

The Green and Healthy Image of Alcohol Trends in Alcohol Marketing



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Introduction

The harmful effects of alcohol consumption are highlighted more and more in the media. This report shows that the alcohol industry tries to counterbalance this negative image of alcohol consumption by putting forward positive aspects associated with the alcoholic drink. Two positive associations which have recently been used by alcohol producers will be highlighted in this report: An association between the drink and a healthy lifestyle; and an association between the drink and environmental responsibility. An attempt is made to market alcoholic drinks as responsible drinks for your health and the environment.

Dangers of a green and healthy image of alcohol

Several risks of marketing alcoholic drinks as "responsible" can be put forward which mostly concern dangers with the image of drinking alcohol as a healthy lifestyle. Dr. Harvey Finkel, of the U.S. Public Health Service Hospital in Boston, warns not to drink the alcoholic beverages for its vitamins, he said in an interview with New Beverage Publication: "Anybody who needs added vitamins in their alcoholic beverages is in real trouble because they should be getting it from their diet." (4) Another danger that Dr. Finkel addresses is that consumers get the feeling that they are drinking something healthy and they should drink more of it (4).

In a newspaper of BBC (5) in 2002, when there were not any alcoholic beverages with vitamins on the market, it is stated that "vitamins could be added to beer in an attempt to reduce alcohol-related health problems in Scotland". Although the added vitamin thiamin is possible to prevent some forms of alcohol-related brain damage for a small number of long term abusers, it would not generally solve alcohol related problems.

An additional risk is the rise of pre-tox drinks. On January 28, 2008 a drink claiming to be the world's first active pre-tox drink has begun a listing in the UK (8). Alibi, which is designed "to prepare the body and process toxins, including those which may typically occur from consuming alcohol", is available in London nightclubs. The drink, which launched at the end of 2007, is an herbal-citrus beverage which contains water, milk thistle, artichoke and ginkgo extracts, added vitamins and amino acids. The drink costs between €2.06 per can. "The innovation lies in its distinct difference from detox products and regimes which are geared to deal with toxins at a later stage," the producer added. Dr Catti Moss, of the Royal College of General Practitioners has some doubts about the supposed effects: "Neither pre-toxing nor detoxing have any evidence to support them (17)". The danger of these kinds of drinks is that it could serve as a licence to get drunk. According to David Poley, chief executive of the Portman Group, the self-regulatory organization in the UK, says: "Companies can advertise these sorts of products, providing they don't imply it means you can drink with impunity" (17). At the official website of the drink the link with drinking Alibi before an alcoholic drink is not mentioned one (18). However, in face to face interviews with Olivier Bolton, the entrepreneur behind Alibi or the company, the association is frequently made (8, 17).



source:
www.thepublican.com

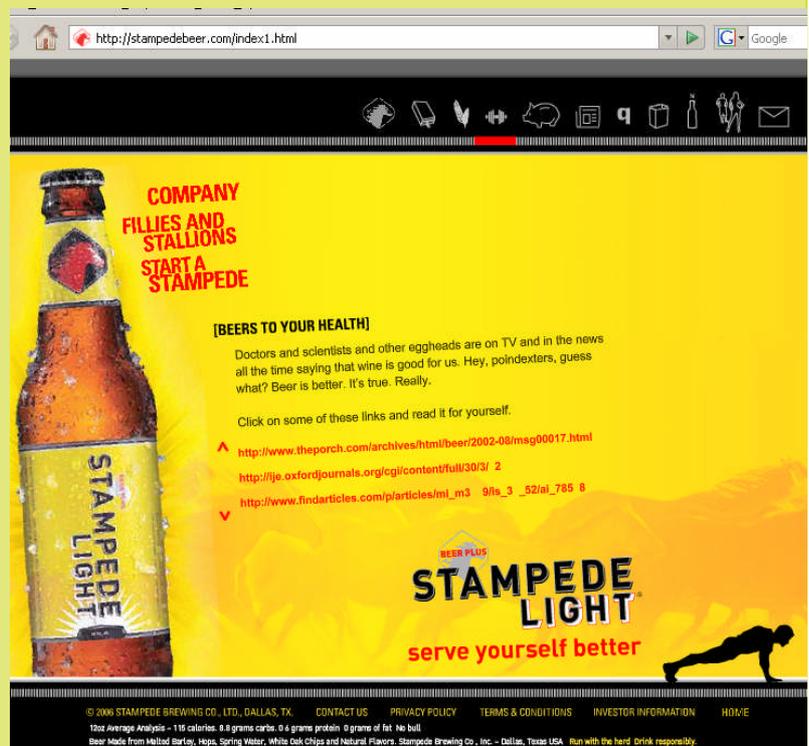
Alcohol as a healthy product

The power of vitamins

Alcoholic drinks are more and more marketed as a healthy product due to added ingredients. One of the first drinks with added vitamins is Stampede Light by the small brewer Stampede Brewing in the United States. Stampede Brewing is one of the first brands to mention hangovers in its marketing (1). The reduced hangover claim stems from Stampede Light's added vitamin B content, replacing vitamins which the company says are lost after drinking alcohol. Stampede Light, which is touted as the first ever government approved vitamin beer, is said to be low in calories, low in carbohydrates and to contain no fat. Stampede Light's targets, according to Schwartz the director of the brewery, the 24- to 34-year-old hip, affluent consumer (4). Although the American government regulates the content of the advertisements, there is still a lot possible. As the textbox below shows, the brewer makes use of this freedom.

