

The devil doesn't just have all the best tunes – he has the best symphony

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Introduction

There are many answers to the question “why do young people smoke?”. Age, gender, parental and peer smoking, family circumstances and ethnicity are all implicated. However a simpler answer is that young people smoke because the tobacco industry puts a great deal of skill and effort into encouraging them to do so. Similar arguments can be made for alcohol. The commercial sector's capacity to influence behaviour in this way is called marketing.

This paper assesses the evidence that tobacco and alcohol marketing are effective in both reinforcing current smoking and drinking, and recruiting new people to these habits. Much of this evidence focuses on advertising, as this is the obvious tip of the marketing iceberg. However, the rest of the iceberg – which includes marketing communications, the other elements of the marketing mix, relational thinking and stakeholder marketing – is equally important, and so is also discussed here.

The paper concludes that marketing has to be seen as the sum of all these parts, a deliberately coherent and strategic whole – and that piecemeal analyses will always be inadequate. This has implications for what we do to control the tobacco and alcohol industries, and also how we can respond with our own ‘social marketing’ efforts.

The Power of Advertising

Two approaches have been used to assess the impact of tobacco and alcohol advertising on substance use behaviour: econometric studies and consumer studies. Econometric studies rely on the construction of complex economic equations that accurately model all the potential influences on smoking or drinking behaviour, including advertising. However smoking and drinking are extremely sophisticated social phenomenon, so this is very difficult to do well. Variables are often naïve (eg ad spend is assumed to equate with ad effectiveness), data incomplete (eg ad spend data for major media are simply unavailable) and models of effect are simplistic (eg long term, cultural impacts are ignored) (Hastings et al, in press).

Econometric studies also have a more basic deficiency when trying to assess the effect of advertising specifically on young people. They deal in population level effects and can therefore tell us little about impact on sub-groups. Both the alcohol and tobacco businesses actually comprise a number of different, smaller markets. Most importantly for our purposes they include older established users and younger, inexperienced users. Furthermore, marketers recognise this and deliberately develop product offerings with appropriate promotional and marketing support which are targeted at these distinct groups. The distorting effect this will have on econometric

studies is underlined when it is remembered that youth brands, such as Bacardi Breezer, are given a disproportionate amount of advertising support (Cooke et al, 2004). The same logic applies to tobacco, where there is consistent evidence that the youth brands are those most heavily supported by advertising (Arnett and Terhanean, 1998; Biener and Siegel, 2000; Pierce et al, 1999).

Consumer Studies. These problems have increasingly led researchers to opt for 'consumer studies' which "*use the individual as the unit of analysis*" (Aitken et al 1988, p1400 see WHO) and attempt to examine or predict the specific responses of young people to advertising. Interestingly, consumer studies are also the method favoured by industry to evaluate their advertising effectiveness (ref any ad research text).

This approach has now established beyond all reasonable doubt that tobacco advertising encourages people to take up and continue smoking.

In the case of tobacco it shows that young people who smoke are more likely to be aware of and appreciate tobacco advertising (Aitkin *et al.*, 1987; Aitkin *et al.*, 1988; Barnard and Forsyth, 1996; Charlton and Blair, 1989; Covell *et al.*, 1994; DiFranza *et al.*, 1991; Evans *et al.*, 1995; Fischer *et al.*, 1991; Klitzner *et al.*, 1991; Pechmann and Ratneshwar 1994; Potts *et al.*, 1986; Unger *et al.*, 1995) than their non-smoking peers. Similarly, research has indicated that adolescents are more receptive to tobacco advertising than are adults (Pierce *et al.*, 1991; Pollay *et al.*, 1996).

The evidence base for alcohol is less well formed; there simply has not been anything like the same amount of research done. Nonetheless, there is clear support from cross sectional studies for the idea that underage drinkers are more aware, familiar and appreciative of alcohol advertising than their non-drinking peers (Aitken et al 1988, 1989a). Furthermore these links are independent of other variables known to be associated with underage drinking (such as age, and peer and parental alcohol consumption) and variables that might explain an attraction to television advertising.

Wyllie et al (1998a,b) also conducted cross sectional surveys with both 10 to 17 and 18 to 29 year-olds, and got similar findings.

