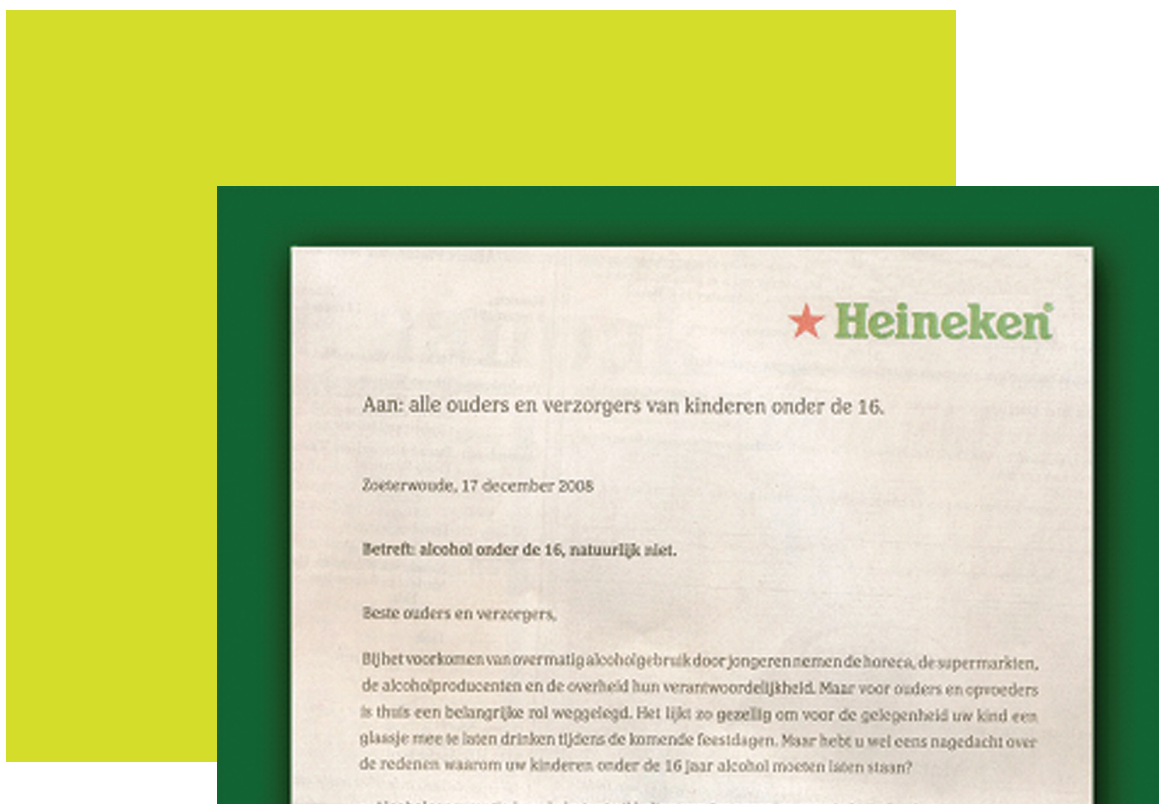


Corporate Social Responsibility: the new marketing tool Trends in Alcohol Marketing



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Introduction

At the EU level, we see a rise in the number of educational campaigns about alcohol, introduced by the alcohol producers themselves. The industry wants to explain to the consumer that drinking too much alcohol or drinking at an early age (e.g. below 16) has harmful effects on health. The message they want to convey is to "enjoy alcohol responsibly".

The true goal behind these Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) campaigns is to improve the image of the company. We have seen this earlier with CSR campaigns by the tobacco industry (1).

The use of CSR within the Tobacco Industry

Henriksen et al. investigated the effect of anti-tobacco campaigns by the tobacco industry and by a non-profit organization on intention to smoke and on attitudes towards the tobacco industry amongst youngsters aged 14-17 years (2). The results were striking. After having seen the ads, the groups did not differ on intention to smoke (the anti-smoking ad from the tobacco industry did not have a better or worse effect on intention to smoke than the anti-smoking ad from the non-profit organization). However, both groups did differ in attitudes towards the tobacco industry: the minors who had received an educational message or ad from a tobacco producer had become more positive towards the tobacco industry compared to the youngsters who had received the more neutral ad from the NGO. The authors concluded that education given by tobacco producers brings more harm than that it in fact has an preventive effect on smoking behaviour from youngsters. The results of this study plead for not letting tobacco prevention being executed by the tobacco industry itself.



