Too much, Too little, Too late: Regulating Alcohol Marketing in the Developing World
Introduction

This paper examines alcohol marketing activity in the developing world and assesses the effectiveness of regulatory mechanisms. In spite of the extensive health, social and economic development impact of alcohol related harm in developing countries, research on alcohol marketing is urgently required to inform both policy and intervention (Babor et al. 2010). To date academic investigations of alcohol marketing activity in developing countries is largely ad-hoc, anecdotal and underfunded. Increasingly the issues of alcohol harm in developing nations is been vocalised by NGOs working in the field, particularly because domestic regulation systems are not in place to monitor or adjudicate on the activities of powerful alcohol marketers (Aitken, 1989).

The aim of this research is to highlight questionable alcohol marketing activities in developing countries given the concerns expressed by health, education and aid organisations working in developing countries (Caetano and Laranjeira, 2006). Recent trends in alcohol consumption and alcohol related harms in developing countries are a considerable concern at a global level. Through attendance at NGO meetings, conferences, plus secondary and field research evidence has been gathered including alcohol marketing activity in India, Malawi, Malaysia, Nigeria, Philippines, Sri Lanka and Thailand. These alcohol marketing campaigns were reviewed using developed world regulatory codes. The findings have implications for marketing theory and practice, and can inform intervention approaches, including: regulation and policy change, social marketing and CSR. Further research is warranted both to more rigorously monitor the level and impacts of alcohol marketing, to address stakeholder concerns and reduce alcohol related harm in the developing world.

Literature Review

Alcohol marketing influences drinking behaviours (Babor et al. 2010) and systematic reviews suggest statistical associations between alcohol marketing and drinking behaviours (Meier et al. 2008; Anderson et al. 2009; Smith and Foxcroft, 2009). Longitudinal consumer studies also find causal associations between marketing expenditure and population level consumption (Ellickson et al. 2005; Collins et al. 2007; Gordon et al. 2010). Research in developing countries suggests alcohol advertising is on the increase, and that young people display a high level of awareness of alcohol marketing (Houssou et al. 1999; Tuladhar, 2005). However, a more rigorous evidence base is needed to monitor global exposure to alcohol marketing (Gordon et al. 2010), both in terms of traditional and new advertising media including sponsorship (Jones, 2011).

Most developed nations regulate alcohol marketing through industry self-regulation or statutory legislation. The UK advertising regulatory system is over 50 years old and alcohol advertising is covered by industry (CAP, 2010) and sector voluntary codes (Portman Group, 2008) and rules restricting appeals to youth or personal/social, sporting or sexual success, immoderate drinking or machismo. The effectiveness of these self-regulation systems is questioned (Casswell and Tharangi, 2009; Hastings et al. 2010), however, many developing nations do not have even rudimentary controls. Despite decades of public policy discourse in relation to alcohol marketing and its regulation in developed nations (Anderson, 2009; Hastings and Sheron, 2011), there is a very limited debate on its relevance or adoption to the developing world context.
World Health Organization statistics (WHO, 2011) evidence that alcohol consumption in Western countries is more or less saturated. As a result, global alcohol corporations are targeting low-income countries and emerging markets with large populations such as South Africa, Nigeria, Malawi, Uganda, Brazil, India and China. Young people also make up the largest proportion of these countries and represent a lucrative growth opportunity for global alcohol brands (Jernigan, 2006). Developing countries media and markets are uncluttered, thus alcohol advertising and promotion can yield a stronger impact on consumption than in Western countries. In a non-regulated market brands can use ubiquitous, sophisticated marketing strategies, long outlawed in developed markets. Thus alcohol is often portrayed as an emblem of success, national pride, heroism, and virility on TV, billboards, press, web and sponsorship (Jernigan, 2008). NGO field workers often see the use free gifts, promotion offers that encourage youth drinking (STAP 2012).

In developing nations, systems of alcohol marketing control are less well established or in some countries non-existent (ADD, 2010; Casswell and Maxwell, 2005). NGOs are concerned about global alcohol brands significant media expenditure in less developed nations and the lack of safeguards to control malpractice. Aid workers in India, Malawi, and Nepal (GAPC, 2012; ADD, 2011) and in Gambia, Ghana, Nigeria and Uganda (STAP 2011) increasingly report the harm of increased alcohol consumption, and evidence of false advertising claims, stereotyping, youth targeting. These concerns are exacerbated by the exponential efforts of alcohol producers introduce alcohol into traditionally non drinking cultures (Jernigan, 1999).

Lower income countries have a disproportionately greater disease burden per unit of alcohol consumption compared with high-income countries (Rehm et al., 2009). Alcohol is a causal factor of social and physical harm to the drinker, their families and communities. Habitual alcohol consumption impacts job performance, absenteeism, deprivation, domestic violence, suicide, crime, and driving; and is a contributory factor for sexually transmitted diseases, and HIV infection (Anderson et al., 2009). Critically, there is a need for alcohol marketers to consider their influence on the culture and society of developing nations. Growing criticism of alcohol industry activities overseas (Anderson, 2009; Jernigan, 2009) highlight a dearth of political enforcement (WHO 2011, 2004; Forut 2010). Given the scale of the problem, it highlights the paucity of research on the nature, extent, and impact of alcohol marketing in developing countries.