Cross-sectional studies raise the issue of causality: does drinking and smoking encourage attention to advertising or vice versa? As Aitken et al argue, the data show that young drinkers are paying more attention to alcohol advertising and, according to advertising theory, this means they must be getting some reward or benefit from it. In particular they are deriving greater benefits from it than their non-drinking peers, and, as all other variables are being held constant, the only possible explanation is that these benefits relate to their alcohol consumption. In short, the advertising is rewarding and reinforcing their drinking.

Examining the impact, if any, of tobacco and alcohol advertising on the *onset* of drinking, requires longitudinal cohort studies, and in tobacco there is clear evidence that advertising not only reinforces current smoking, but recruits new smokers. A meta-analysis of nine such studies (Lovato C et al 2004) concluded and all nine showed "*a positive, consistent and specific relationship*" between exposure to tobacco advertising and the subsequent uptake of smoking among adolescents.

Again, much less research has been done in the alcohol arena, and hardly any with children. Connolly et al (1994) examined the relationship between recall of alcohol related mass-media communications at ages 13 and 15, and alcohol consumption at the age of 18. They found that young men who had a higher recall of alcohol advertising at the age of 15 consumed larger volumes of beer at the age of 18. Casswell and Zhang (1998) carried out a longitudinal study at ages 18 and 21 and found a significant relationship between beer brand allegiance and liking of alcohol advertisements at age 18 with beer consumption at the age of 21. More longitudinal research is therefore needed, particularly with adolescents. Nonetheless a recent WHO review was able to conclude:

Overall, consumer studies – especially the more sophisticated recent ones – do suggest a link between advertising and young people’s drinking. In essence, the more aware, familiar and appreciative young people are of alcohol advertising, the more likely they are to drink both now and in the future. (Cooke et al in press)

In summary, there is reliable evidence to show that advertising for both tobacco and alcohol does have an influence on young people’s behaviour. This is perhaps not surprising; as an advertising executive was incautiously heard to remark at recent WHO meeting, “*its to be hoped so, we’re wasting a lot of bloody money if it isn’t*”.

Integrated Marketing Communications

The tobacco and alcohol industries do not use advertising in isolation; rather they aspire to “*integrated marketing communications*”, or the synergistic and harmonious use of a wide range of promotional tools (Hutton, 1996), including packaging, point of sale, sales promotions, direct promotion, loyalty schemes, brand stretching, the use of electronic media and product placement. Figure 1, for example, describes how WKD a leading ‘flavoured alcoholic beverage’ combines electronic media, point of sale promotions and conventional advertising to communicate a coherent and consistent ‘devil may care’ message.

This thinking is partly driven by a desire for greater organisational efficiency and more effective planning (Kitchen 1994, Smith 1996, Schultz et al 1997): the consistency and coherence ensure that different communication elements reinforce one another and the whole becomes greater than the sum of its parts. It is also driven by the reality of an increasingly literate, discerning and fragmented advertising audience (ibid). This reflects developments in communication and advertising theory, which have increasingly recognised the audience as an active and empowered participant in the communication process. In this new paradigm the function of communication is not so much to do things to consumers, as to meet them half way, exchange knowing looks and facilitate engagement. Meaning is not imposed, it is jointly constructed. Consequently, as Lannon and Cooper explained over twenty years ago, it has become as important to understand, “*what people do with marketing communications*”, as, “*what does marketing communications do to people.*” (Lannon and Cooper, 1983).

If it covers them at all, the tobacco and alcohol literature tends to examine the effects of the many different forms of marketing communication on an ad hoc basis. In this way, promotional devices such as merchandising and sports sponsorship have been shown to encourage tobacco use in the same way as advertising (see Figure 2).

However, one major study has also addressed the broader integrated marketing communications agenda (MacFadyen et al, 2001), examining young people's awareness of and involvement with all existing forms of tobacco promotion. Regression analysis was then conducted to examine whether or not any association existed between these measures and smoking status, and as with previous studies, this found some effects. More importantly, a second analysis found that the greater the number of tobacco marketing techniques a young person was aware of, the more likely he/she was to be a smoker. In other words, a dose-response relationship was identified.

This cumulative impact demonstrates that integrated marketing communications are an effective way of influencing adolescent substance use.