WHO about Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) of the tobacco industry

The WHO (World Health Organization) firmly cut down the CSR of the tobacco industry in the report "Tobacco industry and corporate responsibility... an inherent contradiction" (3). The report writes about education by the industry: "Tactically, these programmes serve the purpose of creating the appearance that tobacco companies are proposing solutions for the problems they create. In reality they detract attention from proven, effective solutions – including price and tax increases." (3, page 2-3)

It may be clear that a similar way of reasoning can hold for the alcohol industry. Education focussed at youngsters costs a lot of money but has proven to be nearly ineffective (4, 5, 6).

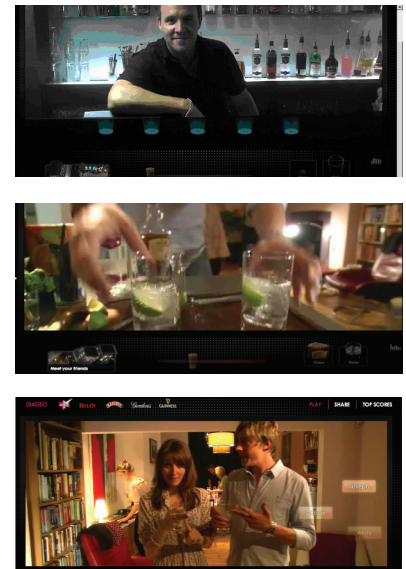
The CSR campaigns developed by the alcohol industry will probably assert little or no effect on the drinking behaviour of young people. However, the campaigns will probably lead to more positive attitudes towards the alcohol brand, as was found for education given by the tobacco industry, as described above (2). That is only one of the dangers that CSR brings along. CSR often consists of educational slogans in advertisements. The slogans are supposed to convey a message of responsibility that stands apart from the attractive message of the advertisement itself. Nevertheless the alcohol companies tend to add attractive language in these slogans which are meant for educational purposes, such as "enjoy responsibly". An additional problem that comes with CSR of alcohol producers is that it treads uncharted territory and as such lends many opportunities to circumvent existing regulations on alcohol marketing.

Alcohol related CSR in Europe

CSR campaign used as alcohol advertisement

An excellent example of CSR that missed the point of achieving responsible drinking habits, while actually functioning as alcohol advertisement, was 2008's Diageo 'The choice is yours' campaign (7, page 1590). The campaign implied that being very drunk carries a penalty of social disapproval. It did so by showing the embarrassing consequences of being thrown out of a club, amongst other things. Research by the University of Bath conversely shows that such incidents are actually seen by young people as a illustration of a 'fun' night out, instead of cautionary tales (8). While Diageo held fast to the idea that 'young adults were more likely to consider drinking responsibly if they believed that by drinking excessively they would be in danger of losing their social credibility and standing,' (7, page 1590) the University of Bath in contrary stated that: "Extreme inebriation is often seen as a source of personal esteem and social affirmation amongst young people" (8).

Furthermore, the website of the 'The choice is yours' campaign shows the logo's of the drinks of Diageo (7, page 1590). So while the website pertains to be educational it is actually and very transparently an advertisement.



Screenshots of the
"The choice is yours"
website.

Aids a disease and an opportunity

HIV/Aids is a grave problem but also an opportunity to invest in the CSR of one of the world's biggest brewers. SabMiller begins its 13 page HIV/Aids strategy with the following sentence: "The extent of the HIV/Aids and related socioeconomic consequences requires SABMiller to manage this as an operational and reputation priority" (9). One of the spearheads of the company's strategy is developing a leadership role in the field of corporate aids prevention and treatment. A goal that the company has only recently set out to achieve: "Our approach recently was to maintain a low profile on our work on HIV and aids as a result the external perception was that we are not at the forefront of addressing this issue" (9, page 7). A problem which the company wants to overcome with their HIV/Aids Strategy.

