



The Centre for Social and Health Outcomes Research and Evaluation
Te Runanga, Wananga, Hauora me te Paekaka



Te Ropu Whariki
The Whariki Research Group



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Key points

- **Social marketing is only part of the solution; we need a lot more to change people’s behaviour.**
- **Marketing with new media is largely hidden and extremely hard to measure.**
- **Media fragmentation makes regulation very difficult.**

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SEMINAR: Alcohol Marketing – Commercial, critical and social perspectives

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Defining social marketing

Social marketing is the application of marketing knowledge, concepts and techniques to enhance social as well as economic ends, said Gerard Hastings at a SHORE/Whariki seminar earlier this year. Professor Gerard Hastings is Director of the Institute for Social Marketing and the Centre for Tobacco Control Research at the University of Stirling and the Open University in Scotland.

Social marketing is also concerned with the analysis of the social consequences of marketing policies, decisions and activities, he said. But social marketing is not just putting “a few ads on telly to get people to do the opposite of what everything else is telling them”.

Social marketers have to look at what their competitors are doing and critique that, he said. “However, at best communication is only part of the solution; in most cases we need a lot more to change people’s behaviour.”

Marketing is not the same as advertising, but much broader, he said. For alcohol companies it means “promoting the right product, at the right price, in the right place”, which is determined by consumer demand and driven by competition. Public health policy makers and researchers must instead consider the social cost of consumption. Scottish licensing legislation includes public health objectives, but UK and Welsh laws do not, he said.

To illustrate the effect of marketing, Dr Hastings gave the example of a recent WHO meeting on the role of food advertising in obesity. In response to a comment from the chair that food advertising encourages children’s poor diets, an anonymous voice from the back said that he hoped so, otherwise “we’re wasting a lot of money”.

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Recent marketing trends

Designer drinks, flavoured alcoholic beverages (FABs such as Smirnoff Ice and Bacardi Breezer) and shooters and shots were recent trends in alcohol marketing, said Dr Hastings. Shots are high-alcohol drinks drunk quickly in addition to something else. “New product development is the main problem in the alcohol field,” he said.

Case study one: Advertising

According to the British Advertising Standards Authority¹, alcohol advertisements “should not suggest that any alcohol drink can enhance .. sexual capabilities, popularity, attractiveness..”

Dr Hastings showed a collection of images from point of sale and magazine alcohol ads for Abbot Ale, Vodka Toffee and Hard Core cider from 2003 and 4. They used strongly sexualised imagery and phrases which related the products to enhanced sexual capabilities and opportunities.

The problem is that media fragmentation makes regulation very hard, he said. Media such as the internet, WAP phones, pay TV and interactive television make it very difficult to monitor marketing activity.

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Case study two: New media - WKD

This UK vodka-based FAB was launched in 1996 by Beverage Brands, a small player globally but a large firm in the UK. WKD marketing included “viral” approaches, (encouraging peer-to-peer endorsements using cell phones, chat rooms and other new media); cell phone txt and win competitions; free point of sale samples and competitions; computer screen savers and wallpaper, and Internet microsites.

New media is largely hidden and extremely hard to measure, said Dr Hastings, as communication is often effectively one-to-one. These marketing methods were also tied into “some very dangerous promotions” such as WKD Pub Olympics, he said, where as well as competing in pub darts and suchlike, people raced to be the first to finish large amounts of WKD.

Case study three: New product development – Sidekick Shots

Shots are a cross between FABs and spirits, with an alcohol content ranging from 12 to 70%. They are promoted as chasers or to be drunk in one mouthful. The shots market is growing 5% each year, said Dr Hastings.

Sidekick Shots came in a shot glass designed to be attached to a larger glass or bottle. Its advertising was irreverent, targeted at students and included point of sale promos, free trials and new media. Multi-shot promotions sold six for £4, all of which were supposed to be drunk at once, said Dr Hastings.

Case study four: Pricing – Frosty Jacks

Research evidence shows that price influences overall and problem rates of consumption; happy hours and price promotion were worrying trends, said Dr Hastings. .

Frosty Jacks is a high-alcohol cider launched in 1997. It was sold in three litre screw-top plastic bottles at very competitive prices, as well as in smaller sizes. It is the top-selling take-home cider with a quarter of the market share.

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Social marketing principles

1 Consumer orientation – addressing the behaviour we want to change from the perspective of those who have to do the changing. One size does not fit all; gaps in health status will not be reduced unless specific programmes target people on low incomes and ethnic groups.

2 Mutually beneficial exchange – each party has to see a benefit in it for them. These benefits will differ and neither perspective is ‘wrong’.

3 Emotion matters – marketing is about a relationship, not a transaction.

4 Long-term vision is needed.

5 Context matters – this includes the commercial context, so competing marketing messages must be analysed.

Next seminar

Associate Professor Sandra Jones, from the University of Wollongong [Centre for Health Behaviour and Communication Research](#), will give a presentation on alcohol advertising regulation in Australia at SHORE on 27 October at 11am. She will be accompanied by Danika Hall, Associate Research Fellow at the centre.

The centre is working on a [VicHealth-funded research grant](#) with the Australian Drug Foundation examining the effectiveness of the Australian alcohol advertising regulatory system. Their other projects in this area include a preliminary study on the relationship between children's viewing of televised sports (the only daytime programming allowed to carry alcohol advertising) and alcohol awareness/attitudes; a review of the nature and extent of on-premise and off-premise promotions of ready-to-drink alcohol products in Wollongong; and a focus group study on the effect of "drink cards" on young males' drinking.

Please RSVP to [Jan Sheeran](#), phone 09 3666 136.

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ⁱ Point 46.7, British Code of Advertising, Sales Promotion and Direct Marketing 2003, Advertising Standards Authority, www.asa.org.uk, downloaded March 2005.