

# Using Critical Social Marketing to examine Alcohol Marketing in Developing Nations

## Executive Summary

The World Health Organisation identifies alcohol consumption, binge drinking, and alcohol related harm as a major concern. Addressing alcohol related harms in the developing world necessitates an understanding of factors that influence drinking, including alcohol marketing. However, there is a paucity of research on alcohol marketing in developing nations. This report presents findings from a study utilising a critical social marketing framework to examine alcohol marketing in developing countries. Critical social marketing has been defined as critical research from a marketing perspective on the impact commercial marketing has upon society to help build an evidence base, inform upstream efforts such as advocacy, inform policy and regulation, and inform development of downstream social marketing interventions (Gordon, 2011).

With the co-operation of the development agency FORUT\* we analysed commercial marketing in seven developing nations based on UK regulatory codes. We assessed a sample of 15 alcohol promotions from India, Malawi, Nigeria, Philippines, Sri Lanka and Thailand against the regulatory codes governing alcohol marketing in the UK - often cited as a gold standard system. Promotions were examined according to seven key themes from the UK system, which forbid associations between alcohol and youth appeal, personal/social success, sexual success, driving (sport), immoderate drinking, aggression/toughness, and strength and power.

The results of this analysis found multiple breaches according to the UK codes. In several cases, promotions breached more than one theme from the codes. Seven communications linked alcohol with strength and power, six with sexual success, and four with both personal/social success,

and youth appeal. The findings suggest that alcohol producers are using questionable tactics to market brands in the developing world. The industry should re-examine its strategies accordingly, and marketing practitioners should develop more socially responsible practices. Critical social marketing studies such as this can also feed into the upstream arena to inform policy and regulation relating to alcohol marketing, as well as downstream social marketing interventions to address drinking behaviours.

## Summary Report Alcohol in the Developing World

Alcohol consumption and alcohol related harms in the developing world are growing concerns (WHO, 2011). Furthermore, heavy episodic drinking is also increasing in many developing countries (Room *et al.* 2002). Alcohol related health harms are numerous, and include coronary heart disease, liver cirrhosis and stroke. Furthermore, alcohol related harm is correlated with infectious diseases in the developing world (WHO, 2011). Alcohol attributable mortality and mortality per litre of pure alcohol per capita is highest in countries with low incomes (Rehm *et al.* 2009). This is partly due to higher incidence of alcohol related infectious diseases, malnutrition and deficiencies in public health infrastructure.

Alcohol producers are becoming increasingly active in developing countries, in part due to market saturation in developed nations, resulting in the identification of opportunities for growth among non-drinking populations in the developing world (Anderson, 2005). The development of interventions designed to tackle alcohol related harms in the developing world, requires an understanding of the factors that influence drinking behaviours. One such factor that has been associated with

drinking behaviours is alcohol marketing (Babor et al. 2010).

### **Alcohol Marketing & Drinking Behaviour**

The evidence base regarding the association between alcohol marketing and drinking behaviours has developed considerably over the past thirty years. Indeed, three systematic reviews suggest small but significant associations between alcohol marketing and drinking behaviours (Meier et al. 2008; Anderson et al. 2009; Smith and Foxcroft, 2009). Furthermore, studies in developing countries suggest alcohol advertising is on the increase, and that adolescents display a high level of awareness of alcohol marketing (Houssou et al. 1999; Tuladhar, 2005). This evidence has generated considerable discussion over public policy in relation to alcohol marketing, and particularly the appropriate regulatory framework (Anderson, 2009). Yet there remains a paucity of published research concerning alcohol marketing in the developing world.

### **Alcohol Marketing Regulation**

In developed countries, alcohol marketing is regulated through various systems including self-regulation, co-regulation, statutory regulation, outright bans (STAP, 2007). Although there are differences in the approach used across countries, common themes in relation to regulation of alcohol marketing include rules over alcohol marketing featuring references to youth appeal, personal/social success, sporting success, sexual success, immoderate drinking, aggression and toughness, and strength and power. In this research, the UK regulatory framework governing alcohol marketing was used to conduct the analysis based on the UK codes of practice of the Advertising Standards Authority/Committee of Advertising Practice (CAP 2010) and the Portman Group (2008).