While the SabMiller HIV/Aids Strategy on first hand seems to be a very positive and charitable development, the role of alcohol in the spread of Aids proves a problem to this point of view. The company itself even alludes to it in its strategy, but dismisses their own responsibility in this issue: "Although there is no evidence of a direct causal link between alcohol and HIV/Aids there are particular patterns of drinking (particularly binge drinking) that place individuals at higher risk. There is growing concern that abuse of alcohol may lead to unsafe sexual behaviour" (9, page 5). This "growing concern" may be a huge understatement. Although drinking in 2002 was proven by the University of Missouri-Colombia to be inconsistently related to protective behaviors (such as the use of condoms), it was also proved to be strongly related to the decision to have sex and to indiscriminate forms of risky sex, such as having multiple or casual sex partners (10). Again CSR can be seen as a 'solution' to a problem which the alcohol industry has a hand in and ultimately as a marketing campaign for SABMiller's corporate image.

Corporate Social Responsibility as Commitment in European Forum

Reflecting alcohol's burden in Europe, the European Commission published an Alcohol Strategy in 2006 to decrease alcohol related harm. The most important action undertaken by the EC was the launch of the Alcohol and Health Forum in June 2007. This Forum provides a common platform for all relevant commercial and non-commercial stakeholders.

"Europe's brewers number one contributor to the EU Alcohol & Health Forum," boasts an April 2009 news release. The article originates from the Brewers of Europe themselves and describes how as of mid-April 2009 Europe's brewing sector has filed more than one third (37) of more than 100 total commitments to the EU Alcohol and Health forum. An impressive claim, but one that does not say anything about the effectiveness of these commitments as De Bruijn stated earlier in the scientific journal *Addiction* (7).

Aside from stating the quantity of commitments, the press release also details some commitments which are deemed 'worth mentioning'. The first of these describes the partnership between the Austrian brewing sector and the Austrian Automobile & Touring Club as well as the Austrian armed forces in launching an educational campaign against drinking and driving. Also mentioned is the Italian campaign for "woman's awareness of medical advice against drinking during pregnancy". This campaign which is led by the Italian national Brewers' Association in cooperation with the Italian Association of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists is prized in the press release as a "leading example of the Brewers of Europe's promotion of local partnerships." The article gives additional positive attention to the commitments which are supported by national governments, just as the above mentioned Italian commitment was supported by the Italian Ministry of Health. In the article it seems that governmental support is used by the brewers as proof of the credibility of the commitments.

The engagement of the Brewers of Europe in the EU Alcohol and Health Forum is not solemnly altruistic, the Forum provides a platform for CSR that is supported by the EU. As the news release shows, commitments to the Forum can be seen as an effective way to perk up the image of the companies involved. These commitments of the Brewers of Europe are clear examples of the alcohol industry using the Forum to further their own gains through CSR.

Dutch examples of CSR

CSR is widespread in Europe, but in this report we use the Netherlands as case study for the use of CSR by the alcohol industry. The Dutch example is interesting, mainly for three reasons. Firstly, the Netherlands is a reflection of Europe as a whole. Alcohol is present in abundance and regulations prohibit the purchase of beer and wine under the age of 16 and strong alcoholic beverages under the age of 18. Secondly, the Netherlands house the headquarters of some of the world's best known alcohol producers, such as Heineken and Bacardi. Thirdly, there have been some mayor changes in Dutch alcohol policy lately (such as the introduction of the time ban on alcohol advertisements on radio and television) which makes the necessity of CSR even bigger in a climate where the alcohol industry gets to govern themselves through self regulation.

Examples of Dutch CSR Campaigns by the Alcohol Industry in 2008

In the Netherlands we see a clear raise in educational campaigns by alcohol producers in 2008. Bacardi launched three different campaigns on television, Heineken launched two and the VIP (Association of Importers and Producers of distilled beverages) launched a website aimed at young people to teach them the similarities and differences between different types of drinks. These six CSR examples will be described below.