**Methodology**

The aim of this study was to initially explore the nature and content of alcohol marketing in developing countries, and consider whether they would breach extant regulatory standards. To scope the problem a recognised methodological approach case study analysis was used (Carroll and Donovan 2002; Dul and Hak, 2007; Gordon, 2011). Data gathering was facilitated by development agencies specialising in alcohol and drug education programmes overseas who supplied examples of the alcohol marketing from the countries in which they operated. A convenience sample of alcohol marketing campaigns was selected and examined for potentially questionable alcohol marketing tactics used in India, Malawi, Malaysia, Nigeria, Philippines, Sri Lanka, and Thailand from 2002 and 2011. The authors also met with development workers who provided examples of alcohol marketing; along with other cases presented at the Global Alcohol Policy Conference in Thailand (2012) and field studies in Africa undertaken by STAP (2011).
In the absence of local regulatory codes in the developing countries, the developing world alcohol campaigns were categorised and analysed according to the UK alcohol marketing codes. These are often viewed as the gold standard system of co-regulation (EASA, 2007) and given their effective use in previous alcohol marketing studies (Hastings et al. 2010; Gordon, 2011). There may arguably be some limitations in the cultural relevance of the UK codes to developing countries and some debate the effectiveness of in self-regulatory systems per se (Anderson, 2009; Hastings and Sheron, 2011). The convenience sample of overseas marketing campaigns were analysed separately by the two authors and assessed using the UK alcohol code guidance on youth appeal, personal/social success, sexual success, sport/driving, drinking behaviour, aggression and toughness, and strength and power. Any evidence of a potential breach of the codes in relation to any of these themes was identified, corroborated and recorded.

Findings

Table 1 summarises findings from 14 examples of alcohol marketing in developing countries analysed by alcohol brand and producer, and their potential breaches of the seven main themes covered by the UK regulatory codes. Applying the extant UK codes we found numerous potential breaches were seven brands associated their alcohol marketing with strength and power; six examples used links to sexual success; four brands linked to personal/social success, and another four using youth appeal.

Diageo Brands such as Guinness Foreign Extra, and Knock Out beer owned by SAB Miller, often associated their products with aggression, strength, virility and power. Indeed, Guinness has long been associated with power in Africa, known as ‘black power’ and ‘Viagra’ (Obot and Ibanga, 2002). Strength and virility are characteristics desirable to adolescents in relation to their attitudes to alcohol beverages and drinking behaviours (Gordon et al. 2010).

Sexuality was often used with provocatively dressed females e.g. LEO lager brand in Thailand, or suggestive references e.g. under age sex (Napoleon Quince brandy in Philippines). Other studies state that adolescents’ see that alcohol consumption can offer self-confidence, sexual relationship and social success (Jones and Donovan, 2001). Product packaging using cartoon graphics and imagery in Thailand also had youth appeal (e.g. Dr Thirsty’s/ Bettlejuice). This tactic was found to influence adolescents’ attitudes and behaviours in relation to tobacco and alcohol consumption (Hughes et al. 1997; Hafez and Ling, 2005).

Critics also argue the imposition of Western norms and liberal social and cultural values (Jernigan, 2000) or materialiam on developing countries. The findings demonstrate that in the developing world alcohol marketing executions use references to youth culture, power, and sporting, social, and sexual success that are supposedly forbidden in the developed world.

The language, imagery and content of the examples of alcohol marketing examined, suggest that the corporate social responsibility policy of alcohol producers operating in these developing markets is open to question. Large alcohol producers publish CSR best practice guidelines concerning alcohol marketing (e.g. Diageo, 2010), but do not seem to adhere to these in the developing world campaigns. Alcohol producers are seemingly taking advantage of lack of regulation, and perhaps even re-using tactics now banned in the developed world. More systematic studies conducting alcohol marketing monitoring are needed and further regulatory
evaluation is warranted to hold alcohol producers more accountable for their marketing activities in the developing world.

