Like, Comment, Share

Alcohol brand activity on Facebook

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FARE is guided by the World Health Organization's *Global Strategy to Reduce the Harmful Use of Alcohol*[i] for addressing alcohol-related harms through population-based strategies, problem-directed policies, and direct interventions.

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Disclaimer

This report contains verbatim quotes from Facebook users. The author has not attempted to mask any offensive language or correct any grammar or spelling errors.

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[i] World Health Organization (2010). *Global strategy to reduce the harmful use of alcohol.* Geneva: World Health Organization.

Contents

Summary

By the end of 2012 the top 20 alcohol brands (brands) in Australia had more than 2.5 million followers on their Facebook pages. During 2012 they posted more than 4500 items of content. Their followers interacted with that content by liking, sharing or commenting on it more than 2.3 million times. These figures suggest that Facebook is now a key player in the promotion of alcohol.

On average over the year, the top 20 alcohol brands posted four items of content per week. The least active brand posted twice a week, the most active posted almost twice a day and the average brand posted every Friday of the year. Brands continuously seek engagement from fans in the form of likes, comments, and shares. They ask questions, host competitions, and post memes and videos to spark engagement and conversation. As brands do this, they rely on fans to use their own identities and peer networks to circulate brand messages.

Brands are investing significant resources in producing content for their pages and managing interactions with consumers. This content is highly visual and increasingly mobile. Brands appropriate content from the internet, like memes and videos, that they repost on their own pages to generate interaction with fans. They also produce advertisements, images of promotional activities and Facebook-specific content to engage with fans. The quality of this content indicates that while brands are not paying for advertising space, they are investing resources in producing content for the pages. This content routinely draws on drinking culture, popular culture and everyday life.

Brands strategically arrange the timing and context of their posts to engage with users in real time. The most common day for brands to post is a Friday, and the most popular time of day to post is between 3pm and 5pm. These posts often reference drinking rituals that accompany the end of the day or the week. Brands routinely post content relating to sporting and music events, cultural pastimes and national holidays. They also post content that fans will interact with via their smartphones. These posts encourage them to 'check in' at events, take, upload and tag photos and comment on time-specific posts. These interactions make brands a part of everyday conversations on Facebook and allows them to become part of the continuous 'flow' of content in the news feeds of their followers. With each interaction, brand content appears in the news feeds of their followers' friends.

The alcohol industry has developed an extensive, real-time, culturally embedded mode of branding on Facebook. The sophisticated use of social media by brands identified in this research raises seven issues that are currently not addressed by existing regulation:

- Extensiveness – Brand activities on Facebook are extensive and continuous in terms of audience size, volume and frequency, interaction and timing.
- Collaboration with consumers - Brands focus on interacting with consumers, with consumer contributions being a regular and intrinsic part of brand messages on Facebook.
- Activations - Brands invest significant resources in 'real-world' promotional activities. They build themed social spaces in nightlife precincts, music festivals and sporting events and use these to generate content and engagement on their Facebook pages.
- Everyday life – Brands engage with consumers' routine conversations about everyday life. The more embedded in everyday life alcohol consumption is, the more valuable alcohol brands are because they become increasingly impervious to regulation.

- Global pages - Brands are using Facebook to develop global approaches to branding, allowing them to use global strategies and to target millions of consumers.
- Surveillance and targeting - Brands and Facebook together accumulate an extensive amount of data about consumers, allowing them to target messaging in ways they were unable to previously.
- Transparency - Regulating alcohol brands depends to a large extent on brand activity being subject to public scrutiny. However, as branding activities go 'below the line' on Facebook, it is not possible for regulators, researchers, policy makers and the public to observe and scrutinise the brands' activities.

In light of the above, this research poses six questions for policy makers and regulators about this mode of alcohol marketing:

How extensive and continuous should alcohol branding be?

Current regulation of alcohol marketing does not address the volume or extensiveness of alcohol promotions. On Facebook, alcohol brands distribute a continuous stream of marketing content through the news feeds of their fans. This content is often interrelated with everyday practices and events. Facebook is being used to embed alcohol consumption in everyday life. Branding on Facebook is integrated with consumers' visual, mobile and continuous mediation of everyday life. Regulatory frameworks should clearly address not only the content of promotional messages but also the volume, reach and impressions of those messages, together with the level of engagement they generate as consumers interact with them.

What kind of collaboration with consumers is appropriate?

Alcohol brands are using Facebook to get consumers to collaborate in the creation and circulation of brand messages. Current regulation of alcohol marketing does not address what kind of collaboration with consumers is appropriate. Policy makers need to explicitly address in regulatory approaches the role that marketers get consumers to play in their alcohol marketing activities.

What kind of engagement with everyday life is appropriate?

Alcohol brands are using Facebook to leverage real-world promotions. Current regulatory approaches make a distinction between traditional forms of advertising and real-world promotional activities. However, on Facebook real-world promotions are used to produce media content. Policy makers need to develop regulatory approaches that encompass all forms of alcohol marketing activity in one framework.

How should global branding activities be addressed?

