁵

The Baileys brand has been extended in recent years to include alcoholic cream, ice cream and choc ices. Häagen-Daaz Baileys ice cream is described as a "sensuous" combination of liqueur and ice cream.⁷⁶ Coupled with this appeal to the senses, Baileys has also sought to portray itself as the choice of intellectuals by its sponsorship of the Baileys Women's Prize for Fiction, tie-in that also helps give the brand a hint of quasi-feminist kudos.⁷⁷

In the USA, Brown Forman (best known for their Jack Daniel's Tennessee Whiskey) launched their Little Black Dress (LBD) vodka in 2012, said to be "designed for women by women, because no one understands your taste more than someone in the same shoes".⁷⁸ In accordance with the drinks industry's stated desire to go beyond "traditional consumption opportunities"⁷⁹ and increase the number of situations in which alcohol is acceptable and even necessary, Brown Forman claim that LBD's "distinct flavours can be dressed up or down to be the perfect fit for any occasion".⁸⁰ It is "designed specifically to capture the essence of what women want in a cocktail... and with an eye toward[s] [the] calorie count".⁸¹ This second statement is particularly worrying given the trend noted by some substance misuse workers for young women to move away

from beer and wine towards clear spirits (such as vodka) which may have a higher alcohol concentration but fewer calories.

"Ladies, it's time. Time to bring the old rules of cocktailling into the modern age. Time to re-write the books on the way we socialize. Time to redefine just what it means to be a lady. Sure, a lady always says, 'please' and 'thank you', but a lady also knows what she wants, and isn't afraid to go out and get it. And Skinnygirl Cocktails is here to show you how. It's a woman's world out there, and it's time to Drink Like a Lady".

Skinnygirl, 2014⁸²

LBD is part of a trend in the USA for lower calorie alcoholic drinks targeted at women, perhaps best exemplified by the Skinnygirl brand.⁸³ In 2009, Skinnygirl Margarita was launched by Beam Suntory (owners of Jim Beam, Teachers and a number of major Japanese brands) in collaboration with "natural foods chef" and television presenter Bethenny Frankel, with the range being later expanded to include premixed cocktails, wines and vodkas. These are promoted alongside a range of snack bars and exercise DVDs as part of the Skinnygirl Healthy Habits Challenge.⁸⁴ Although this trend has not been seen to the same extent in the UK, in June 2014 Diageo launched their Nola Vodka Spritz as a "great tasting, lighter alternative to wine,"⁸⁵ in bottles and cans prominently stating that it contains only 79 calories per 175ml (compared with around 130 calories in the same volume of wine).



Alcohol as a calorie-laden indulgence...



...and a means to weight loss

Attempts to promote beer to women have been more problematic, hampered by ideas that beers contain more calories than wine and are basically masculine. In 2008, Molson Coors famously established a unit to develop beer brands and marketing techniques to appeal to women, with a stated mission to create “a world where women love beer as much as they love shoes”.⁸⁶ The most obvious result was the fruit-flavoured beer range Animée, which was withdrawn from the market after just 11 months.⁸⁷ This failure led to something of a reassessment of the need for specific “women’s beers”. Molson Coors themselves pointed out that their Coors Light, Corona, and Carling Zest brands were already attracting many female drinkers with marketing that avoided strongly masculine or feminine themes.⁸⁸

“Continental [beer] brands like Corona, Hoegaarden and Peroni perform so well amongst women [because] they all appeal to women for one reason or another (interesting serve, something a bit different, trendy glassware), without the need for overly feminine branding.”

Rosie Pragnell, 2014⁸⁹

Perhaps the most striking example of a beer that appeals to women and men is SAB Miller’s Italian lager Peroni Nastro Azzuro. Like Molson Coors’ Corona, Peroni is marketed in the UK as being sophisticatedly foreign – “an unmistakable character and a touch of Italian style and flair”.⁹⁰ Clearly aimed at aspirational middle class drinkers, Peroni Nastro Azzuro and its associated brands are the only beers offered to diners at the middle-market Italian food chains Pizza Express,⁹¹ Prezzo,⁹² Strada⁹³ and Ask⁹⁴ in the UK.

