Constructing alcohol identities

The role of Social Network Sites (SNS) in young peoples’ drinking cultures

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The authors are solely responsible for the content of the report.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In recent years, Social Network Sites (SNS) have become an important aspect of young people’s leisure and friendship networks, including peer drinking culture. Thus, the intoxigenic spaces in which young peoples’ drinking practices and related identities are created and performed have now entered online environments (Atkinson et al., 2011; McCreanor et al., 2013; Moreno et al., 2009a, 2009b; Institute of Policy Research, 2013). Within such online spaces young people are exposed to and interact with new forms of innovative online alcohol marketing (Brooks, 2010; Freeman and Chapman, 2008; Mosher, 2012; Nicholls, 2012). An increasing body of international research is emerging which explores young people’s relationship with SNS alcohol marketing and the role of SNS in drinking cultures. However, qualitative research exploring the experiences and perspectives of young people in a UK context is lacking. This research therefore aimed to gain a better understanding of the role and place of Social Networking Sites (SNS) in young people’s drinking culture, and in the construction of alcohol-related identities in a peer group context. The theoretical concept of social, cultural, symbolic and economic capital was applied in order to understand the importance of drinking and alcohol marketing in young peoples’ friendship groups and the significant role of SNS in symbolising valued drinking practices within and between peer groups.

The research involved three stages of data collection and analysis. Firstly, a content analysis of SNS (Facebook, Twitter) alcohol marketing and user interaction with brands (N=5) popular among young people was conducted. This was then compared to the use of SNS by UK based alcohol health promotion campaigns. Interviews and discussions with friendship groups of young people (16-21 years) (N=70) were conducted to explore the role of SNS and official and peer generated alcohol content in their drinking cultures and individual and peer group identities. This was followed by an analysis of young people’s (N=43) Facebook profiles to examine how alcohol features as part of their online identities and friendship networks.

Summary of key findings

Young people and alcohol marketing on SNS

The research provided further evidence of the increasing use of SNS by alcohol brands popular with young people (both under and above the legal alcohol purchasing age of 18) as part of multi-platform marketing strategies. A diverse range of distinct and creative marketing strategies were used and were designed to engage and interact with potential consumers. SNS users were regularly interacting with and co-creating brand content. It is this interaction which differentiates new media marketing from traditional marketing, in that users unintentionally assist in marketing alcohol brands as cultural and symbolic items of pleasure and enjoyment to their online peers. Such blurring of the boundaries between official and user created content and the promotion of brand content by SNS users to their peer
networks may strengthen marketing influence on peer norms around alcohol and peer group drinking cultures.

Through analysis of brand SNS profiles young people did not appear to be viewing alcohol marketing content. Age verification was in place on both SNS studied which restricted those aged under the legal alcohol purchasing age of 18 from accessing the brand’s profile content. However, the age self-verification on Twitter was judged to be easily by-passed. Facebook user comments and Tweets did not appear to be created by individuals under the age of 18 and most content was not assessed as targeting under age consumers. However, despite young people showing indifference to both new and traditional alcohol marketing and suggesting rarely actively engaging with advertising content, focus group discussion revealed that SNS alcohol brand marketing was a regular feature of their daily lives. Young people were highly knowledgeable about SNS alcohol advertising and chose to engage with marketing content for self-gain (e.g. entering competitions, being informed on local event marketing and promotions). Such marketing played an influential role in the practice through which young people used alcoholic drinks and branding for their symbolic meanings and associations in the display of cultural drinking capital and alcohol-related identities.

Localised night life events marketing on SNS was of particular importance to young people’s drinking cultures and provided a means of being informed about future localised events and promotional offers. Such local event marketing also contributed to young people’s online drinking identities by appropriating camera culture and photographing peer group drinking within their venues. When photographs were subsequently uploaded to SNS by local event promoters, this strategy encouraged young people to further interact with the event’s/venue’s SNS marketing. Within such online intoxigenic marketing environments, alcohol based health promotion campaigns were almost invisible, received less user engagement, and did not appear to be targeting young people.

Alcohol-related practice as a form of ‘capital’ and the role of SNS in young people’s drinking cultures

Although alcohol marketing pervaded young people’s drinking cultures and online activities, peer content further created and contributed to pro-alcohol SNS environments. Alcohol consumption and related practice acted as forms of cultural, symbolic and social capital for young people. A number of alcohol-related factors such as drinking patterns and alcohol-related experience (e.g. humorous experiences of intoxication, brand association, attendance to alcohol events, drinking locations and contexts) provided young people with cultural capital, and a means of establishing and confirming peer appraisal and group values. When valued
and symbolically recognised by the peer group (including via SNS) such experiences led to social capital (see section of Theoretical position below, page 12), inclusion (and exclusion) and distinctive drinking lifestyles and identities. Young people’s discussions around drinking and SNS confirmed alcohol as synonymous with socialising, and alcohol was viewed as a normal, fun and inherently social activity which enhanced social capital. As such, negative aspects of drinking were almost absent from young people’s drinking discourse. However, a culture of intoxication was not evident among all young people participating in the study. Importantly, young people’s drinking was dependent on their economic capital, yet cheap supermarket pricing offers and the culture of pre-loading made alcohol use, participating in the night time environment and SNS drinking culture more amenable.

SNS played an important role in both young people’s friendship networks and their drinking culture. Crucially, SNS provided the opportunity for symbolic meaning to be created from the display of cultural capital through drinking photographs and statuses, which provided a way for young people to distinguish themselves from other and gain social capital within the peer group. These digital environments allowed young people to act out their individual and group identities to a peer audience and provided an extension of the space in which drinking cultures were created and alcohol-related identities shaped. Importantly, SNS drinking culture appeared to be highly gendered in nature and practiced more by young women. Facebook was used by young women as an extension of the performance and creation of specific types of gendered identities through alcohol drinking and drinking occasions. Such identities were displayed to the peer group through Facebook, potentially reinforcing and reproducing the role of alcohol as a key aspect of (gendered) identities.

The depiction of drinking and related behaviours on SNS was a highly managed practice and young people seemed aware of the potential negative consequences of depicting drinking-related content, and that uploading certain content influenced how others perceived them. As such, they managed what was appropriate SNS content based on peer group values and with an awareness of other audiences such as the family, siblings and potential (future) employers. Thus, young people carefully used and managed SNS content to create and display the ‘right’ form of cultural capital with awareness of numerous audiences.

This research highlights the important role of peers in influencing attitudes to drinking and drinking practices as young people enter late adolescence. Such influence may be heightened by peer-relevant and appraised alcohol content on SNS. If holding certain types of cultural drinking capital is perceived as important to the peer group as a way of being accepted, belonging (social capital) and creating group identities, acquiring drinking experience and symbolising these experiences online may encourage young people to partake in particular drinking practices. The study highlights the complex social processes that influence young people’s alcohol culture in a digital world and how various interconnected forms of drinking capital
work in a way to both include and exclude young people from their peer group based on drinking experience and practice. Furthermore, the findings develop the concept of peer pressure and frame young people as active agents in the process of acquiring alcohol-related experience as a form of capital in the construction of their individual and group identities, rather than passive individuals absorbing external pressures to drink through marketing messages and peer norms.
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION, AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

Young people’s alcohol consumption continues to be a source of public health concern at both the national and international level (Department of Health, 2007; Department for Children, Schools and Families, et al., 2008; Donaldson, 2009; Home Office, 2010; Department of Health, 2011; Home Office, 2012; WHO, 2014). The proportion of young people self-reporting drinking has decreased over the previous decade in the UK, although there is some evidence that the average volume of consumption has increased in underage drinkers (aged 11-15) (Fuller and Hawkins, 2013; Meier, 2010). Furthermore the proportion of school aged drinkers (15/16 years) continues to be higher than the European average (Hibbell et al., 2011). These figures reflect a wider culture of heavy drinking and intoxication which takes place within intoxicigenic environments in public spaces, and within the context of ‘pre-loading/drinking’ within the private sphere (Measham and Brain, 2005; Measham, 2006; Szmigin et al., 2008; Griffin et al., 2009; Hughes et al., 2011; Brown and Gregg, 2012; Hutton, 2012; 2010; Barton and Husk, 2014).

There are several interrelated reasons for these trends including factors such as the family, peers, advertising, cultural context, policy, the media and wider consumer society (Austin and Rich 2001; Brody, et al., 2000; Yanovitzky and Stryker, 2001; Borsari and Carey, 2006; Fossos and Larimer, 2007; Spijkerman, et al., 2007; McCreanor et al., 2008; Velleman, 2009; Smith and Foxcroft, 2009; Moreira and Foxcroft, 2010; Babor et al., 2010; Gordon et al., 2010; Atkinson et al., 2011; Nicholls, 2012). In addition, the consumption of alcohol and related behaviour are considered key aspects of classed and gendered identity, which may act as an influential mediator (Griffin et al., 2009; Atkinson et al., 2012; De Visser, 2012a and b; Griffin et al., 2013). More recently, young people’s drinking cultures and the intoxicigenic spaces in which consumption and related practices are performed have entered online environments (Atkinson et al., 2011; McCreanor et al., 2013; Moreno et al., 2009a, 2009b; Institute of Policy Research, 2013). Young people now communicate and interact via social digital media¹ such as Social Network Sites (SNS) (Pempek et al., 2009; Wilson et al., 2012), where they discuss and display alcohol-related content and where they are potentially exposed to new forms of online alcohol marketing (Brooks, 2010; Freeman and Chapman, 2008; Mosher, 2012; Nicholls, 2012). The influence of engagement with online advertising and peer interactions around alcohol through SNS is uncertain, although there is increasing research in this area (Griffiths and Caswell, 2010; Monroe et al., 2010; McCreanor et al., 2013; Morgan et al., 2010; Ridout et al., 2011, 2012; Moreno et al., 2012; Tonk, 2012; Institute of Policy Research, 2013).

¹ For the purpose of this study, the word social media is used to describe networking technologies such as the internet, Social Network Sites (SNS) and mobile phones (Williams 2008). The research focussed on the specific role of SNS such as Facebook and Twitter. SNS are defined as ‘a networked communication platform in which participants 1) have uniquely identifiable profiles that consist of user-supplied content, content provided by other users, and/or system-provided data; 2) can publicly articulate connections that can be viewed and traversed by others; and 3) can consume, produce, and/or interact with streams of user generated content provided by their connections on the site’ (Ellison and Boyd. 2013:156)
In a consumer driven society where we are surrounded by discourses of self-expression, commodification and consumption, young people are largely reliant on consumption and lifestyle for self-improvement and the expression of identity (Baume 1998; Giddens, 1991; Miles, 2000; McCreanor et al., 2012 and 2013). In this neo-liberal context, alcohol marketing, the consumption of alcohol, and participation in alcohol-related behaviours both on- and off-line provide a space in which young people can carefully craft identities within the context of the peer group. The consumption of cultural items and practices, including branded products, play an important role in this creation and expression so that such items and practices are not valued solely for their function, but also their aesthetic and symbolic value (Bourdieu, 1984; Miles, 2000; McCreanor et al., 2012; Stead et al., 2011; Atkinson et al., 2012). Thus, alcohol can be seen as a socio-cultural product with meaning and importance beyond its functional value (i.e. intoxication). Through their choice of alcoholic beverages and drinking practices young people are able to signal and symbolise specific tastes and identities, often in a highly gendered and classed manner (Skeggs 1997; De Visser et al., 2007; Lyons and Willott, 2008; De Visser et al., 2009a and b; Atkinson et al., 2011; Waitt et al., 2011; Atkinson et al., 2012; De Visser et al., 2011; Wait et al., 2011; De Visser et al., 2012 a and b; Thurnell-Read 2012, 2013). Alcohol consumption, marketing, branding and practices are thus used by young people to acquire cultural, symbolic and social capital and status in the process of peer acceptance and in the formation of group identities, and this process now also takes place on SNS (Jarvinen and Gundelach, 2007; Lunnay et al., 2011). In order to better understand the meaning and function of alcohol, it is important to consider how young people actively learn the symbolic meanings attached to alcohol and related practices, and how these might support the acquisition of status, identity and social capital. Online culture such as SNS provides young people with additional space to perform, act out and learn gendered and classed alcohol-related identities.

Internationally, there are high levels of SNS use by young people, with Facebook and Twitter being integral features of young people’s social lives (McCreanor et al., 2013). SNS have mainly social functions for young people, and provide a way of maintaining social relationships and gaining and enhancing social capital (Bourdieu, 1984; Jarvinen and Gundelach, 2007; Pempek et al., 2009; Lunnay et al., 2011). Moreover, SNS provide a platform for creating, presenting and performing identity through the display of active (alcohol-related) social lives and symbolic consumerism (Boyd, 2007; Livingstone, 2008; Pempek, 2009; Hebden, 2011). As such, young people are shown to make decisions around what information, photos and comments are shared in carefully considered manners, with acknowledgement of intended audiences (Tonk, 2012; Byron et al., 2013). With the increasing popularity of SNS over the past few years, the networks that young people are exposed to have increased significantly. SNS are not only an important part in young people’s social lives but are also a venue in which they communicate about a variety of health-related issues such as alcohol use (Monroe et al., 2010). Young people are subsequently exposed to and create a diverse range of alcohol online content, which may have potential positive and negative influences on health and wellbeing (Moreno et al., 2009a and b, 2010; McCreanor et al., 2013).
Alcohol advertising and SNS

There are strong associations between individual exposure to alcohol advertising and attitudes towards alcohol and drinking practices, particularly among young people (Anderson et al., 2009; Smith and Foxcroft, 2009; Babor et al., 2010; Gordon et al., 2010: Babor et al., 2010). The alcohol industry uses a variety of platforms (radio, TV, events, websites, SNS, mobile apps, advertising, sponsorship, branding) to promote alcohol use and the consumption of particular beverages (Babor et al., 2010). More recently there has been increased use of social media such as SNS in alcohol marketing strategies (Freeman and Chapman, 2008; Mosher, 2012; Nicholls, 2012; Brooks, 2010). Research on the use of SNS in alcohol marketing is a relatively new area of enquiry, yet studies are accumulating and provide evidence of the importance of online marketing to the alcohol industry (Mart and Mergendriller 2009; Brooks, 2010; Atkinson et al., 2011; Nicholls, 2012). Studies have shown a variety of creative strategies being used by the industry to attract consumers (Nicholls, 2012; Winpenny et al., 2014) and that young people often find such marketing informative and useful, without recognising such content as advertising (Institute of Policy Research, 2013).

SNS are also one means through which young people display a reciprocal relationship with alcohol marketing (Ridout, et al., 2011; McCleanor, 2012; Monero et al, 2012; Institute of Policy Research 2013; Monero et al, 2014). This can be done in a number of ways such as users interacting directly with marketing pages of the alcohol brands through ‘liking’ or ‘following’ pages, re-tweeting marketing messages, or joining a group dedicated to a brand. Thus, SNS provide an opportunity for young people to associate themselves with particular brands and lifestyles, in turn constructing, negotiating and signalling identity in relation to alcohol to their peers (Boyd and Ellison, 2008; Livingstone, 2008; Moreno et al. 2009a and 2009b, 2010; Ridout, et al., 2011; McCleanor et al., 2013). Thus, such SNS marketing may contribute to the normalisation of youth drinking behaviour and the creation of ‘intoxigenic digital spaces’ in which young people learn about alcohol (Griffiths et al., 2010, p528, Nicholls, 2012; ,McCleanor et al., 2012, 2013; Institute of Policy Research, 2013).

Facebook and young people’s drinking culture

It has become socially acceptable, normal and to some extent expected for young people to display alcohol-related content such as photos depicting drinking, comments, and statuses on their SNS profiles (Griffiths and Caswell, 2010; Monroe et al 2010; McCleanor et al., 2013; Morgan et al., 2010; Ridout et al., 2011, 2012; Moreno et al. 2009a and b, 2010; Tonk, 2012; Institute of Policy Research, 2013). This practice is fun and pleasurable for young people and important for gaining social capital, the creation of drinking stories and group bonding (Griffin et al., 2009; Hebden 2011; McCleanor et al., 2013; Institute of Policy Research, 2013). Importantly, research has shown that this practice is gendered and is practiced more by young women (Mendelson and Papacharisi, 2010; Institute of Policy Research, 2013). Although SNS provides a positive experience for many young people, SNS are likely to contribute to a pro-social content that tends to portray the consumption of alcohol, including
heavy drinking, in an exclusively positive manner. This may encourage the existing culture of intoxication among young people by reinforcing the idea that drinking is fun, pleasurable, and social, without negative consequences. The ways in which young people communicate about alcohol on SNS may also influence how such behaviours are valued and accepted among peers and in turn help shape drinking and related practice (Griffiths and Caswell, 2010; Monroe et al. 2010; Ridout et al., 2011, 2012; Moreno et al. 2009a and b, 2010; Institute of Policy Research, 2013).

**Purpose and aims of the study**

While a growing body of research of SNS and young people’s alcohol culture is accumulating, there remains a lack of theoretically informed qualitative research in the UK context studying the role of both marketing and peer generated alcohol content on SNS. In order to gain a better understanding of the context and culture of young people’s drinking in digital environments, this research examined the role and place of SNS in young people’s drinking culture and in the construction of alcohol-related identities. In doing so, the research examined whether peers’ use of social media may also exert an influence on young people’s alcohol-related behaviours.

In order to meet these aims, the study had a number of key objectives:

- To explore the key features of contemporary SNS alcohol marketing strategies used by alcohol brands popular among young people, how potential consumers interact and help shape such marketing, and to compare this marketing to the use of SNS by alcohol health campaigns.

- To explore the role of industry generated SNS alcohol content in young people’s drinking culture. Specifically, to examine how young people interact with and interpret contemporary alcohol marketing strategies on SNS, and what role marketing and branding play within their drinking cultures and individual and group identities.

- To explore the wider role of industry and peer generated alcohol content on SNS in young people’s drinking culture and the construction of their alcohol-related identities in the context of the peer group. Asking, how does alcohol (i.e. marketing and peer driven content) feature in young people’s own SNS activity and how do young people interpret, resist and incorporate industry and peer driven social media representations of alcohol use when constructing their own on- and off-line identities?

- To apply the concept of ‘capital’ as defined by Pierre Bourdieu (1984) in exploring the complex process through which young people acquire and maintain social status and distinct group identities in relation to alcohol, and whether SNS have a role in reinforcing drinking experience as a form capital within a peer group context.
To meet these objectives, three linked strands of research were undertaken. For a full overview of the methodology, see Appendix 1.