Alcohol brands are using Facebook to develop global approaches to branding. Some brands have already moved to global brand pages that have several million fans and so offer a direct channel to an enormous target market. They also enable the centralisation of content production and data collection about that audience. Policy makers need to address the global strategies of the alcohol industry.

What kind of surveillance and targeting is appropriate?

The mode of branding evolving on Facebook involves extensive surveillance of fans and targeting of content in real time. Regulation of alcohol brands needs to address not just the content and messages distributed by brands, but also what information is collected about consumers and how it is used. Policy makers should challenge the industry to be transparent about what information is collected about consumers and how it is used.

How transparent should alcohol brands be about their activities?

The activities of alcohol brands on Facebook are not all public. This makes it difficult for governments, policy makers and researchers cannot scrutinise their activities. At the same time the industry is amassing large amounts of data about target markets and the extent to which content is seen and interacted with. Considering the industry has extensive data about the extent of interaction online, policy makers should challenge the industry to be more transparent about its marketing activities.

Introduction

Consuming alcohol is entwined with our identities and social lives. The more embedded alcohol brands are in everyday life, the more valuable they are as devices for increasing and normalising alcohol consumption. As the world's most valuable and popular social media platform, Facebook is fundamental to the use of interactive and participatory forms of alcohol marketing. Alcohol brands have been innovative in their use of Facebook as part of broader participatory and culturally embedded marketing activities. A market-leading example is Diageo and Facebook's 'multi-million dollar strategic partnership', announced in September 2011, which aimed to 'drive unprecedented levels of interaction and joint business planning and experimentation between the two companies.' Diageo reported that the partnership had led to a *"20% increase in sales as a result of Facebook activity. This 5:1 return has come off the back of Diageo's brands growing their collective fan base from 3.5 million to 12 million in the past 12 months."*

In addition, Diageo reported that *"the two companies [Diageo and Facebook] will work together to push the existing boundaries of social media through co-created experiments leveraging the full capability of the platform. Facebook will also provide metrics to help Diageo define ROI [return on investment] and performance across its priority brands."*[1]

The use by alcohol companies of Facebook's participatory and surveillance capacities to create brand value has become a matter of public concern and debate in Australia (and elsewhere, see for instance: Hastings and Sheron 2013, Nicholls 2012).

Careful study of these marketing activities is critically important for current policy debates about the regulation of alcohol brands in Australia and elsewhere (including the United Kingdom and United States, see Chester et al. 2010; Hastings and Sheron 2013). In 2012, the Australian National Preventative Health Agency (ANPHA) released an Issues Paper and called for submissions on alcohol advertising regulation (ANPHA 2012). The Issues Paper argued that:

- Most research, policy and regulation focuses on 'traditional' or 'above the line' media, but the majority of alcohol marketing uses interactive, social and below-the-line forms of media and promotion (ANPHA 2012, section 4.44, 5.59).
- Below-the-line marketing 'may seek to "normalise" alcohol and drinking as part of everyday life' (section 4.45) and might be able to create brand value via 'discussions and conversation which do not explicitly reference drinking' (section 7.71).
- Industry use of social and mobile media enables brands to be integrated into cultural spaces and practices.

ANPHA's Issues Paper pointed to the need for an examination of the way that alcohol brands use Facebook, with a particular focus on how brand value is made on the social network. Most research in public health literature has focused on alcohol advertising in traditional media (television and print), paying little attention to other forms of alcohol marketing such as sponsorships, experiential marketing and other below-the-line marketing (Jones and Jernigan 2010). Only a few studies have

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[1] See: http://www.diageo.com/en-row/newsmedia/pages/resource.aspx?resourceid=1072

addressed the prevalence, nature and extent of alcohol marketing on social media. The majority of these studies have focused on how young people engage with alcohol and portray their 'drinking' identity on social media (Brown and Gregg 2012, Griffiths and Caswell 2010; Moreno et al. 2010; Ridout et al. 2011). For many drinkers, social media enhances the enjoyment of excessive consumption because it enables people to amplify the telling of good stories and the sharing of memories (Brown and Gregg 2012: 361). Alcohol brands strategically embed themselves in this broader mediation of drinking culture online. Brands use viral messaging, real-world tie-ins, interactive games, competitions and time-specific suggestions as strategic stimuli for consumer engagement online (Mart et al. 2009; Nicholls 2012).

While these studies have begun to map alcohol brand activity on social media (Gordon et al. 2010; Griffiths and Casswell 2010; Hastings et al. 2010; Jones and Jernigan 2010; Leyshon 2011; Mart et al. 2009; Nicholls 2012), no significant attention has been paid to:

- Examining the extensiveness of this activity in Australia.
- Conceptualising how this mode of branding relies on the participation of users, embeds branding in everyday life and culture, and targets users in real time.

For the first time, this report maps out the extent of alcohol brand activity on Facebook in Australia. It examines how the alcohol industry is using the social networking platform to create valuable brands by providing an overview on the types of activities brands undertake, the types of interactions this is generating with the public, and outlines the implications this has for how alcohol marketing is conceptualised and regulated.

