

## Responsible Alcohol Marketing: A Public Health Oxymoron?



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ASPIRE2025 | Research for a tobacco-free Aotearoa

## Overview

- Corporate marketing and social responsibility
  - Lessons from other fields
- Marketing fundamentals
  - The three vital principles
- Is marketing only a ever problem??
  - Does marketing have a role in promoting behaviour change?
  - Could it use this potential role more effectively?

## Corporate marketing

What does corporate social responsibility mean?



## Corporate marketing

- CSR enables business to claim progress despite the lack of evidence of verifiable change (Doane, 2004)
- "CSR will continue to be little more than PR for as long as it is easier and cheaper to spin than [it is] to change." (Corporate Watch, 2006)
- "Like the iceberg, most CSR activity is invisible...It is often an active attempt to increase corporate domination rather than simply a defensive 'image management' operation." (Miller, 2003)

## Let's learn from tobacco

### A Frank Statement

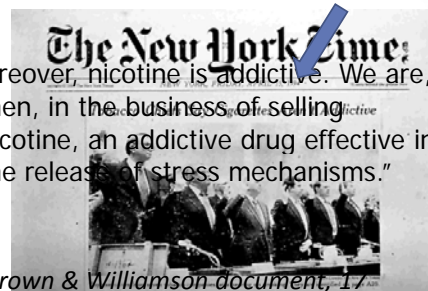
We accept an interest in public health as a basic responsibility, paramount to every other consideration in our business.

We believe the products we make are not injurious to health. We always have and always will cooperate closely with those whose task it is to safeguard the public health.



Moreover, nicotine is addictive. We are, then, in the business of selling nicotine, an addictive drug effective in the release of stress mechanisms."

Brown & Williamson document, 17 July 1963



### Key Lessons

- The tobacco industry framed the debate
  - Focus on doubt, uncertainty and ambiguity

"The most important type of story is that which casts doubt in the cause and effect theory of disease and smoking. Eye-grabbing headlines were needed and "should strongly call out the point – Controversy! Contradiction! Other Factors! Unknowns!" (Hill and Knowlton, 1968)

### So, what does all this mean for alcohol?

- Recognise any strategies?
  - History does repeat
- Look at what's going on below the iceberg

"We were getting lobbied like crazy and, you know, lobbying works if it's done well, and in the end, it was really, where is the problem, what are the things that make this a problem, and will raising the off-licence age to 20 be the solution? And the simple answer, at the end of the day, was 'no'". (Michael Woodhouse, Critic, 2013)

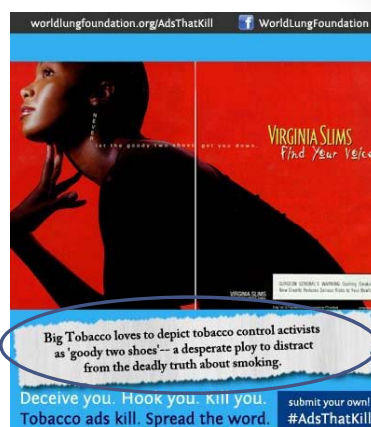
### Lobbying

Katherine Rich on plain packaging:

I sometimes wonder if any of this [alleged trade implications] occurs to public health activists who blindly call for plain packaging as if it's some sort of magic wand that will solve all our ills. (4 /10/2012)

Health Promotion Agency submission:

As experts in marketing and behaviour change, with a focus on reducing the uptake of smoking amongst young people, we believe that the introduction of plain packaging for tobacco products is a significant step to reduce the ability of the tobacco industry to market to, and recruit new smokers, particularly youth and those on low incomes. (October, 2012)



### Call out the industry

"All too often in the choice between the physical health of consumers and the financial well-being of business, concealment is chosen over disclosure, sales over safety, and money over morality.

Who are these persons who knowingly and secretly decide to put the buying public at risk solely for the purpose of making profits and who believe that illness and death of consumers is an apparent cost of their own prosperity.

