

Sport, Alcohol And Marketing: A Systematic Review

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Aim of the research

The objective of this study was to conduct a systematic review of the peer-reviewed publications dealing with sport, alcohol and marketing to (1) establish what is currently known on the topic and (2) suggest future research directions accordingly.

Theoretical background

Excessive and/or regular consumption of alcohol have been identified as a source of vulnerability, from health issues (illness and death), to risky behaviours, accidents, antisocial behaviours and violence (Kelly, Ireland, Alpert, & Mangan, 2015). To counter these negative consequences certain countries have passed specific legislations and/or launched public marketing campaigns to inform about the related dangers and to portray alcohol and its consumption in an unfavourable fashion. Because of these negative associations, alcohol brands actively aim to partner with sports because of the general positive image they hold. Moreover, sports audiences are large and passionate, and sport and alcohol brands have similar targets: predominantly young males. The links are so strong that Wenner & Jackson (2009) talk about 'holy trinity' when gender is linked to sports and alcohol. However, it is necessary to stress out that contexts, whether they are sporting, cultural, economics, media and legal are extremely diverse. Consequently, marketing tactics and related consumption patterns will be very different, for instance from Anglo-Saxon, where alcohol industries heavily sponsor sports (Palmer, 2011), to France that prohibits such activities (Bodet & Fuchs, 2015). For these reasons, it is currently difficult to draw a clear picture of the nature and impact of alcohol brands' promotion tactics around sports on consumption practices and contexts.

Methodology

We conducted a systematic review of articles published in peer-review journals in English language, until June 2016 available in the following databases: Web of science, Ebsco, SportDiscuss, PubMed, BASE, WorldWideScience, Erudit, Psycinfo, Cairn. We searched for a combination of three words in the titles, keywords and abstracts. Alcohol and sport were always the first two words, and we used in succession marketing/sponsorship/brand/advertising/publicity and promotion as third term. An Excel file was used to categorise and analyse the final set of publications identifying various issues such as the objectives, methods, countries where the studies were conducted, and main results.

Results

401 outputs were identified from the first extraction, 121 were selected for reading, and 67 publications were finally kept.

Overall, we identified 8 categories of publications. The first category gathers commentaries and editorials (n = 8). The second category gathers publications focusing on the evaluation of populations' exposure to alcohol publicity during sport and non-sport TV broadcasts (n = 9). The third category gathers publications focusing on the analysis of marketing supports and platforms (e.g. publicities, social media, websites, and football shirts; n = 6). The fourth category, which is the biggest, gathers publications dealing with the impact of exposure to alcohol brands' marketing messages on individuals' perceptions and consumption patterns (n = 28). The fifth category gathers publications dealing with a broad diversity of independent experts' opinions, mainly academics (n = 2). The sixth category deals with the analysis of stakeholders' opinions (e.g. general population, sport managers, parents of participating children, advertising creative; n = 7). The seventh category gathers publications reviewing specific fields of the scientific literature (n = 5). Last, the eighth category gathers publications analysing secondary data: newspapers' articles and governmental documents (n = 2).

These results tend to demonstrate a certain unbalance in the types of studies dealing with the topic. Nevertheless, studies from the fourth category consistently demonstrate a significant link between 1) exposure to marketing messages, brand awareness and recall, and 2) alcohol consumption and risky behaviours. Consequently, it seems relevant to focus now on other categories (i.e. 3rd, 6th and 8th) to how and why sports and alcohol are still strongly partnering despite social and health public negative impacts.

References

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