To examine how brand activity is interrelated with the broader mediation of drinking culture online, we need to turn to a conceptualisation of branding as a social process that relies on the productive sociality of everyday users.

Branding on Facebook

Facebook's value to potential marketers is often attributed to its targeted advertising model which is unlike print, outdoor and broadcast advertising channels. Facebook's value is built largely on its capacity to collect extensive information about users, and then use that information to target advertisements. This enables brands to be highly targeted and reflexive in their advertising strategies. They can select specific individuals based on demographic details, interests, peer networks and location. They can monitor interactions and adjust their communication in real time. For instance, if they find users in a particular location are not engaging with the message, they can shift their targeting or adjust the message. Facebook's advertising model is highly responsive.

However, this advertising model is only one facet of brand activity on Facebook. With the launch of business pages in late 2007, Facebook gave brands a way of engaging with consumers in an ongoing and conversational capacity. Brands could now start a page, accumulate fans, and then produce content and interact with those fans. Brand content would not be confined to the advertising panel, but could now flow through the news feed along with all the other content users were accustomed to seeing from their friends. This change made brand messages a routine and normal part of news feeds. As individuals and their friends 'like' brands and comment on or share their content, the brands' messages 'spill' out into the news feeds of their friends. Facebook is constantly developing

ways to improve the flow of brand content through the platform. Promoted posts enable brands to push their content into the news feeds of users they want to target. Social advertisements package brands and users together. Users will see posts in their timeline telling them that a particular friend liked a brand, invited them to enter a competition, or visited a particular store or event.

These innovations deepen the connections between the everyday lives and identities of users and branding. Brands are no longer just messages that are sent to audiences, they become ongoing open-ended social processes. On Facebook we see brands relying on users to help create and circulate messages. This mode of branding is characterised by three sets of practices.

Firstly, brands move from controlling messages to providing cultural resources that users engage with (Arvidsson 2005, Holt 2002, Zwick et al. 2008). They embed the brand in their everyday lives and identities by circulating content related to popular culture, cultural pastimes and current events. They encourage consumers and cultural intermediaries (like sports stars, musicians and celebrities) to incorporate the brand in their lives. Brands take on multiple meanings as consumers interact with them. The work of branding involves managing this ongoing production of 'meanings' by providing cultural references.

Secondly, brands invest in making and managing social spaces where they interact with consumers in real life (Moor 2003). Brands make themselves part of consumer experiences, pastimes and memories. Consumers use their smartphones to turn these real-life engagements into media texts that they circulate in their peer networks. The brand then becomes a part of the story they tell about their everyday lives.

Thirdly, brands generate and use data in real time to watch and respond to consumers (Turow 2011). As consumers interact with brands over social media platforms, they generate data that connects the brand to their identities, location, pastimes and social networks. Brands use this information to target messages, adapt to specific cultural identities and practices as they emerge, and manage the ongoing development of the brand.

Understanding interaction on Facebook

Facebook is a highly dynamic media platform where brands are created via interaction with users. Not all of this interaction is publicly visible. Brand advertisements, promoted posts and social advertisements can only be seen by the specifically targeted users. When researchers study television advertising and sponsorship of sport, all the content produced by the brand is publicly visible to every viewer. On Facebook, however, people can only see advertisements targeted specifically to them. They can't see how the brand might be targeting users in other demographics or locations. Brands can also choose to shape the content they serve via their pages based on the characteristics of their audience. As users interact with that content – liking, sharing and commenting on it – it moves out into the news feeds of their friends, where it is viewed in contexts that are only visible to those peer networks. In this study we only examine content and interactions that are publicly visible on Facebook through the official pages of alcohol brands.

There are five basic ways in which a Facebook user can interact with a piece of brand content:

- *Like:* When a user clicks the 'like' button under an item of content, that item of content may be distributed into the news feeds of their friends. The item will be accompanied by a message telling their friends they 'liked' it.
- *Comment:* Users can write a comment under most items of content. The comments are then visible to all those who view that item of content, or when the item of content appears in friends' news feeds (depending on the users' privacy settings).
- *Share:* Users can share an item of content by reposting it to their own, or to a friend's, wall and news feeds. When they share the item on their wall it may be pushed into their news feed where friends can like, comment on it, and share it again. As the image is shared into different peer networks, it is viewed in multiple contexts and generates new strings of comments. A user on a brand page can see how many times an item of content has been shared, but cannot see the different contexts in which it has been shared and new comments attributed to it.
- *Tag:* Users can tag themselves and their friends in images, check-ins and posts. This enables users to identify photos of themselves and their friends, and to see places where they have been or content that is associated with them.
- *Check-in:* Users can check in at a particular location, which pushes a message into the news feeds of their friends telling them they are there.

Each time users interact with an item of content it generates data that links them (and their peer network, demographic detail, interests and location) to specific items of content, times of the day and places. As these interactions accumulate, Facebook develops increasingly detailed portraits of the connections between users and brands, social spaces, practices, times and so on. This information is then used to manage and optimise the continuing flow of content through the platform.