1) A content analysis of SNS alcohol marketing, and user interaction with marketing for alcohol brands (N=5) popular among young people. Comparison was then drawn with contemporaneous health campaigns (n=5).

2) Interviews and discussion with friendship groups of young people (16-21 years) (N=70) to explore the role of SNS and official and peer generated alcohol content in their drinking cultures, and individual and group identities.

3) A content analysis of young people's (N=43) Facebook profiles to examine how alcohol features as part of online identities and friendship networks.

**Theoretical position**

A useful theoretical tool for studying the interlinking role of alcohol use, drinking culture, and SNS in the construction of young people’s identity is Pierre Bourdieu’s theoretical framework of ‘Capital’ (1984). The theory allows exploration of the role of drinking in the formation of peer groups, the meanings attached to alcohol (including product types, brands, consumption patterns, etc.) as representative of social identities, the use of alcohol as a way of gaining peer recognition and enhancing individual and collective image, status and identity (Lunnay et al., 2011). Bourdieu distinguished between four types of ‘capital’: social, cultural, symbolic and economic. Each allows for an exploration of the social processes at play which influence social status, taste, and self and group identity, within particular social contexts (e.g. within (drinking) peer groups).

**Social capital:** Peer groups and other social networks that individuals participate in have social value; they provide social status and resources based on group membership, relationships, and networks of influence. The concept can be applied to social hierarchies within youth peer groups and pressures to fit in and conform, as well as the need for young people to distinguish themselves from members of others, both in the real and online world. SNS culture should be seen as providing additional space for young people to carefully acquire and maintain their desired social capital. Gaining social capital is reliant on other of capital; cultural, symbolic and economic.

**Cultural capital:** The way in which certain groups attach meaning, importance and status to particular cultural artefacts and behaviours/experiences/knowledge (e.g. alcohol contexts, brands and drinking practices). Cultural capital is used to uphold and acquire a position within a specific social hierarchy (e.g. peer group), in turn gaining social capital. Cultural capital allows individuals to associate themselves with particular groups by confirming to the groups values and interests, but as a result allows them to distinguish themselves from others. Thus, cultural capital is key to
‘distinction’, the ways in which peer groups both include and exclude individuals, and as such create both individual and group identities. The values attached to particular cultural artefacts and behaviours (which can be alcohol-related), will be dependent on the values and ideals of the social group. Thus, drinking in particular ways and displaying knowledge and experience of particular drinking cultures and rituals could be considered key forms of cultural capital within peer groups. As such, young people holding the ‘right’ drinking experience will prosper in the struggle for social recognition within the context of the peer group and those that do not hold such cultural drinking capital will be excluded or will maintain in a less dominant and valued position. Thus, the ‘right’ type of drinking experience and culture is required, and young people are in a constant struggle to accumulate and express the right and desired image/identity in relation to alcohol in order to be included and to distinguish themselves from less desirable others (e.g. non-drinkers, younger people, the opposite sex). Perceptions of what is the ‘right’ cultural capital is highly influenced by notions of class and gender, with cultural capital creating classed and gendered distinctions. The need for acquiring such drinking culture capital thus may be a key factor in influencing young people’s initiation into drinking and particular drinking patterns.

Symbolic Capital: Cultural capital must be displayed and recognised as valuable within a social context and by an intended audience (e.g. peer group) in order to have prestige and status; it is here that it becomes symbolic capital. Symbolic capital is abstract in that it is not a specific kind of capital (i.e. social or cultural) but every form of capital when it obtains recognition. For example, cultural artefacts (e.g. alcohol brands) and cultural activities (e.g. alcohol experience, intoxication) are interpreted as symbolic and powerful activities that young people can engage in to influence their position within the social hierarchy of the peer group.

The consumption of alcohol is a behaviour that provides opportunity for symbolic capital in that social gains can be obtained through consuming alcohol in particular ways legitimised and validated by the social group (e.g. heavy drinking and intoxication). What constitutes desired symbolic capital depends on the social and cultural capital of the peer group, e.g. alcohol brands that have a high symbolic value for one peer group may in turn have low symbolic value for another because of the cultural and social perceptions of the group. Symbolic capital is closely linked to the way in which identity is performed and constructed by individuals within particular social settings i.e. the performative nature of drinking behaviours young people participate in, which are both gendered and ‘classed’. Thus, ‘audience’ is key to symbolic capital and it is here that the importance of SNS such as Facebook becomes relevant. SNS provide an expansion of ‘real life’ and an opportunity for young people to display, modify and perform identities through symbolic capital, in turn gaining distinction, peer group recognition and social status.

Economic capital: Holding the economic means to participate in the social network and to acquire cultural capital (e.g. money to purchase (particular types of) alcohol and attend events that are valued within the group). Holding a high degree of economic capital can also bring status and prestige in itself by symbolising wealth and exclusive’ alcohol practises.
In line with such theory, alcohol, drinking practices, marketing, branding and social media are implicated in young people’s desire for capital accumulation in order to strengthen peer acceptance and identity construction. As cultural capital, alcohol-related artefacts and drinking experience provide symbolic meaning which young people can use to distinguish themselves from others, whilst conforming to group ideals and values, in turn gaining acceptance and status within the peer group. The application of Bourdieu’s concept of capital situated within the framework of distinction, allows for a better understanding of the social mechanisms that underpin young people’s alcohol-related behaviours in new digital environments.
CHAPTER TWO: THE USE OF SOCIAL NETWORK SITES BY THE ALCOHOL INDUSTRY: AN ANALYSIS OF SNS MARKETING BY BRANDS POPULAR WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

This chapter presents findings of a content analysis of the extent, nature, and user interaction with Social Network based alcohol marketing brands (Smirnoff, Budweiser, Strongbow, Fosters, WKD) popular among young people in the UK. It provides a systematic analysis of both official and user generated content on brand Facebook and Twitter profiles, and interaction between the two. It also compares the use of SNS by the alcohol industry with UK based alcohol health campaigns.

User interest in brand online/social media advertising²

Facebook was the most popular SNS platform, with the largest amount of user likes and interactions. The brands had a large social media following with a total of 22.6 million Facebook likes, ranging between 187,193 (Fosters) and 11,523,904 (Budweiser) (mean 4,532,430 per brand). Twitter had less user engagement, with a total of 50 thousand followers ranging between 11,107 (WKD) and 32,605 (Budweiser) (mean, 9,997 followers per brand) (see Table 1). The international brands Budweiser and Smirnoff were the most popular on both SNS platforms and had the largest increase in SNS likes and followers over the data collection period. Despite the international brands showing the highest levels of user interest, brands most popular in the UK (Fosters, WKD) displayed the largest number of Tweets (see Table 1 and 2).

Table 1: Social Media Popularity of Alcohol Brands

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Brand</th>
<th>Type of beverage</th>
<th>Facebook Likes</th>
<th>Twitter Followers</th>
<th>Number of Tweets</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Budweiser</td>
<td>Lager</td>
<td>11,523,904</td>
<td>32,605</td>
<td>1,614</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smirnoff</td>
<td>Spirit/ Ready to drink flavoured alcohol (i.e. Alco-pop)</td>
<td>10,438,249</td>
<td>2,347</td>
<td>1,084</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongbow</td>
<td>Cider</td>
<td>227,983</td>
<td>1,981</td>
<td>331</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WKD</td>
<td>Ready to drink flavoured alcohol (i.e. Alco-pop)</td>
<td>284,821</td>
<td>11,107</td>
<td>1,942</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fosters</td>
<td>Lager</td>
<td>187,193</td>
<td>1,948</td>
<td>3,131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>22,662,150</td>
<td>49,988</td>
<td>8,102</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

² As of 30th December 2013.
Table 2: Increase in brand popularity over the data collection period (November-December 2013)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Brand</th>
<th>Type of beverage</th>
<th>Increase in Twitter Followers</th>
<th>Increase in Facebook Likes</th>
<th>Increase in the Number of Tweets</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Budweiser</td>
<td>Lager</td>
<td>4,582</td>
<td>169,388</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smirnoff</td>
<td>Spirit/ Ready to drink flavoured alcohol (i.e. Alco- pop)</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>189,867</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongbow</td>
<td>Cider</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>736</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WKD</td>
<td>Ready to drink flavoured alcohol (i.e. Alco-pop)</td>
<td>928</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fosters</td>
<td>Lager</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1,452</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5,597</td>
<td>361,643</td>
<td>301</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Multi-platform marketing

Multi-platform advertising is an important marketing strategy being used by alcohol producers. Brands were clearly using a variety of marketing strategies simultaneously, with cross-referencing between traditional and new platforms common. Websites displayed TV adverts and encouraged engagement with SNS such as Facebook and Twitter. SNS were being used to promote brand marketing on other platforms such as TV adverts and the use of other SNS. For example, a key feature of Facebook was encouraging the use of Twitter hashtags. Three of the four brands had active advertisements on traditional platforms such as television, billboards, radio and newspapers during the data collection period (Strongbow, WKD, Smirnoff). Although multi-platform marketing existed, SNS appeared to display the largest volume of marketing during the data collection period.

Results of the content analysis of SNS brand marketing (Facebook and Twitter)

Extent of SNS marketing and user interaction

There was extensive use of SNS marketing by each alcohol brand over the 4-week data collection period and Facebook was the most frequently used. There were a total of 543 individual Facebook posts on the five alcohol brand Facebook profiles; 446 of which were official posts (82%) and 97 of which were user generated (18%). There were differences between the five brands in terms of the quantity of official brand user posts (see Table 3). Despite being a relatively small brand, the UK based
brand Strongbow appeared to be using Facebook to a greater extent than other brands. However, there were no user comments left on the brand’s Facebook profile during this period. This may be due to lack of interest in the brand or official moderating of user content. International brands had more user posted content.

Table 3: Extent of Facebook content

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Brand</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Total official brand content</th>
<th>Total user generated content</th>
<th>Total content</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fosters</td>
<td>Lager</td>
<td>35 (8%)</td>
<td>19 (20%)</td>
<td>54 (10%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WKD</td>
<td>Ready to drink flavoured alcohol (i.e. Alco-pop)</td>
<td>59 (13%)</td>
<td>17 (18%)</td>
<td>76 (14%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smirnoff</td>
<td>Spirit/ Ready to drink flavoured alcohol (i.e. Alco-pop)</td>
<td>80 (18%)</td>
<td>32 (33%)</td>
<td>112 (21%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Budweiser</td>
<td>Lager</td>
<td>113 (25%)</td>
<td>29 (30%)</td>
<td>142 (26%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongbow</td>
<td>Cider</td>
<td>159 (37%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>159 (29%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>446 (100%)</td>
<td>97 (100%)</td>
<td>543 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Twitter was used by the brands less frequently than Facebook. There were a total of 222 brand and user Tweets across four brands over the two month period. Of these, 157 (71%) were brand posts and 65 (29%) Tweets posted by Twitter users (see Table 4). Like Facebook, there were differences between the five brands in terms of the quantity of official brand and Twitter user posts. Despite being a relatively small brand compared to international competitors, the UK based product WKD displayed the greatest number of both brand and Twitter user posts (see Table 4).

---

3 Strongbow did not post on Twitter during the data collection period.
4 Note that Twitter ‘users’ can include establishments such as bars and venues.
Table 4: Number of Twitter posts by brand

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Brand</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Number of Brand Twitter Posts (Tweets)</th>
<th>Number of non-branded Twitter posts</th>
<th>Total number of posts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongbow</td>
<td>Cider</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fosters</td>
<td>Lager</td>
<td>12 (8%)</td>
<td>1 (2%)</td>
<td>13 (6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smirnoff</td>
<td>Spirit/ Ready to drink flavoured alcohol (i.e. Alco-pop)</td>
<td>34 (22%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>34 (15%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Budweiser</td>
<td>Lager</td>
<td>60 (38%)</td>
<td>18 (28%)</td>
<td>78 (35%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WKD</td>
<td>Ready to drink flavoured alcohol (i.e. Alco-pop)</td>
<td>51 (32%)</td>
<td>46 (71%)</td>
<td>97 (44%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>157 (100%)</td>
<td>65 (100%)</td>
<td>222 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

User interaction with official content

All brands had large numbers of potential consumers interacting with their Facebook posts and Tweets during the data collection period. There was a total of 47,626 Facebook ‘likes’ of the official content posted during the four weeks (78%, n=350 of the posts were liked). Likes ranged from 1 to 5229 with the mean number of likes being 136 per post. The most liked posts were for competitions to win non-alcoholic branded products. Large numbers of users also interacted with brand marketing through sharing (n=3,373, range 1 to 456, mean 16 shares per post) and commenting (n=4,314, range 1 to 885, mean 20 comments per post). Again, users tended to comment on posts related to brand competitions and seasonal associations. The most shared post was for WKD, which involved a countdown to Christmas in which Santa was depicted in a number of relaxing situations (e.g. sunbathing, playing golf). The main message of the campaign was that the fictional figure relaxed on 351 days of the year, thus associating WKD with relaxation and leisure. Brand posts received more user interest than user posts (see Table 5).

There was less interaction between Twitter users and brand Twitter profiles and posts, with a total of 2472 retweets of brand tweets. For example, brands commented and discussed competition prizes and recipe suggestions with SNS users. The international brand Budweiser had the highest numbers of user ‘favourites’ and ‘retweets’, followed by the UK-based brand WKD. Brand posts received more Twitter user interest than user posts5 (see Table 6). There was interaction between the brand and users in 12% (n=41) of Facebook posts and 13% (n=20) of Tweets. On Facebook, brands
openly asked users to respond to their posts and interact as a means of creating viral marketing (8% n=36).

Table 5: Extent of user interaction with brand Facebook content

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Brand</th>
<th>Total user 'likes' of Official brand content</th>
<th>Total user 'shares' of Official brand content</th>
<th>Total user 'comments' on official brand posts</th>
<th>Total user 'likes' of user generated posts on brands profile</th>
<th>Total user 'comments' user generated posts on brands profile</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fosters</td>
<td>3,320 (7%)</td>
<td>263 (8%)</td>
<td>275 (6%)</td>
<td>12 (15%)</td>
<td>3 (3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WKD</td>
<td>6,663 (14%)</td>
<td>1,219 (36%)</td>
<td>989 (23%)</td>
<td>41 (53%)</td>
<td>59 (56%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smirnoff</td>
<td>12,743 (27%)</td>
<td>344 (10%)</td>
<td>629 (15%)</td>
<td>17 (22%)</td>
<td>33 (32%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Budweiser</td>
<td>20,427 (43%)</td>
<td>1,002 (30%)</td>
<td>1,577 (37%)</td>
<td>8 (10%)</td>
<td>10 (10%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongbow</td>
<td>4,473 (9%)</td>
<td>545 (16%)</td>
<td>844 (20%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>47,626 (100%)</td>
<td>3,373 (100%)</td>
<td>4,314 (100%)</td>
<td>78 (100%)</td>
<td>105 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6: Interaction between Brand and Twitter Users

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Brand</th>
<th>Total brand Tweets as user ‘favourites’</th>
<th>Total brand Tweets retweeted by user</th>
<th>Total user comments on brand Tweets</th>
<th>User comments on user Tweets</th>
<th>Total user Tweets as favourites</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fosters</td>
<td>5 (0.5%)</td>
<td>5 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>4 (14%)</td>
<td>1 (0.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WKD</td>
<td>82 (7%)</td>
<td>586 (24%)</td>
<td>42 (20%)</td>
<td>12 (43%)</td>
<td>78 (33%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smirnoff</td>
<td>113 (9%)</td>
<td>223 (9%)</td>
<td>26 (12%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Budweiser</td>
<td>1008 (83%)</td>
<td>1658 (67%)</td>
<td>143 (68%)</td>
<td>12 (43%)</td>
<td>159 (67%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongbow</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1208 (100%)</td>
<td>2472 (100%)</td>
<td>211 (100%)</td>
<td>28 (100%)</td>
<td>238 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note that it was not possible to estimate the number of unique users commenting as a proportion of the total likes. As such, it might be the case that the comments were left by a small number of users.
Official brand marketing strategies

Overall, visual representations such as photos and images dominated brand marketing on Facebook, with relatively few statuses only using text. Of the official posts, 94% contained a photograph (n=419). Profile pictures usually simply depicted the brand logo, yet statuses were more creative and depicted a variety of visual imagery. Unsurprisingly, the tone of the posts was either neutral (59%, n=264) or positive (41%, n=182) in nature. For example, a positive post included statuses associating the brand with leisure such as sport and comedy, and neutral posts included posts solely depicting the brand logo.

A thematic analysis was conducted on brand Facebook (n=446) and Twitter content (n=157). A number of themes emerged when coding the official brand posts which provide a description of the nature of SNS alcohol advertising. Unlike Nicholls (2012) there was little reference to ‘time of the day’ drinking (e.g. reference to drinking at the end of the working day) within the sample, rather an emphasis on seasonal events on Facebook (i.e. Christmas, 7%, n=29) which was unsurprising given the November-December data collection period.

Although there was evidence of traditional advertising such as the reinforcement of brand identity through the display of logos (Facebook, 22%, n=91), as with other forms of marketing, alcohol advertising on both Facebook and Twitter relied on lifestyle association. On both Facebook and Twitter, brand associations moved away from domains such as traditional leisure activities (e.g. watching football), and diversified to include sponsorship and reference to new sporting/physical activities and challenges like Tough Mudder 7, as well as comedy, television shows, and even health campaigns such as Movember 8. However, none of the brands made any reference to how alcohol consumption can hinder fitness, and there were no associations made between alcohol use and some health issues, including cancer which Movember targets. Thus, these brands actively associated with popular cultural activities and trends regardless of inherent contradictions.

‘Real-world tie-ins’ (Nicholls, 2012) are sponsored events promoted primarily via social media. The promotion of such real life events was a key marketing technique being used by the brands on both Facebook (28%, n=124), and Twitter (46%, n=72). Examples included the promotion of football matches (e.g. World Cup 2014), comedy shows, and nightlife events. Whilst WKD was not an official sponsor of the World Cup, the brand used the event to promote the release of a new ‘Brazilian’ (where the competition was held in 2014) flavoured product. These events also generated SNS user content, with event attendees unintentionally promoting the brand through features such as uploading post-event photos (Smirnoff). As suggested by Nicholls (2012) these events provide evidence of integration of real world and online activity, which create a blurring of the distinction between user-generated and brand content i.e. brands adopt user content (e.g. event photos) as a means of reinforcing brand identity.