For consumers keen to fully immerse themselves in the brand, there is the self-consciously hip House of Peroni in central London, which is promoted as location for Italian fashion, food and design, with a chance to “meet the cultural visionaries at the heart of Italian style and culture”.⁹⁵ This focus on lifestyle over product is reflected in the Peroni’s adverts, many of which never show the beer they aim to sell. Although these adverts featuring glamorous Italian women could be seen as appealing men, they are often placed in women’s magazines, and clearly do engage with some women, as the following two blog posts indicate.



The beer ad with no beer: Peroni girls appeal to both sexes, albeit possibly for different reasons

"The Peroni '50s inspired billboards and adverts in magazines have been catching my attention over the last few months. This image alone makes me want to be a Peroni girl."

prettygreentea.com, 2012⁹⁶

"How fabulous are the girls in the Peroni ad campaigns? I've always been so jealous that I'm not one of them by Lake Como or racing a Fiat 500 in the snowy mountains of Cortina d'Ampezza. The ads show the beautiful people celebrating, in the long, hot days of summer, or the cold, snowy days of winter, in classic Italian style."

islawilde.wordpress.com, 2012⁹⁷

Too much, too young – the next generation of drinkers

"The future profitability of the alcohol industry logically requires the continual recruitment of a new generation of young heavy drinkers."

John Bailey et al., 2011⁹⁸

"People have grown up on Pepsi and Coke, so the younger generation have a much sweeter palate. We are playing to that. There has been a huge focus around flavoured beers, and we are developing products around apple and citrus."

SAB Miller, 2014⁹⁹



A vigorous debate has been running for many years about the extent to which alcoholic products are either intentionally or incidentally promoted to young people under the legal drinking age (18 in most countries).¹⁰⁰ The alcohol industry is keen to insist that it does not market its products to children.¹⁰¹ However, the industry generally defines this very narrowly as not directly seeking out underage customers, as the table below indicates.

Company	Position on marketing alcohol to children and young people
AB InBev	"It is important that we ensure that our communication and marketing activities are not directed at people under the legal drinking age." ¹⁰²
Molson Coors	"We aim to avoid any misunderstanding that we target underage drinkers." ¹⁰³
Diageo	"We feel it would be inappropriate for us to engage with those under the legal drinking age, so we do not communicate to this audience directly." ¹⁰⁴
SAB Miller	"Although, to our knowledge, studies indicate that advertising has a negligible, if any, influence on underage drinking, we do not and will not target our marketing to anyone under the legal drinking age." ¹⁰⁵

Despite these statements, an analysis by Prof Gerard Hastings of internal drinks industry documents published in 2009 concluded that young people are a "key target" for alcohol advertisers. One document from Halewood International indicated that the company regarded the youngest market sector for its Caribbean Twist range of pre-mixed rum cocktails as being aged 15 to 24, and Prof Hastings concluded that "whether or not under-18 year olds are deliberately targeted, it is clear that producers are interested in the very youngest end of the legal drinking market".¹⁰⁶

As well as exposure to alcohol advertising on radio and television, in print media and on billboards, research by Alcohol Concern has shown that online social media,¹⁰⁷ sponsorship of sport and cultural events,¹⁰⁸ and the placement of alcohol branding on food and clothing,¹⁰⁹ all provide means for alcohol marketing to grab children's attention, whether intentionally or otherwise. The extent to which this has happened was highlighted by Alcohol Concern's study in 2011 of the recognition of alcohol brands by children aged 10 and 11. This found that:

- 79% of children were aware that Carlsberg is an alcoholic drink. This was significantly higher than the recognition of Ben and Jerry's ice cream (74%) and Mr Kipling cakes (49%) as types of food
- The Fosters and Stella Artois logos were recognised as being for alcoholic drinks by 95% of children

- The Brad and Dan Fosters television advertisement image was correctly associated with alcohol by 75% of the children; compared with just 42% who correctly identified Cadbury's Dairy Milk drumming gorilla advertisement as being for a food.¹¹⁰

It has always been difficult to determine whether alcohol marketing specifically causes individuals to drink. There is a complex combination of factors – such as upbringing, drinking behaviours of family and friends, and price and availability – that can all, to varying degrees, influence drinking decisions. Nevertheless, a growing number of systematic reviews conclude that exposure to alcohol advertising and promotion does increase the likelihood that children and young people will:

- Start to use alcohol
- Drink more if they are already using alcohol.¹¹¹

In short, if children repeatedly see and hear positive messages about drinking alcohol, then their expectations about alcohol are likely reflect to the content of those messages.

