

**BEHAVIOR OF ALCOHOL INDUSTRY DURING
THE COVID-19 LOCKDOWN PERIOD**

**2ND UGANDA ALCOHOL POLICY CONFERENCE
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INTRODUCTION

Background

- Alcohol compromises immunity and recovery from COVID-19.
- At the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic, governments instituted alcohol control measures to cope with virus' disastrous effects.
- Reducing drinking was intended to limit arising health problems and prevent extra burdens on already-stretched health services

Drinking alcohol
DOES NOT protect you
against COVID-19 and
can be dangerous



D19

Background

- “Stay at home” orders banned on-premise food or alcohol consumption and closed off bars, night clubs and restaurants.
- The new challenges led to new approaches to alcohol sales which directly worked against the measures to control alcohol harm.



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Kampala Capital City Authority Spokesperson Peter Kaujju says that the operation will go on during the day and at night.



Problem Statement

- Billions of dollars are spent annually on alcohol marketing yet the negative association between exposure to alcohol marketing and levels of alcohol consumption and harm is well established
- Pre-pandemic health groups were concerned about the expansion of online sales and delivery of alcohol, given
 - The lack of restrictions on how late, how rapidly or how much alcohol can be delivered to a home.
 - Absence of effective mechanisms to prevent purchase from underage and intoxicated users (Julia and Hannah, 2020).
 - Tendency for transcending borders

Study Aim

Commissioned by UAPA we studied the online marketing tactics used by the alcohol industry to increase its availability and consumption during COVID-19 lock down and their implications.



**Exposed: How Big Alcohol Turns COVID-19
Into the World's Largest Marketing
Campaign**

FINDINGS

Tactics for Marketing and Increasing Availability of Alcohol during COVID-19 Period

- **Explosion of on online advertising:** Alcohol industry remained very active during the lockdown period and used closely interlinked concepts of digital marketing, celebrity marketing, home delivery and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) to keep a constant supply of their products
- **New techniques:** Marketing beyond borders, turning users into promoters

Tactics for Marketing and Increasing Availability of Alcohol during COVID-19 Period (Cont'd)

Quarantine campaigns shifted focus from partying to positivity, i.e. provide moments of connection between people (Nielsen report, 2020). Some of them includes: Assisting Dismissed Bartenders, Online parties, Helping Newlyweds, Feel good stories and using Influencer marketing

Liquor retailers, used COVID-19 as an opportunity to capitalize on people staying at home by heavily promoting home delivery services and emphasizing that drinkers need never run out of their chosen alcohol products.

Impact of Alcohol Marketing during COVID-19 Period

- Increased off-premise alcohol sales
- Increase in alcohol abuse and teenage alcohol consumption
- Increase in spending on alcohol
- Increased corresponding harm such as psychological problems and domestic violence
- New drinking 'at home' patterns



Discussion

- Lockdown is a difficult time for everyone, and people look for ways to reduce their stress yet promotion of alcohol use is likely to increase stress, anxiety, sleep disturbances and inability to fight disease.
- The behavior of the industry created marketing and drinking patterns that may be difficult to reverse the drinking habits after the COVID-19 era.



Recommendations

- Increase awareness on the negative interaction between alcohol and COVID-19
- Regulate online alcohol marketing. Development of a protocol to distinguish native advertising, user-generated content and other commercial messages.
- Development of a broad scope of marketing regulation and update of current WHO regulations (WHO report, 2020).

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QUESTIONS? COMMENT?