Bacardi and "Say sorry with Nikkie"

In september 2008 television channel The Music Factory (TMF) broadcasts a program called "Say sorry with Nikkie". The goal of the series, that ran weekly for 3 months, was to 'teach' youngsters between 16-20 years that drinking too much alcohol is not cool or fun. VJ Nikkie Plessen visited youngsters that had spoiled a nice party or evening out because they drank too much. Nikkie offered the youngsters a chance to (publicly) offer their apologies for their misbehavior. The program was made in cooperation with Bacardi (11). Menno Wagenaar, VP Head of MTV & TMF about the program: "Just as Bacardi, TMF believes that it is important for young people to realize that excessive alcohol use is bad for their health. We will present this program in a TMF style, so absolutely not didactic, 'pointing the finger', but in a relevant and entertaining way for young people". Anne Marie Touw, Social Responsibility & Corporate Communications Bacardi Netherlands: "Just as the government, Bacardi distinguishes between responsible drinking – which fits in a positive lifestyle – and alcohol misuse, which should be battled with. Bacardi sees it as her responsibility to inform consumers about responsible alcohol consumption".

TMF is a so-called "youth channel" on which no alcohol advertising is allowed because more than 25% of the watching public consists of minors (below 18 years of age). This is stated in article 21 of the Advertising Code for Alcoholic Beverages. This voluntary Code, made by the alcohol industry itself contains 31 rules about alcohol advertising. This is called selfregulation. Given the fact that TMF is a youth channel, which should be completely free of alcohol advertising, it is striking that apparently Bacardi is allowed to present a program on this channel targeting minors, which is exactly the group that should not be reached!

Many scientific studies have shown that education targeting youngsters is hardly effective (4). Therefore, we do not have to expect large effects of the program on drinking behavior. However, Bacardi has found a way to reach her target group, which will probably be very positive for the brand image of Bacardi.

In the closing credits of the program the name 'Bacardi Netherlands' is shown (without the well known bat logo). And in the first episode of the series we see a guy called Lorenzo offering his apologies to a girl with a "rum coke" in his hand, as he mentions in passing (see picture). This is obviously a form of clandestine advertising.

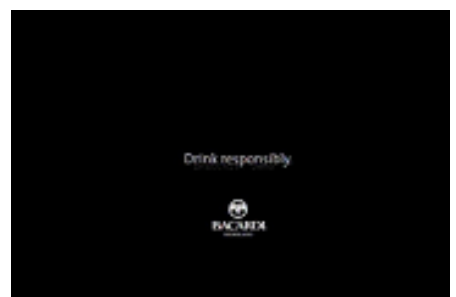
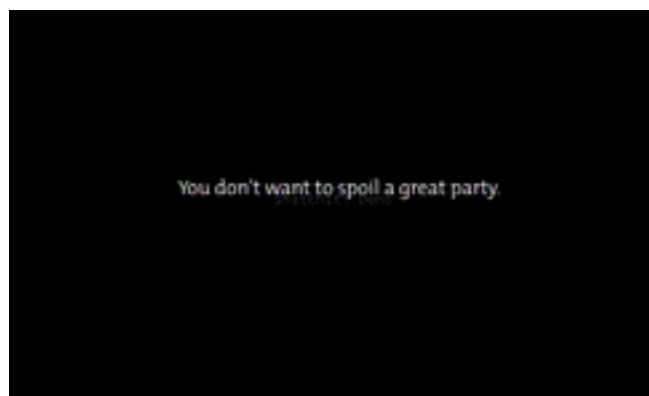
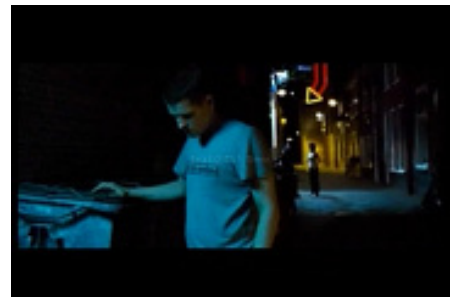
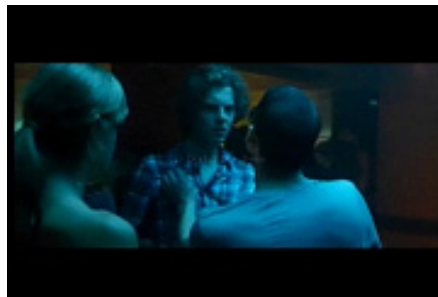
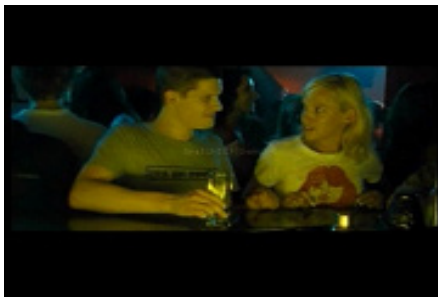