Advertising of Stampede Light

Although the American government approved the vitamin beer and Stampede claims not to encourage consumers to drink more beer, the government prohibits the labelling of the contained vitamins in the beverage. However, as a result of the Freedom of speech it is allowed to put this aspect forward in interviews. As the Schwartz states it: "The funny thing about government code on contents of alcoholic beverages, I can't go out and put it on my label right now, but guess what? Put me on TV doing interviews, (and) I can say whatever I want. That's the irony of it - as long as I'm not paying for it, I can say whatever I want." (4). The brewer does not neglect to mention this ingredient in his interviews (4).



In addition, the brewer advertises his drink at his website (19) with the slogan: 'Stampede light: serve yourself better'. At the question "Why do you think I should drink Stampede Light?" they answer: "Because it's a better beer. That's made by active people for active people who take care of their bodies and themselves [...]" (19).

Another beer which is also told to prevent the onset of hangovers is Carling C2, recently released in the UK by Coors (1). The lager only contains 2% alcohol by volume and according to Business Drink Review it has been developed to encourage people to have a pint when they normally wouldn't drink beer (1). Campaigned under the slogan More Pub Time, Coors states the low strength lager should gain the backing of pub landlords by increasing pub traffic and the average spend per visit (1). Additionally, Carling C2 is advertised as a light beer which could easily be consumed during lunchtime. The advertisements give the impression that it is ok to stay away a little bit longer from your workplace if you drink Carling C2 and that you meet your colleagues while taking a lunch pint.



Advertisements of Carling C2 (source: the publican.com)

In Germany, Neumarkter Lammsbraeu has launched a new type of beer "Oeko-Dinkel-Bier" which is said to be rich in vitamins and minerals (4). The producer emphasizes the health qualities of the drink by quoting the old document in which it is stated that "Es macht seinem Esser rechtes Fleisch und rechtes Blut, frohen Sinn und freudig menschliches Denken", or in other words: the consumer will feel good in his body and mind after drinking this alcoholic beverages (20).

Antioxidants in drinks

An American example of beer which is marketed by its "healthy" characteristics is BluCreek Zen IPA by Wisconsin microbrewer (6). According to the website of the brewer, the added green tea helps to reduce stress. "Green tea has been claimed to reduce stress and produce alpha waves. This is thought to be due to high antioxidant levels and the presence of l-theanine, which is a glutamate analog present in green tea that can cross the blood-brain barrier and reduce glutamate excitotoxicity during stress and ischemia." (6).



source:
<http://www.lammsbraeu.de>



And the added blue berries "may help combat disease and promote healthy aging, which include: improved motor skills and actually reversing the short-term memory loss that comes with aging; inhibit all stages of cancer; protect against heart disease and damage from stroke; help prevent urinary tract infections; and improve night vision and prevent tired eyes" (6).

On a website on health a consumer of BluCreek claims that a mix of ingredients is added that are commonly found in some fat burners or weight loss supplements and "When I picked up a bottle of *BluCreek (Honey) Herbal Ale*, I was not sure if I was looking at a new weight loss supplement, a beer, or perhaps both." (21).

The development of new spirits seems to go along in the trend in which health aspects are emphasized. Liqueurs that contain antioxidants seem to be no exception nowadays, as distillers make everything from pomegranate to Acai Liqueur (9). Veev is a 60% proof white spirit that is made from the acai fruit from Brazil. It also contains other antioxidant-containing fruits such as acerola cherry and prickly pear (9).



source: cocktails.about.com

Another asset in the antioxidants line is Domaine Charbay Green Tea Vodka. Charbay are a small, family run, micro-distillers who run The Still on the Hill in Napa, USA. According to The Vodka took 5 years to create and is made from rare first-growth green tea from the Anhwei Province, a prime growing region along China's fabled Silk Route.

Alcohol with fresh water

Pivovarna Lasko has launched the Bandidos Power Beer with Guarana in Slovenia in 2007 (10). The drink consists of 85% beer and 15% water, with added extracts of guarana and natural saffron. According to the Drink Business Review in December 2007, the combination of beer, water, guarana and saffron extract is a novel concept (10). Another watered-down alcoholic beverage has been introduced in Germany and the United Arab Emirates by Sturmfeder & Schuette. VIQUA comes in 275 ml long-neck-bottles and is ready-to-drink out of a glass with a straw or directly out of the bottle. According to the alcohol producer: "The trend to enjoy white wine spritzer still remains strong until present day. It is not only the growing health consciousness, but also the light and refreshing taste as well as a low level of alcohol content that adds to the growing popularity of this drink. VIQUA, the new wine & water mix, is ideal for people who enjoy a sophisticated while light and refreshing drink." (22). According to Sturmfeder & Schuette, there are not any preservatives or other additives added to VIQUA. Another interesting fact is that VIQUA only contains 35 Kcal per 100 ml - and this by only 5.7% alcohol volume (22).



source:
<http://www.wein-abc.de/news/index.php?idcontent=137>

Anheuser-Busch has launched a vodka brand in the US under the Purus (23). The name is designed to emphasize the purity of the vodka, as it is said to be made using organic Italian wheat and 'pristine' water from the Italian Alps (3). In addition, it is distilled five times and refined through an active charcoal filtration process.

