

**ALCOHOL
FOCUS
SCOTLAND**

“In Your Face”

Experiences of Alcohol Marketing



People in Recovery

What is alcohol marketing and why does it matter?

Every day the global alcohol industry wakes up with a problem; thousands of its best customers have died from drinking its products. In Scotland alone, 10 people die because of alcohol every day. That's why, as one big brand marketer put it, "we had to attract more younger drinkers – the heavy-using loyalists of tomorrow". To do this the industry spends billions of pounds every year to encourage us to drink their products - and it works.

Alcohol marketing is all around us all the time. Whether it's sponsoring the World Cup, the Scottish Professional Football League or festivals like Trnsmt, advertising on TV, billboards, branded merchandise, online promotions or alcohol displays in shops. It makes us think positively about alcohol and encourages us to drink more. It's clever, it's insidious, and it affects us all. However, some groups of people are particularly affected. People with alcohol dependence experience disproportionate harm from alcohol and are more susceptible to its marketing. For those in recovery, alcohol marketing can be a trigger which threatens their recovery and can cause relapse.

That is why AFS is keen to bring the voices of people in recovery into conversations about marketing. As this issue is now being debated in Scotland, it's vital that we understand how marketing impacts on people's lives, and what they think should be done about it.

The voices of people in recovery

During the past year AFS has been speaking to the recovery community about alcohol marketing. Through a mix of focus groups, individual interviews, and surveys we have engaged with around 150 people. This is what they said:

"Until you are in recovery it is hard to understand how important this is. Reducing alcohol advertising could easily help save lives for many in the recovery community."

People in recovery from alcohol problems see alcohol marketing everywhere:

In supermarkets:

"I got drawn in at a supermarket with the offers at the end of the aisle"

At bus stops:

"From the start of the day when I'm at the bus stop it's there on the billboard"

On the street:

"Covid has meant an increase in beer gardens"

During sports:

"Why are they trying to associate it with sport?"

On the radio:

"On the radio it will pop up"

At the cinema:

"The first 7 adverts at the cinema were for alcohol"

On social media:

"Ads pop up all the time on social media"

In the news:

"It's promoted in news coverage as editorial material"

In convenience stores:

"In smaller shops it's always behind the counter staring right at you"

On TV:

"Certain movie channels are sponsored by alcohol companies, so I get constant alcohol adverts"

On transport:

"Even on the plane all the entertainment and enjoyment is based around alcohol"

Exposure to marketing can be triggering and distressing:

Making everyday tasks difficult:

"Very upsetting, difficult to do shopping"

Causing cravings:

"Can create unwanted cravings for alcohol"

Encouraging purchases:

"The temptation to buy is extremely high"

Bombarding the senses:

"Even the smell is a huge trigger for me"

Creating pressure to drink:

"You're made to feel like it's the norm and you should be doing it"

Impacting self-esteem:

"They...make me feel guilty of my situation, remind me I've got a problem"

Trapping people in a cycle of addiction:

"Triggers lead to relapse"

People can develop strategies to avoid alcohol marketing, but some people find it impossible:

Giving up interests:

"Maybe the answer is to avoid sporting events if you're in recovery."

Withdrawing:

"I've tried, but it's futile though. You'd have to shut yourself in a box and not go outside."

Changing shopping habits:

"I avoid the alcohol aisle but in some smaller shops it is at the till point so can't"

Leaving social media:

"Having to delete Facebook"

Switching off the TV:

"I avoided TV like the plague"

Staying at home:

"I spend more time at home"

Blocking ads online:

"Despite blocking them more just appear"

People in recovery are angry about alcohol marketing and worried about its impacts. They think something needs to be done about it:

"It makes me feel angry - alcohol is a really dangerous chemical that destroys people's health"

"They stopped it with cigarettes, why aren't you doing it with alcohol?"

And have ideas about what actions should be taken:

Outright marketing bans:

"I'd ban it completely"

Limiting marketing locations:

"I would only have alcohol promotions in licensed premises"

Tackling online marketing:

"They should take note and stop the pop ups"

Stopping in-store promotions:

"No store tasting promotions and deals"

Reducing visibility in shops:

"Hide the alcohol in shops like cigarettes"

Tackling online marketing:

"They should take note and stop the pop ups"

Changing packaging and labels:

"Introduce health warning labels... Possibly also plain packaging"

"I understand that this is about money, but I feel that something needs to be done"

"The lesser the better with alcohol marketing."

Act Now!

Alcohol marketing is negatively impacting on people's lives and affects us all, but you can take action to help address the problem:

- Use #InYourFace to share the message on Twitter, Facebook, or other social media channels
- Snap and share your pictures of alcohol marketing by using #InYourFace to spread the message on social media.
- Stay up to date by subscribing to eFocus, AFS's monthly newsletter
- Make your views known - visit www.alcohol-focus-scotland.org.uk

AFS's call for action

The Scottish Government must act to protect us from alcohol marketing. AFS is calling on decision makers to put people above profits by:

- Introducing statutory restrictions on alcohol marketing activities, including:
 - advertising in outdoor and public spaces
 - sponsorship of sports and events
 - branded merchandise
 - advertising in print publications
- Ensuring alcohol displays and promotions in shops are only visible to those planning to browse or purchase alcohol.
- Stopping price being used as a promotional tool.
- Mandating the display of health information on all alcohol packaging.
- Ensuring restrictions are comprehensive and explicitly include all forms of brand marketing, including identifiable fonts, colours, and taglines, not just brand names.