Minority pursuits – matching your ethanol to your ethnicity

"By 2020, ethnic consumers, including Hispanics, are going to drive more than 70% of all growth in the beer market. It's an incredibly important demographic. What we've tried to do with this program is create a distinctive and integrated program with a clear and consistent message that Heineken is what's next in Latin music and culture."

Heineken USA, 2011¹¹³

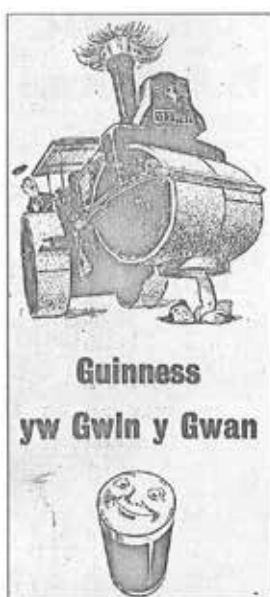
"Multicultural is the new mainstream for brewers in search of growth."

EJ Schultz, 2012¹¹⁴

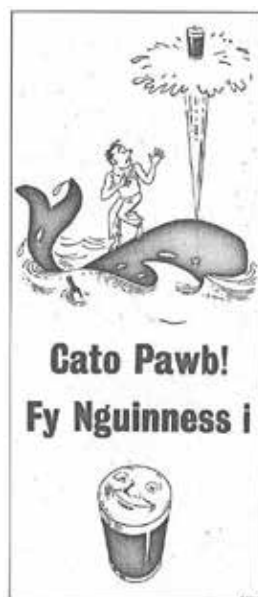
Attempts to draw in particular sections of the population are nothing new in brewing. In the 1950s, Guinness sought to increase the market for their beer in a community with a traditional leaning towards temperance, with a series of adverts in *Y Cymro* and *Baner ac Amserau Cymru* using Welsh translations of their English catchphrases.¹¹⁵

Alcohol marketing targeted at other ethnic minorities in the UK has been limited, perhaps because for many decades the most significant minorities within the UK had their origins in Commonwealth countries where alcohol use was not a strong social norm. (Alcohol consumption in India and Pakistan, for example, in the 1960s was statistically close to zero).¹¹⁶ More recently, some attempts have been made to capitalise on the increased number of Eastern Europeans now living and working in the UK, with the Polish beers Żywiec (owned by Heineken) and Lech and Tyskie (both owned by SAB Miller) all being widely distributed and promoted.¹¹⁷

The picture has been very different across the Atlantic, where matching marketing to ethnicity is often seen as a key brand strategy. In 2013, Cuban-American business guru Glenn Llopis advised that "most US-based firms have a significant corporate imperative to attract Hispanic consumers, given their tremendous demographic and economic importance".¹¹⁸ It has been estimated that Spanish speakers will make up 15% of the total drinking age population of the USA by 2015, and 25% of it by 2045.¹¹⁹ Amongst the companies seeking to cash in on this market



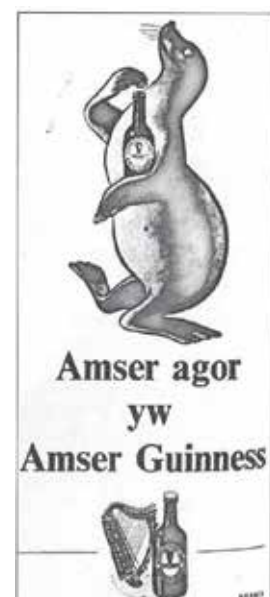
"Guinness for strength"
(literally "Guinness is the wine of the weak")



"My goodness!
My Guinness!"



"Lovely day
for a Guinness"



"Opening time
is Guinness time"

Images by kind permission of Gwasg Carreg Gwalch, Llanrwst

are Molson Coors, who launched their citrus-flavoured Coors Light Summer Brew this year after tests showed that fruit-flavoured beers were popular with Latino drinkers. The company has freely admitted that this is an important market for it because Latino males in their 20s drink 20% more beer on average than people of that age group in the general population.¹²⁰

In 2011, Anheuser Bush launched their www.africanamericanbud.com website, alongside a similar site aimed at Hispanic consumers. The site attracted a certain amount of ridicule,¹²¹ and was eventually taken down, although Anheuser Bush still promotes one of its key elements as part of its corporate social responsibility offering: Legends of the Crown is an online collection of 30 paintings of historical African monarchs commissioned by the brewery. The collection is said to offer “lessons in leadership from Anheuser-Busch and the great kings and queens of Africa” and to show the company as a “corporate leader ahead of the times”.¹²²