### **Alcohol Marketing in the Developing World**

In developing countries, the regulation of alcohol marketing is less systematic or often non-existent, with enforcement a major problem. (Casswell and Maxwell, 2005). This has led to criticism of alcohol industry activities overseas (Anderson, 2009; Jernigan, 2009). Indeed, unethical commercial practices including false advertising claims, youth targeting and breaches of international and voluntary codes of practice have been identified in India, Malawi, and Nepal (ADD, 2011). However, there is a paucity of research on the nature, extent, and impact of alcohol marketing in developing nations. The existing evidence base is limited and somewhat outdated, with few studies published in the academic literature. This present study utilises a critical social marketing framework to try to alleviate these gaps in the evidence base.

### **Research Methods**

Analysis was used based on a convenience sample of 14 marketing campaigns used between 2002 and 2011, from India, Malawi, Malaysia, Nigeria, Philippines, Sri Lanka, and Thailand. Each marketing execution was analysed according to codes regulating alcohol marketing in the UK (see Table 1), due to the fact that across the seven countries examined there is general absence of comprehensive alcohol marketing regulatory systems. Data collection included web searches and case examples provided by our stakeholder partners FORUT. We recorded when evidence of a potential breach of the codes was identified under the seven key regulatory themes (see Table 1). Inter-coder reliability checks ensured consistency.

# Using Critical Social Marketing to examine Alcohol Marketing in Developing Nations

**Table 1: Key themes in UK Alcohol Marketing Regulatory Codes**

Themes Investigated	Based on Alcohol Marketing Regulatory Codes of ASA/CAP & the Portman Group: Alcohol marketing communications must not...
① Youth Appeal	...appeal strongly to people under 18, reflecting or being associated with youth culture
② Personal/Social Success	...claim or imply that alcohol can enhance confidence, social success, acceptance or popularity
③ Sexual Success	... link alcohol with seduction, sexual activity or sexual success nor imply that alcohol can enhance attractiveness
④ Driving & Sport	...feature sporting and other physical activities or enhance mental or physical capabilities; or contributing to professional or sporting achievements.
⑤ Drinking Behaviour	...condone or encourage immoderate excessive, binge-drinking or drunkenness;
⑥ Aggression, toughness	...link alcohol with daring, toughness, aggression or unruly, irresponsible or antisocial behaviour.
⑦ Strength and Power	...not imply that a drink may be preferred because of its alcohol content or intoxicating effect.

## Findings

Our analysis identified potential breaches across all of the seven main themes covered by the UK regulatory codes (see Figure 1). The most common theme identified in the analysis was marketing which associated with strength and power with seven brands; followed by sexual success with six examples; then personal/social success, and youth appeal, both with four examples; of potential breaches if applying the UK codes. Brands owned by multi-national corporations such as Guinness Foreign Extra owned by Diageo, and Knock Out beer owned by SAB Miller, associated their products with aggression, strength, virility and power in their marketing.

Several examples examined used provocatively females in their executions, such as the LEO lager brand in Thailand. The Dr Thirsty's product range in Thailand used cartoon graphics and imagery on product packaging, for example, the Bettlejuice brand, even though this practice was previously banned in the UK. From these findings it appears that alcohol producers are using references between alcohol and strength and power, sexual, social, and personal success, and appeals to youth, in their marketing activity in developing nations, despite these practices being in breach of regulatory codes in place in the developed world. Furthermore, the use of these themes could be perceived to be imposing Western neo-liberal social and cultural values and norms, on developing countries (Jernigan, 2000). This suggests that engagement with relative stakeholders including alcohol producers, and an appropriate policy response, is required.

