

# FACT SHEET

## Alcohol Marketing in the Gambia Findings of the MAMPA project

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### Introduction

In 2010 the African regional office of the World Health Organization commissioned the Dutch Institute for Alcohol Policy and EUCAM (the European Centre for Monitoring Alcohol Marketing) to set up a pilot study to monitor alcohol marketing in African countries. This resulted in the MAMPA project. MAMPA stands for Monitoring Alcohol Marketing Project Africa and is conceived to study alcohol marketing on the African continent as well as to build capacity among national governments and NGOs in installing effective alcohol marketing policies to protect young people against the harmful effects of exposure to alcohol marketing. In the spring of 2010, the first phase of the MAMPA project began by monitoring alcohol marketing activities in the Gambia, Ghana, Nigeria and Uganda. An important aim of the project was to develop a method to monitor alcohol marketing in low-income countries. This Fact sheet provides an overview of the situation concerning alcohol and alcohol marketing in the Gambia as well as the findings of the the MAMPA monitoring exercise in the Gambia.

### Existing Regulations

Among the African countries in which alcohol marketing activities have been monitored within the MAMPA project, the Gambia has the strongest alcohol marketing policy. In the Gambia, there is a state monopoly on the production and sale of beer (1). The advertising of alcohol is banned on national television and radio. The advertising in other media is not regulated. Additionally, there is a mandatory health warning message on alcohol advertising.

### Alcohol in the Gambia

According to figures of the WHO in Gambia annually 2.27 liters alcohol are consumed per capita (1). The most consumed alcoholic beverage is beer (1). The only national brewery in the Gambia is Banjul Breweries Ltd which has three German stakeholders, one of which is the beer brewery Warsteiner (2). The government of the Gambia owns minority shares of the brewery. Besides soft drinks, Banjul Breweries produces the local beer Julbrew and the international Guinness beer. The brewery also distributes Coca Cola

in the country. No large distilleries are placed in the Gambia.

### Alcohol marketing in Magazines and Newspapers

In the Gambia, no magazines were found that were specifically aimed at the Gambian market. However, 14 newspapers (the Point, Foroya, Daily's Observer and Today) were scanned on placement of alcohol advertisements. Besides sport sponsorship which is portrayed in a newspaper (the logo of Carlsberg on a football player's shirt), no alcohol advertisements were found in the newspapers examined.



Figure 1: Carlsberg logo in a sport section of newspaper Today.

### Alcohol marketing on Television

The government runs the only television service, called GRTS that broadcasts nationally. Its programs cover about 60 percent of the Gambia's territory and reach those living in the eastern part of the country (3). After monitoring the Gambia Radio and Television Service (GRTS) TV station for 28 hours in the weekend and 6 hours on a Monday, no alcohol advertisements were found. International sport events that are sponsored by alcohol producers are shown on national television. In this way, Gambians can still be exposed to alcohol advertising on

television.

Those who can afford satellite systems are able to receive additional independent television programming such as the Premium TV Network, an external, privately owned station that transmits by Arab-sat to Banjul. Almost 6 hours of Foxmovies and 6 hours of MBC 4 were examined. Although these channels are allowed to broadcast alcohol advertising on television, in the period we have examined the television channels, no alcohol advertising has been found.

### Alcohol Marketing on Radio

Radio is an important medium in the Gambia. In this medium, alcohol advertising is not allowed. West Coast Radio (12 hours on different weekdays, 6 hours on different weekend days) and Paradise FM (9 hours on different week days, 12 hours on different weekend days) have been monitored. Within this period, no alcohol advertisements were encountered.

### Outdoor Advertising

Although alcohol advertising on billboards and on the street is permitted in the Gambia, relatively little alcohol advertising was found. Some billboards with ads of Julbrew beer and Guinness beer were found. The city centre of Banjul and the large town Birkama were monitored and scanned on the availability of alcohol advertising in the public space. In both areas, we found no alcohol billboards, posters or promotional items (eg alcohol-branded umbrella).



Figure 2: In most towns and cities in the Gambia, bars are free of any signs and adverts.

