

eurocare

European Alcohol Policy Alliance

Alcohol marketing and social media

Eurocare reflections 2014



The European Alcohol Policy Alliance (EUROCARE) is an alliance of non-governmental and public health organisations with 57 member organisations across 25 European countries advocating prevention and reduction of alcohol related harm in Europe. Member organisations are involved in advocacy and research, as well as in the provision of information and training on alcohol issues and the service for people whose lives are affected by alcohol problems.

The mission of Eurocare is to promote policies to prevent and reduce alcohol related harm, through advocacy in Europe. The message, in regard to alcohol consumption is **“less is better”**.

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Authors: Sandra Tricas-Sauras and Nils Garnes

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1.ABOUT THIS REPORT

Alcohol in Europe has a positive image and is associated with celebrations, gatherings and festivities. However, there is another side of the issue - underage alcohol consumption can lead to irreparable damage to the developing brain, increased likelihood of dependence, traffic accidents, risky sexual behaviour, violence and depression, to name but a few issues.

Regulating alcohol marketing is recognised by World Health Organisation as one of the “Best Buys” to reduce and prevent alcohol-related harm. However over the years it has proven to be an extremely controversial policy area to regulate, with opposing interests at stake and an ongoing “evidence battle”.

Eurocare defines marketing as a mix of sophisticated, integrated strategies, grouped around four elements: the product, its price, its place (distribution) and its promotion. However, in this report we limit our focus to the promotion of the product itself (e.i advertising, sponsorship and product placement).

The European Alcohol Policy Alliance will in this report present its policy recommendations together with its literature review on alcohol marketing and social media.

This report will not only examine the alcohol marketing on young peoples drinking, but also investigate the utility in social media in promoting healthy behaviors.

2.BACKGROUND AND EUROCARE POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Despite being a key health determinant alcohol is still heavily marketed with young people as an important target group. Consumers (and non-consumers) are exposed to sophisticated marketing aimed at creating positive expectations and beliefs not just about the product itself but how it will make them feel and be perceived by others. Alcohol marketing techniques range from mass media advertising to sponsorship of events, product placement, internet and social media campaigns, merchandise and usage of other products connected with alcohol brands. In 2009, the Science Group of the European Alcohol and Health Forum reviewed evidence looking at the impact of marketing on the volume and patterns of drinking alcohol. It concluded that alcohol marketing increases the likelihood that young people will start to drink alcohol and that if they are already drinking, they will drink more in terms of amount and frequency.

According to the WHO European Charter on Alcohol 1995, “All children and adolescents have the right to grow up in an environment protected from the negative consequences of alcohol consumption and, to the extent possible, from the promotion of alcoholic beverages”.

Reducing exposure to alcohol marketing by young people should be a key objective of an updated EU Alcohol Strategy. The existing French ‘Loi Evin’¹ provides an approach to the regulation of alcohol marketing that should be adopted as the minimum standard across the EU. A statutory regulatory framework should control the volume and content of marketing, online marketing, sponsorship and product placement. Crucially, in light of technological advances and the increased role of social media in society today, particular focus needs to be placed on regulation of the alcohol marketing in the online and mobile environments.

¹ Included in the French Act of Public health

Eurocare calls for a level playing field for commercial communications that should be implemented across Europe, building on existing regulations in Member States, with an incremental long-term development.

EUROCARE RECOMMENDATIONS

- No alcohol advertising on television or in cinemas.
- No alcohol advertising on the internet except at points of sale.
- No alcohol sponsorship of cultural or sport events.
- No alcohol advertising outdoors and in public premises (i.e. athletes' shirts, bus stops, lorries etc)
- No sales promotions such as Happy Hours and Open Bars/Girls Night etc.
- No intrusive² and interstitial³ marketing tools such as: social media, apps on mobile phones.
- Young people should not be exposed to alcohol marketing. Strict regulations should be in place to restrict product placement of alcohol products in films and programs portraying drinking classified as for 18 certificate.
- Alcohol advertising should only be permitted under precise conditions defined by statutory regulation. It should neither be mentioned nor linked to sexual, social and sports related images, nor imply benefits related to these areas that are accrued from consumption of alcoholic products.
- A health message must be included on each advertisement, drawing attention to specific risks associated with alcohol consumption.