More recently drinks companies have tended towards marketing materials that recognise the multi-ethnic nature of US society, and the appeal of some aspects of Black and Hispanic culture to

the population as a whole. For example, one of Molson Coors’ most successful campaigns – in which musician Ice Cube argues with a bottle of Coors Light over which one of them is colder – was originally targeted at African-Americans, but in the end had a much broader appeal, leading *Advertising Age* magazine to conclude that “multicultural is the new mainstream for brewers in search of growth”.¹²³

Niche markets – turning small beer into big business

“There’s a bit more of a sipping culture than a supping culture. What used to be a working class way of life is now a middle-class hobby.”

John Grocock, 2012¹²⁴

“Cask ale drinkers have more money to spend than any other group of drinkers – they are more than twice as likely to earn more than the national average wage than the population in general.”

Society of Independent Brewers, 2014¹²⁵



AB-InBev targets black drinkers with African history lessons

Despite stagnant beer sales in the UK, one area of brewing where growth has been reported is in 'craft beers' (also referred to as 'artisan beers' and 'real ale') with such drinks becoming increasingly popular amongst more prosperous drinkers. According to the 2012 Cask Report, real ale accounted for 8% of beer sales in the UK, and 15% of the beer sold in pubs, bars and restaurants (compared with 7% and 11% respectively in 2008)¹²⁶ and a similar pattern is being seen in the USA.¹²⁷

This trend has gone hand in hand with a flowering of small breweries (sometimes based within pubs or private houses) but international drinks corporations have not been slow to catch on. Blue Moon Belgian White,¹²⁸ for example, is promoted as "a craft ale developed on a baseball ground in Denver"¹²⁹ by the Blue Moon Brewing Company.¹³⁰ It was in fact created in a Molson Coors brewery attached to a baseball stadium sponsored by the company. A similar process has taken place with the Cornish bitter Doom Bar. Found in bars and pubs across Britain and internationally, it is now claimed to be "the No.1 selling cask beer in the UK".¹³¹ Much is made of its provenance "made exclusively from Cornish water"¹³² and brewed by the Camel Estuary. It's also part of a profitable and growing craft portfolio for Molson Coors.



Molson Coors get crafty in Denver....

Emerging markets – Asia, Africa and Latin America

"Diageo needs to expand into emerging markets because earnings growth is becoming challenging in some more mature markets."

John Ficenec, 2014¹³³

"Developing markets remain the engine of volume growth for the global beer industry. Per capita alcohol consumption continues to rise as disposable incomes increase."

SAB Miller, 2013¹³⁴

It has become a commonplace in recent years for drinks company executives refer to Europe as a 'challenging' environment in which to try and sell more alcohol.¹³⁵ With consumption levels already high, and the market crowded with competitors, it's hardly surprising that international drinks companies are seeking to tap into new markets worldwide. Economic growth in many parts of Asia, Africa and Latin America is creating more and more potential consumers for commercial alcoholic drinks. SAB Miller, for example, reported in 2013 that Latin America accounted for 32% of its earnings, compared with just 12% each coming from Europe and North America.¹³⁶



...and in Cornwall

Many countries outside Europe and North America have historically very low levels of alcohol consumption. The following table shows drinking levels, in terms of the average number of litres of pure ethanol drunk by each person per year, in the most populous countries in each of four major world drinks markets in the period 2008-10.¹³⁷ (These totals include legal alcohol sales as well as estimated illicit consumption). The potential for growth in alcohol sales in a number of populous countries is obvious.

European Union	North America (excluding Mexico)	Asia	Africa	Latin America
Germany 11.8 litres	USA 9.2 litres	China 6.7 litres	Nigeria 10.1 litres	Brazil 8.7 litres
France 12.2 litres	Canada 10.3 litres	India 4.3 litres	Ethiopia 4.2 litres	Mexico 7.2 litres
United Kingdom 11.6 litres	—	Indonesia 0.6 litres	Egypt 0.4 litres	Colombia 6.2 litres

A similar pattern can be seen if the data is broken down according to the World Health Organisation's six operating regions.