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7 A popular physical endurance race.
8 Movember is campaign aimed at raising awareness of cancer and mental health issues among males.
Competitions (10%, n=43) were another main feature of brand marketing, and featured in 10% (n=43) of Facebook posts and 14% of Tweets (n=22). Quizzes also featured within Twitter content (n=15, 10%). Participation in competitions and quizzes did not involve entry requirements or challenges in the traditional sense of a competition, but simply required the user to ‘like’ or ‘share’ or ‘retweet’ the brands status/post. This is a technique used by advertisers to encourage viral marketing among users, i.e. when a user likes a post, this becomes visible to the individual’s SNS contacts, regardless of whether they themselves are interested in the brand, thus encouraging further interaction and recognition by potential consumers. Such a process is one way in which the potential consumer indirectly acts as the marketer, advertising products, perhaps unknowingly, on behalf of the brand. Brands were clearly taking advantage of the Facebook culture of photos and liking, to encourage consumers to interact with (like and share) brand content as a way of marketing their products (Nicholls, 2012).

Facebook brand marketing was gendered in nature (22% n=96) both in terms of the lifestyle associations presented (e.g. football), and in the depiction of drinking itself. All of the 136 posts that depicted an individual presented men; women were never the protagonist in any of the advertising posts. When women were depicted (9%, n=12) they were shown alongside men in all examples. Humour (including gendered ‘banter’⁹) was used on both Facebook (16%, n=56) and Twitter (10% n=15), as were fictional/cartoon characters (Facebook 9% n=38; Twitter 4% n=6). Moreover, 7% (n=24) of the Facebook posts and 19% (n=30) of Tweets included celebrity endorsement of the brand, such as musicians and bands appearing at brand sponsored events (e.g. Budweiser), or the sponsorship of the UK reality TV show ‘I’m a Celebrity’ by WKD. Reflecting its popularity in the UK, WKD were unique in that they tended to use localised/UK based association with their marketing such as reference to popular TV shows and even political events such as the vote on Scottish Independence (see Appendix 4). Facebook also used personalisation of content within its marketing (4% n=19). For example, Strongbow posted numerous images of their latest beverage with various names inscribed encouraging users to tag themselves in the post, in order to encourage viral marketing. SNS were also being used to promote new products on Facebook (7%, n=31) (e.g. Strongbow) and brands provided users with, and asked for, recipes suggestions (Facebook 6% n=26k Twitter 5% (n=8), thus encouraging consumption.

There were few references to price/offers/deals/promotions (Facebook n=1). The only reference to a drinks offer was a WKD Drinks promotion promoting two large bottles for £5 in the retailer Tesco. CAP code 18.10 specifies that sales promotions should not imply, condone or encourage excessive consumption of alcohol, and this post did not appear to be in breach of this. Reference to responsible drinking was also limited other than provision of links to Drinkaware.co.uk, with Facebook referencing the website more than Twitter (Facebook 24%, n=105; Twitter n=3, 2%). Thus, other than following self-regulation guidance on displaying the website, brands were not explicitly promoting responsible drinking. However, the provision of responsible drinking messages has been recently criticised (Smith et al., 2014). In one

⁹ Banter is the exchange of teasing and jokey remarks, which are often gendered.
analysis of statements in US alcohol magazine advertising, 87% of 'responsibility' messages were less prominent than the marketing tagline, and responsibility was never defined. Furthermore, the authors concluded that 88% of responsibility messages were used to promote the product through drinker or brand associations, rather than promote a change in drinking behaviour. Similarly, in our analysis, there were no references to alcohol units or the potential health effects of alcohol consumption. Smirnoff was the only brand which provided additional information alluding to responsible drinking on Facebook, posting a status encouraging the use of a unit calculator during the festive period. There was also an absence of posts depicting intoxication. However, brand association with common drinking and intoxicogenic environments through sponsorship of nightlife events indirectly linked brand products to intoxication whilst bypassing CAP regulations. As Nicholls (2012) suggested, the various marketing strategies discussed work to embed alcohol in the daily online routine of potential consumers and as a normal aspect of various cultural leisure activities and seasonal celebratory events (e.g. Christmas).

Posts were reviewed for any evidence of encouraging alcohol use. In 4% (n=20) of Facebook posts and 17% (n=26) of Tweets, alcohol consumption was encouraged directly, whilst 10% (n=45) of Facebook posts and 9% (n=14) of Tweets encouraged drinking indirectly. Direct encouragement included competitions giving away free drinks, posts providing alcohol drink recipes and online venue locators allowing users to find local establishments where brands were sold (Budweiser). WKD appeared to promote drinking directly to a greater extent than other brands by offering alcohol as part of competition prizes and retweeting other pages (e.g. drinking venue pages) promoting local drink offers. Indirect encouragement included WKD posts associating the consumption of their products with payday and Strongbow, which personalised drinking vessels to depict user’s first names. None of the posts were assessed to be of direct youth appeal, other than one Smirnoff post which depicted a popular (former) boy band member making cocktails. Such celebrity endorsement could be considered in breach of CAP code 18.14 which states marketing should not feature or portray real or fictitious characters that are likely to appeal particularly to people under 18 in a way that might encourage young people to drink. However, whilst such entertainers might be considered to be most popular with young people, and therefore in breach of the code, the CAP code does not provide guidance on characters that have universal appeal, and music sales data is not available broken down by age group. Furthermore the musician depicted was aged over 25 at the time (code 18.16), thus it might be argued that he was intended to appeal to a similar age group. Similarly, all individuals depicted on both Facebook and Twitter were assessed by the researchers as being aged over 18 years old. All brand Facebook and Twitter pages used age verification which restricting those aged under the legal alcohol purchasing age of 18 (if answering truthfully) from accessing the brand’s profile content.

User generated posts

Fewer user comments were presented than official content for both Facebook and Twitter. There were a total of 97 user comments on Facebook and 65 user Tweets related to brands over the 4 week data collection period. International brands had
the most user comments, reflecting the higher number of ‘likes’ and Tweets. On Facebook, user comments appeared to disappear over time, suggesting that some brands monitored user comments posted on their profiles.

User content tended to be text based, although photos (n=27, 28%) were posted on the brand Facebook profiles (see Appendix 4). For example, users posted images of alcoholic products (n=13, 48%) with captions suggesting and referring to the consumption of the beverage. Posts and Tweets related to a variety of different brand marketing including Real Life events such as the World Cup (Facebook 10% (n=10), Twitter 45% (n=44)), brand competitions (Facebook, n=28, 60%) and recipes (Facebook, n=10, 10%). None of the user comments related to price promotions or drunkenness, and none appeared to be left by those aged 18 and under.

Results: Alcohol-health campaigns in social media

Campaign descriptions

As a result of SNS and Internet searches, five alcohol-health campaigns were selected and monitored over the four week data collection period. Three of the five campaigns ran during discrete periods throughout the year (i.e. over a one week or one month periods). Campaigns were Government (3/5) or charity/industry supported (2/5) (e.g. industry funded Drinkaware, Go Sober Macmillan cancer). All were targeted towards population level alcohol consumption, or parents. None were targeted specifically at young people.

In terms of marketing platforms, the majority of campaigns used poster displays (n=4), video scenarios (n=3), websites (n=5) and Social Network Sites (SNS) (n=5). The most popular SNS used were Facebook and Twitter (see Appendix 5). There was little or no use of TV, radio and mobile app technology by the campaigns. The majority (80%, n=4) focused on the health impacts of alcohol consumption, whilst one was an abstinence based campaign (Dry January). All of the campaigns promoted prevention approaches, including preventing onset, alcohol-related harms or promoting abstinence. Each of the five campaigns also included research data in promoting their message such as Government statistics on the economic and social cost of alcohol, alcohol-related harms and the health benefits of reducing alcohol use. All campaigns provided an element of support on their websites (e.g. self-help leaflets, peer to peer forums/blog pages, live online expert panel question and answer sessions) and included a ‘responsible drinking’ message and links to external sites related to responsible drinking. There was evidence of intertextuality with SNS being used to promote cross platform marketing on traditional media such as TV and campaigns linking their websites to their SNS presence and vice versa.

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10 Six alcohol-related campaigns were identified during the monitoring period. However, one (Change4life) only included a small alcohol-related component during the time of collection and was therefore excluded from the analysis.
Use of SNS by health promotion campaigns

Twitter was being used by the campaigns to a greater extent than Facebook. Of the 468 campaign SNS posts, 71% (n=333) were Tweets and 29% (n=135) Facebook posts. However, there was greater user engagement (Facebook likes and Twitter followers) with campaign Facebook profiles (79%, n=62,902, mean 12,580) than Twitter profiles (21%, n=16,624, mean 3,324). Although users Tweeted about the campaigns more than posting on campaign Facebook profiles, they commented on the latter posts to a greater extent than retweeting campaign content (see Table 7).

Alcohol based health promotion campaigns were less prominent than alcohol SNS marketing and received less user engagement than alcohol brands SNS profiles. There were slightly fewer SNS official campaign posts (44%, n=468) than official posts by the 5 alcohol brands (56%, n=603) monitored during the 4 week data collection period. Comparing interaction, it was clear that users engaged significantly more with alcohol brand SNS (88%, n=4820) than alcohol health promotion campaign SNS (12%, n=663)\(^\text{11}\).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Facebook Mean</th>
<th>Twitter Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Official Posts</td>
<td>33.8 (4)</td>
<td>66.6 (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>User Posts (Facebook comments, campaign related user Tweets)</td>
<td>53 (2)</td>
<td>62.8 (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>User Comments (comments on campaign Facebook posts, campaign retweets)</td>
<td>44.3 (3)</td>
<td>27.5 (4)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key discussion points – Chapter 2

- **Alcohol brands are utilising SNS as an important part of their multi-platform marketing strategies.** Although both Twitter and Facebook are being used extensively, it seems that Facebook is used to a greater extent than Twitter by alcohol marketers.

- **A variety of distinct SNS marketing strategies were being used by alcohol brands.** Whilst the analysis confirmed those of Nicholls (2012), there was evidence that SNS marketing strategies continue to develop and adapt. Brands use marketing techniques such as lifestyle and gendered associations, celebrity endorsement, recipes and personalisation to make brands relevant to potential consumers. Price promotions/offers are rarely used. Offline Real

\(^\text{11}\) User interaction is inclusive of both user generated posts and total user comments on Facebook and Twitter.
life and competitions are the main strategies that encourage user interaction, and this leads to viral marketing.

- **SNS users regularly interact with brand content.** Alcohol brands SNS pages attract and interact with millions of potential consumers through the liking and viewing of brand pages, and sharing and commenting on official brand content. It is this interaction which differentiates new media marketing from traditional marketing in that users help create and advertise brand content to their online peers. Thus, SNS users are marketing alcohol brands as cultural and symbolic items to their online peers, which may influence peer norms around alcohol and peer group drinking cultures.

- **The distinction between official and user generated content is blurred.** Interaction between brand and users and encouragement of user generated content (e.g. offline real life event photos) is initiated by brands through marketing strategies such as competitions, recipe and photo requests. This blurring of the boundaries helps reinforce brand identity among consumers. There was evidence that brands did monitor user content uploaded on their Facebook pages, with content disappearing over time. The blurred distinction between official and user content presents challenges to SNS marketing regulation.

- **No direct reference to intoxication featured within brand content.** This shows that brands were abiding by CAP regulations and codes. Nevertheless, alcohol was portrayed as a normal aspect of everyday life and leisure and indirectly associated with intoxication through the sponsorship of events located in environments in which drunkenness is likely (e.g. nightclubs).

- **It is unclear as to whether under-age young people are viewing such marketing content in the UK.** Age verification was in place on both SNS which restricted those aged under the legal alcohol purchasing age of 18 from accessing the brand’s profile content. User comments and Tweets did not appear to be created by individuals under the age of 18. Content was not assessed as targeting under age consumers, yet endorsement of brands by popular celebrities may appeal to those under legal drinking age.

- **There is little reference to responsible drinking and advice within brand content.** Other than reference to the industry-funded Drinkaware website, reference to responsible drinking, alcohol units or the potential health effects of alcohol consumption were absent from the SNS marketing content.
• Alcohol based health promotion campaigns are less prominent on SNS than alcohol, brands, receive less user engagement and do not appear to be directly targeting young people. Campaign presence on SNS is relatively low and takes place within an environment saturated by alcohol brands. Furthermore, user engagement with health promotion on SNS is far less than engagement with brands SNS content.

• In an ever-changing environment of SNS alcohol marketing, both brand and user generated content present challenges to existing reactive regulatory codes. SNS alcohol marketing is rapidly changing and prominent in real time for shorter periods than traditional media. As such, content appears and disappears on a daily or even an hourly basis, reducing the time frame in which content might be judged and regulated (Nicholls, 2012). Moreover, a high proportion of content is user generated and as such not created with knowledge of CAP codes. Thus, relying on self and public regulation (through complaints) of such media designed for traditional media may be inadequate.

• Longitudinal research is required that examines the impact of SNS marketing on potential consumers, including young people. Although there is strong evidence of the influence of traditional marketing on young peoples' alcohol use and attitudes, the effects of SNS marketing remain unknown. However, with the involvement of peers in such marketing, SNS may be more effective in transferring marketing into sales. Methodological research on how SNS marketing effects can be measured is required.
CHAPTER THREE: THE DISPLAY OF ALCOHOL IDENTITIES ON SNS: AN ANALYSIS OF ALCOHOL CONTENT ON YOUNG PEOPLE'S FACEBOOK PROFILES

This chapter presents findings of a content analysis of alcohol content on young people's (aged 16-21) Facebook profiles (N=40). The work aimed to explore the nature and extent to which young people present alcohol-related identities on SNS. Text (e.g. status updates) and visual images (e.g. photos) were quantitatively and qualitatively analysed thematically using a predetermined coding frame, whilst allowing themes to arise from the data itself. A number of themes emerged that provided a description of the ways in which alcohol featured as part of young peoples' online SNS identities.

Findings

Demographics and overview of Facebook profiles

Of the 70 participants who took part in the group interviews (see below), 43 (61%) agreed to participate in the Facebook study (n=13 (32.5%) male; n=27 (67.5%) female). The majority of participants (93%, n=40) displayed alcohol-related content on their Facebook profiles, and it was only these individuals who were included in the analysis.

The modal age of the participants was 17 (range 16-21). There was almost an even split between those aged under (52.5%, n=21) and over (47.5%, n=19) the legal alcohol purchasing age of 18. The age displayed on Facebook and the age reported within the group interviews where compared. Only one participant displayed a different age on Facebook, reporting that they were aged 19 when their true age was 17. This suggests that in this sample false dates of births were not being used that would allow access age restricted content (e.g. alcohol advertising).

The participants had a total of 19,574 Facebook friends, ranging between 74 and 1709. The median number of friends was 406. Girls (82%, n=16,037) had more Facebook friends than boys (18%, n=3,537). A total of 28,320 photos were displayed by the participants, ranging from 17 to 7733. The median number of photos was 249 per participant.

Alcohol-related culture on Facebook as a normalised and visual phenomenon

The display of alcohol-related content on Facebook was found to be a normal, routine and frequent practice among young people, who appeared to be willing to portray their drinking episodes and alcohol consumption on Facebook. Alcohol culture and experience on Facebook was predominantly visual, with photos being used as a means of displaying drinking experiences to the peer group. Although the majority of the participants displayed alcohol-related status (60% n=24), more reported visual depictions (95%, n=38). Of the 28,207 photos displayed, almost half (49%, n=13,914) were alcohol-related. The number of alcohol-related photos ranged
between 6 and 3,567, with the mean number of alcohol-related photos being 366 per participant. Females (86%, n=11,998) and those aged over 18 (60%, n=8,385) displayed the most alcohol-related photos. There were a total of 586 Facebook statuses displayed by the participants. These ranged from 1 to 120, with a mean of 24 statuses per participant. Of the 586 statuses, 31% (n=182) related to alcohol. Alcohol-related statuses per participant ranged from 1 to 31, with a mean of 8. As with photos, females (69%, n=126) and those aged over 18 (77%, n=144) displayed more alcohol-related statuses.

Profile and cover photos can be regarded as more significant than other types of photos on Facebook as they have been carefully chosen by individuals to represent themselves. These are the photos which individuals wish to draw attention to and may be seen publicly (e.g. by users who are not Facebook friends with). As such, profile and cover photos were selected as a sample for further analysis in relation to alcohol. All but two of the 40 participants (n=38) displayed alcohol-related profile/cover photos. Of all the 1,425 profile and cover photos displayed, 58% (n=827) related to alcohol. Alcohol-related profile (present and past photos) and cover photos ranged between 1 and 88 (mean 22 per participant). Again, females (76%, n=625) and those aged over 18 (72%, n=597) displayed more alcohol-related profile/cover photos.

Social context of visual depictions of drinking

The alcohol-related profile/cover photos (N=827) were coded into categories relating to the social context of drinking; 42% (n=348, mean 9 per participant) were explicit in nature (e.g. the participant was shown drinking) and 15% (n=120, mean 3 per participant) were implicit (taken on a night out (e.g. pub/club) but did not show consumption itself). A further 43% (n=359, mean 9 per participant) involved photos that suggested the individual was in the process of attending a night out/party. This was a highly gendered category of photograph, and included images of females taken within the home/friend’s home whilst getting ready/preparing for a night out (males 13% n=46, females 87% n=313). The importance of pre-loading photos to young females was confirmed through discussions with young people (see Chapter 4). Those aged over 18, and females displayed more of each category than those under 18 and males (see Tables 8-11).

Table 8: Number of drinking profile/cover photographs for each category by sex

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Explicit drinking</th>
<th>Implicit drinking</th>
<th>Pre-drinking context</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>46% (n=159)</td>
<td>28% (n=34)</td>
<td>13% (n=46)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>54% (n=189)</td>
<td>72% (n=86)</td>
<td>87% (n=313)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100% (n=348)</td>
<td>100% (n=120)</td>
<td>100% (n=359)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9: Number of drinking photographs for each category by age
### Table 10: Total number of males and females displaying each type of drinking photo

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Explicit drinking</th>
<th>Implicit drinking</th>
<th>Pre-drinking context</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>85% (n=11)</td>
<td>76% (n=10)</td>
<td>84% (n=11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>74% (n=20)</td>
<td>78% (n=21)</td>
<td>85% (n=23)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 11: Total number of those aged over and under 18 displaying each type of drinking photo

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Explicit drinking</th>
<th>Implicit drinking</th>
<th>Pre-drinking context</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under 18</td>
<td>67% (n=14)</td>
<td>76% (n=16)</td>
<td>86% (n=18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 18</td>
<td>84% (n=16)</td>
<td>79% (n=15)</td>
<td>84% (n=16)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In terms of the setting/context of drinking, when identifiable (the location was identified in 70% (n=580) of photos), 68% (n=396) of the alcohol-related profile/cover photos were within private homes (e.g. pre-loading photos) and 32% (n=184) within public drinking spaces. Females and those aged over 18 displayed more photos within both the home/friends home (females 88% n=345, over 18 79% n=313) and public drinking spaces (Females 76% n=140, over 18 73% n=134). Photos taken at home/friends home in a pre-drinking/night out context appeared to be particularly prominent among females (females 88% n=345, males 12% n=51).