² Intrusive here defined as behaviour ad that targets your habits and based on your profile using social net, your own emails, cookies, localisation etc, or brings you to change web page by replacing ads by others.

³ Interstitial here defined as movable ads that appears between two web pages in a plain screen or when you start apps on your smartphone

3. ALCOHOL, MARKETING AND SOCIAL MEDIA IN ADOLESCENCE AND YOUNG POPULATIONS

The purpose of this review of the scientific literature is to assess recent evidence in the field of marketing and social media, and younger populations regarding alcohol consumption.

During the last decade, scientific research has consistently shown that youth exposure to alcohol marketing is associated to an increase in drinking habits for baseline drinkers with significant consequences. Social media use and daily exposure to marketing campaigns has also significantly risen for adolescent and young individuals particularly over the past five years. Despite the scientific evidence, regulation seems to be inattentive to the need to protect specific vulnerable groups such as young individuals. A clear lack of cohesion in legislation regarding this topic across countries can be found.

Further work is required in this area in order to regulate youth exposure to alcohol marketing of whichever type to prevent early uptake of drinking and its consequences. Additionally, specific actions to enhance younger populations' critical appraisal of alcohol use in marketing and social media are also needed.

4. DEFINING TERMS

It is essential before advancing in this review to define certain key terms related to this work, such as "marketing", "social media" and "adolescent" or young populations. The issue regarding alcohol consumption which is also discussed in this piece of work should be straightforward. However, an interesting fact is that the scientific literature has highlighted numerous examples where identifying beverages as containing alcohol could be a challenge. This is a particularly relevant and potentially dangerous for specific populations such as young individuals.

4.1 Definition of Marketing

The specialised literature has offered a number of definitions for marketing adapted to time. According to the American Marketing Association, it can be defined as:
"... an organizational function and a set of processes for creating, communicating and delivering value to customers and for managing customer relationships in ways that benefit the organization and its stakeholder" (Kotler, 2011).

Eurocare understand marketing as a mix of sophisticated, integrated strategies, grouped around four main elements: the product, its price, its place (distribution) and its promotion. All four elements have ways of doing marketing, such as product design and brand name (product), pricing strategy and wholesale (pricing), distribution channels and placing within retail establishments (place) and promotional strategy, advertising, sales promotion and public relations (promotion). This mix of marketing strategies makes alcohol marketing a complex issue. When extended to an online reality, the complexity necessarily expands.

4. 2 What is Social Media?

Despite lacking from a formal definition, of "social media", Blackshaw (2006) describes it as generally understood as Internet-based applications that carry consumer-generated content which encompasses "media impressions created by consumers, typically informed by relevant experience, and archived or shared online for easy access by other impressionable consumers".

This includes a variety of applications in the technical sense which allow consumers to “post”, “tag”, “digg”, or “blog”, and so forth, on the Internet. The contents generated by these social media include a variety of new and emerging sources of online information that are created, initiated, circulated, and used by consumers with the intent of educating each other about products, brands, services and issues (Blackshaw & Nazzaro, 2006).

Nowadays, the use of these applications is quite common in almost all scenarios, such as educational, professional and divulgative forums that appear to be used by a high proportion of the public, particularly younger people.

4.3. Definition of adolescent or young individual

In this review, the terms adolescent and young population are used interchangeably. Taking into account the WHO definition, human adolescence is described as the phase of human growth and development situated after childhood and before adulthood (Krug et al., 2002). Traditionally, the age period is described from ages 10 to 19.

This period is conventionally characterised by an exponential rhythm in growth and dramatic changes in many dimensions of the individual. Biological determinants appear to be universal, but the individual duration and defining aspects of this specific period can differ across time, culture, socioeconomic factors and ultimately depending on the person’s experiences.

Significantly related to this specific period are critical transitions and experiences that may determine future actions of the individual. Adolescence is a period of preparation for adulthood during which time several key developmental experiences occur. While adolescence is a time of tremendous growth and potential, it is also a time of considerable risk during which social contexts exert powerful influences.