As the following facts disclose, despite some rising pretenders, the tobacco industry may be the king of concealment and disinformation." (Sarokin, J. *Haines v. Liggett Group*, 1992)

### Marketing



### Three principles

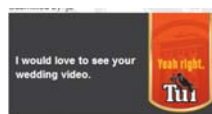
Be:

- Visible
- Accessible
- Affordable



### Being visible

- Develop and promote brand personalities



### Ensuring ubiquity



### Establishing a cult



The prize was 20 home party sponsorships worth \$10,000. In effect the winners would be Coruba ambassadors, those people famous for making the party happen.

### It really works!

...with that Export ad... they got the bus like I'd love to do that. Just like grab a whole lot of people and go... But you'd need Export to do it as well.

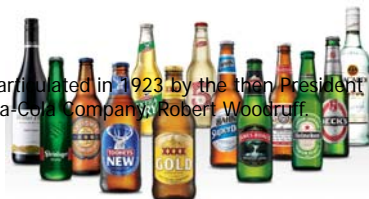
(McCreanor et al., 2005)



### Be accessible

- Maximise distribution
  - Helps normalise product as well as increasing purchase opportunities
- Whose vision?
  - "A ????? within arm's reach of desire."

First articulated in 1923 by the then President of the Coca-Cola Company, Robert Woodruff.



Be accessible

- Own prime locations within stores
- Entry routes
- Slow down spaces
- Where additional merchandising opportunities exist



Be affordable

- “Value-added” promotions appeal strongly to young people
- Price discounts



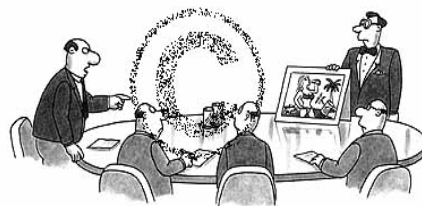
Be affordable

- Young people LOVE “a whole lot of free stuff”



Outcome??

A new oxymoron?: Responsible alcohol marketing

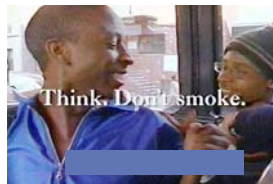


“I think your advertising concept is stupid, exploitative and offensive. It's going to make us a fortune!”

But is marketing only problematic?

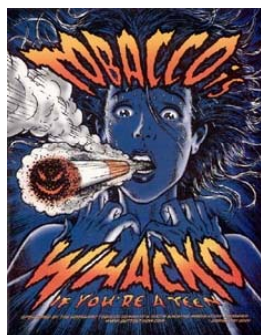
- No doubt that change occurs in response to environments
- Four of the 5+ suggestions address marketing:
  - Visibility – reduce marketing
  - Affordability – raise prices
  - Accessibility – increase age and reduce distribution
- But could marketing support a changed regulatory environment?
  - Social marketing strategies are important
  - Much to learn from tobacco

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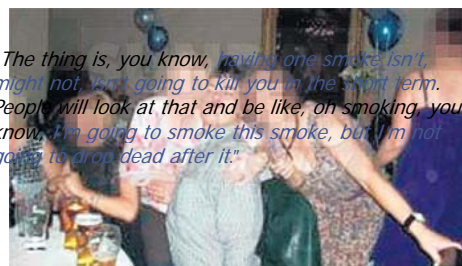
Talking to the heart



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*"The thing is, you know, having one smoke isn't going to kill you in the short term. People will look at that and be like, oh smoking, you know, I'm going to smoke this smoke, but I'm not going to drop dead after it."*

What matters to people?

- Looking good



**If you drink like a man you might end up looking like one.**



**Not everyone who gets hit by a drunk driver dies.**

What matters to people?

- Being in control of the big things



### Some final thoughts

- Regulation is pivotal to changes in drinking behaviour
- Education is weak and long-term
- Social marketing cannot counter commercial influences

#### HOWEVER

- Marketing can play a positive role in consolidating behaviour change

#### BUT

- We need to re-think our approach