**Popular categories of photograph**

A number of popular categories of drinking photograph were identifiable. The drinking ‘selfie’\(^\text{12}\), both alone and in groups, was dominant, as were highly staged and constructed photos in which (mostly) females displayed their outfits and posed like celebrities. These photos received many ‘likes’ and positive comments from peers. For young women, positively received alcohol-related photos typically included a posed group image in which the subjects wore glamorous outfits and makeup, whilst smiling or pouting, and holding wine or cocktails. In contrast, it was more difficult to describe the most popular and ‘liked’ photos of males. Male participants’ alcohol-related photos tended to include women, suggesting that photos were more likely to be taken of men when in mixed drinking groups. This reinforces the importance of the photo and camera culture in young women’s drinking practice, as confirmed through discussions with young people (Chapter 4). Gender differences in beverage preferences were also clear through the photos, with males being depicted drinking beer, and females wine and cocktails.

In some instances, whole photo albums depicted the entire drinking occasion, from the pre-loading context of preparing for the night out, to the walk home, suggesting

\(^{12}\) A self-taken photograph usually taken with a hand-held digital camera phone.
that documentation of the highlights of a night out drinking in real time was a normal practice among young people. However, the drinking experience did not end there, with the uploading, 'liking' and commenting on photos and post-drinking statuses (e.g. expressing enjoyment or referring to hangovers) providing a means for young people to maintain the memories and experiences created through drinking.

Drinking photos appeared to involve heavier drinking and constructed glamorous group photos when depicting special occasions, such as school proms, festivals, birthdays and holidays. For example, participation in drinking games and nights out ‘dressed up’ were shown in holiday and birthday photos. Moreover, as the night appeared to progress, images became more playful with exaggerated expressions, the pulling of faces and playful behaviour (interpreted as indicators of intoxication). It was these photos that young people commented on and joked about after the drinking occasion. Females tended to document these types of photos more than males. The alcohol experiences shared visually on Facebook provided a partial account of alcohol use, with alcohol and drinking occasions being presented as overwhelmingly fun, positive and pleasurable, with negative experiences being omitted.

‘Thank you so much to everyone who came tonight for food and drinks for my leavers. Had a lovely time! Will miss all of you! But time for a few more drinks at our place with some lovelies’ (Female 21 years)

’Soo hangover but great night out’ (Male, 19 years)

Peer appraisal of alcohol-related content

The online intoxigenic spaces that young people participated in were appraising and non-judgemental. The accounts of drinking expressed through alcohol-related photos were popular among peers, which were confirmed through discussion with young people (Chapter 4). The alcohol-related profile/cover photos received a total of 2,166 ‘likes’, ranging from 1 to 520 per participant. The mean number of likes was 57 per participants; the equivalent of 14% of the participants’ Facebook friends liking the photo. Moreover, 17% (n=138) of the alcohol-related profile/cover photos had been praised by the participant themselves. A further 41% (n=340) had been praised by others, meaning that one or more of their Facebook friends had liked the photo or commented in a positive manner. Only two comments left by others were negative in tone. These were individuals expressing dissatisfaction with their own appearance in alcohol-related photos. Such dissatisfaction was reflected in discussions with young women who revealed appearance was a main factor to consider when uploading a photo to SNS (see Chapter 4). Females and those aged over 18 had more photos praised by both self (females 83% n=115, over 18s 77% n=106) and others (females 83% n= 281, over 18s 75% n=255).

As with photos, alcohol-related statuses were popular among peers. A quarter (25%, n=45) of the alcohol-related status where praised by self and two thirds (667n=121)
were praised by others. Of those praised by others, 41% (n=50) where praised positively, 54% (n=65) neutrally and 5% (n=6) negatively. Females and those aged over 18 had more statuses appraised by self (female 78 % n=35, over 18 78% n=35) than others (female 75% n=91, over 18 79% n=96). For example, peers would confirm what a ‘great night’ the drinking occasion had been, suggesting they should ‘do it again soon’, whilst some commented and complained about being hung-over. Of the alcohol-related statuses, only 4% (n=8) referred directly to the effects of alcohol (e.g. hangovers) and 3% (n=6) to drunkenness. These were displayed by both males/females and those aged over 18. Thus, alcohol and drinking was framed as an overwhelmingly positive experience.

‘Great night last night, let’s do it again soon’ (Female, 18 years)

"Feeling hungover 😞 "Hope you feel as rough as I do" (Female, 20 years)

**Multi-media videos and ‘Neknomination’**

Alcohol-related multi-media videos were compared to photos and statuses. There was a total of 107 multi-media videos displayed on the participants’ Facebook profiles, 7% (n=7) of which were related to alcohol. These included videos taken at family meals, videos taken in the night time environment, pre-loading and drinking game videos. Despite extensive media coverage and public concern over the activity ‘Neknomination’ during the data collection period, there was little evidence of either participation or viewing of such videos among the participants. By analysing each participant’s posting history, there was evidence that 4 (10%) participants had participated in the virtual drinking game and 6 (15%) had viewed Neknomination videos by being tagged in videos. Both males and females had participated and viewed such videos. All those participating in, and viewing, Neknomination were over 18. Despite some examples of reluctance to participate, the few nominations received appeared to be viewed positively by the participants and the wider peer group.

‘Done my Neck and Nominate. Thanks || for my nomination. I nominate || to do it, you’ve got 24 hours boys’ (Male, 17 years)

‘Neck and Nominate because peasant XX flipping nominated me. I can’t even believe I did this. Okay, so ||, || and || you have 24 hours starting now, xoxo’ (Female, 18 years)

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13 Note that Neknomination viewing may have been higher as participants may have viewed videos they were not tagged in.
Alcohol advertising and branding on young people’s Facebook Profiles

There was little interaction with alcohol brands by participants. Within the alcohol-related status and profile/cover photographs analysed (n=2,006), only 0.3% (n=6) referred to alcohol brands (e.g. uploading photographs of a specific brand). Furthermore, only 8% (n=3) of participants had ‘liked’ a total of six alcohol brand Facebook pages. In comparison, 45% (n=18) had ‘liked’ (N= 149) non-branded alcohol/drinking related Facebook pages (e.g. pages celebrating intoxication, pages for club nights and bars). When compared to other branded consumer products, interaction with alcohol brands became even less important, with 63% (n=25) of the participants having liked a non-alcohol brand Facebook page (N=238) such as a clothing brands, non-alcohol beverages and food items.

Young people appeared to interact with local event and venue marketing to a greater extent than brand marketing. This was confirmed through discussion with young people (Chapter 4). Almost half (43%, n=17) of the participants had been tagged in drinking locations via Facebook, with a total of 63 drinking locations being tagged by the participants. Moreover, a prominent marketing strategy used by bars seemed to be photographing patrons and posting to the business’ own Facebook page, thus encouraging sharing; 15% (n=6) of participants had been tagged in official drinking venue/event photos (n=14). Such practice was discussed by young people as a common feature of their nights out, which encouraged further interaction with venue/event SNS content (see Chapter 4). Both tagging of drinking locations and official event/venue photos tended to be displayed by females (71% n=12, 83% n=5). The majority of participants tagged in drinking locations (76% n=13) and official event/venue photos were over the age of 18 (33% n=2).

Key discussion points – Chapter 3

- **Displaying alcohol content on Facebook is a normal and routine aspect of young peoples’ drinking experiences.** Alcohol-related content is a prominent feature of young peoples’ Facebook profiles with the normalisation of alcohol use among young people being reflected and reproduced online. Of the 1,425 profile and cover photos displayed, 58% (n=827) related to alcohol. There was a willingness among young people to share their drinking experience on SNS, with the frequency and nature of alcohol-related content on Facebook suggesting it is a normal and routine for young people’s drinking experiences to be subsequently displayed on Facebook.

- **Alcohol itself was not always a primary focus of the content.** Instead, it was the drinking occasion and context of alcohol and related behaviours that appeared to be important to young people’s friendships and shared experiences.

- **Alcohol-related content was popular among peers, receiving positive feedback and appraisal.** These online alcohol experiences and subsequent identities are appraised and co-created with peers, acquaintances and even third parties. Thus, the creation and display of such peer alcohol-related content appears to have a
significant role to play within young people’s drinking cultures and in the formation of self and group identity.

- **Drinking culture on SNS appears to be predominantly visual, with drinking photos in particular being the main way in which fun, pleasure, humour and positive drinking culture is depicted and expressed online.** It further suggests an important role of camera culture within young people’s friendship groups and shared drinking experiences.

- **The accounts of alcohol displayed are partial and selective.** They depict an overwhelmingly positive experience, with little focus on negative consequences. In turn, a glamorised construction of drinking experiences is created. Despite media and public concern around online drinking games such as Neknomination during the period the research was conducted, there was little evidence of widespread participation.

- **Young people displayed alcohol use and culture on Facebook to varying degrees.** Alcohol is a common feature of male and female, legal and under legal age drinkers’ Facebook profiles. However, despite young peoples’ Facebook profiles depicting high numbers of alcohol-related images, the nature and extent of alcohol coverage varied. This suggests differing degrees to which young people create and express ‘alcohol identities’ online. Older young people and females were more willing to partake in this practice.

- **Facebook alcohol culture is highly gendered and related to age.** The Facebook culture of drinking photos is a gendered phenomenon in that it appears to be a practice conducted more so by females. It also becomes more prominent as young people approach the legal alcohol purchase age. This may simply reflect increased participation in drinking and the night time environment, or perhaps greater control and monitoring of what alcohol-alcohol content is shared via Social Network Sites before the legal drinking age is reached. In the profiles analysed, it appeared that young people were not using false date of births, and therefore were unable to access content restricted to over 18s, such as alcohol advertising.

- **Facebook is a space in which young women perform feminine identities.** Facebook is used by young women to portray a particular type of glamorous femininity through the drinking context and drinking choices. Such identities are displayed to the peer group through Facebook, potentially reinforcing and reproducing the role of alcohol as a key aspect of gender and identity.

- **Drinking photos are an important feature of the pre-loading drinking culture.** For young women in particularly, the pre-drinking context provides the ideal opportunity to prepare for and create the ideal drinking photo with the intention of peer appraisal on Facebook. In turn, the importance of the pre-loading/drinking to the drinking context is heightened.
• **Group drinking stories and memories are created on Facebook.** Photographs were used by young people to create drinking stories online which provided a means for young people to relive the drinking occasion and bond through shared drinking experience. This was shown in the ways in which young people were quick to display and reflect the events of the night on Facebook, and the various ways in which peers interacted with drinking-related images through ‘likes’, comments and ongoing conversations around the drinking experience, which was instigated by the uploading of photos. Thus, alcohol-related content encourages and promotes ongoing group interaction.

• **Young people engage with and relate to local events marketing to a greater extent than brand marketing.** There was little evidence that young people were engaging with alcohol brands via Facebook to a great extent and that brand content was being used to create and depict identity. However, young people did appear to be interacting with local drinking venue (where brands are sold) marketing which provided a means for them to be informed on local events and promotions. Moreover, third party organisations such as clubs and event organisers played a role in the construction of young people’s online identities through uploading drinking/drinking location photos taken within their venues onto official Facebook pages. Such marketing on the micro level appeared to have a more prominent role in young peoples’ drinking cultures than wider macro level brand promotion.
CHAPTER 4: THE ROLE OF SOCIAL NETWORK SITES (SNS) IN THE ACCUMULATION OF DRINKING CAPITAL AND IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION: FINDINGS FROM FRIENDSHIP GROUP INTERVIEWS WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

This chapter draws on findings from group interviews (N=14) to present young people’s (N=70) perspectives and experiences regarding their drinking practices and attitudes, and the role of Social Network Sites (SNS) in their drinking cultures and friendship networks. It reports findings which further understanding of the nature of young people’s drinking in the context of peer relations, alcohol marketing and the potential influence and role of social/digital media such as SNS (e.g. Facebook). In doing so, it draws on the concept of social, cultural, symbolic and economic capital to illuminate the role of drinking in young people’s peer networks, group belonging, and the creation of individual and group identities. The concept is used to highlight the increasing importance of SNS in symbolising valued drinking practices within and between peer groups both off and online, and the potential influence of this process. Details on the study sample are provided in Appendix 1.

Distinct drinking practice

Different groups of young people were identified based on their frequency and regularity of drinking. Three groups emerged, regular, moderate/cautious drinkers, and abstainers. Of the 70 participants\(^\text{14}\), 30% (n=21) drank a few times a year, 17% (n=12) drank once a month, 4% (n=3) drank once every two weeks, 17% (n=12) once a week, 10% (n=7) twice a week and 1% (n=1) every day or almost. A further 14% (n=10) abstained from alcohol and one interview contained a non-drinking friendship group (Muslim females aged 18-21). There were similarities in the views of drinkers and non-drinkers regarding reasons for not consuming alcohol. All three drinking categories reported religion, disliking the taste of alcohol and its effects, and not needing alcohol to have a good time as main reasons for not drinking. In addition, drinkers thought that abstention from alcohol would be influenced by having a family member with alcohol problems, and having parents who did not drink. Among some younger moderate/cautious drinkers, it was felt inevitable that their consumption of alcohol would increase with age. This highlights how young people’s alcohol use and related practices is fluid and changeable over time.

In those that did drink, the regularity of drinking varied, with some groups (mostly older participants, but not all) drinking more regularly on a weekly basis and some only on special occasions such as school prom and birthdays (primarily moderate/cautious drinker). Drinking patterns were not consistent, with some young people reporting drinking regularly and then having prolonged periods without drinking. For many, drinking was opportunistic and dependent on invitations to events such as house parties and birthdays. House parties, student nights, nights out in ‘town’ and birthdays were main contexts that involved higher levels of drinking, although drinking levels differed among those who attended such events. For most, drinking was associated with the peer group and was not a common activity within a family.

\(^{14}\) 20% (n=14) did not report their drinking frequency.
context. Family drinking was regarded as more casual and involving lower levels of consumption and the consumption of different drinks. The frequency of drinking also appeared to increase with age for some participants, whilst others reported drinking less as they grew older due to fewer opportunities to drink (e.g. a reduction in the number of house parties). Thus, age, context and location were highly influential on the frequency and levels of drinking, which created distinct drinking lifestyles among young people. These differences were also reflected in the varying extent and nature of alcohol-related SNS content on young people’s Facebook profiles (see Chapter 3).

‘Yeah, well only if it is like a party or someone’s birthday. We won’t just like, go out and go to town or anything like that.’ (Female, 17 years, moderate drinker)

Participant 1: yeah when we were in Year 9 there used to be two parties every weekend.

Researcher: How come it’s not more often now?

Participant 1: everyone got caught.

Participant 2: When everyone was younger, they used to have one but their Mum and Dad found out so they didn’t do it anymore. (Females, aged 18, regular drinkers)

‘I think it’s different when you’re with you family and then your mates, cause you might want to drink less when you’re with your family than mates’

(Female, 16 years, moderate drinkers)

**Social, cultural, symbolic and economic drinking capital**

The distinction in young people’s drinking practices and cultures were influenced by a number of social factors that distinguished them from others, whilst conforming to peer group values, in turn creating individual and group identities. Within this process, various forms of cultural drinking capital acted as symbolic capital when recognised and valued by the peer group, and provided young people with the means of gaining peer acceptance and inclusion (i.e. social capital). However, young people that lacked the right cultural drinking capital failed to symbolise the correct values to the peer group, and as such were to some extent indirectly excluded on the basis of their drinking practices. The remaining discussion provides an overview of the main forms of drinking capital that were found to be influential within peer group drinking cultures, whilst highlighting the role of SNS in this process.
**Drinking as a normal, fun and inherently social activity**

Drinking was viewed as a normal, fun, and inherently social activity, even by those who drank moderately/cautiously and by those who abstained. Alcohol was synonymous with socialising, highlighting how, for these young people, the need for peer contact and the accumulation of social capital was attached to decisions around drinking. Alcohol provided opportunities for peer group interaction and was viewed as a normal activity practiced ‘when people get together’ (Male, 17 years, regular drinker). Although for some, alcohol use was a normal aspect of socialising, many reported that they did not rely on alcohol for enjoyment. Young women expressed drinking alcohol to boost confidence and sociability in certain drinking situations (e.g. clubs and house parties), as it allowed them to engage in activities such as dancing which were valued as cultural capital by their peer group. It was also the fun, positive and social aspects of drinking that young people wished to display as a form of cultural capital on SNS in the hope for peer approval. Alcohol practice as a symbol of fun and sociability was confirmed through the analysis of participants’ Facebook profiles (see Chapter 3). Therefore, positive drinking and alcohol-related contexts provided a means of accumulating cultural capital, consolidating social capital, and establishing individual and peer group identities.

*Researcher: Is drinking alcohol important in your night out?*

*Participant 9:* Well I couldn't be sober in a club

*Participant 11:* I don’t know, it makes you dance and stuff and you don’t feel as embarrassed to dance.

*Participant 13:* I can’t dance unless I’ve had a drink

(Females, 17-18 years, regular drinkers)

*Participant 57:* I know it’s not meant to make it a good time but it does

*Participant 62:* You don’t have to have it to have a good time. I wouldn’t feel pressurised to have one though’

(Females, 17 and 18 years, regular drinkers)

As a consequence of drinking being overwhelmingly discussed in a positive manner, negative aspects of drinking rarely featured within conversations. ‘Responsible’ drinking, reducing drinking and the adverse effects of alcohol were infrequently discussed topics. When negative effects such as hangovers did feature, they were discussed within the context of fun and enjoyable drinking stories. As might be expected, it was abstainers that expressed more negative views of alcohol and its effects, and in general they appeared to hold less knowledge on alcohol. Reducing
drinking or changing drinking patterns were rarely discussed, but when it was raised the implication was that it would have adverse consequences for their social lives (i.e. social capital). When the topic of reducing drinking was reported, it was within a gendered context with young women discussing how information on the amount of calories in alcoholic drinks might encourage them to drink less. Among some young women, self-regulation of alcohol use (e.g. by drinking water between drinks) was also connected to issues of self ‘control’, sexuality (e.g. avoiding being labelled a “slut” when drunk) and safety within public drinking environments. For example, care was taken not to get too intoxicated due to the fear of ‘drink spiking’. Both the short term and long term effects of alcohol use were almost completely absent in young people’s conversations, reinforcing its role as predominantly positive and social. This was also reinforced by the analysis of participants’ Facebook profiles, as discussed in Chapter 3.