Furthermore, the lack of regulation means that alcohol producers can take advantage and perhaps even re-use tactics now banned in the developed world. Further studies such as ours can be used to hold alcohol producers more accountable for their marketing activities in the developing world. Marketing practitioners should be encouraged to revisit their strategies and develop socially responsible and culturally sensitive practices.

## Implications

There are clear implications from this study for alcohol producers, policy makers, marketing practitioners, and the marketing and social marketing disciplines. The findings demonstrate that in the developing world alcohol marketing executions use references to youth culture, power, and sporting, social, and sexual success. The language, imagery and content of the examples of alcohol marketing examined

Figure 1: Summary of Findings

## ANALYSIS OF 14 ALCOHOL MARKETING CAMPAIGNS IN 7 DEVELOPING COUNTRIES ASSESSED USING UK REGULATORY CODES

### INDIA

Brand (Owner/Campaign Dates) Campaign Details & Potential Regulatory Breach



#### Blenders Pride Whisky

(Pernard-Ricard/2010) - Potential Breach: ③⑦

Billboard campaign shows man & woman in sultry poses. Slogans 'taste-power', *taste that speaks for itself*

#### 'Kingfisher' Beer

(United Breweries/2003-2009) - Potential breach ②③

Campaign posters with sexual imagery of 'thighs' and provocative copy e.g. *'lust for kingfisher lager'*. Glamorous young females & businessman Kingfisher sponsored jet.

#### Knock Out Beer

(SAB Miller India/2008) - Potential Breach: ③⑦

Strong beer ABV of 8%. Brand Name has connotations of aggression and strength. Advertising for beer is associated with grenades, tanks and military weapons

#### Royal Challenge Whisky

(United Breweries/2005) Potential Breach : ②③⑦

Billboard campaign shows a man wearing a wreath with the text *'Julius Caesar ruled kingdoms & parties - In you he lives'*. Sponsors of Royal Challengers Bangalore cricket team.

### MALAWI

Brand (Owner/Campaign Dates) Campaign Details & Potential Regulatory Breach



#### Rider Spirit

(Abwensi Group/2010) Potential breach: ①③⑦

Marketed liquor in plastic sachets, high in alcohol content, available at low prices. Being easy to conceal for youth drinkers. Other brands *'Black Punch'* & *'Mafia'*.

### NIGERIA

Brand (Owner/Campaign Dates) Campaign Details & Potential Regulatory Breach



#### Anchor Strong

(Guinness Anchor Berhad – Diageo/2008) Regulatory theme in potential breach ⑦

Brand name focused on strength, posters with the text 'True strength cannot be denied'. Also associated with 'Shots', depicting a shot glass beside the beer bottle to imply it is as strong as a shot of spirit

#### Guinness Foreign Extra Stout

(Diageo/2002) Potential breach: ②③⑦

Billboards, radio on television feature an actor named Michael Power to personify the brand. Power the hero rescues a young woman in danger. He is the guest at a surprise party given by friends. Billboard advert reads 'Guinness...Reflects the Power in You'

### SRI LANKA

Brand (Owner/Campaign Dates) Campaign Details & Potential Regulatory Breach



#### Lion Lager

(Lion Brewery (Ceylon) Plc/2010) - Potential breach ③⑦

The Lion brand name suggests strength and power, & aggression and toughness. Poster campaign featured a lion with strapline *'Is there a Lion in you?'*

### MALAYSIA

Brand (Owner/Campaign Dates) Campaign Details & Potential Regulatory Breach



#### Anchor Strong

(Anchor Berhad – Diageo/2008) Potential breach ⑦

Brand name focused on strength, posters with the text *'True strength cannot be denied'*. Also associated with 'Shots', depicting a shot glass beside the beer bottle to imply it is as strong as a shot of spirit

### PHILIPINES

Brand (Owner/Campaign Dates) Campaign Details & Potential Regulatory Breach



#### Champion

(Champion Breweries Plc/2010 Potential breach: ②

Campaign posters associate the 'Champion' brand name with success. Promotion text *'Plenty of free drinks'*.