Besides this sly way of advertising for the Bacardi brand, mentioning the “rum coke” contains a ‘double’ or ambiguous message: on the one hand, somebody offers his apologies for doing something stupid in a drunk mood, but on the other hand he is drinking a Baco (Bacardi coke) when he offers these apologies. This partly invalidates the goal of the program.

Bacardi and “You don’t want to spoil a great party”

Also in 2008 Bacardi broadcasts a television commercial with the message: “You don’t want to spoil a great party”. The commercial consists of two parts. First we see actor Teun Kuilboer (known from the popular soap series Good Times, Bad Times in the Netherlands) having a fight in a club. But nothing of what the characters say can be understood. Then, it turns out that the commercial has been played backwards. After he is thrown out of the club, the movie is ‘rewinded’. Then, we can understand what the characters say to each other.

Suddenly it becomes clear that the main character walks into the club, instead of being thrown out, that he isn’t pulling a fight, but instead bumped into somebody by accident, and that he ordered a glass of water instead of turning one down. The message Bacardi wants to convey is: “Drink Responsibly” and “You don’t want to spoil a great party”. In the marketing magazine Adformatie (12) Bacardi explains that both campaigns, the program “Say sorry with Nikkie” and “You don’t want to spoil a great party” have the goal: “to point out to youngsters aged 16-20 – at which age you are allowed to drink alcohol – that going out should be fun and has to remain fun”. Remarkable about this statement by Bacardi is that they indicate, openly, that their educational campaigns are focussed at minors (below the age of 18).



This is remarkable because alcohol advertising is not allowed to target minors. Also, Bacardi is a strong alcoholic beverage (> 15% alc. vol.). In the Netherlands there is a minimum legal purchasing age for strong alcoholic beverages of 18 years. Therefore, also targeting 16- and 17-year olds with an 'educational' campaign, which will be beneficial for the Bacardi brand, is in violation with the selfregulation rules of the alcohol industry.

This is one of the big disadvantages of social marketing messages from the alcohol industry itself; the advertiser is still targeting youngsters and even minors with her brand name. This will be beneficial for brand awareness and brand recognition.

Bacardi uses Formule 1 racing driver Schumacher for "don't drink and drive" message

A third Bacardi campaign in 2008 focussed on the "don't drink and drive" message. Bacardi found ex-Formule 1 driver Michael Schumacher willing to commit to the "Champions Drink Responsibly" campaign (13).

The "Champions Drink Responsibly" campaign is an international campaign that is being broadcast worldwide. Part of the Bacardi-campaign is the so-called "Champions Drivers Club". This club is present at Bacardi events. Members of the club that will be the BOB ('Consciously Sober Driver', in Dutch 'Bewust Onbeschonken Bestuurder') will be awarded with free non-alcoholic cocktails and drinks.



Heineken worldwide internet campaign "Know the signs"

On November 14th 2008, Heineken officially launched her first worldwide internet-based 'responsible drinking' campaign, called "Know the Signs". This new campaign extends the 'Enjoy Heineken Responsibly' programme. According to Heineken the goal of the campaign is to create more self awareness amongst Heineken drinkers about (excessive) alcohol consumption.

Research done by Heineken in several countries has shown that often during a night out, people change into their less attractive 'alter ego', after having drunk one or several glasses too many.

Everybody recognizes this change in others, but nobody likes to admit to change in one of those types themselves as well. The most prominent types the research revealed are: The Crier, The Fighter, The Sleeper, The Groper and The Exhibitionist.