**The symbolic value of alcoholic drinks, brands, and marketing**

A variety of different alcoholic drinks were consumed by young people and they held extensive knowledge of the different brands available. Choice of drink was dependent on factors such as age, gender and the social context of drinking (such as location and peer group). For example, younger participants reported drinking spirits and ready to drink flavoured alcohol beverages (i.e. ‘alcopops’), whilst wine was consumed solely by older females. Choice of drink was similarly influenced by sex, with men reporting drinking beer/lager, and women wine and cocktails. As with levels of drinking, the choice of drink differed by the social context. For instance, pints of beer would not be drunk by males when in bars and clubs, only in pubs. Shots and energy drinks were consumed when out ‘in town’ in bars and clubs and were only consumed in a peer context (e.g. not with family). Certain drinks such as wine were also discussed as ‘pre-load’ drinks for women and drinks such as beer were associated with specific contexts such as men watching football. Such choices did not reflect differences in beverage taste however, but were influenced by gendered, aged and classed associations.

Drinks were chosen for their symbolic meanings and associations in that they were seen as representing certain social groups and identities. For instance, certain drinks were openly discussed as being more masculine or feminine than others, reflecting the gendering of brand marketing. Beer and cider brands (e.g. Budweiser, Fosters and Strongbow) were regarded as masculine and associated with masculine activities and contexts such as football and ‘the pub’. In contrast, wine, cocktails (labelled as ‘pretty’ drinks by participants), and spirits (e.g. Smirnoff Vodka) were associated with femininity. It was primarily pictures and statuses associated with drinks such as cocktails that young women discussed uploading to SNS, based on their aesthetic value and associations with femininity and prosperity. The social acceptability of consuming alcoholic drinks was largely influenced by perceptions of masculinity and femininity, which suggests alcoholic drinks act as a form of cultural capital in symbolising gendered identities. For example, it was viewed as unacceptable for men to be seen drinking beverages such as wine and ready to drink flavoured alcohol beverages in public and on SNS, but acceptable to do so within the home in the absence of a peer audience. This was confirmed by the
analysis of young peoples’ Facebook profiles which found clear differences in the beverages depicted by sex (see Chapter 3).

Participant 1: Yeah, I think the Smirnoff ones look more girly again cause they look like cocktails.

Participant 2: Yeah and fruity and stuff.

Participant 1: In nice cups. That just looks like a lads one cause it’s got football in it [Budweiser].

(Females 20-21 years, regular drinkers)

‘How they look. You pretty much get a girl who orders like a pink Jagerbomb, the guy might be tempted to get it but doesn’t want to look too bad in front of his mates, like ‘I’m gonna pass, it looks good, but I’m gonna pass’.

(Male, 19 years, regular drinker)

Drinks and brands were also symbolic of age, and held cultural capital specific to different age groups. There was a consensus that ready to drink flavoured alcohol beverages such as WKD catered for under-age drinkers and were associated with immaturity. Such reference to WKD as a ‘drink for teenagers’ suggested young people interpreted marketing as being targeted towards this age group. Drinks such as Guinness were associated with ‘old men’ and more expensive wines with older women. Due to the symbolic meanings and identities these drinks reflected, young people either avoided consuming them or carefully managed what they drank in public, among peers and what was depicted on SNS. Participants expressed how drinks such WKD might be drunk at home with parents, but they would avoid being seen with these in public and carefully managed their SNS profiles to exclude images of the brand. These age distinctions provide further evidence of the symbolic value of alcoholic beverages and brands as forms of cultural capital. It also suggests that young people perceived the cultural capital drinks hold to adapt and change with age.

Researcher: What about drinks like WKD and things like that, are they drinks that you drink?

Participant 30, Male: They’re a younger person’s drink aren’t they

Participant 26, Female: That’s like what I used to have when I was little, well not little but...

Participant 30, Male: When you’re at a family party

Participant 26, Female: You’d get a WKD and you’d think you were boss

(Male and Female, 17 years, regular drinkers)
Alcoholic drinks were also discussed in terms of (perceived) social class, with specific types of alcoholic drinks and brands being seen as symbolic of economic capital and associated with certain social groups. Participants associated cheap alcoholic drinks (e.g. Frosty Jacks, Supermarket brands) with distinct stereotypes such as homelessness and drug use, and used derogative language to describe drinkers (e.g. ‘Smack head beer’) and dissociate themselves from such stereotypes. Other brands such as WKD and Lambrini were associated with social groups that young people labelled as undesirable (‘chavs’) and discussed with respect to local stereotypes. Although cheap and affordable, participants avoided these drinks due to the negative or lack of cultural capital and the identities they symbolised. Conversely, young women associated knowledge of drinks such as wine as ‘posh’, and drinks such as champagne and cocktails were seen as symbolising high cultural and economic capital through connotations of expense, prosperity, exclusivity and sophistication. It was the consumption of these drinks that some young women valued as the ideal images to upload to their SNS profiles. However, others judged those actively using such drinks symbolically negatively, and viewed this practice as “attention seeking”. This highlights the different ways in which youth groups used alcoholic drinks and brands to signify various forms of cultural capital and social status.

Participant 55: Yeah because it just looks pretty.

Participant 54: The wine looks good.

Participant 55: Yeah haha, I just like it in the picture.

Researcher: Is that the only time?

Participant 55: Yeah. It looks more classy and posh.

Participant 54: Unless I see something looking good to me and think 'you know what? It has to be posted'.

(Females, 19 years, regular drinkers)

‘Well if you say like Lambrini you think of sixteen year old girls going down the beach in shorts, a bandeau, sandals. That's exactly what I picture, dead orange with their make up all over, dead stereotypical.' (Female, 17 years, regular drinker)

Participant 1: cos you like your posh wines

Participant 2: Cos you like about it
Participant 1: Upper class wine

Participant 2: She knows her stuff

(Females, aged 21, regular drinkers)

‘Well I always think that when I see celebrities drinks I always want to drink what they’re drinking, like Circo Vodka I think ‘yeah, I wish I could drink that’ but it’s dead expensive’  (Female, 21 years, regular drinker)

Despite expressing an indifference to alcohol advertising (including advertising on SNS) and reporting rarely engaging with or paying much attention to marketing content, when probed, participants were knowledgeable about various alcohol brands and marketing, and carefully choose the products they drunk based on the lifestyle associations and symbolic meanings represented in marketing. However, young people also reported that directly ‘liking’ an alcohol brand’s Facebook page or following a brand on Twitter was a practice associated with immaturity and therefore was to be avoided. In keeping with most research in this area, the majority of young people viewed themselves as agents with the capacity to pick and choose the marketing they engaged with for their own purposes. Many young people recognised the potential influence of brand marketing on their drinking practices, but framed themselves as active in this process, carefully selecting what brands they choose and viewed such marketing as informative in this decision making. For example, young people reported only engaging with SNS marketing if there was something to gain, such as winning brand competition prizes or being informed about nightlife events and offers. Marketing was felt to influence younger people and those less knowledgeable about alcohol in general. Some also held the opinion that that being aware of advertising techniques reduced its influence.

SNS provided an extension of the space in which cultural capital, status and identity could be created and symbolised to a peer audience through uploading photographs depicting the consumption of certain drinks. This was a highly managed practice with much thought involved in deciding what drinks to include and exclude on SNS. Symbolic associations along the lines of gender, age and perceived social ‘class’ position highlighted the process through which alcoholic drinks were used by young people to distinguish themselves and dissociate themselves from others, in turn creating particular peer approved identities. This provides further evidence of the role of alcohol beyond its practical function, in that brands act as cultural resources that young people actively use and re-appropriate in the representation of a gendered, mature- and classed-self within the peer group context, both off and online.
Drinking locations and contexts: nightlife environments and pre-loading as contexts for acquiring cultural drinking capital

Drinking locations and contexts provided opportunities for young people to acquire social and cultural capital within the peer group. These locations and contexts differed by age, with those under the age of 18 years drinking at house parties and birthday celebrations. Young people used new technology such as SNS, particularly Facebook group message and mobile apps such as WhatsApp to organise alcohol-related events. Being invited to such events via Facebook was status giving and acted as a form of social inclusion and social capital. Thus, attending such events was desirable, particularly among younger participants. For instance, participants discussed examples of younger people gate-crashing parties where alcohol was consumed due to liberal SNS privacy settings. Younger people were thought to drink in outside public spaces such as parks, but this context was used as a derogative insult by some older participants, highlighting how young people used drinking contexts and environment as a way of distinguishing themselves from less desirable others (e.g. younger people).

**Participant 26, Female:** I forgot you can make a group, you can make an event so say if someone’s having an 18th or a 21st or whatever they’ll make the event then they’ll invite whoever they want on their Facebook

**Participant 30, Male:** You got to make sure it’s locked or whatever though because like you’ll get 100 kids from like random schools who are like 12 and you’ve never seen in your life just turn up to your party, they’ll be invited and you’ll be like ‘oh’

(Female 17 years moderate drinker, Male 17 years regular drinker)

With age, young people continued to drink at parties but also began to drink within public drinking environments such as bars and clubs. Participating in the night time environment was highly valued among both older and younger people who were yet to engage in such practices. It was regarded as an ideal drinking context holding high cultural capital, but was dependent on personal financial resource (economic capital). For young women, the nightlife environment was described as an ‘ideal’ context for taking drinking photos and subsequently uploading to SNS to be viewed by peers. This was confirmed through analysis of their Facebook profiles, Chapter 3. High value was also placed on being depicted drinking in certain clubs that were regarded as ‘classy’ and exclusive, whilst other drinking locations were seen as holding as less symbolic capital, particularly among females (e.g. the pub).

Young people rarely ‘tagged’ themselves in drinking locations. This practice was interpreted as ‘trying too hard’ and associated with younger people, and as such was to be avoided. However, the symbolic importance of the night life environment as a space to acquire cultural capital was reflected in how young people valued localised events marketing. They actively engaged with this type of marketing on SNS
to a greater extent than brand advertising as it provided a means of being informed on future popular events. Moreover, local event marketers were contributing to young people’s online drinking identities through appropriating the camera culture of young people’s drinking cultures in their own marketing strategies. Being photographed by professional photographers within clubs and bars was a common feature of young people’s nights out and encouraged further interaction with marketing. This was evident on young peoples’ Facebook profiles (Chapter 3).

Pre-loading/drinking contexts were highly valued by older females as a space in which they bonded with female friends whilst ‘getting ready’ for the night out. During this time they drank alcohol (usually wine), applied makeup, chatted, listened to music, and took highly staged photos to be uploaded to SNS, before heading out to bars and clubs (usually between 10.30pm and midnight). The analysis of young people’s Facebook content found the pre-load experience to be the most dominant drinking context displayed on young women’s profiles (see Chapter 3). To some extent the pre-loading experience appeared to be the most enjoyable aspect of a ‘night out’ for young females. Thus, the apprehension and build up to a night out drinking in bars and clubs provided as much pleasure as the actual night out itself. Young men did pre-drink, but placed relatively less value on this context, and defined pre-loading as an activity practiced by females. The pre-load context as an opportunity for acquiring cultural and social capital to be displayed as symbolic capital on SNS was a gendered process. Thus, different drinking contexts provided young people with opportunities to enhance their social and cultural capital in ways that were aged related, and gendered in nature. SNS had a key role in documenting and symbolising participation in these locations and contexts to peers, which worked in a way to reinforce particular status and group identities based upon drinking context and locations.

**Participant 26, Female:** yeah, as you’re getting ready, it will be as you are getting ready. Cos I like do everyone’s makeup so they’re all at one house I’m not travelling and then the others do hair or whatever, it’s more like if you’re getting ready at mine its easier, one person will like my mums normally the taxi driver takes us all to the place anyway

**Participant 30, Male:** so we don’t have to do that do we lads

**Researcher:** yeah so you think there are gender differences in terms of that build up to a night out

**Participant 30, Male:** from like other people that I know I don’t really hear of it like it’s usually just the same like lads pick each other up and just go straight away. cos they don’t really like usually like sit together cos its usually indoors you need like lots of time to get ready, like 5 minutes, top, jeans on.

(Female 17 years moderate drinker, Male 17 years regular drinker)

**Economic capital, pre-loading and supermarket offers**
Young people’s level of economic capital (i.e., having the money to purchase alcohol and attend events) was highly influential on their drinking patterns and practices. Whilst young people had favourite types of alcohol (e.g., beer, vodka) the cost of alcohol, and price promotions were important factors not only in determining whether young people would drink, but also what brand was consumed. Cheap supermarket offers were influential in young people’s purchasing choices, and an important way in which marketing influenced young people’s use of alcohol. However, the promotion of cheap alcohol on SNS was rare, which highlights the influence of traditional marketing (i.e., on- and off-trade supermarket offers) on young people’s alcohol use and choice of drink.

Pre-drinking was significant to economic capital. Other than enjoyment and providing a context for acquiring cultural capital for young women, the main reason for pre-loading was to reduce the cost of a night out and to avoid spending too much money on alcoholic beverages in bars and clubs. Not having the economic capital to fund a night out ‘in town’ was thus overcome by pre-loading on cheap alcoholic drinks on offer within supermarkets and licensed shops. Drinking at parties within the home was also valued by both younger and older participants as it was regarded as a cheaper alternative to the night-time environment which was sometimes out of reach due to economic restraints. Economic capital therefore influenced the social context of drinking.

Participant 54: Save money by spending it on pre-drinks...

Participant 56: So they don’t have to buy it in the clubs where it’s more expensive so they just buy it in Home and Bargain.

Participant 54: True. But say there was five of you and you have £5 on you, £5 shots. Shots are on the house. (Male, 19 years, Females 18 years, regular drinkers)

Participant 25, Female: they do it before town because drinks are expensive in town

Participant 26, Female: yeah so you don’t really drink in town you just drink in the house and then don’t really in town.

Participant 30, Male: well yeah, if I was going to town then I would do it

Researcher: is that because of the costs?

Participant 26, Female: yeah it is so ridiculous

Participant 30, Male: yeah it’s like 7 quid for a drink

Participant 26, Female: I’ve only been twice and it was ridiculous

Participant 25, Female: yeah if I don’t have money then I can’t go out
Managing SNS alcohol content in the creation of the ‘right’ cultural capital

SNS had an important role in both young people’s friendship networks and their drinking culture. These digital environments provided an opportunity for young people to act out their individual and group identities to a peer audience and provided an extension of the space in which drinking cultures were created and alcohol-related identities shaped. This was evident in young people’s willingness to share their drinking experience on SNS, as reported in Chapter 3. For many young people, social media had become a normalised aspect of alcohol-related leisure and routinely featured in pre-, interim- and post-drinking occasions. Although drinking, drinks/brand, the drinking context, intoxication and behaviours surrounding nights out commonly featured as part of young people’s online profiles, they were carefully managed to avoid representing the ‘wrong’ cultural drinking capital. Some participants were also conscious of being perceived as uploading excessive amounts of drinking content. The extent and nature of SNS drinking content varied between peer groups and was influenced by age, gender and the extent to which drinking and nights out were valued by the peer group. Again, this was reflected in the Facebook content analysis (Chapter 3).

“I think we’re at that age now where we’ve gone beyond that, it’s not such a big thing like everyone’s doing it now. If it was like 2, 3 years ago maybe then it would be more like, a lot more people would be mentioning it as we were drinking and that.” (Female, 21 years, regular drinker)

“People do it to look cool though. Like the amount of kids, well not kids but year nines from our school that are like fourteen this summer will go down the woods and get pictures of the Lambrini because it makes them look cool” (Female, 18 years, regular drinker)

With the depiction of drinking and related behaviours on SNS being a highly managed practice, young people were aware of the potential negative consequences of depicting drinking-related content and were aware that uploading certain content influenced how others perceived them. As such, individuals managed what was appropriate SNS content based on peer group values and with an awareness of other audiences such as the family, siblings and potential (future) employers. They were able to recognise potential risks, evaluated their own content and took appropriate actions to prevent damage to their reputation. Management strategies included not taking photos, not uploading photos, ‘untagging’ (i.e. so that the photo did not appear on the user’s profile), asking friends to delete photos, not uploading when drunk, and turning a potentially negative photo into one of humour and storytelling. Participants also discussed sharing those photographs that might be interpreted negatively on Snapchat, which is a mobile application that allows users to share photographs for a short period of
time (usually 10 seconds). In contrast, privacy settings on Facebook, beyond restricting public access to profiles, were not of concern. Some avoided posting whilst drunk, yet drunkenness itself constrained status management, with participants reporting uploading such statuses when drunk and regretting doing so when sober. Such active SNS management was stressful for some young people, who wanted to be perceived in particular ways through their drinking practices. Thus, young people carefully used and managed SNS content to create and display the ‘right’ form of cultural capital with the knowledge of numerous audiences.

“Well say you put a picture on Facebook or something and you get likes, so a lot of people just want loads of likes as they’ll feel popular.” (Female, 20 years, regular drinker)

Participant 17: I just wouldn’t post it, like if I was having a drink I just wouldn’t post it.

Participant 18: You just wait til after, when you have sobered up and that before you regret anything. Because it can cause you proper loads of....

Participant 19: yeah like, like the next day, well I wait until the next day anyway when I wake up. Then I will go through all the pictures from that night.

Researcher: So would you stop on a night out to update status or pictures?

Participant 19: well you might do a status update, but with photos I will wait until the next morning then when I wake up have a look through the photos and see which ones I want to put

Participant 18: and which ones you want deleting

Researcher: what kind of pictures from the night would you delete or not want to see on Facebook?

Participant 19: ah nothing like that, just pictures that you don’t think are nice or something.