For many fast moving consumer goods companies the ultimate aim of this imbricative communication effort is to build evocative brands, and the tobacco and alcohol industries are great exponents of this skill. Marques like Marlboro, Bacardi, and Budweiser have achieved iconic status and provide an invaluable platform from which to launch sub brands like Marlboro Lights and Bacardi Breezer. We also know from tobacco industry internal documents, that they are acutely aware how important their skills in this area are to their financial success. Brands and their carefully crafted imagery are the principal means of meeting the psycho-social needs of young people. Ultimately, as a UK ad agency expressed it: "*if a brand of cigarettes does not convey much in the way of image values, there may well be little reason for a young adult smoker to persist with or adopt the brand*" (Rothmans, 1998).

And so to Marketing

The marketing mix. Just as advertising cannot be divorced from marketing communications, so communications are inseparable from marketing. As one popular definition explains, marketing combines promotion with the capacity to 'get the right product in the right place at the right price' (Cannon). 'Right' in this context means in line with consumer needs and preferences; what marketers term 'consumer orientation'. This emphasises the importance of understanding your consumer, and starting from where they are, and not imposing your priorities or perspective on them. In the market place, where consumption is voluntary, to do anything less is to risk bankruptcy.

A good illustration of this is the alcohol industry's response to the burgeoning drug and rave culture of the early 1990s. Recognising its popularity among young people, alcohol companies responded by incorporating it into their offering to the market. As Forsyth (ref) points out, their advertising used creative talent and imagery from the rave scene. He quotes style magazines of the time stating that Grolsch were attempting to "woo young people through rave imagery", and Vladivar Vodka's

advertising “strange ambient club feel, a bit druggy”. Brain (ref) shows that products were also appearing with drug related names such as ‘Raver’, ‘Blastaway’ and ‘DNA’ (a reference to MDMA or ecstasy). These were then joined by mixed alcohol and stimulant drinks or ‘buzz drinks’, focussed on a capacity provide a ‘hit’. This promotion and new product development was supported by energetic point of sale activity with particular efforts to penetrate the club scene.

This example also illustrates the other key characteristic of marketing: that it uses a multifaceted and coherent approach. The promotion, pricing, distribution and product characteristics (the ‘marketing mix’) were all focussed on the same need. Similarly, there would be no point in Philip Morris producing the most evocative of marketing communications if the smoker can’t get hold of their cigarettes, afford them - or enjoy consuming them.

This raises the question of whether these other elements of the marketing mix, when used by the alcohol and tobacco industries, influence adolescent behaviour. The evidence base on price effects, at least at a macro level, is clear cut: lower prices encourage both alcohol and tobacco consumption (Godfrey, 1997; Chaloupka and Warner, 2000). It seems reasonable to assume that price when used as a marketing tool will also affect consumption; it is difficult to imagine that ‘two-for-one’ offers, money off coupons and happy hours would not do so and there is some direct evidence to support this, at least for alcohol (Hastings et al, in press). There is also good evidence that point of sale marketing has an impact on adolescent tobacco consumption, as the recent court case brought and lost by the tobacco industry to challenge restrictions on such marketing demonstrates (Hastings, 2004). We also know that the number of licensed premises is linked to the amount of drinking (ref).

There is also evidence that the product itself can influence consumption: research on fortified fruit wines and dry white ciders in Scotland showed how they met perfectly the needs of underage drinkers, were consumed disproportionately by under 16s and this consumption was independently related to problems such as violence and drunkenness (Hughes et al, 1997). It is also difficult to imagine that new products such as shots, which are designed as ‘chasers’, to be drunk in addition to other products, not instead, can do any other than increase consumption. Indeed one leading brand, Sidekick, even comes in a pack that can be clipped onto the ‘main’ drink – whether it be in a glass or a bottle.

However, as with marketing communications, examining the component parts of the marketing mix in isolation understates the problem. The marketing mix is just the public face of a coherent strategy that, building on integrated marketing communications, again focuses on the brand. The aim is to ensure that the brand can perform its ultimate function of creating recognition, making a promise and delivering satisfaction.