The Crier and The Groper

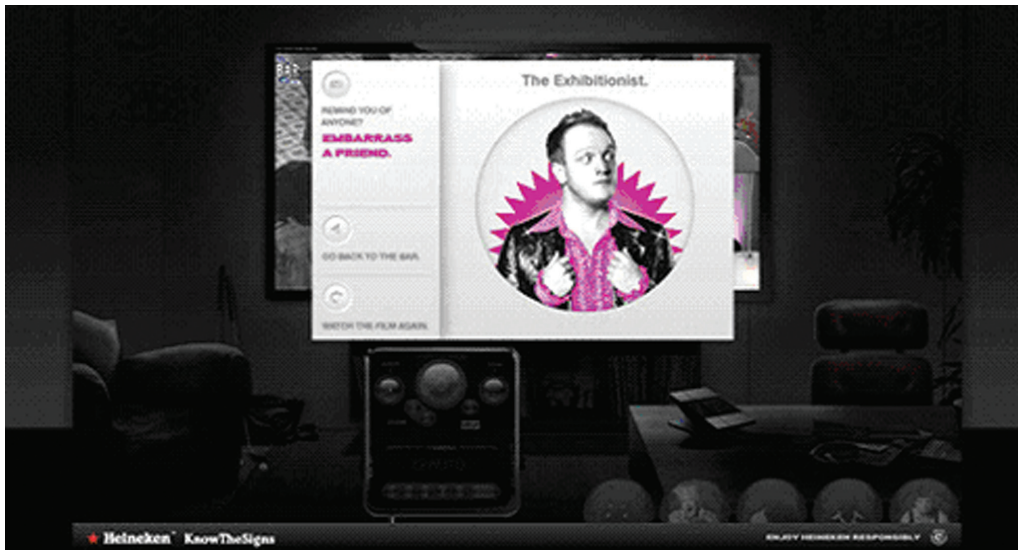
Website Knowthesigns.com

To create intrigue around the launch of the campaign, Heineken created an entertaining 'Hollywood-style' trailer to introduce the campaign concept and a few of its characters. The website www.knowthesigns.com (and in the Netherlands also www.heineken.nl) is the focus of the campaign. The site asks visitors to watch CCTV surveillance footage and use a virtual remote to pan and click on specific areas of the bar to spot the embarrassing characters that emerge when one has had that one drink too many. This way, you get to know all the embarrassing characters in an entertaining way.



Embarrassment tool

With the special Embarrassment tool on the site, you can transform your friends in one of the embarrassing alter ego's and send them a personalized foto upload.



Embarrassment tool: Turn your friend into one of the characters

Know the Signs Widget

Heineken also created a "Know the Signs Widget" where you can match each of your friends with one of the five embarrassing characters on several popular social networks, such as MySpace and Facebook and the Dutch social network Hyves. Place the widget at your friends and let them discover how they behave in a night out.

Heineken points parents at their responsibility

On December 17th 2008, one month after the launch of the Know the Signs campaign, Heineken published another CSR activity.

Only a few days before Christmas and New Year, a period of the year when people tend to drink more alcohol, Heineken published a page large ad in several national newspapers (AD, Telegraaf, Volkskrant and Spits). The ad was a letter, signed by the general director of Heineken, aimed at parents and caretakers of children below the age of 16.

With this letter Heineken wanted to remind parents not to give their youngsters below 16 any alcohol during special occasions such as the Christmas holidays. Parents often think it is sociable and harmless to let their children drink a glass of alcohol during the holidays.

In the letter Heineken is saying that "the catering industry, the supermarkets, the alcohol producers and the government take their responsibility in preventing excessive alcohol use by youngsters". Heineken then points out that also the parents play an important role to tackle this problem.

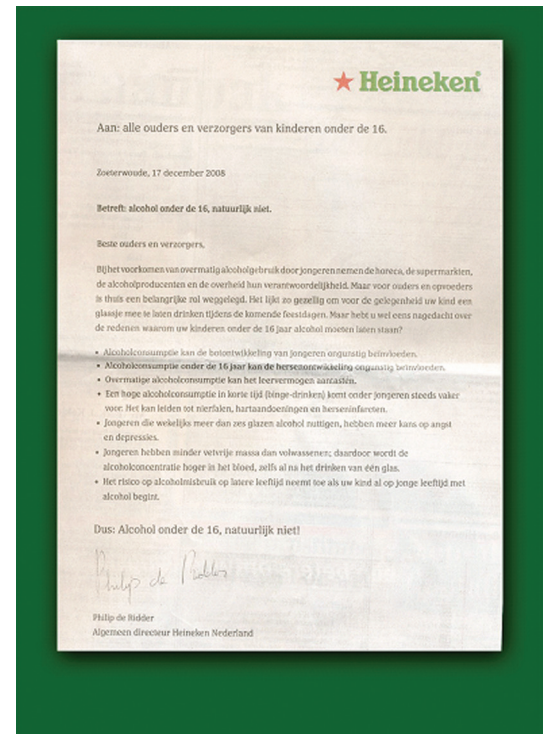
Then, Heineken provides a list of seven different reasons of why alcohol below 16 is harmful (e.g. drinking at an early age affects the development of the brain, the ability to learn, the kidneys, the heart, it increases the risk of alcohol misuse and there is a relation with depression and anxiety).

