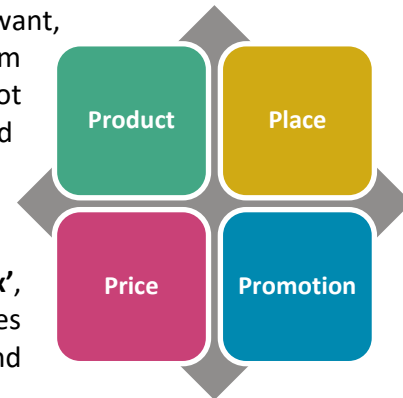


Alcohol Marketing and its Impact

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Marketing

Marketing is “the business activity that involves finding out what customers want, using that information to design products and services, and selling them effectively.”¹ It covers a wide range of activities and disciplines including – but not limited to – advertising in traditional media outlets such as print, television and radio, promotional activities in online and social media, and sponsorship of sporting and music events.



A common term used to define the key aspects of marketing is the ‘**marketing mix**’, made up of the “four Ps”: Product, Place, Price and Promotion. Different activities influence individuals in different ways, such as **raising awareness** of new and existing products, **reinforcing brand identity**, and directly **encouraging sales**.

The alcohol marketing mix

Product

There are several ways that product design can facilitate increased consumption:

Approach	Impact
<p>Product size</p> <p><i>Increasing size (‘supersizing’) in the off-trade by increasing can and bottle sizes, the number of products contained in a multipack, or be producing limited edition larger products. Increasing size in the on-trade by selling drinks in larger servings (e.g. ‘pitchers’, ‘fishbowls’, bottles of wine). Decreasing size (two 330ml cans still exceed the 568ml of a larger can).</i></p>	<p>Often used in conjunction with price to emphasise increased value for money and reduce trips to the bar.</p> <p>The diminished feeling of indulgence may increase frequency of consumption or the amount drunk in a single occasion.²</p>
<p>Product features</p> <p><i>How it tastes, how it looks. E.g. making alcopops taste sweet and pleasant, colouring the product itself.</i></p>	<p>Used to appeal to different audiences. Australian research found the packaging used for ‘alcopops’, designer drinks or Ready to Drink (RTD) beverages appealed more to adolescents, and alcopops appealed more to females.³ Adolescents were more likely to purchase a product with energy ingredients, and products that looked like a soft drink.⁴</p>
<p>Glass design</p> <p><i>The size and shape of glassware</i></p>	<p>Used to communicate brand values, curate a positive drinking experience, and influence consumers to drink and spend more.⁵ Glass design can influence a consumer’s ability to accurately assess or recall the quantity of alcohol consumed, which may facilitate increased consumption in the on trade and at home.⁶</p>
<p>Product composition</p> <p><i>E.g. increasing the product strength, promoting ‘healthy features’ (e.g. Skinny Lager whose branding emphasises that it contains less calories than comparable lagers).</i></p>	<p>Perception of being less indulgent or having better health properties can lead consumers to consume more.</p>

Place

Reviews of research have reported a consistent relationship between outlet density and likelihood of heavy drinking.⁷ *Within* the retail setting, a variety of techniques are used to influence purchasing behaviour:

Approach	Impact
Expose consumers to promotions	Influences purchasing behaviour, ⁸ e.g. research found that those who participated in point-of-sale promotions purchased a greater quantity than those who did not. ⁹
Place products in temporary stacks at the end of the alcohol aisles or create off-shelf displays	Interrupts customer flow, captures attention, and may instigate cravings. ¹⁰
Give the impression that the product is selling well or about to run out	Perceived scarcity may expedite purchase decisions. ¹¹
Ensure products adopt a central position in the store or are visible on key routes for consumer tracks <i>E.g., near the tills, in a central aisle, at the point of sale, at eye level.</i>	Increases consumption and triggers unintended purchases as more likely to come across/see the products. End of aisle displays have been found to increase the purchase of alcohol by up to 46%. ¹²
Place products in the chillers	Implies ready for consumption and may instigate cravings or reinforce purchasing decisions.
Position alcohol-related 'cues' elsewhere in the retail setting <i>E.g. Marks and Spencer's 'Dine in for Two for £10' offer promotes that the deal comes with 'free wine'.</i>	Triggers unintended purchases.