No public health studies have attempted to measure whether or not this combined marketing effort has an impact on adolescent smoking and drinking. Furthermore, even this conception of marketing understates the phenomenon. As the word ‘strategy’ suggests, continuity and the dimension of time have to be considered, along with the increasing emphasis that is being put on relationships rather than transactions in recent marketing thought.

Relationship marketing. The basic ideas of the marketing mix emerged in the 1950's largely out of experiences in the fast moving consumer goods market. These focussed on managing discrete exchanges, which had to satisfy clearly defined customer needs on the one hand, and provide profit on the other. Transactions were at the heart of this process.

This thinking continued to dominate until the mid eighties, when serious criticisms emerged, particularly from research done in the fields of both services and business to business marketing. Services differ from tangible products in that they are not pre-prepared and packaged, but are, to a large extent, manufactured at the point of delivery. This makes the 4 'P's less easy to apply. Specifically, it fails to give sufficient emphasis to that most crucial of service industry constructs: customer service (see for example, Heskett, 1987). Interestingly, some of the earliest work in this area was done in bars and pubs, which, from a marketing perspective, produced the most compelling examples of relationships at work. The 'Cheers phenomenon' of the local pub, where every customer is known and welcomed, their needs catered for without question or query which results in loyalty. Customers will return continually and pay far more for the product (alcohol) than they would if they used alternative outlets such as supermarkets.

Meanwhile, in business to business marketing, the mass, transactional assumptions in earlier marketing thought conflicted with a day to day reality of long term, co-operative alliances between buyers (Rajagopal and Bernard 1993). A more continuous and sophisticated model was needed. At the same time marketing academics and practitioners began to emphasise the value of customer loyalty, it became clear that it is less costly - various authors suggest a factor of between 4 and 10 - for a company to keep existing customers, than win new ones, although no definitive studies have actually confirmed this.

Researchers, therefore, began to argue that the focus in marketing should not be on *transactions*, but *relationships* (Berry, 1983; Grönroos, 1994; Gummesson, 1994). It isn't just today's margin that matters, but also the promise of tomorrow's. From this perspective the task of the marketer is to ensure that the company does all it can to build, enhance and retain long term customer relationships. Customer satisfaction - rather than sales figures - becomes the arbiter of success. As with other human relationships, trust and commitment are crucial (Morgan and Hunt, 1994).

This relational thinking has now transferred to main stream marketing. Advances in information technology, sophisticated loyalty schemes and electronic point of sale data have provided the logistical basis for this. At the same time increasingly sophisticated branding provides the emotional dimension to the relationship. In the process it has become an integral part of tobacco and alcohol marketing.

Does relationship marketing (RM) influence adolescent smoking and drinking? Again no public health studies have looked at this, and it is difficult imagine what a conventional trial would be like. The business literature, however, has examined the effectiveness of RM and this research suggests it brings numerous benefits to the marketer (O'Malley and Tynan, 2000): stability and better long term planning because you get to know your customers; lower price sensitivity because service quality and

trust provide valued compensations; and the opportunity to 'up sell' (sell more) and 'cross sell' (sell alternative products).

Stakeholder marketing. There is one other layer of marketing to consider. As well as focussing on the consumer, marketing and relational thinking are extended vertically, horizontally and internally. Relationships are built with suppliers, allies, employees and even (in the case of strategic alliances) competitors (Palmer, 2000). They are also built with policy makers.

The tobacco industry have been particularly active in their stakeholder marketing. A recent European Commission review (Hastings and Angus, 2004), for example, showed how they have put enormous efforts into influencing tobacco control policy at a local, national and EU level. It also records some remarkable successes. In the UK the fact that a former Minister of Health is also Deputy Chairman of British American Tobacco perhaps says enough about the rewards of good stakeholder marketing.

Similarly, the alcohol industry is very active in this domain. Witness the current row about the prominent position given by the Government to the Portman Group in their response to alcohol problems in the UK (Edwards et al, 2004). The Portman Group are funded by the alcohol industry supposedly as a watchdog, but for many in public health they are in reality more like a lapdog. Indeed their position on alcohol is extremely troubling. It mimics the view of the industry, that problems are simply the result of misuse by a minority, and flies in the face of the public health consensus that general availability is the issue.