Reach

Interactions are central to how content circulates on Facebook. While a brand can post an item of content on its page, what matters is how far that content reaches out into Facebook networks and how many impressions and interactions it generates. Impressions are the number of times an item of content is displayed. Reach is the number of people who receive an impression of a piece of content. Interactions are when a user likes, comments on or shares the content.

Brands can assess their reach in two ways[2]:

- 'Organic' reach refers to both the number of unique users who saw an item of content in their news feeds or visited a brand page from a story published by a friend who liked, commented on or shared it.
- 'Paid' reach refers to the number of unique users who saw a post from an advertisement for a page or post.

Reach is dependent on several factors in the Facebook network. The more fans a page has, the further its items of content reach. The more interactions an item of content gets, the further it reaches. The more friends that fans of a brand page have, the further it reaches. For instance, if a fan

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[2] https://www.facebook.com/help/285625061456389

with 1000 friends likes an item of content, it will reach into more news feeds than if a fan with 100 friends likes that same item of content. Brands are able to pay to guarantee their posts reach a set number of fans.

Facebook advised advertisers in February 2012 that posts from their pages may only reach 16% of their fans[3]. This reach could be increased by paying to promote posts and generate interaction from fans. Facebook uses an algorithm to determine how content is served into the news feeds of users. This algorithm takes into account many factors, including judgments related to affinity, weight and time. Affinity is the closeness of relationship between the poster and the user. For a brand, this is based on how close the user's preferences and interests are to the content the brand posts. And, if fans have interacted with your content in the past, their affinity score will go up. Content is weighted depending on how engaging it is, with some types of content receiving higher weighting than others. For instance, images are weighted higher than text, and the number of interactions an item of content has increases its weight. As fans like, comment or share the content, it is likely to weight higher. Time relates to how recent the item of content is. The older it is, or the longer it has been since the last interaction, the less likely it is to be served in a news feed.

Brands adapt to this algorithm in the following ways:

- Developing a fan base that has common interests.
- Creating content that has a high affinity with the interests and practices of their fans.
- Generating interaction with fans over time that increases affinity with the page overall, and generating interactions with individual items of content that increase their weight.
- Posting regularly and carefully timing the posts to maximise interaction.[4]

Facebook's algorithms reward quality content highly targeted to users' interests and that users want to interact with. Facebook's goal is to increase the level of interaction and engagement on the platform because that generates more data and more time spent on the platform. Facebook rewards brands that operate in this way.

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[3] https://www.facebook.com/notes/facebook-marketing/sponsor-your-page-posts/10150675727637217
[4] For more on reach see: http://mashable.com/2012/05/24/facebook-reach/

Methodology

This report presents a content analysis of the activity of the top 20 alcohol brands on Facebook in Australia.

Selecting the top 20 brands

We used the McCusker Centre for Action on Alcohol and Youth's *Guide to the Australian Alcohol Industry* to generate a list of 258 alcohol brands distributed in Australia. To that list we added other brands we were aware of with a Facebook presence, such as craft beers and brands that were new to the market.

We searched for each brand on Facebook to determine if it had an Australian Facebook page and how many fans it had. A fan is someone who has 'liked' a brand's page on Facebook. This means the person has purposely chosen to 'link' his or her profile to the brand's page and receive content from that brand in Facebook news feeds. We identified 51 brands with a Facebook fan base of more than 5000. From that list we selected the 20 brands with the largest fan base. Of the 207 brands excluded from this analysis:

- 10 had between 1001 and 5000 likes.
- 30 had fewer than 1000 likes.
- 92 had no dedicated Australian Facebook page, but had global pages or pages from other countries accessible to Australian Facebook users.
- 74 had no presence on Facebook.

Describing the brands and posts

For the top 20 brands, we collected the following basic descriptive information and metrics:

- The number of fans.
- The date the page was founded.
- The range of the 'people talking about this page', a Facebook-generated metric that provides a reading of how many fans have interacted with the page in the previous week.
- The most popular age group which likes the page, a Facebook-generated metric that sorts fans into a variety of age ranges: 18-24, 25-34 and 35 -54.
- The number of posts the brand made during 2012.
- The number of likes, comments and shares each post received from Facebook users.

Developing categories for analysing the posts

We analysed every post made by a brand and the comments that fans made on that post and inductively developed codes to categorise brand activity. These codes fell into two main categories:

- Brands' practices.
- The thematic content of brands' posts.

Nicholls (2012) provides the only published study that has attempted to categorise alcohol brand activity on social media. Some of the categories that Nicholls developed informed the codes

developed for analysis. These included real-world tie-ins, encouragement to drink and time-specific questions. The codes we developed are clearly defined and internally consistent in the way they have been applied to the content of the 20 brands' Facebook pages.