Participant 14: Like where it is a proper mug shot

(Females, 17 and 16 years, moderate drinkers)

Appearance and femininity

Participants provided many examples of the types of photographs they would and would not upload. Females had more interest in discussing drinking photos and as such, the practice of drinking photo creation and display was highly gendered. This was reflected in the analysis in young peoples’ Facebook content in which the
majority of drinking photos were created by females (see Chapter 3). For women, ideal drinking photos were ones in which young women were satisfied with their appearance and examples of ‘bad’ photos primarily depicted unsatisfactory appearance. Appearance was felt to become less satisfactory when intoxicated. With respect to this, the pre-load context provided the perfect opportunity for creating ideal photos and the cultural capital that they symbolised. Discussions around ideal ‘flattering’ photos highlighted the key role of drinking occasions as an opportunity for young women to perform a glamorous form of feminine identity which could be captured on camera and shown to a peer audience through SNS. Young women were clearly using Facebook as an extension of the context through which they performed and created specific types of gendered identities through drinking and drinking occasions. Such identities were displayed to the peer group through Facebook, potentially reinforcing and reproducing the role of alcohol as a key aspect of gendered identity. Although most young women participated in this practice, some were still judgemental of others who uploaded such photos. They viewed this practice as attention seeking and vain. This suggests a certain level of competition among young women in the accumulation of symbolic capital within drinking contexts as a means of gaining social status within the peer group based on appearance.

Researcher: So, what types of photos would you un-tag then?

Participant 1: If you look fat.

Participant 2: Oh, ones where your knickers are out, you look fat, you look like you’ve been sick, you got a double chin.

Participant 3: You got one eye going one way than the other.

Participant 1: Yeah. When your eyes go all funny, ah, one eye looking for you one eye searching for you. Yeah, they're not a good look.

(Females 20-21 years, regular drinkers)

Participant 1: If you’re looking alright in them then I don’t put them on because it just shows you having a good time. But when you look like a mess head then...

Participant 3: But you’re just dead drunk and you’re like “oh yeah”, and the next morning you go delete, delete, delete.

Participant 2: Can’t believe I put that.

Participant 1: I hate seeing pictures the next morning. [to P2] Like, you’ve got some disgusting ones of me and I hate them. I’m like eating pizza or subway.

(Females, 21 years, regular drinkers)
Intoxication, drinking stories and SNS

Student life and youth culture is often associated with a culture of intoxication. University and college students participating in the study appeared to relate to this practice, yet there was no evidence that this culture was widespread across all friendship groups. The degree to which drinking to intoxication held cultural and symbolic capital therefore varied across friendship groups. For some, intoxication was a key element of drinking and ‘nights out’ and some expressed drinking alcohol and organising nights out with the intention of drunkenness. Others, usually young females, openly reported avoiding drunkenness to the extent of losing control. In some peer groups intoxication was regarded as the ‘wrong’ form of cultural capital and as such those displaying such behaviours were judged by their peers. This shows how the symbolic display of intoxication as a form of cultural capital varied, and as a result, reinforced group distinctions. The below extract exemplifies the differing value placed on intoxication as an important element of peer drinking occasions.

Researcher: What are your main aims for when you decide to go on a night out?

Participant 19: Dance

Participant 17: socialise

Participant 19: have fun and dance

Participant 19: it’s not to like go out and get drunk, it’s not like that

Participant 18: if it happens, it happens

(Females, 17 years, moderate drinkers)

Participant 30, Male: to not remember, to not remember the rest of the night (laughing)

Participant 29, Female: you see mine is more just to see friends

Researcher: but part of that would be to get drunk to the point you can’t remember?

Participant 26, Female: I don’t really like that, I’m not like that. If I feel a bit drunk I will stop drinking and have a water, were as some people will just vomit

Participant 29, Female: I hate it when you lay down in bed and you are either taking off or the bed is taking off
Participant 30, Male: I just drink till I vomit

Participant 26, Female: you what?

Participant 29, Female: when you lay back down and you feel the room spinning, I hate that part

Participant 30, Male: if you don’t have a spinning room you haven’t drank enough

Participant 26, Female: no see I don’t let myself get like that, I think I’m sensible

Researcher: so would you say that kind of experience on reflection, if you had that experience that would be a good night out

Participant 30, Male: not in the morning... at the time it is good, but in the morning you look back and think of what have I done (laughing)
Participant 29, Female: I lay in bed to wait for the texts, ‘can’t believe you’ve did this’ or whatever

Participant 26, Female: you’re always the one that vomits

Participant 30, Male: yeah well I don’t vomit anymore

Participant 26, Female: yeah on stairs in other people’s houses. When it was up the bathroom wall?

Participant 30, Male: that was New Year

Participant 29, Female: it’s alright I’m the one that says ‘I love you.’

(Females 17 years moderate drinkers, Male 17 years regular drinkers)

For some, intoxication was not valued as an experience in itself. Instead, it was important as a form of cultural and symbolic capital within the context of storytelling, with value being placed on intoxicated experiences in the creation of humorous group drinking stories. While all young people reported examples of uploading and/or being tagged in alcohol-related photos, their opinions on the creation of intoxicated statuses and photos were divided. Many perceived them as a source of annoyance and embarrassment. Displaying statuses outwardly referencing alcohol use and intentions to drink to intoxication were viewed as immature and a practice to be avoided. However, decisions on whether to upload statuses and photos reflecting intoxication (e.g. vomiting, comatose states, hangovers) were made on judgements as to whether they would be interpreted as humorous and worthy of a good drinking story. For example, few young people had participated in Neknomination, viewing this drinking game and practice as ‘ridiculous’ and
‘pointless’. However, those that did appreciated this performance for its comic value.

‘Funny things. Like something happens and you’ll tweet about it – for example when I tweeted ‘Can’t believe I threw up in [name of licensed premises] last night and then just acted like it never happened’ – that’s funny’ (Female, 18 years, regular drinker)

SNS were crucial in the creation of such drinking stories. Young people spontaneously discussed the role of SNS drinking content in creating group ‘memories’. Looking back at drinking photos both individually and as a group was a common practice, particularly among young women. The creation of such stories acted as a form of shared cultural drinking capital which bonded the group, enhancing social capital and reinforcing shared values. Not partaking in this SNS practice restricted the creation of such cultural drinking capital, which led to feelings of exclusion and lack of desired peer appraisal. Sitting back and observing others’ inclusion in such practices via Facebook caused social anxiety and a feeling of ‘missing out’ among some. As such, a need to depict and participate in SNS drinking culture seemed to indirectly influence some young peoples’ involvement in drinking occasions.

Researcher: So, what are the main reasons why you share photos from nights out on Facebook and Twitter?

Participant 12: To show everyone what you look like really.

Participant 13: So we can look back at it.

Participant 12: Memories isn’t it really?

Researcher: Do you like doing that, looking back at old photos?

All: Yeah.

Participant 12: We all went on holiday last year and we look back over it all the time.

Participant 10: I look at my Facebook album of that holiday like every day.

(Females, 17-18 years, regular drinkers)

‘Because obviously if I see my friends drinking and posting pictures next time we go out I feel that I have to do that also because you’d be the odd one out of you’re out. Yeah, because sometimes it is peer pressure isn’t it? And then like, people look like they’re having fun and you’re the only person who is not having fun, why not?’ (Female, 17 years, moderate drinker)
Distinction, inclusion and exclusion through drinking

The differing and interconnected forms of capital created by drinking and related practices worked to include and exclude young people from the peer group based on drinking experience and practice. Moreover, the extent to which value was placed on drinking practices varied between and within peer groups and as a result how drinking, related behaviour and contexts provide a way for young people to both conform and distinguish themselves from others.

‘I feel that certain friendship groups drink, different amounts, different types, in different situations’ (Male, 17 years, moderate drinker)

For many young people, alcohol use, brand association, participating in events where alcohol was consumed and experiencing intoxication, acted as a form of symbolic capital, inclusion and social capital within the context of the peer group. As such, those not participating in such activities reported examples of feeling excluded. Even when attending such events, abstaining from alcohol prevented them feeling completely included and in many cases, abstainers ended the night early. Non-drinkers themselves provided numerous examples of how their abstinence or lack of drinking impacted on their social role within the peer group and the extent to which they felt accepted and included. In particular, young people who did not drink for religious reasons reported feeling excluded from their wider peer groups due to not attending social events which usually involved alcohol use. Participants also discussed examples of peers who did not drink due to their religious beliefs, and how this restricted their inclusion in social events and opportunities for pleasure.

Participant 30, Male: yeah he wasn’t drinking because of religion and then because he was over here, he lives here on his own, he is from XX, his dad would kill him like if he knew he was drinking. But because we all were going to parties and he stopped himself coming with us and once he came and got absolutely rotten.

Participant 26, Female: and he bought all the shots

Participant 30, Male: yeah he bought everyone shots at the whole party.

Researcher: and has he been drinking since then?

Participant 30, Male: he has been like at three parties since then, but he only goes if he can give a good excuse because he lives next door to his auntie but he lives on his own. So like if he can give an excuse why he would be out all night then he would go, but if he can’t then he won’t. He still looks heavy on religion but not as he would do than if he was with his family.
Researcher: do you think he kind of feels more accepted and he fits in more since he has been drinking?
Participant 30, Male: I reckon, we got him to drink. I blame myself for him… I blame me and the other lads that we go with for getting him to drink because if it weren’t for us then he would never have drank.

(Female 17 years moderate drinker, Male 17 years regular drinker)

‘Yeah like, prom. Like when I really wanted to go to prom but I didn’t go and I was not allowed to go just because of alcohol’ (Female, 17 years, non-drinker)

However, it is important to highlight that examples were also given where both drinkers and non-drinkers did not feel excluded due to abstention. Some drinkers respected others’ decisions not to drink and viewed this positively in that it was seen as resisting ‘peer pressure’. In some peer groups moderate drinkers had a role of ensuring the safety of drinkers when out in the night time environment. This suggests that the process through which drinking acts a form of inclusion and exclusion is not universal among young people and is instead highly dependent on the value placed on alcohol (as a form of cultural capital) by the peer group.

Participant 53: it’s their choice isn’t it?
Participant 62: Yeah, it’s their choice so whatever.

Participant 53: but you can still have a good time with them if you’re drinking and they’re not.

Participant 62: it’s good that they don’t feel pressured to do that

Participant 53: yeah, they’ve got their own mind

(Females, 17 and 18 years, regular drinkers)

‘If I know me and my friends are going to start drinking I know at least one of us will have to keep all of us in check so we usually go in a group of four five so at least one will have to drink lightly and make sure that the rest are fine and not having too much mischief’ (Female, 17 years, moderate drinker)

However, on the whole, not depicting the 'right' form of cultural drinking capital influenced young people’s social status within the peer group and led to them feeling excluded. This research suggests that the process of capital accumulation, inclusion and exclusion has now been extended online, with SNS providing a way of young people to symbolise certain forms of capital to their peers, in turn reinforcing
or gaining social status and inclusion within the peer group. For cultural capital to become symbolic, it must be displayed and recognised as valuable within a social context and by an intended audience (e.g. peer group) in order to have prestige and status; it is here that SNS play a crucial role. The need to feel included and a sense of belonging to group identities may influence the extent to which young people actively try to acquire drinking capital. Young people rarely directly discussed this process using the concept of ‘peer pressure’ and when they did they contested the argument or used the concept to discuss others, and not themselves. As with marketing, they did not always see themselves as directly influenced, but did recognise younger people could be influenced by their own SNS alcohol content. The various forms of capital discussed highlight the complex social processes that feature within young people’s decisions around drinking and their drinking cultures, and provides a description of the ways in which young people are influenced to drink by their peers and the role of SNS in this process.

‘No I don’t’ feel pressured, I don’t do it because other people are doing it, I do it because I want to’ (Female, 17 years, regular drinker)

Participant 12: I think you influence the young people. Like us, we’re allowed to go, we’re old enough to go. But when we were sixteen we’d look up to the sixth formers and they’d all be out.

Participant 10: You’d see what people wear and be like ‘oh I want to be like that, I want to get dressed up’

(Females, 17 and 18 years, regular drinkers)

Key discussion points – Chapter 4

- **Alcohol consumption and related practice acted as forms of cultural, symbolic and social capital for young people.** A number of alcohol-related factors such as drinking patterns and alcohol-related experience (e.g. humorous experiences of intoxication, brand association, attendance to alcohol events, drinking locations and contexts) provided cultural capital and a means for young people to confirm to peer group values, whilst distinguishing themselves from less desirable others (e.g. younger people). When valued and symbolically recognised by the peer group such experiences led to social capital, inclusion and distinctive drinking lifestyles and identities.

- **Alcohol was synonymous with socialising and was viewed as a normal, fun and inherently social activity which enhanced social capital.** Negative aspects of drinking and reducing drinking were almost absent from young
people’s drinking discourse. When negative effects and reducing drinking were discussed it was within a gendered context. Young women discussed reducing drinking to lose weight and boost appearance, and self-regulating alcohol use as a means of maintaining control within the context of safety in public drinking environments and to prevent being labelled negatively with reference to their sexuality (e.g. slut).

- **Drinks were chosen for their symbolic meanings and associations.** Alcoholic drinks and brands were seen as representing certain social groups and identities in relation to gender, class and age. Is was through consuming certain drinks that young people could associated themselves from certain social groups and lifestyles, highlighting how brand association influences young people’s drinking practices. SNS provided an extension of the space in which cultural capital, status and identity could be created and symbolised to a peer audience through uploading photographs depicting the consumption of certain drinks.

- **Young people showed indifference to alcohol marketing, yet were highly knowledgeable on alcohol advertising (including advertising on SNS) and engaged with marketing content for their own purposes.** They used alcohol brand lifestyle associations as a signifier of identity which could be represented and reinforced on SNS. Young people also actively engaged local events marketing on SNS to a greater extent than brand marketing as it provided a means of being informed on future popular events. Local event marketers were contributing to young people’s online drinking identities by taking drinking photographs of young people which would later be uploaded to SNS. This strategy encouraged young people to further interact with the events/venues SNS marketing.

- **Young people recognised the potential influence of alcohol marketing on their drinking practices but framed themselves as active agents.** They carefully engaged with marketing if they felt there was personal gain (e.g. being informed on local events, winning brand competition prizes, depicting brand associations). Marketing was felt to influence younger people and those less knowledgeable than themselves. Some held the opinion that that being aware of advertising techniques reduced potential influence.

- **Drinking locations and contexts provided opportunities for young people to acquire social and cultural capital within the peer group, in ways that were related to age and gendered in nature.** SNS had a key role in documenting and symbolising participation in these locations and contexts to peers, which worked in a way to reinforce particular status and group identities. Representing participation in the night time environment and pre-loading on
SNS was highly valued, particularly among young women. They were regarded as ‘ideal’ contexts for taking drinking photos and subsequently uploading to SNS to be viewed by peers as a form of symbolic capital.

- **Young people’s level of economic capital** (i.e. having the money to purchase alcohol and attend events) was highly influential on their drinking patterns and practices. The cost of alcohol was an important factor in determining whether young people drank and what brands were consumed. Cheap supermarket offers were influential and a main way in which marketing influenced young people’s use of alcohol. Not having the economic capital to fund a night out ‘in town’ was overcome by pre-loading on cheap alcoholic drinks on offer in supermarkets and other licensed shops.

- **SNS played an important role in both young people’s friendship networks and their drinking culture.** Crucially, they provided the opportunity for symbolic meaning to be created from the display of cultural drinking capital through photographs. These digital environments allowed young people to act out their individual and group identities to a peer audience and provided an extension of the space in which drinking cultures were created and alcohol-related identities shaped.

- **The depiction of drinking and related behaviours on SNS is a highly managed practice.** Young people were aware of the potential negative consequences of depicting drinking-related content and were aware that uploading certain content influenced how others perceived them. As such, individuals managed what was appropriate SNS content based on peer group values and with an awareness of other audiences such as the family, siblings and potential employers. Thus, young people carefully used and managed SNS content to create and display the ‘right’ form of cultural capital with the knowledge of numerous audiences.

- **Young women used Facebook as an extension of the context through which they performed and created specific types of feminine/gendered identities through drinking and drinking occasions.** Such identities were displayed to the peer group through Facebook, potentially reinforcing and reproducing the role of alcohol as a key aspect of gendered identity.

- **A culture of intoxication was not evident among all young people participating in the study.** The degree to which drinking to intoxication held cultural and symbolic capital varied across friendship groups. Intoxication was rarely valued as behaviour in itself, but was important as a form cultural
and symbolic capital within the context of storytelling with value being placed on intoxicated experiences in the creation of humorous group drinking stories. SNS were crucial in the creation of such drinking stories.

- **Various interconnected forms of drinking capital worked in a way to both include and exclude young people from the peer group based on drinking experience and practice.** The extent to which value is placed on drinking practices varied between and within peer groups and provided a way for young people to both conform and distinguish themselves from others. However, for many young people, alcohol use, brand association, participating in events where alcohol was consumed and experiencing intoxication, acted as a form of symbolic capital, inclusion and social capital within the context of the peer group. Not depicting the "right" form of cultural drinking capital influenced young people's social status within the peer group and could lead to them feeling excluded. The need to feel included and a sense of belonging to group identities may influence the extent to which young people actively try to acquire particular types of drinking capital.

- **The study highlights the complex social processes that influence young people’s alcohol culture in a digital world.** The findings add and develop the concept of peer pressure and frames young people as active agents in the process of acquiring alcohol-related experience as a form of capital in the construction of their individual and group identities, rather than passive individuals absorbing external pressures to drink.

**CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS**

Social Network Sites (SNS) provide a new marketing opportunity for the alcohol industry to engage with potential customers (Nicholls, 2012; Winpenny et al., 2014). Although there are strong associations between exposure to traditional alcohol advertising and young people’s own alcohol use (Anderson et al., 2009; Smith and Foxcroft, 2009; Babor et al., 2010; Gordon et al., 2010), there is a lack of comparable research investigating novel marketing modalities. The association is likely to be complex as young people have reported finding online marketing informative and
useful (Institute of Policy Research, 2013), whilst online peer networks plays a
mediating role in SNS alcohol marketing (Atkinson et al., Nicholls, 2012). Furthermore,
unlike traditional marketing, the relationship between consumer and brand is often
reciprocal (Pempek et al, 2009; Ridout, 2012; McCreanor, 2012; Monero et al, 2012;
Griffin et al, 2013b). This means that peer drinking practices
represented on SNS may contribute to the overall alcohol marketing (albeit
informally) that young people are exposed to (Griffin and Caswell, 2010; Monroe et
al 2010; McCreanor et al., 2013; Morgan et al., 2010; Ridout et al., 2011, 2012; Moreno
et al. 2012; Tonk, 2012; Griffin et al., 2013b). It has been suggested that SNS marketing
and peer content may contribute to the normalisation of youth drinking behaviour
through the creation of ‘intoxigenic digital spaces’ in which young people learn
about alcohol (Griffiths et al., 2010, p528, Nicholls, 2012; Griffin et al., 2013b).