Even more contentiously, it is claimed that the consumer marketing based around the drugs culture discussed above, was backed by active stakeholder marketing (Forsyth 2004). This focussed on encouraging legislators to ban raves and prohibit the use of drugs in clubs. These two Bills, introduced by friendly MPs (Graham Bright and Barry Legg respectively), apparently for laudable drugs prevention reasons, in reality benefited the alcohol industry by pushing young people back to using (legal) alcohol to get their hit. Forsyth also points to the anti ecstasy campaign donated by a consortium of ad agency, which he attributes, not to altruism, but to the fact they all had major alcohol or energy drink clients.

The great advantage of this stakeholder marketing for both the alcohol and tobacco industry's is that it enables them to influence the social context in which they do business, and ensure that it is as supportive as possible. By the same token, of course, it is a cause for concern among those addressing adolescent substance use. In tobacco at least there is a burgeoning evidence base to justify this concern. It is clear that controls on tobacco marketing have been successfully resisted by the tobacco industry (Hastings and Angus, 2004; Hastings & Ling, in press) and the result has been inadequate protection for young people.

Conclusion

There is a hard evidence base to confirm the plausible common sense view that advertising and marketing communications for tobacco and alcohol do effect consumption by young people. However, for the most part this only provides a

fragmentary view of one element of marketing. It is akin to assessing the impact of the car on society by testing alternators and spark plugs.

Here is an urgent need for public health to recognise the full, strategic complexity of marketing and its impact on young people's alcohol and tobacco use. This has fundamental implications for industry control programmes, which need to move way beyond advertising.

It also provides a useful insight into the notion of social marketing, which is often seen as a synonym for social advertising. In reality it is much broader than this. Social marketing has the potential to use all the tools of marketing – including branding, relation building and stakeholder marketing – to advance public health goals. From what we know of the power these tools have had in the hands of Diageo and Philip Morris, it is high time we too made use of them.

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Fig 1: The Integrated Marketing for WKD

WKD is vodka based FAB launched in 1996 by Beverage Brands UK Ltd, a relatively small player in the alcohol market. They have made use of all elements of the marketing mix to maintain a coherent and evocative 'devil may care' brand.

Marketing Communications. Conventional advertising and sponsorship is combined with innovative new media activity. The WKD website was designed by one of a growing crop of specialist 'new media agencies' and is very sophisticated. It includes arcade games, downloads for screensavers and wallpaper, a list of WKD sponsored events, a competitions section, a prize attracting photo album of people out drinking WKD and the chance to sign up to become a WKD VIP member. WKD keeps in email contact with all its registered website users and text messaging and 'text and win' competitions are also used extensively. The new technology is also interactive: the website offers e-mail postcards that can be sent to friends, and a 'windup service' allowing users to send bogus letters by e-mail to their friends. In this way WKD gains from the credibility of young people marketing to each other, using what has been dubbed 'viral' or 'tribal' marketing (Jobber, 2004); a sort of corruption of peer education.

Point of Sale and Price

The communications effort keeps potential customers apprised of new features, special offers and promotions such as the 'Pub Olympics' – an event included a miniature ski slope down which drinks were poured into participants mouths

The Product

WKD comes in three flavours: Vodka Blue, Vodka Iron Brew and Vodka Silver. The name is linked to the word wicked, a fashionable 'street' term used by young people to express approval.