5.METHODOLOGY

In order to review the recent evidence regarding the chosen topic of this review a computer-assisted Boolean search of the scientific literature was conducted. Electronic databases searched were EBSCO Host, OVID-CINHAL, MEDLINE-PubMed, PsychInfo and Embase.

The search was confined to materials published from January 2000 to December 2013. Search terms included free text and MESH terms for: adolescent, young population, alcohol, drinking behaviour and social media, intrusive marketing, advertising and marketing. Additionally the terms review and peer review materials were added.

Reference lists of retrieved reviews and primary studies were also scanned for additional relevant studies. Additionally, hand searched articles were included.

Studies were selected if they related directly to the search topic and due to time and availability constraints only full text material articles were included in this review.

The age of participants included in the studies ranged from 12 to 25 year-olds.

Language of publication was restricted to English.

Relevant studies were identified by screening titles and abstracts of retrieved references from

the previous mentioned electronic databases. Articles were not selected unless the title or abstract clearly focused on alcohol marketing or advertising, and drinking behavior in young people or adolescents. Full texts of the articles were retrieved for further screening in case of doubt. Each retrieved article was subsequently screened for inclusion according to the criteria described above.

6.RESULTS OF THE ELECTRONIC DATABASES SEARCH

The electronic searches identified 235 potentially relevant articles. After screening the titles and abstracts, 83 potentially relevant articles were obtained as full text publications. An additional 59 articles were identified from revising the different reference lists or electronically suggested articles of the retrieved articles.

At a second stage, full articles were revised for eligibility and 6 articles were yet again excluded according to the search criteria. In a subsequent hand-search 31 articles were also identified. Articles were excluded if they were secondary reports, letters or editorials.

6.1 Brief description of the studies

A total of 84 scientific articles were finally included in this review according to the previously defined criteria.

Materials included in this review presented data from a variety of scenarios covering European, North American and Australian evidence in most cases. In addition, a few examples included data on samples regarding American Indians, Hispanic, Brazilian, Chinese or N. Zealanders. Topics and focus of the identified articles varied widely and therefore, in order to facilitate the discussion of the found evidence, particular organisation was needed.

All the articles were revised thoroughly and in order to discuss the main topics described by the scientific literature, it was decided to use a thematic content analysis of the main themes in order to present the outcomes.

7.TOPICS DESCRIBED BY THE REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

After reviewing the material identified by the databases search and due to the variability of data main topics, articles were organized according to main themes, which are presented next.

7.1 Alcohol Consumption in young populations

Research suggests that alcohol consumption among younger populations is an established fact across countries despite mild differences. As an example, research conducted in the UK by Bellis et al. (2009) noted that around 84% of 15 to 16-year-olds had consumed alcohol in the last week with exponential increasing figures for consumption with age rise. Similarly, Australian and American studies suggest that more than half of young Australians have already consumed alcohol before the age of 12, which naturally increases by the age of 17 to more than 90% of the individuals for that age range. Alarmingly, according to Toumbourou et al. (2009) around 10% of 12 year-olds appear to consume alcohol weekly. In general, data suggests that alcohol consumption seems to be high also for young populations in the USA and Australia, but significantly higher for the latter with reported data indicating that Australian students would report consuming alcohol two to four times more than their USA counterparts.

According to a recent European project, the AAA study, which incorporated a total of 33,566 students from 25 countries data confirm high prevalence rates for alcohol consumption too (Steketee et al., 2013). According to the AAA study, the countries with higher lifetime prevalence rates of alcohol consumption would be Estonia (85.7%), followed by Hungary (84.7%), Czech Republic (84.2%), and Lithuania (81.7%). In general, no gender differences were found between the countries in terms of lifetime prevalence for the use of beer, spirits, or other substances. Some exceptions were Armenia, Cyprus, Italy, Switzerland, and Sweden were specific cases occurred. In Armenia and Cyprus, males seemed to drink more beer or spirits. Also, in Italy fewer females reported drinking beer and a greater proportion of Swiss males used cannabis. In contrast, Swedish females (38.3%) reported that they drank more spirits compared to males (29%) (Steketee et al., 2013).

