

FACT SHEET

Alcohol Marketing in Ghana 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 Ghana.

Existing Regulations

The advertising of alcohol is only regulated by self-regulation in Ghana (1). The enforcement of these voluntary rules is not implemented by the government. In the proposed National Alcohol Policy (2) which is currently discussed, the alcohol marketing policy relies solely on a self regulatory system.

Alcohol in the Gambia

According to figures of the WHO in Ghana annually 1.54 liters of alcohol are consumed per capita, another 3.6 liters of 'unrecorded' non-commercially brewed alcohol is also consumed per capita (1). The most consumed alcoholic beverage is beer (1). Guinness Ghana Breweries Ltd is the leading alcohol company in Ghana. This company produces and/or distributes brands as Guinness, Star, Gulder, Heineken and Baileys. It is majority owned by Diageo and 20% of the shares are owned by Heineken International (3). Guinness Ghana Breweries Ltd also owns smaller Breweries in the country (4). Accra Brewery Ltd is the ultimate

holder company of the international key player SAB Miller (5). The company produces brands as Castle beer, Chairman beer, Club beer and Redd's beer. No information was found on alcohol advertising regulations which the Ghanaian breweries endorse. However, Guinness Ghana Breweries can be expected to endorse Diageo's international marketing code (6).

Alcohol marketing in Magazines and Newspapers

A reliable impression of alcohol advertising in magazines could not be given due to limited access to magazines.

Ghanan newspapers, which are mostly black-and-white, have large full color alcohol advertisements. The number of alcohol advertisement can be somewhat overestimated due to Valentines Day which fell within the monitoring period. Besides these large full color alcohol advertisements, we have found some examples of Corporate Social Responsibility. It was interesting to see that the CSR was found in newspapers in which no common alcohol advertisement was placed. For example, one of the articles that included CSR praised Guinness Ghana for its support of the national tradition by sponsoring local festivals. All in all 16 newspapers were analyzed and this produced ten full-page alcohol advertisements, and two editorials about alcohol brands.

Alcohol marketing on Television

Ghana has only 2 channels with a national coverage. Six other channels are not national. The alcohol advertising on the national channels TV3 and GTV has been monitored for 58 hours, this resulted in 29 alcohol advertisements. This means that on average, an alcohol advertisement is broadcasted every two hours. In reality however, most of the advertisements are shown after 8 pm.

Alcohol advertisers clearly have specific target groups they would like to reach: adult men, females and young people. Frequently used themes in alcohol advertising are football, financial success and a successful

career. It is remarkable that some of the alcohol consumed in the alcohol commercials, is consumed at the workplace. Furthermore, most of the alcohol advertisements, especially the spirit commercials, are very humorous. During the MAMPA project multiple youngsters were interviewed. Some of these children mentioned these humorous alcohol advertisements. Youngsters are clearly the target group of some of the alcohol commercials broadcasted. A good illustration might be the cartoon by the spirit Opeimo in which cartoon characters play football and market the spirit.



Figure 1: Screenshot from the Opeimo commercial where cartoon football players dance and promote the alcoholic product.

Alcohol Marketing on Radio

Monitoring took place on two days between 6 am and 6 pm, two radio stations were monitored which produced four alcohol commercials and a two hour radio program sponsored by an alcohol producer. Advertisers found on the Ghanaian television channels broadcast also on Ghanaian radio.

Outdoor Advertising

Bars are called Kiosks in Ghana. Traditionally, these kiosks are painted in blue and white. In this way, everybody can recognize the locations where alcohol is sold. Although small posters of alcohol brands are shown on the outside of the kiosks, alcohol-branded posters are almost always found inside the bar.

Besides the blue and white kiosks, international brands often interact with this traditional type of marketing by painting bars in their specific brand colors. Examples of this are brown and yellow Guinness bars and blue Star-bar. Most of these paintings are made professionally and are initiated by the alcohol producers. This type of alcohol advertising shows people not only where they can buy alcohol, but also the "recommended" brand of choice.

Within the small Sebu village in the south of Ghana we found 14 alcohol kiosks and 24 alcohol marketing practices within an area of an estimated 500 by 500 meters. Besides the



Figure 2: A Ghanaian drinking spot painted in the traditional blue and white.

colors of the bar, some of the alcohol selling points were recognizable by the display of bottles of alcohol by both national and international brands.

Reaching the city, traffic junctions were covered with billboards of different products. Alcohol-branded billboards were frequently found. These billboards mostly advertised international beer and spirit brands. On some places alternatives to billboards were placed to reach out to the crowd (eg giant bottles). Billboards and smaller posters were found often in the city centre as well. In total 27 alcohol marketing practices were found in the identified square of 500 meters by 500 meters in Accra.

Other forms of marketing

Easy availability and affordability of alcohol: Alcohol is sold for low prizes which makes it affordable, even for the low-income groups. Cheap spirits are the local produced spirits (e.g. palm wine) and spirits sold in small sachets (sold for about 10 eurocents). Beer is also promoted as affordable for large groups of Ghanaians (7).

Accra Breweries has organized the Easy Access Depot Projects, to make alcohol popular and easily accessible in local communities. Alcohol is marketed as a product that can be accessed from everywhere by everyone (7).

Event Sponsoring: Alcohol producers sponsor cultural events and parties. Every Ghanaian tribe has an annual week with festivities. This week is heavily sponsored by national and international industrially produced alcohol brands. These weeks are

utilized to permanently paint bars in the colors of the brands and to give away alcoholic beverages for free or at discounted prizes. Club beer, for example, is marketed as the only true Ghanaian beer with a long heritage and “the general feeling that it’s great to be Ghanaian” (7). The beer is advertised as the ‘authentic festival beer’.



Figure 3: Music event of which the spirit Kasaprenko is one of the main sponsors.

Media training of journalists: In Ghana, journalists are trained by the industry. For example by Accra Breweries, who trained 60 journalists in December 2007 alone (7). Media can serve as a highly reliable, influential and free marketing tool for the alcohol industry. Providing training to journalists provides the alcohol industry direct contact with the journalists and makes it possible to tell them the story from their perspective. It opens doors for close contact in the future.

Considering the importance of close contact and goodwill among journalists, it is not surprising that Accra Breweries Ltd (in conjunction with UNESCO) sponsored the 2008 world press freedom day celebrations (3rd May 2008) organized by the Ghana Journalists Association (8).

Adherence to alcohol marketing restrictions in Ghana

Ghana relies fully on self-regulation. This is not regulated on the country level, but the larger alcohol companies which are active in Ghana have their company’s code of conduct which mainly regulates the content of alcohol advertising. These marketing codes do not restrict the volume of alcohol advertising and there is a lot of freedom regarding the content of alcohol advertising.

Conclusion

The monitoring exercise shows that alcohol advertising is highly prevalent in Ghana. Both in mass media (television, radio, print) and on the streets alcohol marketing can be seen frequently. Connections to sports, to social and sexual success are made frequently, and alcohol is portrayed as part of the national tradition. Interviews with young people show that they like the humorous and musical alcohol advertisements best. These advertisements are not regulated by the alcohol industry’s self-regulation system. Moreover, the use of other marketing tools such as event sponsoring and influencing the general media by organizing media trainings to journalists, creates a society in which alcohol plays an essential part. Alcohol is marketed as a product that plays a central role in the life of every Ghanaian: It is part of every party and celebration and it is easily available and affordable to everyone.

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