The total costs of this campaign were € 176.558 (16), only a trifle compared with the millions of euros that Heineken is spending annually on marketing activities, in which they convey the message that alcohol is fun and sociable, instead of an addictive substance.

It seemed that the general public reacted fairly positive towards this activity enrolled by Heineken. The content of the message conveyed by Heineken ("no alcohol below 16") is correct. However, the sender of the message in this case is an alcohol producer.

It remains questionable whether this action by Heineken has the intended effect, namely that youngsters below 16 do not drink alcohol, especially during special occasions. Thus, we don't know whether the letter has any effect on drinking behaviour of youngsters, but chances are high that this 'responsible' action from Heineken will contribute to a more positive image people have of the Heineken brand. This will of course only be advantageous for Heineken.

In fact this call for parents can also be seen as a form of alcohol advertising for the Heineken brand.



Emphasis on 16 years

In the letter, Heineken strongly emphasizes the age limit of 16 years below which no alcohol should be consumed. It is almost as if drinking below 16 is very harmful, while the effects above the age of 16 'disappear'. Research has shown this is not the case. The brain is developing until the age of 23-24. Also, below the age of 40 no benefits of alcohol consumption have been identified (17). A moderate consumption of alcohol can only have a small beneficial effect on cardiovascular disease after the age of 40. It seems that Heineken wants to consolidate the age limit of 16 years that is now the minimum legal purchase age for mild alcoholic beverages in the Netherlands (18 years for drinks > 15% alc.vol.).

Responsibility

Also, Heineken stresses in the introduction of the letter that all stakeholders e.g. the alcohol industry (producers, retailers etc.) and the government "take their responsibility". As the WHO noticed about the tobacco industry, "these programmes serve the purpose of creating the appearance that tobacco companies are proposing solutions for the problems they create. In reality they detract attention from proven, effective solutions – including price and tax increases" (3). For example, educational campaigns have proven to be very cost-ineffective, whilst other measures, such as a tax increase or a raise of minimum legal drinking/purchasing age, are relatively cheap and very effective (4).

VIP Campaign "Taste differs. Alcohol does not"

A final example of Dutch CSR campaigns in 2008 is the website www.drinkwijzer.info ("drinkwiser.info"). This website is an initiative of the VIP (Association of Importers and Producers of distilled beverages). In the fall of 2008 free cards and radio commercials, among others, were used to draw attention to this new website. The goal of the campaign was to show that "Taste differs. Alcohol does not".

Central to the website is an "alcoholtest" (on the radio it was advertised as: "Test your knowledge about alcohol now! Start the quiz and win one of the 25 key chain alcoholtesters!"). The alcohol test was developed after research had shown that a lot of misunderstandings exist about alcohol.

For example, many people think that a glass of beer and a glass of liqueur differ in the amount of alcohol consumed. Also, 42% of the respondents believed that hard liquor has more harmful effects on health than beer or wine (18). However, when counted in standard alcoholic consumptions each glass contains as much alcohol.

The VIP wanted to point out with this initiative that it is less harmful to drink spirits (compared to other types of alcoholic beverages) than many people think it is. However, some critical comments on this campaign can be made:

A standard alcoholic consumption does not exist anymore. In practice, the concept of a "standard alcoholic consumption" is less and less common. Especially people that mix or make their own drinks at home often do not know or do not make use of 'standard glasses'. Besides this, product innovations can be very confusing for the consumer with regard to the "standard alcoholic consumption". For example a can of beer of 0.5 l with a higher percentage of alcohol (Bavaria 8.6) or a larger beer bottle (Grolsch contains 33 cl. instead of the 'regular' 30 cl) do not add to a clear concept of 'standard consumptions'. Also, a lot of variation between countries exists (e.g. a standard alcoholic drink in the US contains almost 14 grams of alcohol, while in the Netherlands it contains 10 grams).