7.2 Marketing and early uptake of alcohol: a clear link?

Many studies have tried to establish the link between alcohol advertising and adolescent drinking. Results are not always 100% conclusive but most data suggest that many forms of alcohol campaigns and advertising (such as television, in-store displays, magazines and concession stands) would influence adolescent consumption. A longitudinal American study by Phyllis and colleagues (2005) explored the relationship between individuals' exposure to a variety of types of advertising and successive drinking in a sample of over 3100 participants. This study also evaluated whether contact with an alcohol (and drug) prevention program would modulate the relationship between exposure to advertising and drinking habits. Interestingly, students participation in the ALERT Plus prevention program, seemed to reduce future drinking in the entire sample, highlighting the adequacy of including this type of programs and policies to limit exposure to aggressive marketing campaigns.

A more recent systematic review from Smith & Foxcroft's (2009) evaluated the effect of alcohol advertising and marketing on the portrayal of drinking behaviour in young people. The cohort studies included more than 13,000 young people and a variety of ranges of alcohol ads and marketing strategies (both in print and broadcast media). This relevant review suggested that there is a clear association between exposure to alcohol advertising and subsequent alcohol consumption in young people. Although Smith & Foxcroft (2009) systematic review provided evidence that limiting alcohol advertising could have an impact on alcohol consumption, data is not absolutely unquestionable due to certain confounding or residual factors. However, the authors alluded to stronger empirical evidence to support their hypothesis and emphasised the need for policy groups to revisit and reinforce some of the actual policy recommendations in this topic.

The previous message is equally consistent with Gordon et al (2009) research which assessed the cumulative impact of alcohol marketing on young people's drinking. This Scottish study evaluated a sample of 920 respondents using an information pack which was sent out to the homes of all second year (12–14 years, mean age 13 years) pupils attending schools in three local authority areas in the West of Scotland. The findings of this ambitious study supported the idea that awareness and appreciation of alcohol marketing was significantly associated with being a drinker and intending to drink within the next year. Main results seemed to be in agreement with existing evidence and Gordon and colleagues noted that given the fact that evidence suggests not only association but also a causal link between alcohol marketing and young drinking, regulation seems inadequate to protect young individuals from alcohol marketing strategies (Anderson, 2009; Weintraub et al. 2006).

To conclude, an American study conducted by Henriksen et al (2008) also accentuated the idea that receptivity to alcohol marketing would predict the initiation of alcohol use. Despite methodological difficulties and low response rate of this study, data obtained supported clearly the link between alcohol uptake and marketing receptiveness. Henriksen and colleagues study strongly advocates the need for preventive programs that may limit or reduce adolescents' receptivity to alcohol marketing strategies. The authors, as in other examples, actively suggest encouraging the incorporation of educative programs (for instance, as part of education curricula) that would provide adolescents specific tools to be more critical when confronted by attractive alcohol campaigns.

7.3 Adolescence, a critical time

As indicated earlier in this document, adolescence is characterised by the critical transitions and experiences that may determine future actions of the individual since this is a period of preparation for adulthood during which time several key developmental experiences occur. Aspects such as identity formation are intrinsic to this period and authors have expressed concern about the impact that certain types of alcohol marketing may have on it. As indicated by McCreanor et al. (2005) beverage alcohol is prominent among the many branded consumer goods that young people increasingly use as a way of signalling their identity and place in the world.

The companies and marketing strategies (of which many are global actors) use very refined promotional practices to target specific groups such as beginning drinkers, regular teenage drinkers and established young drinkers (Academy of Medical Sciences, 2004; Jernigan & O'Hara, 2004 ; Babor et al., 2003; Randen &Lunde, 2002; Brain, 2000). McCreanor et al. (2005) noted that recent marketing practices are grounded in social science theories of identity and consumption, fetching a disturbingly creative robustness to the goal of accepting commodities as positive and unproblematic markers of who we are. This would be reflected in the multiple opportunities that alcohol marketing has taken advantage of to extend the reach and image of its products. McCreanor and colleagues also noted that despite the fact that the alcohol industry would attempt to refute any suggestions that their campaigns reach or even target underage drinkers, there is a growing understanding in public health alcohol science that there is a convergence between these effects and the profit-making goals of marketing. It is obviously vital for the sustainability of alcohol companies that new generations are constantly primed and recruited into the ranks of consumers which again raises concerns about protecting individuals against powerful companies and its campaigns.