More recently, research in this area is slowly accumulating, yet there remains a lack of
theoretically informed qualitative research in the UK context which considers young
peoples’ experiences and perspectives. This research addressed such a gap by
exploring the place of SNS in young people’s drinking culture, and the influence of
both SNS marketing and peer generated alcohol content in the construction of
alcohol-related identities.

**Young people, alcohol marketing and SNS**

Alcohol marketing was widespread within SNS environments, forming a key element
of brand multi-platform marketing strategies. A variety of distinct SNS marketing
strategies were being used by alcohol brands (e.g. competitions, lifestyle and
gendered associations, celebrity endorsement and personalisation) which may
encourage user interaction with brand content resulting in viral marketing and a
blurring of the boundaries between official and user generated. Although some
brands appeared to monitor user generated content on SNS, the display of user
content which has been created without consideration CAP codes presents challenges to SNS marketing regulation. As Nicholls, (2012) states, SNS alcohol
marketing is also rapidly changing and is prominent in real time for shorter periods
than traditional media. As such, content appears and disappears quickly, reducing
the time frame in which content might be assessed and regulated (Nicholls, 2012).

Recently, the Finnish government announced (as an amendment to the Finnish
Alcohol Act 152/2014) that from 2015, existing regulations on alcohol advertising
would be extended to social media so that formal marketing cannot include
gaming, user posts, photos, video clips and user shared advertisements. The
amendment does not ban Internet marketing per se, and does not control user
generated content on personal and ‘fan’ profiles, but places severe restrictions on
the type of marketing activity that is allowed to feature on SNS. The legislation would
cover much of the content identified in this study, would prevent factual information
about products to be shared by consumers (e.g. through the removal of the ‘share’
button on brand Facebook pages), and any user posts on official brand SNS sites
would also be banned. This legislation is not based on any particular research into
social media marketing but originates from the principle that all types of alcohol
marketing are potentially harmful, and therefore practices considered the most
harmful and influential should be restricted. It is uncertain how this amendment would
operate in practice on the globalised Facebook platform, and it does not apply to foreign marketing (e.g. Finnish producers marketing abroad), but importantly, international brands would be prohibited from targeting Finnish customers, and so would require close integration with current SNS policy.

In the current research there was an absence of formal brand posts depicting intoxication and price promotions. However, brands were frequently associated with drinking and intoxigenic environments through sponsorship of nightlife events, thus bypassing CAP regulations. Moreover, celebrity endorsement of brands and the use of fictional characters (e.g. Santa) in marketing could be considered in breach of CAP code 18.14 which states marketing should not feature or portray real or fictitious characters that are likely to appeal particularly to people under 18 in a way that might encourage the young to drink. Although the code states that celebrities must be over the age of 25, the use of celebrities with a history of appeal among under 18s (e.g. ex 'boy band' members) may bypass codes.

Despite evidence of extensive engagement and interaction with potential users on SNS, it was unclear as to whether under age young people were regularly viewing brand marketing content. User generated content did not appear to be created by those under the legal drinking age of 18 and age verification systems were in place, which were intended to restrict under age youth from accessing brand content. The research also found that on Facebook at least, young participants under the age of 18 were not entering false dates of births in order to access restricted content. In contrast, Twitter used a self-declared age verification system, so that users must enter date of birth before accessing alcohol brand profiles; a system which is easily bypassed.

The CAP codes state that ‘no medium should be used to advertise alcoholic drinks if >25% of its audience is under 18 years of age’ (CAP, 2010). It was not possible to determine the proportion of young people in our sample of brands engaging with SNS content as this would require permission to inspect the profiles of all users who had liked or followed a page. However, whilst group interviews and the analysis of Facebook suggested young people (including under 18s) to be indifferent to alcohol marketing on SNS, they were knowledgeable about brand marketing via both traditional and new media. Moreover, previous research has reported that Facebook has a very high youth reach, with an average monthly reach of 89% of males and 91% of females aged 15–24 (Winpenny et al., 2014).

The research highlighted alcohol brands as a key component of young people’s drinking cultures due to the symbolic value that they held. They acted as cultural resources that young people actively used and re-appropriate in the representation of self (Holt, 2002; Miles 2000; Stead et al., 2011). Moreover, and in contrast to direct brand engagement, local events and venue marketing (where alcohol was served) were highly valued by young people as informative sources used when organising peer drinking occasions. They were important to young people in being informed on local events and drink promotions. Such local event marketing also contributed to young people’s online drinking identities by appropriating camera culture and photographing peer group drinking within their venues. When photographs were subsequently uploaded to SNS by local event promoters, this strategy encouraged
young people to further interact with the event’s/venue’s SNS marketing. The local relevance of such marketing may be an important factor in influencing young people’s drinking practices more directly than brand marketing, making participation in local nightlife more amenable and appealing. The role and importance of such marketing in localised contexts to young people’s drinking cultures is an important line of further enquiry. It has been suggested that use of creative interactive techniques on SNS may produce a stronger effect than traditional advertising on young people (Montgomery and Chester, 2009), but this remains to be tested.

In keeping with the findings of previous studies (Atkinson et al., 2011; Nichols, 2012) there was a relative lack of SNS based alcohol health promotion campaigns. The number of alcohol health campaigns was limited and did not specifically target young people. Furthermore, user engagement with health messages was much less than with industry content (which other than references to Drinkaware did not promote ‘responsible drinking’). As part of multi-component approaches alongside other approaches such as media literacy training (Babor at al., 2010), SNS health promotion may offer a useful opportunity to engage young people with public health messages, but the current research suggests that this is not successful. Campaigns must appropriate young people’s online cultures and increase their presence within pro-alcohol intoxigenic environments. As the research has shown, young people’s cultures of drinking and intoxication vary and are related to age, class and gender. As such, generic health campaigns may fail to engage young people. Moreover, findings show that the negative aspects of drinking did not feature in young people’s accounts of drinking, and when they did feature, they were turned into positive cultural capital and framed as humorous in the creation of drinking stories. Thus, campaigns that solely focus on the potential negative aspects of drinking are unlikely to engage young drinkers. Designing and evaluating campaigns with messages that reflect and engage with various youth drinking cultures that are disseminated on SNS is required. However, short of a ban on all SNS alcohol related marketing (such as with the Finnish model), doing so within the space of SNS that is saturated with advanced and well-funded alcohol marketing and peer generated content will prove difficult.

The role of SNS in young peoples’ drinking cultures and alcohol-related identities

Social media such as SNS like Facebook and Twitter, alongside mobile app devices such as WhatsApp, SnapChat and Instagram, were integral features of young people’s drinking cultures. These applications routinely featured in many aspects of their drinking practices, from organising nights out and engaging with local events marketing and brand promotions, to depicting the events of the night out through the sharing of drinking photos and statuses. As such, SNS have become an extension of the drinking context for young people and a space in which friendships and distinct alcohol-related identities and memories are created. SNS strengthen the practice through which young peoples’ social capital can be enhanced through
acquiring certain types of cultural and symbolic drinking capital. Although a normalised and fun aspect of young people’s social lives, SNS drinking culture is a carefully managed practice. Certain parts of drinking are emphasised and suppressed, showing the creation of selective identities in relation to alcohol online, particularly among young women.

With SNS being integral to young people’s peer drinking cultures, and an extension of young people’s peer interaction, they are an important additional factor in the formation of social norms and ‘capital’ around alcohol within the peer context. Although alcohol marketing was pervasive, it was peer content that appeared to create and contribute to pro-alcohol environments. As individuals enter the teenage years, peers have an increasingly important influence on attitudes to drinking and drinking practices, which may be heightened by depictions on SNS (Seaman et al., 2010, Velleman, 2009; Atkinson et al., 2011; Williams et al., 2012; Velleman; 2009; Griffin et al. 2013). If holding certain types of cultural drinking capital is perceived as important to the peer group as a way of being accepted, belonging (social capital) and creating group identities, acquiring drinking experience and symbolising these experiences online may encourage young people to partake in particular drinking practices.

The research provides further evidence that SNS are an extension of the space in which cultural capital can be both accumulated and expressed symbolically. Young people carefully negotiate online identities in relation to alcohol and carefully consider what drinking photographs, drinks and drinking behaviour are displayed. Photographs, brand affiliation and comments displaying the ‘wrong’ type of cultural (drinking) capital may have implications for an individual’s status and acceptance within the social hierarchy of their peer group. As such, alcohol representation (through brand marketing and sharing of user alcohol content) on SNS may not influence young people’s drinking directly, but may be a mediator through which alcohol is experienced within the peer group. It is the subsequent representation of these behaviours online that establishes norms and reinforces alcohol use behaviour. Our findings suggest that this process is gendered and related to notions of class, age and maturity. In particular, alcohol-related capital held by young males and females was associated with a wider set of culturally embedded understandings of what it is to be a man or a women and how masculinity and femininity should be ‘performed’ and accomplished (West and Zimmerman 1987, Butler 1999, Atkinson et al., 2013). It is these lifestyles and identities that marketers wish to depict and influence in ways that encourage the use of alcohol (McCreanor et al., 2012).

The research adds to our understanding of the changing nature of young people’s drinking in a digital and marketing environment and highlights the significant role of alcohol in identity construction, group belonging and acceptance. Moreover, it provides evidence of the increasing importance of SNS in young people’s friendships and the ways in which SNS reinforce the role of drinking in youth culture, group affiliation and identities. It also highlights the concept of ‘capital’ as a useful tool for understanding young people’s drinking in a digital world (Jarvinen and Gundelach, 2007; Lunney et al., 2011). In order to effectively respond to young people’s drinking, an understanding of the changing digital context in which young people use alcohol
as a way of creating (gendered, classed and age-related) identities through the process of capital accumulation is important.

A number of limitations of the research must be acknowledged. The research included a cross sectional examination of two popular SNS, Facebook and Twitter, over a one month period. Marketing and user alcohol representations are likely to be seasonal, and other SNS may also be used by the industry to represent alcohol in different ways. In addition, there may be more recent examples of SNS alcohol health promotion campaigns targeted towards young people at international and local levels, which may be applicable to UK youth drinking culture. Moreover, whilst the analysis of young people’s SNS profiles confirmed key findings from focus groups, it relied on researcher interpretation of content. Research examining and exploring the importance and role of such SNS content through the interpretation of the account holder would have added to our understanding. Furthermore, whilst the qualitative discussions with young people provided rich and in-depth information on their day to day experiences, it would have been useful to triangulate qualitative data with quantitative data on SNS use and alcohol representation and participants own alcohol behaviour. Such limitations can be addressed by future research.
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APPENDIX 1: STUDY DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The research proceeded over three linked stages of data collection and adopted a mixed-method approach. Methods used included a content analysis of alcohol marketing and alcohol health promotion campaigns on SNS, friendship group interviews with young people, and a content analysis of young people’s Facebook profiles for alcohol content. The research included young people aged 16-21 attending secondary schools, colleges and universities within a metropolitan county in the North West of England with significantly higher levels of alcohol consumption, hospital admissions, and ‘binge drinking’ than the rest of England (Public Health England, 2012). Participants included those approaching the legal alcohol purchasing age of 18 who may have been likely to have begun regular drinking (e.g. according to the English Smoking, drinking and drug use among young people in England survey 22% of 15 year olds reported alcohol use in the previous week), and those aged 18-21 year olds, who as well as being legally able to purchase alcohol, are priority targets of alcohol marketers. A brief overview of the methods employed in each stage of the project is provided below.

1) Content analysis of SNS alcohol marketing

This element of the project aimed to provide a snapshot content analysis of the extent, nature, and user interaction with SNS based alcohol advertising among brands popular among young people in the UK. The study is original in that it provides a systematic analysis of both official and user generated content on brand SNS profiles, and the interaction between the two. Previous research (Atkinson et al., 2011) found a relatively low representation of alcohol-related health campaigns on SNS, hence the project also aimed to compare the use of SNS by the alcohol industry with UK based alcohol health campaigns.

Using existing data on young people’s consumption of specific alcoholic brands (Alcohol Concern, 2013; Alcohol Concern, 2012; Trading Standards, 2013), the top five brands were selected for analysis; Smirnoff, Budweiser, Strongbow, Fosters and WKD. Based on research into SNS preferences among the UK population (Ofcom 2014, Ofcom 2013), the project focussed on marketing on the SNS Facebook and Twitter, whilst mapping connected advertising on other platforms (e.g. websites, television).

Informed by previous research conducted by Nicholls (2012), a number of activities were undertaken:

- Collection and analysis of traffic data for each brand’s Facebook and Twitter accounts. The number of ‘likes’ (Facebook) and ‘followers’ (Twitter) were collected at weekly intervals over a four week period (02/12/13-30/12/13) to provide a measure of user interaction with the brands’ online marketing. Such user interaction provides a crude measure of the number of potential consumers for each brand. Note that such interaction/interest differs to that of traditional media such as television in that the potential consumer has actively decided to engage with the SNS content. As suggested by Nicholls (2012:2), the ‘actual reach of social media is wider than the range of ‘active’ users captured in the number of ‘likes’ or followers (since users may look at a page or timeline without actively liking or following it)’. Thus, figures presented are likely to be an underestimate. It is also important to note that when a SNS user ‘likes’ or ‘follows’ a brand’s Facebook or Twitter profile,
marketers gain access to individual’s profile data, which may subsequently be used for market research.

- Using the website www.creativeclub.co.uk, which provides information on current UK alcohol marketing strategies, a mapping exercise of marketing for each brand on a variety of platforms (websites, television, newspapers, billboards and radio) was conducted during the month of December 2013. This was undertaken to collect data on the extent of multi-platform advertising among the brands.

- An analysis of text and visual SNS ‘posts’ (Tweets and Facebook status) and archived photos on each of the selected brand’s Facebook and Twitter profiles was conducted. Both official (brand posts) and unofficial content (content created by other SNS users) displayed on the brand’s SNS profiles/walls were extracted over a 4 week period (18th November 2013-15th December 2013). Using screen capture software, real time accounts of the brands’ online presence were recorded. Data was archived and then cleaned and analysed using an Excel spreadsheet. Using a thematic coding frame, a combination of pre-determined and emerging themes were coded.

- SNS such as Facebook and Twitter differ from traditional media as they allow for greater interaction between the user and the producer of content. Therefore, to assess the level of user interaction with the brand content, and vice-versa, a number of indicators were chosen. The number of comments (Facebook and Twitter), ‘likes’ (Facebook), ‘retweets’ (Twitter), ‘favourites’ (Twitter) and ‘shares’ (Facebook) of each of the brand’s SNS posts were collected.

- The UK Code of Non-Broadcast Advertising (BCAP Code 18; which would include Internet marketing); and Code of Broadcast Advertising (CAP 19) state that advertisements and marketing communications of alcoholic drinks should not be targeted towards people under 18 years of age and should not imply, condone or encourage immoderate, irresponsible or anti-social drinking (ASA, 2014). In addition, the Portman Group’s Code of Practice (2009) makes recommendations on electronic marketing, to prevent targeting of young underage drinkers and to ensure that user-generated content on media such as SNS is monitored (Portman Group, 2009). To examine whether marketing strategies were in breach of these codes and guidelines each Facebook and Twitter post was assessed for evidence that the content might appeal to young people in a direct manner (e.g. using characters (real or fictitious) that are likely to appeal particularly to under 18s), and if any individuals portrayed in marketing appeared to be below the age of 18. The efficacy of the age verification system used by the SNS to prevent exposure to alcohol marketing was examined using a fictitious account created for an underage user (aged 15). Brand Facebook and Twitter profiles were also screened for evidence of the monitoring of user generated content by the brand (e.g. deleting user posts, in accordance with the Portman Group code). Each post was then screened and assessed on whether it might be interpreted as encouraging the use of alcohol in both a direct and indirect manner.

- To compare the marketing strategies used in alcohol and health promotion, contemporaneous UK alcohol health campaigns were identified and analysed in a
similar manner to marketing strategies. A mapping exercise of SNS/website based alcohol campaigns was conducted, although no campaigns specifically targeting young people were identified. In order to explore the extent and nature in which campaigns use social media to communicate with their audience, a content analysis was carried out on Facebook and Twitter. Content was collected for each of the five identified campaigns during a four week period between 18th November and 14th December 2013. The use of various media platforms and the level of user interaction with these campaigns were monitored. Due to the different layout styles between the two SNS, number of ‘followers’ on twitter was equated with the number of ‘likes’ on Facebook.

2) Group interviews with young people

Accessing participants

Recruitment letters (n=54) stating the research aims and procedure were sent to head teachers and principals of all secondary schools (both state and private, free schools and academies) colleges and pupil referral units (PRU) in the study location. In addition recruitment emails, posters and Facebook adverts were distributed in a two University departments and in student accommodation halls. Five educational establishments (schools n=2, colleges n=2, University’s n=1) agreed to participate in the research. Educational establishments and individual participants were drawn from low-high- and mid-point IMD quintiles, although level of deprivation was not one of our inclusion criteria. The sample included one Catholic school, and all were mixed sex establishments.

A total of 14 semi-structured group interviews were conducted with 70 participants between March and June 2014. Three of the 14 interviews were conducted with young people from the wider community and youth groups. Focus groups lasted between 45 and 90 minutes and took place during school/college/university hours or at a time convenient for the participants. The number of participants in each group ranged from 3 to 10 and included both mixed- and single-sex groups (see Table 1).
<table>
<thead>
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<th>Interview number</th>
<th>Recruitment source details</th>
<th>IMD quintile of educational establishment</th>
<th>Age range of participants</th>
<th>Number of participants</th>
<th>Sex of participants</th>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
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<td>4th</td>
<td>17-18</td>
<td>5</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<td>4th</td>
<td>17-18</td>
<td>5</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>College. Non-religious. Academy sponsor led</td>
<td>5th</td>
<td>17-18</td>
<td>6</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>High school. Non-religious. Academy sponsor led</td>
<td>5th</td>
<td>16-17</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>High school. Non-religious. Academy sponsor led</td>
<td>5th</td>
<td>17-18</td>
<td>6</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Further Education College. No religion.</td>
<td>4th</td>
<td>18-20</td>
<td>3</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
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<td>4th</td>
<td>17-19</td>
<td>10</td>
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<td>9</td>
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<td>11</td>
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<td>17-19</td>
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Friendship group discussions were used to gain insight into peer group drinking cultures, thus reflecting the real life dynamics, existing experiences and shared knowledge and meanings attached to alcohol (Lunt and Livingstone, 1996; Eder and Ferguson, 2003; Heath, et al., 2009). Both drinking and social networking are practices that are adapted and re-appropriated within micro social contexts such as the peer group (Griffiths and Caswell, 2010). Thus, friendship group interviews were a suitable method in studying such group interactions. A representative selection of SNS content (e.g. alcohol advertising) was used in the interviews to initiate conversation and gain an understanding of young people’s interpretations. Questions covered a number of areas such as young people’s friendship networks, young people’s drinking experiences, their use of SNS, SNS and alcohol/drinking, and online alcohol advertising (see Interview Schedule, Appendix 2). A brief questionnaire was also completed by each participant in order to provide information on demographics and alcohol use. The questionnaire data was analysed using SPSS v21.