The Green image of the alcohol industry

There is a raising awareness among consumers about environmental issues. Consequently, the alcohol industry emphasizes their ecological friendly producing process, their manifests of responsibility on the environment and new products.

Marketing the product as green

360 Vodka is a vodka from McCormick Distilling Company, which is described as being a "green" vodka brand and was launched in the summer of 2007. According to Drink Business Review, "the vodka is promoted as having numerous "green" credentials, such as utilizing an energy-efficient, "five times filtered" distillation process, and being packaged in an 85% recycled glass bottle with a chlorine-free paper label" (2). The company also encourages the return of its bottles by donating 1 American dollar for each returned bottle to charity (2).

Purus Vodka by Anheuser-Busch was already mentioned in this report for its emphasis on the purity of the vodka. The "raindrop-shaped" bottle is said to be 100% recyclable, to have a 100% tree-free paper label and an environmentally sustainable cork closure (3).

In the same period, the Company of Wine People has introduced a variation of the bag-in-box format in the UK - a wine that is sold in a plastic pouch. The Chenin Blanc Chardonnay variety of Arniston Bay White Wine is now available in 'e-pak' packaging, which is a 1.5 liter pouch with a tap. The company claims that the packaging offers a 'greener' alternative to glass bottles as it is lighter, with 90% less waste and less landfill than two glass bottles (7). The product is targeted at outdoor consumption, such as picnics and outdoor concerts, as it is non-breakable and easier to transport than glass bottles.

Domaine Charbay Green Tea Vodka of which we already reported the added antioxidants, donates one dollar of each bottle to green initiatives such as the Rainforest Action Network and Sambazon's Sustainable Acai Project (9). The company also use soy ink and sustainable packaging for the product. Finally, materials are said to be recycled in the office whenever possible (9).

Marketing the company as green

Besides marketing the product as ecological responsible, we see that almost all alcohol companies pay attention to the protection of the environment on their website. Marc Gross of the Beer Brewery Heineken NV says: "Global warming and availability of energy are just two of the major challenges we face. Through our work in these areas over the past years, we have invested in our collective future. (11, page 9)". The Australian Foster's Group commits itself to the goals of zero injury to our employees and zero harm to the environment as a result of our operations (12). And SAB Miller has written down sustainable development priorities which include: Making more beer but using less water; Reducing energy and carbon footprint; Having a vibrant packaging reuse and recycling economy; Working towards zero waste operations and; Having supply chains that reflect our own values and our commitment to sustainable development (14). InBev has committed itself to similar actions (15) and the homepage of Anheuser-Busch starts with their "pledge" in which they seek to consider environmental impact (13).



source:<http://www.psfk.com/2007/12/purus-anheuser-buschs-eco-premium-vodka.html>

OUR PLEDGE

Our pledge is to continually seek to operate more efficiently and maintain our quality standards, while considering our environmental impact in order to be better stewards of the world in which we live.



source:<http://www.psfk.com/2007/12/purus-anheuser-buschs-eco-premium-vodka.html>

Demonstrating this environmental priority, we can find many awards which are earned by these companies. Molson's Montreal brewery was, for example, in January 2008 honoured by the Canadian Industry Program for Energy Conservation (CIPEC) Leadership Awards (16). Natural Resources Canada, CIPEC recognizes outstanding accomplishments by Canadian this company in improving energy efficiency and reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Conclusion

More and more negative effects of alcohol consumption are highlighted in the media. There is a raising awareness of alcohol related problems. In a reaction, we can see that the alcohol industry actively tries to build an image of responsible alcohol: Alcohol which suits a healthy lifestyle and is in line with efforts to improve the environment. Some of the dangers of this one sided perspective of the "contributions" of alcohol in society are discussed in this report.

In this report only recent trends on marketing a responsible image are taken into account. There are off course other forms of marketing alcohol as a responsible product which are common for a longer period of time and are not described in this report. Older marketing strategies are for example the use of scientific studies which show positive effect of moderate alcohol consumption and health effects (eg heart diseases). Continually, campaigns of the alcohol industry about responsible drinking which have often the message: 'It is ok to drink as long as you are not under-aged or pregnant' or 'Drinking while going out is ok as long as you don't drive afterwards'.

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Trends in Alcohol Marketing

Responsible Alcohol: "Green and Healthy"

More and more negative effects of alcohol consumption are highlighted in the media. There is a raising awareness of alcohol related problems. In a reaction, we can see that the alcohol industry actively tries to build an image of responsible alcohol: Alcohol which suits a healthy lifestyle and is in line with efforts to improve the environment. Some of the dangers of this one sided perspective of the "contributions" of alcohol in society are discussed in this report.

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