7.4 Risks and Protective factors

A number of different factors have been described as contributing to alcohol initiation and developing later drinking patterns. Among those, early age's exposure, parents' drinking, peer attitudes' to alcohol, family role, being exposed to permissive environments and, socioeconomic background, poor management family practices and favourable attitudes towards alcohol and drug use appear to be commonly described by the scientific literature.

On the other hand, research has also explored a number of strategies or protective factors that may prevent alcohol use and/or abuse in younger populations. According to Steketee et al. (2013) in order for prevention strategies to attain long-term change in adolescent alcohol behaviours, diminishing vulnerability to risk factors as well as enlarging protective factors is essential. Historically, research has mainly focused on psychosocial individual risk factors

assuming that lifestyle choices and behaviour are ultimately the result of single choices. However, it should be noted that the aetiology of alcohol use by young populations is multifactorial and many domains should be considered for each individual case.

Relevant studies have also highlighted the role of marketing and social media as initiators of alcohol use showing strong correlation between the former and adolescents' drinking uptake (Henriksen, et al, 2008).

7.5 Using Marketing and Social Media as an Ally

This review of the literature has also identified a number of examples using marketing or social media as an ally in order to change health behaviour related to alcohol or to raise specific awareness as part of public health campaigns. Some examples are presented next.

As part of a comprehensive multi-method process evaluation, Bouck et al (2005) explored via focus groups young Canadian adults' knowledge, attitudes and beliefs on binge drinking and campaign messages. The researchers also asked participants to highlight specific marketing messages or techniques that would enhance their awareness level on the risks of binge drinking. Participants themselves recommended targeting campaigns to parents and high school or post-secondary students who were identified as at risk. Respondents also recommended using specific types of messages and images or language that would be more suitable for a younger population. Finally, TV, posters and internet messages were noted as key media channels for distributing this type of messages on the risks associated with excessive alcohol intake. It appears clear that younger people are used to communicate via these avenues and are therefore more receptive to messages that may be available. The problem of binge drinking is not unique to Canada's reality but equiparable to most Westernized countries. However, students seem to be ignorant or dismissive of the existing risks associated with excessive alcohol consumption. In order to engage with this target population, it is essential for media campaign developers to use adequate language that may facilitate transferring public health messages.

A more recent review published in *Lancet* in 2010 took into account some of the points just discussed. Wakefield and colleagues advocate the use of mass media campaigns but also warn that due to the characteristics of these media, certain campaigns could fail if not adequately targeted. Wakefield et al (2010) propose areas for improvement in this area both for action and research and emphasise the need for quality campaigns with longer and better funding that may help achieving better results by tailoring appropriate media messages to its target population. This message is consistent with research by Surkan et al (2003), Slater et al (2006) and Killoos et al (2010) which also used specific public health approaches and social marketing to modulate alcohol use in precise populations.

7.5.1 Alcohol and Accidents

One topic where social media can be an ally is in the field of alcohol and accidents. A number of articles have emphasised the relationship between alcohol and accidents such as traffic crashes. A study conducted by Perkins et al. (2010) evaluated the efficacy of a specific media campaign which was designed to correcting normative misunderstandings and limiting the prevalence of drinking and driving among a young population in the American state of Montana. The quasi-experimental study assigned participants to one of three groups (social norms media campaign, buffer and control). Four random samples of young individuals were assessed four

times in 18 months via telephonic survey. Perkins et al. (2010) results suggested that the social media campaign was positive at exposing social norms messages and that the campaign was able to limit misperceptions and decreased drink and driving attitudes. Perkins and colleagues suggest that this type of research would be useful in other types of public health issues. The authors insisted on the fact that messages should be targeted and useful for the intended audiences, which is not always the case in public health campaigns. Perkins and colleagues' (2010) program could provide evidence for the use of changing risky drinking behavior while focusing on social norms marketing in an example of tailored strategies regarding the topic studied by this review.

7.6 Regulation and the Need for Robust Policies

The literature has consistently highlighted the need for clearer policies regarding alcohol, marketing and young populations.