WHO Region	Average consumption (litres of pure alcohol per person per year) 2008-10
Africa	6.0 litres
Americas	8.4 litres
Europe	10.9 litres
Eastern Mediterranean	0.7 litres
South-East Asia	3.5 litres
Western Pacific	6.8 litres

In seeking to maximise sales around the world, drinks companies have taken a two-pronged approach:

- On the one hand they have their **'strategic' or 'signature' brands with "broad consumer appeal across geographies"** and "consistent

marketing from country to country".¹³⁸ Indeed, the appeal of such brands is often that they are not local, and that they represent the Anglo-American culture that newly affluent Asians, Africans or Latin Americans may aspire to

- On the other are their **'local champions' to "capture the local taste of our consumers"**¹³⁹ and often maintaining a strong local identity.

Asia

"In China particularly, beer consumption has grown exponentially. In 1992, Chinese consumers drank 12 pints per person, per year. By 2011, this had jumped by 425% to 63 [pints]."

MarketLine, 2012¹⁴⁰

"The expansion of alcohol production and consumption in China over recent decades has been followed by a predictable increase in both acute and chronic problems resulting from alcohol use, and the increase is likely to accelerate in the future."

Yi-lang Tang et al., 2012¹⁴¹

With rapid rates of economic growth and a burgeoning middle class in many Asian countries, the focus of many drinks companies' marketing is increasingly shifting eastwards. In China in particular (where more than a billion potential

consumers are up for grabs) economic growth and greater personal wealth have been drivers of increased alcohol consumption. A sharp rise in drinking has been recorded there, from an average of 0.4 litres of pure alcohol per person per year in 1952, to 2.5 litres in 1978, and 4.9 litres in 2009 – a more than tenfold increase in one or two generations. Moreover, these figures only reflect legal consumption, and a great deal more is drunk unofficially. Unsurprisingly, this increase in consumption has gone hand in hand with increases in alcohol-related illnesses.¹⁴²

International drinks industry growth in China has been very much at the luxury end of the market. One obvious example has been Diageo's Scotch whisky portfolio, which accounts for more than 50% of the company's recent growth in sales in the Asia-Pacific region.¹⁴³ Echoing SAB Miller's on-trend central London House of Peroni,¹⁴⁴ in 2011, Diageo opened a new Johnnie Walker House in Shanghai, followed in 2012 by one in Beijing, aiming to entice spending by China's new wealthy middle class.¹⁴⁵ Described by the company as "the world's largest embassy for luxury Scotch whisky", the Beijing venue includes a bar, museum, shop and a private club.

In the world of work, boozing with customers and colleagues is increasingly important for business people wanting to get ahead, and in August 2014 the *Economist* reported that some job advertisements in China now ask for "good drinking capacity".¹⁴⁶ Luxury Western spirits have also become popular in China as gifts and bribes for government officials. One study has shown that civil servants in China suffer with alcoholic liver diseases much more than the general population, and that the higher their rank, the more likely they are to have the disease.¹⁴⁷ In March 2014 the *Financial Times* reported that Diageo, Pernod Ricard and Rémy Cointreau had seen big falls in sales of their spirits in China in the wake of a major anti-corruption campaign there. The paper reported that the companies had "explicitly blamed Beijing's austerity drive for their woes".¹⁴⁸

As elsewhere in the world, drinks companies have been quick to take advantage of digital media in Asia, with Diageo establishing a substantial presence on Weibo – the site that fills the gap left by the prohibition of Twitter and Facebook in China's heavily censored online environment. The company's Johnnie Walker whisky has 634,000 fans on Weibo¹⁴⁹ and Baileys has 150,000.¹⁵⁰ Relative newcomer Pernod Ricard's Chivas Regal has 66,000.¹⁵¹



On Weibo, Bailey's is for good times with the girls...



...and Chivas Regal is all about male bonding and business success

Africa

"Africa remains the key opportunity for growing our outstanding beer business, and expanding spirits."

Diageo, 2013¹⁵²

Africa has long been an important market for international drinks companies, but recent years have seen a renewed drive to increase sales. Guinness, for example, has been imported into Nigeria since the 1800s, and brewed there since 1962. Whilst Guinness is sold around the world as a quintessentially Irish drink, Guinness Nigeria describes itself as "an iconic African company",¹⁵³ and owners Diageo have successfully positioned their product as a marker of Nigerian identity – in particular by linking it with the national football team (the Eagles) winners of the 2013 African Cup of Nations. Along with the UK, USA, and its neighbour Cameroon, Nigeria is listed by Diageo as one of its top markets for the Guinness, which is also popular with Nigerian ex-pats and is sold in the UK by Tesco. Nigerian Guinness (also known as Foreign Extra Stout) has an alcoholic strength of 7.5% – around 1¾ times the strength of Guinness Original, and a 600ml bottle delivers a hefty 4.5 units of alcohol.