The following factors need to be noted:

- Facebook content is highly dynamic. Unlike content analysis of broadcast or print media texts, a complete objective data set cannot be collected. Brands and Facebook can manage who sees content and when, and the flow of content for particular regions and demographics. For instance, during the course of this study both Smirnoff and Absolut merged their Australian pages into their global page. This means Australian users are served a mixture of global and Australian content.
- Content can appear on the network in many different contexts. We analyse the content as it appears on the brand's Facebook page, but every time a fan interacts with an item of content it moves into the news feeds of their friends where it may be viewed in different contexts and with different commentary.
- Following the Advertising Standards Bureau[5] and Alcohol Beverages Advertising Code Complaints Panel[6] decision in 2012, which found the Smirnoff and VB Facebook pages to be in breach of the Codes, those brands removed much content. For instance, Smirnoff posted many photo albums during 2012 that have now been deleted. For this reason the analysis of these two brands is not a complete reflection of what they posted to Facebook during 2012.
- Following the data collection, Jacob's Creek deleted all of the content posted to its page before July 2013.

In the table over the page we list and define each code used in the analysis.

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[5] See Advertising Standards Bureau (2012) case report 0271/12 here http://122.99.94.111/cases/0271-12.pdf and case report 0272/12 here http://122.99.94.111/cases/0272-12.pdf.
[6] See ABAC Complaints Panel Determination 58/12 here http://www.abac.org.au/uploads/File/58-12%20Final%20Determination-%20VB%20-%2016%20August%202012.pdf and Determination 59/12 here http://www.abac.org.au/uploads/File/59-12-%20Final%20Determination-Smirnoff%20-%2016%20August%202012.pdf

Table 1: Codes used in the analysis

Code	Description
Practices	
Ask	Posts which call on fans to do something: • Asking fans to like, comment or share a post. • Posts that ask fans a question. • Quizzes. • Polls. • Competitions that asked people to create content or answer questions.
Activation	Content that relates to something the brand does in 'real life'. This includes: • Posts promoting brand activations at cultural and sporting events. • Photo albums from brand activations at events.
Advertisement	Images or videos which were brand advertisements used in other media (like television or print), or images that could easily appear elsewhere as advertisements because they included product image and/or brand logo.
Consumption suggestion	Posts that suggest consumption methods for the product, including cocktail and food recipes.
Time and Event Specific Drinking (TESD)	Posts that link a particular time or event to drinking. This most often involved posts about drinking after work, on the weekends, or on public holidays.
Competition	Posts that promote or give details about a competition.
Consumers	Images of consumers, including consumer-generated content that the brand posted to its page (but not content that consumers posted that was not re-posted by the brand).
Photos	Photo album from a club or event.
Responsible consumption	Posts that promote responsible consumption or have an 'enjoy responsibly' watermark or similar in the image.
Themes	
Personality	Posts where a brand acts like a person by creating a distinctive cultural identity or sense of taste. Examples include: • Where the brand invokes a tradition or heritage, often connected to specific places or ways of life. • Where the brand is embodied by particular figures or characters (like founders or mascots). • Where the brand positions itself as part of everyday activities, or cultural pastimes like sporting events or national and cultural holidays.
Mythology	Posts where brands build a personality by invoking myths. These can be specific-origin myths relating to the product, or where the brand positions itself within broader cultural myths.
Meme	Posts where brands craft a personality by displaying a sense of humour or savviness by posting viral images, videos and jokes. These include re-posting internet memes and adapting them to the brand identity.
Popular Culture	Posts where brands craft a personality by displaying a sense of taste in music, sport, film, or television programs.
Music	Posts where brands engage with popular music. This includes partnering with music festivals, posting music news and video clips, asking fans about their taste in music, running music-related competitions, music-related consumption suggestions, and photo albums from music events.
Sport	Posts relating to sporting events or sportspeople.
Empathy	Posts where brands express empathy with the public relating to natural disasters.

Results and discussion

The top 20 alcohol brands on Facebook in Australia

The top 20 brands were ranked by the size of their Facebook fan base and comprise:

- 10 spirits brands.
- Five beer brands.
- Three liqueur brands.
- One cider brand.
- One wine brand.

All brands have established their pages since 2008, more specifically:

- Five started in 2008.
- Six in 2009.
- Five in 2010.
- Four in 2011.

The fan bases of the brands ranged from 55,579 fans for Midori to 223,687 fans for Rekorderlig. Some brands accumulate large fan bases in a short period of time. Rekorderlig (number 1) and Wild Turkey (number 2) each accumulated more than 200,000 fans since their pages launched in 2011, whereas Pure Blonde (number 3) and Bundaberg Rum (number 4) began their pages in 2008 and Smirnoff (number 5) in 2009.

Brands acquire fans quickly using a variety of promotional tactics including advertisements and promotional posts on Facebook, advertisements in other media and online channels, real-world promotional activities and activities that prompt peer-to-peer content sharing. The larger the fan base, the more reach brand content has into the news feeds of users. The reach and value of the Facebook page increase when brands get fans to interact with the content. Facebook publishes a 'people talking about this page' measure, which displays the number of people who have interacted with the brand's page in a one-week range. The ranking of each of the brands for this measure is provided in table 2 over the page.

Facebook publishes a 'most popular age group' that follows the page. For the top 20 brands:

- 12 brands' most popular age group is 18 to 24.
- Six brands' most popular age group is 25-34.
- Two brands' most popular age group is 35-54.