For example, Casswell and Maxwell (2005) reviewed the status of alcohol marketing policy with an emphasis on global governance. Casswell and Maxwell cite some examples such as novel approaches in branding, sponsored events and use of viral marketing that makes it difficult to monitor and consequently protect vulnerable groups such as adolescent or young populations. To date those efforts to limit marketing on a global level, rely mostly on voluntary codes and self-regulation which in most cases is inadequate and unsatisfactory. The authors of this review conclude insisting on the fact that global responses are needed, in particular to monitor and regulate marketing in emerging societies. In their opinion, an international convention for alcohol should be embraced taking as model examples such as the Convention on Tobacco Control in order to provide a global response to alcohol-related difficulties.

A recent Australian example about alcohol policy reform was presented by Doran et al. (2010). The authors emphasized data suggesting that alcohol would be responsible for approximately 3.8% of deaths globally and 4.6% of disability adjusted life-years (DALYs) are attributable to alcohol use. It is a fact that alcohol imposes economic costs equivalent to about 1% of gross national product in high-income countries and that actions are required. Taking into account the relation between high alcohol consumption and burden of disease in Australia, the National Health System actively recommends long term goals in relation to modifying the country's drinking culture to support healthier and safer outcomes. Doran and colleagues cite previous research by Cobiart et al. (2009) which provided evidence for the use of better cost-effective plans to reform alcohol policy in that country. Transferring resources related to reduce alcohol related harm, it has been estimated that policymakers could achieve over ten times better results in health gain that if compared with actual approaches. Despite the evidence, states and governments should still agree on expanding reforms on alcohol policy in Australia but also across other countries.

Taking into consideration the data reviewed in this section and along the analysis of the literature in this field, it would be reasonable to say that the scientific literature has repeatedly shown the need for more determined and robust policies that tackle alcohol policies that push for more effective alcohol legislation. This topic is particularly evident for the case of adolescent and young populations where certain ambiguity can be found.

The need for the alcohol industry to find and preserve new customers has evidenced the use of specific and sophisticated marketing and social media campaigns directed to young customers. Taking into account vast and different ways that the industry may have in order

to influence policy decisions or even public health approaches, the scientific literature has repeatedly highlighted the need for further work so that comprehensive and stringent alcohol control policies can be enforced.

8. EUROCARE CONCERNS

Findings from the literature, shown above, raises important topics to be discussed, such as the link between early uptake of alcohol and advertisement, the critical time of adolescence as well as risk and protective factors, together with the positive opportunities with social media and the need for robust policies. On the basis of what is found in the literature and also on the basis of policy discussion, Eurocare would like to point out some main concerns regarding alcohol advertisement and social media.

8.1 New media habits and concerns

Young Europeans (16-24 years old) spend more time on internet than watching TV (EUCAM 2009), and Internet is therefore an important tool for advertisements and branding mechanisms. In 2007, the drinks companies increased their web expenditure by 70%, while traditional forms of advertising declined (Brooks 2010). Internet is not simply replacing traditional forms of advertisement, but extends existing channels used in the traditional marketing, and introduces new techniques in marketing, such as viral marketing techniques.

Four area of concerns will be addressed in this section; volume, insufficient age control, viral marketing techniques and lack of monitoring opportunities.

The first area is volume, where there is a non-stop access for exposing marketing messages. In addition, information online is available long-term and on other conditions than when broadcasted on TV, e.g. TV adverts which have been banned can be found online after being banned (Brooks 2010).

The second concern is insufficient age control, where both lack of age control and the efficiency of existing age controls are problematic. TV adverts at YouTube are most popular among the age group 13-17, and content available on other terms than TV where e.g. commercials which have been banned on TV could potentially be available online. On sites with age verification, the process is questionable since there is no way to prevent underage users from entering fictitious date of birth.

The third concern is the viral marketing techniques, where consumers are used as active players in the marketing through interactive methods. The development of consumers own alcohol brand related pages and groups on social networking sites brings up many challenges on topics such as regulations, access, rights and ownership of the use of content. User-generated content, where consumers are uploading pictures etc., is an important part of this issue.