Diageo is just one of a number of Western drinks companies jostling hard to get a bigger slice of lucrative African markets such as Nigeria.¹⁵⁴ Sensing the opportunity for increased sales, SAB Miller have said they aim to raise average beer consumption in Africa from its current level of around 8 litres per person per year, up to as much as 30 litres per person within 15 to 20 years.¹⁵⁵

A variety of tactics are being employed. Poorer drinkers are targeted by SAB Miller with Chibuku¹⁵⁶ – an opaque beer made from sorghum, maize and cassava that the company sells in cardboard cartons for around half the price of its bottled beers.¹⁵⁷ Chibuku is a traditional brew that continues to ferment in the box, with its alcoholic strength increasing over about 5 days from 2% to 5%, and has been described as an alcoholic porridge.¹⁵⁸ At other end of the economic scale, drinkers SAB Miller has described as "new aspirational customers"¹⁵⁹ are targeted with more expensive brews. Spirits manufacturers are not far behind, either: "We want to do the same in Africa as we have done in Asia," says Pierre Pringuet, chief executive of Pernod Ricard (owners of Malibu, Beefeater and Jameson), which currently makes a major slice of its profits from emerging markets in Asia.¹⁶⁰



Guinness is essentially Irish...



...and Nigerian



"New aspirational customers" in Nigeria getting the beers in

"The role of women in Africa is changing rapidly, with many women gaining greater status and influence in African societies. Snapp provides African women with a product they feel is more refined than beer, with cues of differentiation and sophistication".

Diageo, 2014¹⁶¹

As a subset of marketing aimed at ambitious middle class drinkers, women have been a particular target for marketers in Africa. In Kenya – where alcohol consumption by women is around 1.3 litres of ethanol per year, compared with 6.9 litres for British women and 7.4 litres for Kenyan men¹⁶² – Diageo has launched the alcoholic apple drink Snapp. In a manner similar to Brown Forman's Little Black Dress vodka (see **Drink like a lady** page 12) Snapp is described by the Diageo as its "first brand in Africa to be developed and marketed exclusively for women" and is promoted by a glamorous trio of Snapp

Girls who draw envious glances from less slim women in the promotional video.¹⁶³ In reality, the commercialisation of brewing in Africa by firms like Diageo has, if anything, undermined the status of many women as it displaces the traditional home-brewing often carried out by women and representing "a rare source of authority and prestige for women on a male-dominated continent".¹⁶⁴

"What is most attractive about a frontier market like Africa is that the competition is not other beer brands; it's home brew. Only about 20% of the beer consumed in Africa is branded or bottled. The remaining 80% is brewed at home or by small commercial establishments. I'm not talking about trendy craft brews here; I'm talking about moonshine. As incomes continue to rise in Africa, so will consumption of bottled beer."

Charles Sizemore, 2014¹⁶⁵

"Thus [women] are alewives and brewsters as long as there is no serious profit to be made. When brewing becomes economically viable on a larger scale, women are ousted. They become barmaids and landlord's appendages."

Steven Earnshaw, 2000¹⁶⁶

Like Lambrini, Snapp is a cider marketed like a wine, with the suggestion it should be served in Champagne flutes, and the claim that it "provides a more stylish and sophisticated alternative to beer".¹⁶⁷ In its first year of sales from 2012-13 there were £10 million net sales of the drink making it Diageo's "most successful launch of a new brand, ever".¹⁶⁸ It is interesting to note in this context, that Halewood International were able to successfully defend themselves in 2012 against complaints about their "I am what I am" television advert for Lambrini by pointing out that none of the Lambrini Girls in the advert was actually shown drinking.¹⁶⁹ Clearly, Diageo did not feel the need to place the same restriction on its Snapp Girls in Kenya's more lax regulatory environment.



Lambrini girl

Latin America

"We have expanded our reach to emerging middle class consumers...Despite some headwinds in Brazil and volatility in Venezuela, these are long term, high-growth markets with favourable population demographics, and we are well positioned to capture these opportunities."