The only exception was the exposure of crates by the Banjul Brewery. On these crates the name of the brewery is mentioned and either Coca-Cola, Guinness, or JulBrew is mentioned. Most of the selling points in which

we have spotted these stacked crates, sold no alcoholic beverages. By distributing soft drinks in alcohol-branded crates, alcohol producers “force” retailers to market the alcoholic products. In the capital city Banjul 13 places with alcohol branded crates were spotted in a radius of 500 meter. In the town Birkama we found 21 places with crates with the words “Guinness is good for you” or “JulBrew” within a radius of 500 meter.



Figure 3: Soft drinks packaged in Guinness crates.

### Other forms of marketing

**Easy availability of alcohol:** Consumers in the Gambia are encouraged to buy larger volumes of alcohol through a service in which whole crates of beer are transported for free to the house of the customer. This service is provided by the alcohol distributor and not by the retailer.

**Online:** the alcohol industry uses social network websites to reach consumers. A website as Facebook which is particularly interesting to young people, has its own JulBrew account set up by Banjul Breweries. In contrast, the company's website is not very attractive to consumers due to its little content and the simple lay-out.



Figure 4: JulBrew account on the website Facebook with more than 300 friends.

### **Corporate Social Responsibility**

**initiatives:** the brewery gets free publicity and direct contact with the government by giving money to the local and regional government to support environmental sanitation in the Gambia. In 2007 and 2008 Julbrew Breweries donated one million dalasis to Kanifing Municipality to support its environmental sanitation (4). In November 2009, the Global Week of Climate Action, involving school children and representatives from various youth groups, was sponsored by the Brewery and Dept of Forestry. Sponsoring this event has several benefits for the brewery: free positive publicity, connection of the brewery to environmental friendly projects, connection to youth and connection to the Department of Forestry (5).

### **Adherence to alcohol marketing restrictions in the Gambia**

The Gambia is a country with a large majority of Muslims. Muslims contribute up to 90% of the Gambian population (6). Another 8 percent of the population is Christian. The Islam and many of the Christian denominations generally have a taboo on alcohol use. Although alcohol is consumed and produced in the Gambia, reluctance towards alcohol and alcohol use can be recognized in the Gambian culture and policy.

Reflecting the public reluctance towards alcohol use in the country, alcohol marketing is strictly regulated in the Gambia compared to other African countries that were monitored for the MAMPA project. Alcohol marketing is not allowed to be broadcasted on television and radio. Outdoor advertising and alcohol advertising in print media (newspapers/magazines) is permitted but is less prevalent than in the other African countries monitored. Sport sponsorship is not allowed by law.

Although alcohol producers try to market their product in the Gambia in different ways, the relatively strict regulation is adhered to. The combination of clear and strict alcohol marketing regulations, the support of this regulation by the general public and the relatively small size of Banjul Brewery which is not owned by giant global alcohol companies, might explain why the Gambian youth is not exposed to much alcohol advertising. Important media and marketing tools like television, radio and sport sponsoring are free of alcohol advertising. However, by permitting alcohol advertising on the street, increasing outdoor alcohol advertising can become an issue in the future. Also sponsoring of youth events like the Climate Week and websites attractive to youth (e.g. Facebook) is still permitted and is

already used by the national brewer to reach a young audience.

### **Conclusion**

Of the countries that were studied during the first phase of the MAMPA project, the Gambia has the strictest regulations on alcohol marketing. Most notable is the ban on alcohol marketing on radio and television, which during the MAMPA analysis was seemingly adhered to. Other forms of alcohol marketing are not regulated. However, compared to the other countries that were studied, relatively few other forms of alcohol marketing (outdoor advertisements, newspaper ads etc.) were found. This may be explained by the fact that alcohol is generally met with reluctance in Gambian society because of a number of varying social, cultural and religious factors.

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This Fact Sheet was based on the WHO report 'Alcohol Marketing Practices in Africa. Findings from the Gambia, Ghana, Nigeria and Uganda. ISBN 978 929 023 1844.



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