Lack of monitoring opportunities is the fourth concern addressed. In order to ensure the effectiveness of existing alcohol marketing regulations, as well as ensure enforcement of regulations, monitoring of alcohol marketing is needed. The alcohol industry recognizes the challenges of online monitoring, where the European Forum for Responsible Drinking (EFRD) acknowledges that branded websites can be monitored, but user generated media that are not controlled by the brand cannot be monitored by the industry itself (EFRD).

This leaves us with the situation where the industry cannot fulfil their own codes of conduct

when it comes to removing inappropriate advertisement within 48 hours. Another important issue when it comes to monitoring is the cross boarder nature of internet, where the content crossing borders and the channels and techniques so divers and complex that monitoring is less likely to happen.

One approach to tolerate the existence of alcohol marketing is to run public campaigns with a public health message, which balances the messages from the industry. However, this is an unrealistic approach for two reasons; complexity and scale. As shown previous in the document, marketing is a complex mix of different approaches and strategies. The complexity becomes even bigger when addressing digital marketing. So, first to be able to compete with commercial communication in the channels used, and second, to sustain the activity in the same scale as the commercial interests, is something Eurocare regards as very unlikely to expect from a public sector. When looking at the situation today, alcohol marketing messages always outnumber health messages, and industry is able to use more complex ways of communication.

8.2 What does the public say?

There is a wide public support for statutory regulation in Europe. Findings from the Eurobarometer report "Attitudes towards alcohol" (Eurobarometer 2007) shows strong support for both a partial ban and health warning messages. 76% of the European Union population would approve a ban on alcohol advertisement targeting young people, and 50% of the respondents answered "agree totally" with this statement. Furthermore, 77% of the European Union population would agree on putting warnings on adverts, in order to warn about of the danger of drinking alcohol in relation to pregnancy and drink driving.

These numbers shows that there is a willingness and support for stronger regulations on alcohol marketing among Europeans.

9. CONCLUSION

This review has explored recent existing scientific evidence on the topic of alcohol, youth, marketing and social media during the past decade.

This subject has received substantial attention not only from the academic community and relevant institutions, but also European Union, national governments and other members of the public. It is however only during the last couple of years that relevant scientific studies have been presented in relation to the topic, highlighting some factual challenges that society and regulators face.

Despite the obvious difficulties to control avenues related to alcohol marketing actions are needed to protect adolescents from early contact with alcohol. Actions such as price control or age limit consumption are in place but could be improved, but additional arrangements appear needed in relation to limit some of the alcohol related marketing tactics having younger populations as targets.

As noted earlier, alcohol advertising was familiar and likable to school students who had never consumed an alcoholic beverage. Additionally, the link between marketing, alcohol advertising promotions and underage drinking has been also credited by several robust studies.

We can therefore conclude that public health policies should establish prevention programs but

also limit the exposure that adolescents' and younger populations face to alcohol marketing on a daily basis. Additionally, helping youngsters to recognise marketing tactics and provide further information on this topic is also encouraged as in the case of the tobacco industry where good results have been obtained. Increasing consumers' critical appraisal of marketing and social media appears essential to lessen negative influences that lead to early drinking onset.

The purpose of this review was to explore the literature on the topic of alcohol, marketing and younger populations. Although the link between marketing and alcohol uptake in adolescent or younger populations has been repeatedly highlighted by the scientific community, authorities often fail to address this issue and even less to translate it into a clear message in the form of policies or public health strategies.

Despite a clear message regarding the need to regulate marketing and social media promoting the use of alcohol and normalising its routine intake which emerged across the evaluation of the studied articles, much work is still required in order to counter influential structures such as the alcohol industry but also in order to provide the public with critical tools that help them dealing with discriminating messages offered by omnipresent marketing campaigns and social pressure to embrace alcohol uptake.

10. LIMITATIONS

This review was not a systematic account of the whole existing scientific evidence on the selected topic, and therefore no categorical recommendations can be extrapolated. However, it helped to highlight relevant aspects that may help researchers to continue investigating certain avenues to protect young individuals against aggressive marketing strategies.

This review had very specific limits in terms of search and focused on peer reviewed material on the subject without a particular time frame. It could be the case that certain relevant materials have been omitted and therefore interesting materials may be absent in the thematic analysis.

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