Sample details

A total of 70 young people participated in the group interviews. The age of participants ranged from 16 to 21 years and the average age was 17.8 years. Of the sample, 57% (n=40) were female and 43% (n=30) male. The majority of the sample were White British (77%, n=54). In terms of religion, 49% reported no religion/did not report/don’t know, 37% (n=26) reported Christianity as their religion, and 14% (n=10) Muslim. 20% reported attending a religious service outside of school. In terms of alcohol use, most reported lifetime use of alcohol (86%, n=60), with only 10% having not tried alcohol in their lifetime. Those who had never drank alcohol had not done so due to religious reasons. Age of initiation into alcohol use ranged from 6-19, with the mean age of initiation being 13.3 years. In terms of the frequency of drinking, 30% (n=21) drank a few times a year, 17% (n=12) drank once a month, 4% (n=3) drank once every two weeks, 17% (n=12) once a week, 10% (n=7) twice a week and 1% (n=1) every day or almost. 20% (n=14) did not report their drinking frequency. None reported drinking alone. Relationships were usually established through education, with young people making friends through school, college and university. Some groups were long-term friendships, and others were newly established relationships through University study.

Analysis procedure for qualitative data

Group interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim, with all identifiable data anonymised. Transcripts were analysed using the NVivo (10) qualitative data analysis programme (Richards, 1999). Interviews were coded by the researchers who had conducted the interviews.

The study was informed by a social constructionist approach, viewing knowledge and experience of alcohol as being constructed through social interaction between individuals. This approach pays attention to the use of language and discussion by different social groups, and views this as important in the construction of various shared experiences, understandings and meaning. We were therefore interested in multiple perspectives, recognising that reality is local and specifically constructed, and as such different groups may construct different knowledge and express multiple meanings on the same issue which are dependent on social context and factors (e.g. gender) (Lincoln & Guba, 2000; Charmaz, 2006; Andrews, 2012). Thus, the research aimed to understand how research participants construct their individual and shared meanings around drinking. This approach is useful when studying group interaction and identity, as it allows for the exploration of the ways in which people use language to convey and construct individual and group identities and experiences.
The transcripts were read several times for familiarity, and grouping of the data was conducted in order to find similarities and differences between accounts in a pre-determined manner. Although the focus group interviews were conducted based on a pre-determined, semi-structured interview schedule, new patterns and themes emerging from the group discussions were identified and coded using an inductive thematic analysis approach (Krippendorff, 1980; Boyatzis, 1998; Braun and Clarke, 2006). The original research questions were regularly consulted to identify relevant themes and subthemes and to guide the coding. The themes were then related and studied in relation to the theoretical concept of ‘capital’ being applied as a useful tool in studying youth drinking culture. The application of theory helped to take descriptive data further so that alcohol culture could be examined and understood rather than described (Lunnay et al., 2011). When presenting quotations as examples, an effort has been made to ensure that the quotations used were representative of young people’s views and experiences. Any inconsistencies and contradictions within the data have also been acknowledged.

4) Analysis of young peoples’ Facebook profiles

Young people participating in the group interviews were invited to take part in the Facebook study. Once study information was provided and written content obtained, participants granted the researchers access to their Facebook profile by accepting a Facebook ‘friend request’ from a member of the research team. The main reason for using one of the research team’s personal Facebook account, rather than setting up an account for the research project was to reduce the possibility that the participant’s friends might notice and ask why they were taking part in a research project. Using a personal account therefore helped maintain confidentiality. Following the interview, extracts of the participant’s Facebook profile posted over an eight week period (from the date on which the friends request was accepted) was taken using screen shot capture software and any information explicitly revealing their identity deleted. Data was extracted within a 24 hour period and the participants were subsequently defriended.

Both textual (e.g. status) and visual images (e.g. photos) were thematically analysed for alcohol content both quantitatively and qualitatively using a predetermined coding frame, whilst allowing themes to arise from the data. Peer engagement and appraisal of alcohol-related content was also assessed by measuring the number of ‘likes’ for each post.

Ethical considerations

Ethical approval from the University ethics committee was granted for all stages of the research. Parents of young people under the age of 16 years were sent a letter detailing the aims and requirements of the study and a parental ‘opt out’ form allowing them to withdraw their child from the research was provided. No opt-out forms were received. Young people were fully informed of the nature of both the interviews and the optional nature of participating in the Facebook study, and provided their own written consent on the day of the research. Participants were informed that they were also free to withdraw from the research at any time without providing a reason, that participation was voluntary and anonymity would be protected. Although incentives in research is a contested area (Heath, et al., 2009), participants received high-street vouchers for taking part in order to increase participation and to show our appreciation for their readiness to express their views and experiences. References to individuals, place names and organisations have been anonymised in this report.
APPENDIX 2: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

ARUK ‘Young people, alcohol and social media project’

Introduction

- Researcher introduces themselves, the project and the types of questions that will be asked.
- Introduce the consent form, confidentiality, participant information sheet and the screening questionnaire.
- Each participant completes the demographics/alcohol screening survey.
- Each participant introduces themselves.

1. Questions on the friendship group

1.1. How long have you known each other?
1.2. How do you know each other?
1.3. Do you see each other/socialise with each other outside of school/college?
1.4. Do you drink alcohol together?
1.5. How often do you drink alcohol together?
1.6. How do you organise nights out/drinking occasions?
1.7. What are the main reasons for drinking? (Individual reasons, and group reasons)
1.8. What are the main aims of a night out, what do you hope to achieve?
1.9. Do you class drinking as having an important role within your peer group? Why?
1.10. What do you think of people that don’t drink?
1.11. Are there people within your peer group that don’t drink? If yes, why do you think they choose not to drink? Do they still participate in nights out despite not drinking alcohol?
1.12. Have you heard of the word ‘pre-load’ (pre-drinking), when you drink at home/someone else home before you go out? Do you do this? Why? Do you drink different drinks before you go out?
1.13. What would a typical drinking occasion involve?
1.14. How much would you drink on a typical night out?
1.15. Where do you usually drink?
1.16. Do you drink different types of alcoholic drinks depending on where you are? Why?
1.17. Do you drink different types of alcoholic drinks depending on who you are with? Why?
1.18. What are your favourite alcoholic drinks? Why?
1.19. Are there any alcoholic drinks you would not drink? Why?
1.20. What alcohol brands do you drink?
1.21. Why do you drink these brands?
1.22. What brands would you not drink? Why?
2. Questions on Social networking sites

2.1. What are the key ways in which you stay contact as a group?
2.2. Do you use SNS? If so, which?
2.3. Which would you say is the most popular SNS among your friends? Why?
2.4. Do different SNS have different uses?
2.5. Who do you interact with using SNS?
2.6. Do you have privacy settings to restrict certain people viewing your profiles, or parts of your profile? Who? Why?
2.7. How would you define a SNS (Facebook) friend? How do they differ from ‘real life ‘friends’?
2.8. How many friends do you have on SNS?
2.9. How many SNS friends would you say you know well?
2.10. What type of things do you post on SNS?
2.11. Are SNS an important part of your peer/friendship group? Why?
2.12. In what ways do people want to be portrayed on SNS?
2.13. Do the ways in which people present themselves online reflect how they are in real life? Or does your online image differ in any way?
2.14. What would you not post on SNS? Why?

3. SNS and alcohol

3.1. What types of things about alcohol and your drinking do you post about on SNS? (e.g. statuses, organising events, photos)
3.2. What types of alcohol content do you like seeing others post?
3.3. What alcohol content would you not post? Why?
3.4. Are there any negative effects of being seen by others in these types of photos? If so, what?
3.5. Do you post photos of yourselves and others drinking? Who?
3.6. Can you describe what these may look like?
3.7. What drinking photos would you not post? Why?
3.8. What things do you consider when deciding whether or not to post a drinking photo?
3.9. Do you restrict who can see these photos? Who? Why?
3.10. What is the ‘ideal’ drinking photo?
3.11. What are the main reasons for posting drinking photos?
3.12. Do you talk about or look back at the photos you’ve posted with your friends?
3.13. In what ways do you want to be perceived by others in such photos?
3.15. What do SNS add to the drinking experience?
3.16. Have you ever had any negative experiences involving alcohol content of Facebook?
3.17. What do you think of the suggestion that SNS may encourage young people to drink alcohol?
3.18. Do you know Neknomination is? If so, how would you define it?
3.19. What are your views on Neknomination?
3.20. Did you know anyone who has participated in Neknomination? If so, why do you think they participated?
3.21. Did you participate in Neknomination? If so, why?
3.22. Is there anything you’d like to add about SNS and alcohol?

4. **Alcohol advertising on SNS**

4.1. What type of people do you associate with the following drinks?

Visual aids taken from brand SNS will be used here (Screenshots 1-5).

4.2. Can you recall adverts for these brands? Where did you see these adverts?

4.3. What would you say are key features of alcohol marketing? What kind of features do they include?

4.4. Where do you usually see alcohol advertising?

4.5. Can you recall any online or SNS adverts?

4.6. What are the key features of SNS alcohol advertising?

Refer to visual aids taken from brand SNS analysis if required (Screenshots 6-10).

4.7. How often do you see alcohol advertising on SNS?

4.8. Would you say it was a common feature of your online SNS activity?

4.9. Do you think alcohol advertising online/SNS is different to traditional adverts? (e.g. TV)

4.10. Do you ever interact with/click on alcohol advertising on SNS? (e.g. like pages)

4.11. Have you ever liked an alcohol advert page because you see your friend has?

4.12. Do you ever seek out alcohol adverts on SNS? Why?

4.13. Do you ever see suggestions on Facebook telling you to like a certain brand?

4.14. What do you like and dislike about these alcohol advertising on SNS?

4.15. Do you find out about events where alcohol is being sold via SNS? Do you attend these events?

4.16. Do you feel that SNS site alcohol advertising may appeal to young people? Which? How?

4.17. What do you think about the suggestion that alcohol advertising on SNS may encourage young people to drink?

4.18. Is there anything else you would like to add about alcohol advertising on SNS?

Thank the participants and distribute incentive

**APPENDIX 3: SNS MARKETING CODING FRAME**

Appendix 1: Coding frame for SNS alcohol marketing analysis
1) Total number of official SNS (Twitter/Facebook) posts (textual and visual)
2) Total number of user SNS (Twitter/Facebook) posts
3) Total number of user likes/retweets of official posts
4) Total number of user likes/retweets of unofficial posts
5) Evidence of ‘Trending’
6) Number of user shares of official posts

Type of post

7) Photos
8) Text
9) Video
10) Extract post

Tone

11) Positively toned post
12) Negatively toned post
13) Neutrally toned post
14) Use of humour

Promotions

15) Cost of product mentioned
16) Reductions in price/promotions/offers
17) Picture of one of the brands alcohol products
18) Brands logo
19) New product

Use of people

20) Includes a person
21) Men only
22) Women only
23) Both men and women
24) Person shown drinking
25) Member of public
26) Cartoons/fictional characters used
27) Celebrity
28) Name of celebrity
29) Profession of celebrity
30) Gendered in nature

‘Responsible’ drinking

31) Responsible drinking
32) Alcohol units
33) Recommended number of drinks
34) Health/negative effects
35) External link responsible drinking/health campaigns
36) Drunkenness
37) Reducing drinking

**Multi-platform marketing**

38) Reference to other forms of marketing
39) Examples

**Brand and user interaction**

40) Interaction between brand and users
41) Brand responds to users comments
42) Brand responds to users post
43) Brands post asks users to respond

**Research**

44) Research is quoted
45) Examples
46) Brand survey

**Real life branded/sponsored events**

47) Real life event sponsored by the brand
48) Specific example
49) Music
50) Sport
51) Comedy
52) Club night
53) Other event (state)
54) Ticket promotion
55) Pre event
56) Post event
57) Alcohol/drinking linked to the success of the event

**Competitions**

58) Prize
59) Nature of competition
60) Competition prize related to the brand
61) Competition prize not related to the brand
62) Entry related to the brand of alcohol (e.g. designing a drink)
63) Entry not related to the brand of alcohol (e.g. 'liking' a post)
Games and quizzes

64) Game or quiz
65) Content of quiz or game relates to alcohol product
66) Content of quiz or game does not relate to alcohol product

Sport

67) Reference to sport, drink suggested
68) Reference to sport, drink not suggested

Recipes and mixes

69) Recipes given
70) Call for recipe suggestions

Music

71) Non-branded music comment or link

Looking back at a drinking occasion

72) Positive night, no reference to drunkenness
73) Positive night, reference to drunkenness
74) Negative night, no reference to drunkenness
75) Negative night, reference to drunkenness

Encouraging alcohol use

76) Encourages consumption directly
77) Encourages consumption indirectly

Time of drinking associations

78) Daily drinking
79) Weekly drinking
80) Week day drinking
81) Weekend
82) Special occasion
83) Festive period
84) Bank holiday
85) Pay day

ASA/CAP guidelines

86) Researcher comments on content in context of guidelines (open response)
87) Content may break guidelines (Yes/No)
Content may appeal to under age young people.

Notes on type of words and language used in this extract

Open/new codes

Description

Examples

APPENDIX 4: EXAMPLES OF SNS MARKETING STRATEGIES

WKD
Localised marketing

Drink promotions (WKD were the only brand to display Supermarket offers)

Time of day associations

Competition, celebrity and localised marketing
Indirect Football World Cup Association

Seasonal/Christmas association/ Fictional character

Real Life Event, Music association. Brand encourages user interaction
Drink recipes

Real Life Event, Music association
Celebrity endorsement/potential youth appeal

Budweiser

FA CUP BUDWEISER PINT GLASS COMPETITION

Fancy winning your very own Budweiser FA Cup pint glass? We’re giving you a chance to win one of 1000 in our Facebook competition! Just complete your details and answer the question below for a chance to win - GOOD LUCK!

What does the acronym ‘FA’ stand for in the FA Cup? *

Competition

Alcohol Stockist application.
May encourage consumption.
Real Life Events, Football association

Fosters

Seasonal/time of year association. May encourage consumption.
Real Life Events, Rugby association.

Examples of user generated content.

Real Life Event, comedy association. Celebrity endorsement.
Strongbow

Personalisation. New product

Real Life Event, Tough Mudder
APPENDIX 5: DESCRIPTION OF CONCURRENT ALCOHOL HEALTH CAMPAIGNS

**Drinkwise North West.**

Drinkwise are a regional campaign (North West, England) working with the NHS and Local Authorities to help minimise the harm caused by alcohol. The campaign promoted two alcohol-related campaign videos (‘I’ve paid the price for alcohol’ and ‘See what Sam sees’) delivered by individuals who are affected by alcohol. Both videos aim to raise awareness of harms associated with drinking and how and whom they are most likely to affect. The website offers a range of different resources and information on alcohol-related issues and is also used for encouraging individuals to register, pledging their support to help reduce the harms associated with alcohol. The campaign uses Twitter, Facebook and Google+ as part of its communication efforts.

**Alcohol Awareness Week**

Alcohol Awareness Week (18th – 24th November 2013) was a national campaign run by Alcohol Concern. It aimed to improve the lives of individuals by reducing alcohol-related harms. The campaign encouraged local areas to promote information on how alcohol impacts on individuals, families and communities, with the aim of changing society’s relationship with alcohol. Local authorities, schools and work places were encouraged to take part and raise awareness on alcohol issues within their local area over a one week period. The campaign also promoted the use of tools such as Identification and Brief Training (IBA), which aims to develop skills to identify and advise individuals who may be drinking above safe drinking levels. The website offered a range of alcohol-related advice and external links to promote the health harms related to alcohol. It used Twitter and Facebook as part of its communication efforts.

**Dry January**

Dry January was a national campaign run by Alcohol Concern which aimed to challenge individuals to abstain from drinking for one month, and aimed to raise awareness by encouraging discussions around alcohol in the wider community. Participants could sign up individually or as a team. Sponsorship was encouraged to help motivation and raise money for Alcohol Concern to help tackle alcohol-related harms. The campaign also promoted the use of tools such as Identification and Brief Training (IBA), which aims to develop skills to identify and advise individuals who may be drinking above safe drinking levels. The campaign used Twitter, Facebook, Pinterest, Instagram, YouTube and Ebay as part of its communication efforts.

**Drinkaware**

Drinkaware is a national campaign supported by voluntary donations and industry based organisations. The main stated aims of this campaign were to promote responsible drinking, reduce alcohol misuse in the UK and produce evidence based information about alcohol. There were three elements of this campaign. Firstly, ‘Make a change’ which focuses on promotional health information for alcohol users who want to make a change. Secondly, ‘Understand your drinking’ which aims to provide information on how to better understand individuals relationship with alcohol, the associated harms and interventions to on how to make change. Thirdly, ‘Check the facts’ focuses on information and prevention. The campaign is parent orientated and aims to help parents initiate conversations with children.
about alcohol through preparing them with knowledge, advice and tips. Drinkaware uses promotional techniques such as poster displays, radio ads and online video clips. The campaign uses Twitter, Facebook and Google+ as part of its communication efforts.

**Go Sober**

Go sober was a national campaign launched to raise funds for Macmillan Cancer with the goal of securing money to develop support functions for those undergoing cancer treatment and recovery. The campaign aimed to raise awareness of the benefits of abstaining from drinking alcohol during a select period of time by encouraging individuals to challenge their normal drinking pattern. It offers several support functions such as tips and advice and uses promotional techniques such as TV and radio adverts, information downloads and shop memorabilia. The campaign used Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and Pinterest as part of its communication efforts.