Diageo, 2013¹⁷⁰

"Overall, globalization and consolidation have contributed to the expansion of the alcohol industry in the Latin American region."

Ce Zhang et al., 2013¹⁷¹

As in Africa, Western drinks companies' efforts in Latin America have focussed on increasing consumption at both ends of the income spectrum. In Colombia, Honduras and El Salvador, where alcohol consumption is low even by Latin American standards (at 6.2, 4.0 and 3.2 litres of ethanol per person per year respectively) SAB Miller is seeking to "make beer more affordable and accessible".¹⁷² Expressing concern



Snapp girl



that “80% of the population in our operating countries is in the lowest two income levels, and for them beer is still an expensive choice”, their solution has been to sell and promote their brands as the “smarter, more affordable way to buy a beer”. The 750ml (just under 1⅓ pints) bottle of the company’s Aguila beer is said to “provide great value for money, particularly when shared amongst friends”¹⁷³ – similar to the British Retail Consortium’s claim that bulk packages of alcohol sold at a discount by supermarkets are “for enjoying at home with family and friends over a long period”.¹⁷⁴

SAB Miller also aim to “meet the aspirations of our premium consumers”¹⁷⁵ with beers like Cusqueña, “specially made for those consumers who value

the best brands”.¹⁷⁶ The company’s corporate reports show how they seek to sell to low-income labourers in the ramshackle *pueblos jóvenes*^c of Peru, who may have beer with their family Sunday dinner; and also to hip urban professionals in the Colombian capital Bogotá, seeking “some beers to refresh” after a game of indoor soccer.¹⁷⁷ Not to be outdone, French spirits giant Pernod Ricard have been promoting their top-end Chivas whisky brands with a high-profile Spanish-language campaign entitled Chivas Home Parties, offering to turn the apartments of young professionals into a disco and bar for the evening, complete with a Chivas barman.¹⁷⁸

c. Literally “young towns” – shanty towns better known by the Brazilian term *favelas*



The typical consumer in Peru

- 38L, 25 years old, living in ramshackle neighbourhood
- Single, lives with the mother of his child in his parents' house
- Family and friends are very important and trusted
- He works as a labourer, with a monthly salary of \$1,500 (US\$350), and works the neighbourhood for extra jobs
- He knows it will be a struggle to make a success of his life and he dreams of ending his own business so he can educate his son
- He is optimistic about the future and is proud of being Peruvian
- He loves visiting relatives in the country and enjoys regional festivals
- He plays soccer on weekday evenings and enjoys a beer afterwards, while being a loyal fan of his local team
- On weekends he hangs out with friends, chilling in local bars in the afternoon and partying in discos at night
- He spends Sundays with the family, who gather for a traditional home-cooked meal and family time, often with a beer

SAB Miller bringing beer opportunities to rich and poor in Colombia and Peru



Creating customers in Latin America:
Enjoying cheap beer with your mates in a concrete pub with branded plastic chairs...



...or hosting a whisky-themed party for your fellow city slickers at your urban bachelor pad



“Our association with football creates a powerful connection with fans and has helped drive Budweiser’s growth in Brazil.”

AB InBev, 2013¹⁷⁹

“Alcoholic drinks are part of the FIFA World Cup, so we’re going to have them.”

Jerome Valcke, 2012¹⁸⁰

“I was amazed by the number of people who were drunken [at the World Cup games] and the level of alcohol. I was a bit surprised.”

Jerome Valcke, 2014¹⁸¹

For SAB Miller’s big beer competitor AB-InBev, one of the biggest opportunities for alcohol marketing in Latin America has been the 2014 FIFA World Cup in Brazil. The company’s Budweiser beer was the official beer of the tournament, providing it with a clear opportunity to further shake off its North American image and position itself more firmly in markets further south. The sponsorship was controversial from the start. Faced with a long-standing ban on the sale of alcoholic drinks in Brazil’s football stadiums – that would have prevented one of the major sponsors from pushing their product to spectators – FIFA’s General Secretary Jerome Valcke went as far as to insist that “alcoholic drinks are part of the FIFA World Cup, so we’re going to have them”. Pressure from FIFA led ultimately to the Brazil’s national parliament overturning the ban it had passed in 2003,¹⁸² and is already being applied to Russia and Qatar, hosts of the Cup in 2018 and 2022, to repeal their own restrictions on alcohol sales in and around their football stadiums.¹⁸³ Valcke later said that he was “amazed by the number of people who were drunken and the level of alcohol” during World Cup matches in Brazil.¹⁸⁴

Discussion and recommendations

"Creating a positive role for alcohol in society is our highest priority and fundamental to our long term business interests."