Conclusions

It was not the intention of the authors to discuss or justify cultural values or social interpretation of the advertising themes in this first phase exploration. Further research funding is needed to follow up on this work particularly in terms of potential bias that negative campaigns were used to highlight the concerns of the NGOS. Indeed complaints are the driver of advertising regulation investigations for example in the UK. We acknowledge this exploratory study has some limitations, particularly its small convenience sample, and reliance on third party evidence of bad practice. The analysis of alcohol marketing executions in developing countries using UK regulatory codes may not be entirely relevant or applicable to these locations. However, the findings can offer new insights into the nature of alcohol marketing and the need for tighter regulation in developing countries. Furthermore, the findings can help inform social marketing interventions both upstream and downstream. Further funding is needed to enable researchers to monitor and measure alcohol marketing and its impacts more rigorously within and across a wider range of countries. This will need to engage civil and industry stakeholder organisations to inform and prevent irresponsible, harmful or unethical alcohol marketing. Clearly the initial exploratory evidence presented here shows that there is too much unchecked alcohol marketing activity, too little regulation in place and it may be too late to curb the growing harm of alcohol consumption in the developing world.
### Table 1: Developing Countries Alcohol Marketing Campaigns Assessed by UK Regulatory Codes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Brand/Owner of Campaign</th>
<th>Code Theme</th>
<th>Details of campaign/potential breach</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indian Cases</td>
<td>Kingfisher Beer/United Breweries</td>
<td>□ □</td>
<td>Billboards show glamorous young females ‘sexual imagery of ‘thighs’ and provocative slogan ‘lust for kingfisher lager’</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Royal Challenge Whisky/United Breweries</td>
<td>□ □ □</td>
<td>Billboard shows man wearing a wreath with slogan ‘Julius Caesar ruled kingdoms &amp; parties - In you he lives’</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Blenders Pride Whisky/Pernard-Ricard</td>
<td>□ □</td>
<td>Billboard shows man and woman in sultry poses with slogan ‘taste-power’,...‘taste that speaks for itself’</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Knock Out Beer SAB Miller</td>
<td>□ □ □ □</td>
<td>‘Strong beer ABV 8% connotations of aggression and strength. Advertising the beer is associated with grenades, tanks and military weapons.</td>
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<td>Malawian Case</td>
<td>Rider, Black Punch &amp; Mafia/Abwensi Group</td>
<td>□ □ □</td>
<td>Spirit liquor in plastic sachets, high in alcohol content, low prices, easy to conceal for youth drinkers, Malawi Bureau of Standards now banning them. (Endal, 2011). Other brands included ‘</td>
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<td>Malaysian Case</td>
<td>Anchor Strong/Diageo</td>
<td>□ □ □ □ □</td>
<td>Poster with the text ‘True strength cannot be denied’. Also been associated with ‘Shots’, depicting a shot glass beside the beer bottle to imply it is as strong as a shot of spirit</td>
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<td>Nigerian Cases</td>
<td>Champion/Champion Breweries Plc</td>
<td>□ □ □</td>
<td>Brand name associates with success, posters featured the promotion of ‘plenty of free drinks’.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Guinness Foreign Extra Stout/Diageo</td>
<td>□ □ □ □</td>
<td>Actor Michael Power on billboards, radio and television. Power plays the hero who rescues a young woman in danger, or is the guest at a surprise party given by friends. Focus on strength given the actor’s name, and the strapline in the billboard advert reads ‘Guinness...Reflects the Power in You’.</td>
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<td>Philippino Cases</td>
<td>Napoleon Quince Brandy/Destileria Limtuaco</td>
<td>□ □ □ □ □ □ □</td>
<td>Billboards for old brandy, copy reads &quot;(&quot;Have you tasted a 15-year-old?&quot;). Radio advert in which a wife accuses her husband of having an affair with a 15-year-old at a bar. He explains the 15-year-old in question is Napoleon Quince. Promoting sexual objectification, exploitation of women and paedophilia.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Tanduay Gin/Tanduay/Distillers Inc.</td>
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<td>An advert for the brand showed a semi-naked young female, with three bottles of the product arranged underneath her in a phallic symbol arrangement.</td>
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<td>Sri Lankan Cases</td>
<td>Lion Lager/Lion Brewery (Ceylon) Plc</td>
<td>□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □</td>
<td>The Lion brand name suggests strength and power, and aggression and toughness. Furthermore, a poster campaign featured a lion with the strapline ‘Is there a Lion in you?’</td>
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<td>Thai Cases</td>
<td>Johnnie Walker Whisky/Diageo/</td>
<td>□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □</td>
<td>Building wrap on Baiyoke Sky Tower in Bangkok, Thailand with the text reading ‘Drink, Don’t Drive’. Ambiguous link alcohol &amp; driving, and perceived to encourage people to consume more alcohol.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Dr Thirsty’s RTD/TIS Worldwide Co. Ltd</td>
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<td>‘Dr Thirsty’s ‘Lemon Punch’, ‘Orange Punch’ and ‘Bettlejuice’ features cartoon graphics, and imagery on the product packaging that hold youth appeal.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Leo Beer/Boon Rawd Brewery</td>
<td>□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □</td>
<td>Lifestyle festival, billboards numerous young females wearing revealing underwear. Association with glamour models and youth music culture.</td>
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**Key for Regulatory theme:** - youth appeal, - personal/social success, - sexual success, - driving/sport, - drinking behaviour - aggression/toughness, - strength/power
References


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STAP. (2007), Regulation of alcohol marketing in Europe: ELSA project overview on the existing regulations on advertising and marketing of alcohol. Utrecht: National Foundation for Alcohol Prevention (STAP).