Price

Consumption is correlated with price: higher affordability generally increases consumption and lower affordability decreases consumption.¹³ **Heavier drinkers are known to choose cheaper** products that provide the lowest price-per-unit.¹⁴ Crucially, given the **restrictions on multi-buy discounts in Scotland**, marketing can also be used to imply that a product is good value or there has been a significant price discount, which may trigger impulse purchases or lead a consumer to purchase greater quantities:

Approach	Impact
Lower prices	Can increase volume of purchase. ¹⁵
Price or volume discounts and promotions	Emphasises value for money, ¹⁶ can increase volume of purchase. ¹⁷
Attention grabbing price labels, price marking on products, or applying price discounts to products not available in multipacks	Triggers impulse purchases or leads a consumer to purchase greater quantities.
Positioning smaller products or multipacks next to larger ones <i>E.g. 35cl spirit bottles next to 70cl and 1 litre bottles</i>	Perceived value for money.

Research from the University of Sheffield research indicates that a **ban on multi-buy promotions would increase the efficacy of MUP**; modelling has estimated greater reductions in levels of alcohol consumption, alcohol-related hospital admissions and deaths when MUP is combined with an off-licensed trade discount ban.¹⁸

Promotion

Reviews of longitudinal research consistently report that exposure to marketing communications is associated with increased consumption.¹⁹ These communications work in a variety of ways:

Approach	Impact
Extend the contexts paired with alcohol <i>Such as: associations with sports, the night-time economy, cultural entertainment, eating meals, social occasions, seasonal holidays, watching popular television, and even days of the week (#WineWednesday, #ThirstyThursday).²⁰</i>	May facilitate more frequent consumption by establishing or reinforcing cues and norms.
Competitions with the purchase of larger multipacks	Incentivises consumers to purchase greater quantities
Giveaways with limited edition packs <i>E.g. branded glassware or clothing</i>	Triggers impulse purchases
Setting marketing discourses in contexts which are already synonymous with heavier consumption <i>Such as pubs and bars, nightclubs, and music festivals</i>	May implicitly reinforce heavier consumption.
Questionable efficacy of marketing to promote lower-risk consumption <i>(‘Responsible drinking’)</i> <i>E.g. criticisms that pregnancy warning labels lack visibility, and lower-risk drinking messages are strategically ambiguous or secondary to the goal of promoting alcohol consumption.²¹</i>	The lack of robust messages promoting lower-risk drinking, particularly at the point of consumption, may also be a component in drinking heavier quantities.

Impact of alcohol marketing

Alcohol marketing contributes significantly to an ‘alco-genic’ environment, i.e. one that reflects and promotes a culture of alcohol use. A number of systematic reviews have concluded that exposure to alcohol marketing is associated with initiation of alcohol use and increased consumption.²²

Certain groups in society are particularly vulnerable to the effects of alcohol marketing:

- Exposure to alcohol marketing reduces the age at which **young people** start to drink, increases the likelihood that they will drink, and increases the amount of alcohol that they consume if they already drink.²³ Early age of drinking onset is associated with an increased likelihood of developing alcohol abuse or dependence in adolescence and adulthood, and also with dependence at a younger age.²⁴
- **Those in recovery** from alcohol dependence have cited “the persistent availability and marketing of alcohol” as the largest place-based risk that they face.²⁵ ‘Environmental triggers’ are common in relapse, and can include alcohol advertising and marketing, which cue the desire for alcohol.²⁶
- As well as being 7 times more likely to die due to alcohol,²⁷ **those living in our most deprived communities** have easy access to considerably more places to buy alcohol than those in our most affluent areas.²⁸ Those with the lowest incomes are most affected by high concentrations of places to buy alcohol in their neighbourhood, with more alcohol outlets associated with higher levels of problem drinking.²⁹

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