#### Tanduay Gin

Tanduay Distillers Inc./2009 Potential breach ③

Advert showed a semi-naked young female, with three bottles of the product arranged underneath her in a phallic symbol arrangement.

### THAILAND

Brand (Owner/Campaign Dates) Campaign Details & Potential Regulatory Breach



#### Johnnie Walker Whisky

(Diageo/2006) - Potential breach ④⑤

Brand featured on a building wrap on Baiyoke Sky Tower Bangkok, Text reading *'Drink, Don't Drive'*. Although this may have been intended to encourage people not to drink and drive, it does link alcohol & driving, and appear to encourage people to consume alcohol.

#### Dr Thirsty's

(RTD/TIS 1997– ongoing) - Potential breach ①

'Dr Thirsty's' is available in several varieties including 'Lemon Punch', 'Orange Punch' and 'Beetlejuice'. The brand range features cartoon graphics, and imagery on the product packaging that hold youth appeal. Indeed, the 'Beetlejuice' brand had a complaint upheld against it by the UK Portman Group in 1997 (Portman Group, 1997).

#### Leo Beer

(Boon Rawd Brewery/2010 - Potential breach ①③

As part of a marketing campaign 'LEO' sponsored a lifestyle festival, with billboards showing the brand name and event, also featuring numerous young females wearing suspenders and revealing underwear. Association with glamour models and youth music culture.

# Using Critical Social Marketing to examine Alcohol Marketing in Developing Nations

here, suggest that the corporate social responsibility policy of alcohol producers operating in these markets is questionable. Global alcohol producers, who publish CSR best practice guidelines concerning alcohol marketing (see Diageo, 2010), do not seem to adhere to these in the developing world.

Our findings contribute to the research evidence base, and can help inform upstream activities such as advocacy, lobbying and informing policy and regulation. FORUT\* and other development agencies already pursue such an agenda, suggesting that a critical social marketing approach to these activities could be developed. Policy makers have an important role to play, as the existing regulations, or lack thereof, do not seem to offer adequate control, suggesting that policy interventions are required. Potential solutions include engaging with alcohol producers and marketers on their CSR policy and marketing strategies and an international framework convention on alcohol control, similar to the one developed for tobacco (Lancet, 2007).

Results from studies of this type can be used to help inform alcohol interventions delivered in developing countries by agencies such as FORUT\*. Understanding the competition supplied by the alcohol industry to behaviour change can assist in overcoming barriers and identifying motivational exchanges and useful promotion techniques in social marketing interventions. The study demonstrates the utility of critical social marketing, reinforcing that social marketing can provide a useful framework for research, and assisting the establishment of the field within the social sciences.

## Conclusions

The present study demonstrates the utility of the critical social marketing framework. Our findings contribute to the evidence base

on alcohol marketing in developing nations. Furthermore, the findings can help inform social marketing interventions both upstream and downstream. The aid agencies involved in this particular study are well placed to facilitate advocacy and lobbying as well as to deliver social marketing interventions on the ground. Such initiatives have an important role to play as part of multi-faceted strategies to tackle alcohol related harms in the developing world.

Our findings reinforce the view that alcohol producers are using alcohol marketing tactics in the developing world that are questionable. This suggests that the industry needs to re-examine its market strategies in these countries. Further, marketing practitioners can contribute to this process by developing more socially responsible practices. Finally, our research demonstrates the importance of consideration of the concept of marketing and society. Critical analysis of commercial marketing practices, through use of a critical social marketing framework can help develop more responsible, sustainable, and socially beneficial marketing systems, and through use of social marketing encourage the use of marketing ideas for social good. We would welcome consumer studies building upon this research to assess the impact of alcohol marketing on individual attitudes and behaviours and inform appropriate policy responses. We are keen to engage with other stakeholders and researchers interested in gathering evidence into the alcohol marketing in other developing countries.

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