Figure 2: Research on the effects of marketing communications

<p>Sponsorship</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - exposure to a cigarette sponsored sports advertisement reinforced existing smoking behaviour, and for non-smokers created favourable attitudes towards smoking, increased awareness and liking of brands¹ - children show a higher awareness of the sponsoring brand and links the exposure to brand recall and understanding of brand imagery^{2,3,4} - children's preference for motor racing is a significant independent variable in progression to regular smoking⁵ - the statement "<i>smoking can't be all that dangerous, or the Government would ban sports sponsorship</i>" was put to over 4000 11-16yr olds; substantially more smokers than non-smokers agreed with it⁶
<p>Merchandising</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - items such as branded lighters, T-shirts, baseball caps and badges frequently reach adolescents at the point-of-sale, special events or through competitions^{7,8,9} - there is a positive significant relationship between experience with tobacco promotions and susceptibility to tobacco use^{10,9,11} - there is a relationship between the numbers of promotional items owned and a higher likelihood of smoking¹² - there are relationships between smoking initiation rates and levels of promotional expenditure, and owning/using tobacco promotional items and the onset of smoking^{13,14}
<p>Brand-Stretching</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - for example the endorsement of holidays, cafés and music; items that are then sold rather than given away¹⁵ - initial research focussed mainly on advertising for such products and shows that this is consistently seen as advertising for the sponsoring tobacco brand rather than the product^{16, 15} - 15yr olds' awareness of brand stretching is independently associated with being a smoker¹⁷
<p>Packaging</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - tobacco packaging both reinforces brand imagery and reduces the impact of health warnings^{18,19,20,21} - when fewer brand image cues were on the packaging, adolescents able to recall more accurately non-image health information²¹ - plain packaging limits the ease with which consumers associate particular images with cigarette brands and significantly influences smoking behaviour¹⁸
<p>Point-of-Sale (POS)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - cigarette packets were displayed in such a way at the POS as to act like advertising²² - young adolescents who reported seeing tobacco advertising in stores were 38% more likely to experiment with smoking and the advertising enhances brand imagery^{23,24} - the more youth-orientated advertisements were displayed outside shops, the more often children tried to buy cigarettes²⁵ - there are greater levels of POS advertising in areas where there is likely to be a high prevalence of smoking (e.g. deprived/ethnic minority areas); young people are unduly exposed to them^{26,27,28}
<p>Product Placement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the paid for placement of cigarette products in films and on TV is a controversial but documented marketing communications tactic. Strong evidence links this with adolescent smoking^{29,30,31}
<p>Loyalty Schemes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - there is a significantly greater participation in deprived areas and coupons may offset the effect of price increases³² - loyalty schemes involvement among 15yr olds is independently associated with smoking¹⁷
<p>Free Samples</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a systematic search of tobacco industry documents confirms free samples as a popular strategy³³ - receipt of free samples by young people independently associated with susceptibility to smoke¹¹
<p>Internet</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - tobacco manufacturers have their own websites and sponsor further sites unrelated to tobacco. Also pro tobacco sites (not related to industry) include chat rooms/message boards and celebrities/attractive role models smoking, which may appeal to the young^{34,35,36}
<p>Marketing Communications</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - young people are aware of <i>all</i> forms of tobacco marketing communications; over ½ of all smokers had participated in some form of promotion; and the greater the number of tobacco marketing techniques a young person was aware of, the more likely he/she was to be a smoker¹⁷
<p>1. Huek <i>et al.</i>, 1993; 2. Ledwith, 1984; 3. Piepe <i>et al.</i>, 1986; 4. Aitken <i>et al.</i> 1986; 5. Charlton <i>et al.</i>, 1997; 6. Bates, 1999; 7. Pierce <i>et al.</i>, 1999; 8. Coeytaux <i>et al.</i>, 1995; 9. Gilpin <i>et al.</i>, 1997; 10. Feighery <i>et al.</i>, 1998; 11. Altman <i>et al.</i>, 1996; 12. Sargent <i>et al.</i>, 2000; 13. Redmond, 1999; 14. Bauer and Johnson, 1999; 15. CTRC, 2001; 16. Aitken <i>et al.</i>, 1985; 17. MacFadyen <i>et al.</i>, 2001; 18. Goldberg <i>et al.</i>, 1995; 19. Rootman and Flay, 1995; 20. Carr-Greg and Gray, 1993; 21. Beede and Lawson, 1992; 22. Di Franza <i>et al.</i>, 1999; 23. Schooler <i>et al.</i>, 1996; 24. Donovan <i>et al.</i>, 2002; 25. Voorhees <i>et al.</i>, 1998; 26. Woodruff <i>et al.</i>, 1995; 27. Laws <i>et al.</i>, 2002; 28. Ruel <i>et al.</i>, 2001; 29. Hart, 1996; 30. Chapman and Davis, 1997; 31. Dalton <i>et al.</i>, 2003; 32. CSM, 1995; 33. Sepe <i>et al.</i>, 2002; 34. CME, 1997; 35. CME, 1998; 36. Hong and Cody, 2002.</p>