These age groups correspond with the target market of the brands. The two brands with a fan base of people aged 35-54 are wine brand Jacob's Creek and liqueur Baileys. The six brands favoured by those aged 25-34 are the spirits Johnnie Walker, Jameson Irish Whiskey, Jack Daniel's and Bundaberg Rum's 'Bundy R. Bear', and the beers VB and XXXX Gold.

It is important to note that these age rankings are based on the ages that Facebook users enter when they sign up. A user needs to be 18 to see and like an alcohol brand's Facebook page.

Facebook determines a user's age based on the information voluntarily entered into their profile when they sign up.

Table 2: Brands snapshot of Facebook metrics

	Brand	Fans	Start Date	People talking about this page per week (range between May-June 2013)	Most popular age group
1	Rekorderlig	223 687	2011 January	6485 - 14 398	18-24
2	Wild Turkey	221 120	2011 August	5334 – 13 561	18-24
3	Pure Blonde	215 369	2008 April	862 – 2302	18-24
4	Bundaberg Rum	187 197	2008 June	4812 – 17 676	18-24
5	Smirnoff	180 000	July 2009	137 – 1236	18-24
6	Jim Beam	166 001	2011 March	3145 – 12 658	18-24
7	Johnnie Walker	144 678	2008 November	1063 – 5885	25-34
8	Baileys	141 863	2009 November	4925 – 12 006	35-54
9	Jack Daniel's	138 557	2010 June	2998 – 7867	25-34
10	Jacob's Creek	134 993	2010 January	2012 – 5986	35-54
11	Tooheys Extra Dry	111 128	2008 March	390 – 2808	18-24
12	American Honey	93 867	2011 March	855 – 4765	18-24
13	Jagermeister	79 022	2010 January	240 – 3472	18-24
14	Bundy R. Bear	78 906	2008 November	995 – 3477	25-34
15	Carlton Dry	76 698	2010 October	1832 – 3352	18-24
16	Victoria Bitter	65 885	2009 July	1244 – 5368	25-34
17	XXXX Gold	63 708	2010 November	1103 – 5431	25-34
18	Absolut	63 362	2009 August	790 – 1993	18-24
19	Jameson Irish Whiskey	59 056	2009 October	127 – 2255	25-34
20	Midori	55 579	2009 October	893 - 2740	18-24

Top 20 brands' interaction with fans on Facebook

On average, brands posted four items of content a week. The most prolific brand, Jim Beam, posted nearly twice a day, while the least busy brands still posted more than twice a week (see Figure 1 below).

Figure 1: Total number of posts by brand in 2012
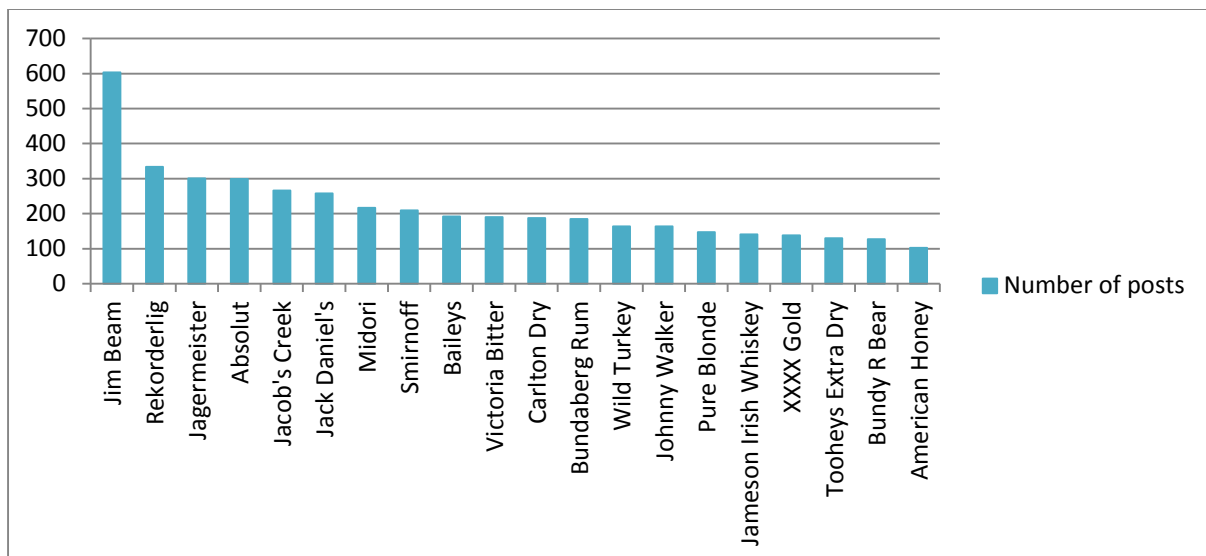
Posts generate more value as fans interact with them. A brand that posts a lot of content that is of little interest to its fans will be incrementally 'filtered out' of their news feeds by Facebook's algorithms. Brands need fans to continuously interact with their content to generate presence in their news feeds. Table 3 over the page ranks the top 20 brands by average number of interactions per post received. While in the table above we see that Jim Beam generated the largest number of posts, it ranks tenth in the average interactions per post.