Because a standard alcoholic consumption hardly exists nowadays, the different types of beverages, such as beer, wine and spirits, also cannot be compared that easily anymore. Because of the above reasons there is a risk that in fact a glass of hard liquor does indeed contain more alcohol compared to a glass of beer. And when a drink contains more alcohol, it is of course increasingly harmful.

Risk of 'underestimating' strong liquor

The VIP campaign could possibly be useful within the catering industry, with respect to pouring drinks, because here usually pre-measured amounts of alcohol are being used. However, as made clear above, for alcohol use at home (which is still the majority of the alcohol consumption), the campaign can be confusing and even lead to an increased consumption of hard liquor, because it is now perceived to be "less harmful as was previously thought" and standard drinks do not exist anymore.

Thus, on the one hand the website www.drinkwijzer.info and the campaign "Taste differs. Alcohol does not." were designed to increase 'knowledge' about alcohol, but on the other hand, it might only lead to more confusion about standard drinks and to a higher consumption of hard liquor. This final development would of course not be disadvantageous for the VIP (Association of Importers and Producers of distilled beverages).



"...on the one hand we differ enormously"

"...on the other hand we are the same"



Drinkwiser Knowledge Quiz
What do you know about alcohol?

"Test your knowledge about alcohol now! Start the quiz and win one of the 25 key chain alcoholtesters!"

Taste differs. Alcohol does not.

Conclusion

More and more companies are using CSR to transform their corporate identity to include a great amount of responsibility. This also holds true for the alcohol industry. In doing so these companies claim to feel responsible for informing their customers about the 'responsible use' of alcohol. The alcohol industry in some instances will even go so far as to reach out to minors, a target audience which they are not allowed to reach, in many cases due to alcohol marketing regulations. Even so, CSR practically has the same effects as advertisements, because it sheds a positive light on a brand or product. That is why CSR can also be seen as an expression of marketing.

It is a special kind of marketing veiled in social responsibility. In many cases it takes the form of education, even though it has been shown time and again that education is not a very effective method of reducing the use of alcohol of young people (4, 5, 6). Furthermore, the industry even manages to slip in some straight forward advertisements in their CSR campaigns, such as shown in the Dutch television program Say sorry with Nikkie and on the website of Diageo 'The choice is yours'. (Thus, invalidating the social responsible goals.) According to STIVA (the social aspects group of the Dutch alcohol industry) CSR campaigns are not "public recommendations" to drink alcohol, Therefore STIVA believes the CSR commercials cannot be labelled as "alcohol advertising." In this case these adds would be allowed to be broadcast within the Dutch Watershed of 6.00 - 21.00 hours on radio and tv. This report shows some of the many shapes that CSR can take: television programs, television adds, internet campaigns and newspaper advertisements.

By including the brand name in social responsible campaigns, brand awareness and brand recognition are raised. Therefore, it is safe to label such campaigns as advertisements. In these campaigns the alcohol producers claim to contribute to the solving of alcohol related problems. Thus far, those claims have not been scrutinized well enough to say that they do, or do not, hold water. What we can say is that comparable CSR campaigns of the tobacco industry have been proven to have no effect or even undesirable effects on behavioral changes (14).

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Trends in Alcohol Marketing

Corporate Social Responsibility: the new marketing tool

The Alcohol Industry and Corporate Social Responsibility
With tightening regulations on alcohol marketing, alcohol producers develop new initiatives to make customers aware of their brands and products. One such recent development is the use of Corporate Social Responsibility to build on the image of the companies. This boils down to alcohol producers claiming to take responsibility in informing customers about responsible drinking behaviour through the use of education. A challenging new development that takes with it certain dangers that are discussed in this report.

This trend report is published by the European Centre for Monitoring Alcohol Marketing (EUCAM). EUCAM is set up to collect, exchange and to promote knowledge and experience about alcohol marketing throughout Europe.

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