Diageo, 2014¹⁸⁵

"There is a beer for every occasion and every taste. It's time to stand up, raise a glass, be proud of it, and above all: love it. We say let there be beer!"

Carlsberg UK, 2014¹⁸⁶

In March 2013, 34 of the UK's drinks companies pledged to "remove 1 billion units of alcohol sold annually from the market by December 2015".¹⁸⁷ Signatories to the pledge included AB InBev, who's "goal [is] to create new occasions to share our products with consumers",¹⁸⁸ and Carlsberg, who two years earlier had urged retailers to stack up beers "away from the beer fixture to drive impulse purchase."¹⁸⁹

Despite claims at the time that the Billion Unit Pledge showed "how social responsibility and commercial success can go hand in hand",¹⁹⁰ the industry's attitude to ensuring sensible levels of alcohol consumption continues to have a narrow focus on:

- Vocal opposition to activities that are already illegal (such as underage sales and drunk driving)
- Responsible use of alcohol by consumers, rather than its responsible marketing and sale
- Support for measures with little or no proven effectiveness (such as the Portman Group's labelling campaign).¹⁹¹

Meanwhile, the drinks industry insists that its massive marketing spend in the UK is not intended to increase consumption, whilst simultaneously eyeing up "developing markets... [where] per capita alcohol consumption continues to rise as disposable incomes increase."¹⁹² In spite of its protestations that "no company benefits when its products are misused",¹⁹³ the alcohol

industry as a whole, like any other industry, has a collective interest in increasing the number of occasions on which consumer use its products, and increasing the number of those consumers.

Like many businesses, the global drinks industry would like people around that world to think that they'll get less out of life without its products – Diageo state that "every day, everywhere customers and consumers can rely on Diageo to help them celebrate life,"¹⁹⁴ and that "creating a positive role for alcohol in society is our highest priority and fundamental to our long term business interests."¹⁹⁵ To this end, the industry argues that self-regulation is "more effective and credible than government regulation and legislation"¹⁹⁶ and seeks to "avoid any misunderstanding"¹⁹⁷ that it might be breaking the rules. In reality, this self-regulation has proved ineffective in the UK and elsewhere, and there have even been suggestions that it has advantaged some major drinks companies at the expense of their smaller competitors.^{198 199} In spite of its commitment to "global standards and self-regulation"²⁰⁰ and "effective self-regulation across the industry and the globe",²⁰¹ where the drink industry sees an opportunity to push the boundaries of advertising – as in the case of Kenya's cider-quaffing Snapp girls²⁰² – it gladly takes it. It has also not shied away from placing undue pressure on national governments to allow it more scope to sell its products – as seen in the pressure on the South African government to continue to allow alcohol advertising,²⁰³ and on the Brazilian government to permit sales of alcohol in football stadiums.²⁰⁴

It is quite clear that the international alcohol industry cannot be relied upon to regulate its own activities in the public interest, and that national governments (and, where appropriate, supranational agreements between governments) need to take the lead in managing the sale and marketing of alcohol. Alcohol Concern recommends the following controls be implemented in the UK, and we would also suggest that the principles embodied in them have a wider international relevance.



Recommendation 1

The regulation of alcohol promotion should be statutory and independent of the alcohol industry, and meaningful sanctions for non-compliance should be in place.

Recommendation 2

Where the promotion of alcohol is permitted, messages and images should only refer to the characteristics of the product: its origin, composition, strength, and means of production. Use of lifestyle images of drinkers or scenes depicting a drinking atmosphere should be prohibited.

Recommendation 3

Given the obvious conflict between the alcohol industry's need to promote the use of alcohol and the need to promote moderate drinking, alcohol producers should have no role in formulating information or policy relating to the safe use of their products. Messages about the safe use of alcohol should be drawn up by a body independent of the industry, and should be factual in nature and avoid ambiguous concepts such as "responsible drinking".

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204. op. cit. Ce, Z. and Monteiro, M. (2013).

Creating customers

Finding new ways and places to sell alcohol,
and new people to buy it

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Alcohol Concern
Promoting health; improving lives