Table 3: Brands ranked by average interactions per post

Brand	Fans	Posts	Likes	Comments	Shares	Total interactions	Average interactions per post	Interactions per fan during the year
Wild Turkey	221 120	164	200 589	13 306	16 717	230 612	1406	1.04
Bundaberg Rum	187 197	185	217 818	14 561	23011	255 390	1380	1.36
Baileys	141 863	192	167 685	14 844	19 037	201 566	1050	1.42
Pure Blonde	215 369	147	131 868	8979	11 512	152 359	1036	0.71
Rekorderlig	223 687	334	261 201	18 742	9787	289 730	867	1.30
American Honey	93 867	102	65 057	8281	5246	78 584	770	0.84
XXXX Gold	63 708	138	77 075	11 833	3930	92 838	673	1.46
Jack Daniel's	138 557	258	149 481	10 067	12 300	171 848	666	1.24
Johnnie Walker	144 678	164	87 074	6119	8319	101 512	619	0.70
Jim Beam	166 001	603	273 429	20 262	36 624	330 315	548	1.99
Tooheys Extra Dry	111 128	130	53 316	11 016	1249	65 581	504	0.59
Bundy R. Bear	78 906	127	45 133	4209	6581	55 923	440	0.71
Victoria Bitter	65 885	190	58 595	8091	6354	73 040	384	1.11
Midori	55 579	217	58 478	1933	2567	62 978	290	1.13
Jameson Irish Whiskey	59 056	141	23 213	3915	1345	28 473	202	0.48
Smirnoff	180 000	209	27 501	2484	2619	32 604	156	0.18
Jagermeister	79 022	301	37 321	4047	2450	43 818	146	0.55
Jacob's Creek	134 993	266	31 844	4132	2042	38 018	143	0.28
Carlton Dry	76 698	187	19 401	4630	1232	25 263	135	0.33
Absolut	63 362	299	30 138	2537	1921	34 596	116	0.55
Totals	2 500 676	4354	2 016 217	173 988	174 843	2 365 048	543	0.95

Alcohol brands, like most industries, carefully guard data about the extent of their interaction on social media. *Socialbakers* provides one of the only publicly available comparisons of interaction on Facebook across several industries. *Socialbakers* analysed Facebook brand pages with more than 10,000 fans, categorised them by industries, and calculated the average engagement rates - i.e. the number of interactions, divided by the number of posts, divided by the number of fans.[7]

A typical pattern is that as a brand's fan base increases, the engagement rate tapers off. Two key reasons for this are (1) the bigger a fan base gets, the more likely it will include fans with less interest in the brand; and (2) the bigger the fan base, the more likely it will be less coherent in terms of demographics and interests and therefore the harder it is to produce content that has a high affinity across the whole fan base.

Socialbakers found alcohol brands had the highest engagement rate out of the eight brand categories they examined:

- Alcohol: 0.40
- Automotive: 0.39
- Fast Moving Consumer Goods: 0.27
- Airlines: 0.26
- Finance: 0.19
- Telecommunications: 0.18
- Fashion: 0.15
- Retail: 0.14

Table 4 over the page calculates the *Socialbakers* engagement rate for the brands in this study. This calculation demonstrated that 12 alcohol brands in our study had an engagement rate above the alcohol industry average. Only two brands in our study had an engagement rate below the finance industry average. Overall, the brands in this study have an average engagement rate (0.46) above the alcohol industry average *Socialbakers* found (0.40), which is significantly higher than other industries. This confirms observations that the alcohol industry is a key innovator in the use of social and culturally-embedded modes of branding.

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[7] http://www.socialbakers.com/blog/1073-alcohol-brands-shake-up-engagement

Table 4: Brands ranked by *Socialbakers* engagement score

Brand	Fans	Number of posts	Total interactions	Average interactions per post	Engagement score
XXXX Gold	63 708	138	92 838	672.74	1.06
American Honey	93 867	102	78 584	770.43	0.82
Baileys	141 863	192	201 566	1049.82	0.74
Bundaberg Rum	187 197	185	255 390	1380.49	0.74
Wild Turkey	221 120	164	230 612	1406.17	0.64
Victoria Bitter	65 885	190	73 040	384.42	0.58
Bundy R. Bear	78 906	127	55 923	440.34	0.56
Midori	55 579	217	62 978	290.22	0.52
Pure Blonde	215 369	147	152 359	1036.46	0.48
Jack Daniel's	138 557	258	171 848	666.08	0.48
Tooheys Extra Dry	111 128	130	65 581	504.47	0.45
Johnnie Walker	144 678	164	101 512	618.98	0.43
Rekorderlig	223 687	334	289 730	867.46	0.39
Jameson Irish Whiskey	59 056	141	28 473	201.94	0.34
Jim Beam	166 001	603	330 315	547.79	0.33
Jagermeister	79 022	301	43 818	145.57	0.18
Absolut	63 362	299	34 596	115.71	0.18
Carlton Dry	76 698	187	25 263	135.10	0.18
Jacob's Creek	134 993	266	38 018	142.92	0.11
Smirnoff	180 000	209	32 604	156.00	0.09
Totals	250 0676	4354	2 365 048	543.19	0.46

The analysis above demonstrates that the alcohol industry continuously posts an extensive amount of content that stimulates large and ongoing interaction with consumers. While some brands may appear to have lower levels of interaction relative to other brands in the top 20, when compared to other industries they are all generating extensive engagement on Facebook. Furthermore, quantitative interaction is not the only measure of brand value on Facebook. While some brands post less or get lower levels of interaction, they may still be generating good return on investment if that content and engagement is highly concentrated in their target markets.

From this public analysis of brand pages we cannot determine the extent to which brands are focusing their engagement on particular target markets. An example of this is Wild Turkey's 'The Turkey 10' campaign that won the 'Best Demonstration of Results' award at the 2013 Media Federation Awards. Recognising that 'the sports market is flooded with alcohol sponsorships', the brand sponsored local sporting clubs. It used YouTube and Facebook to post videos about the sporting teams. The teams 'that had to have a sense of strength of character' became the brand's voice via local sporting competitions and provided continually refreshed creative content. The teams

starred in documentaries and had their own Facebook apps. Wild Turkey reported that campaign helped make it the number one bourbon brand on Facebook in Australia with a '60% increase in top of mind, a 42% increase in intention to purchase and a 58% increase in future consideration. Its sales outstripped the bourbon category's 2.55% annual growth by a factor of 8.5, realising a 21.2% year-on-year growth' (Media Federation Australia, 2013).

Top 20 brands' Facebook activity

Alcohol brands undertake a variety of activities to interact with fans on Facebook. In the following section we outline and give examples of the following alcohol brand activities on Facebook:

- Associating drinking with specific times and places.
- Asking consumers to interact.
- Using mythology and popular culture to build a brand personality.
- Offering consumption suggestions.
- Using images.
- Running competitions.

Time and event-specific drinking

Alcohol brands associate drinking with specific times and places. The most common time is Friday afternoon, when brands will regularly post updates anticipating the weekend. Figure 2 below illustrates that Friday is the most common day for brands to post, with most brands posting every Friday.

Figure 2: Total number of posts by day of week for all brands in 2012
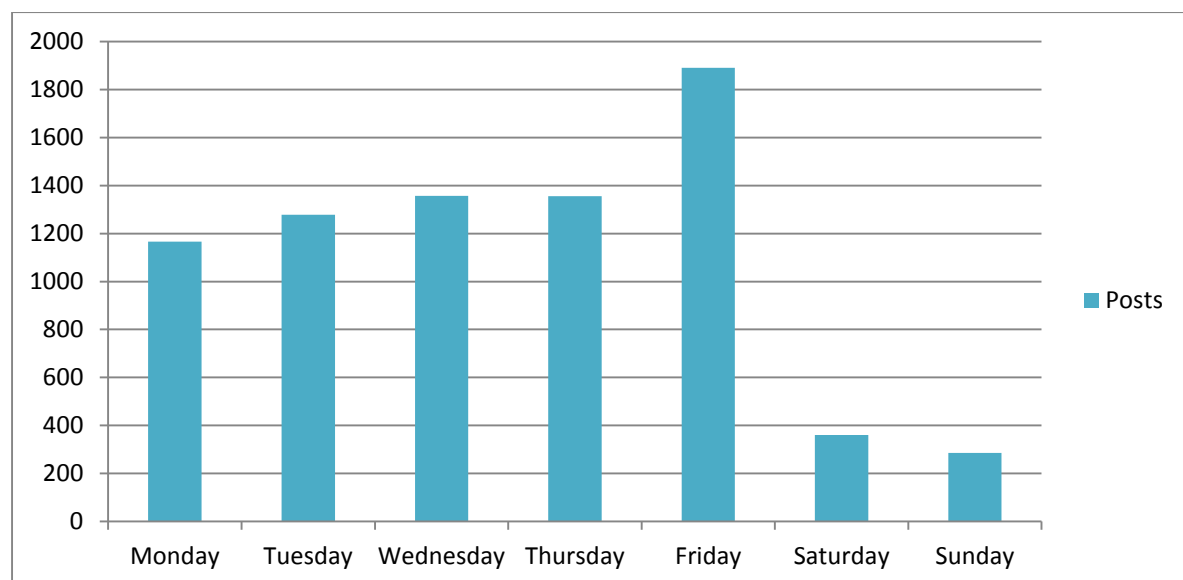
In addition to Fridays, brands would also post on Monday asking fans to reminisce about the weekend, on Wednesday lamenting the middle of the week, and on Thursday anticipating Friday. Brands would also post leading up to, during and after national holidays such as Australia Day, Anzac Day or Christmas Day. They post encouraging fans to express sentiments about the day and to confirm they would be having a drink. The significantly lower posts on Saturdays and Sundays are

possibly attributable to the costs of funding an agency to moderate content on weekends. Figure 3 below shows posts that specifically associated drinking with a particular time and place by time of day. These posts were made most often between 2pm and 6pm.

Figure 3: Time and event specific posts by time of day
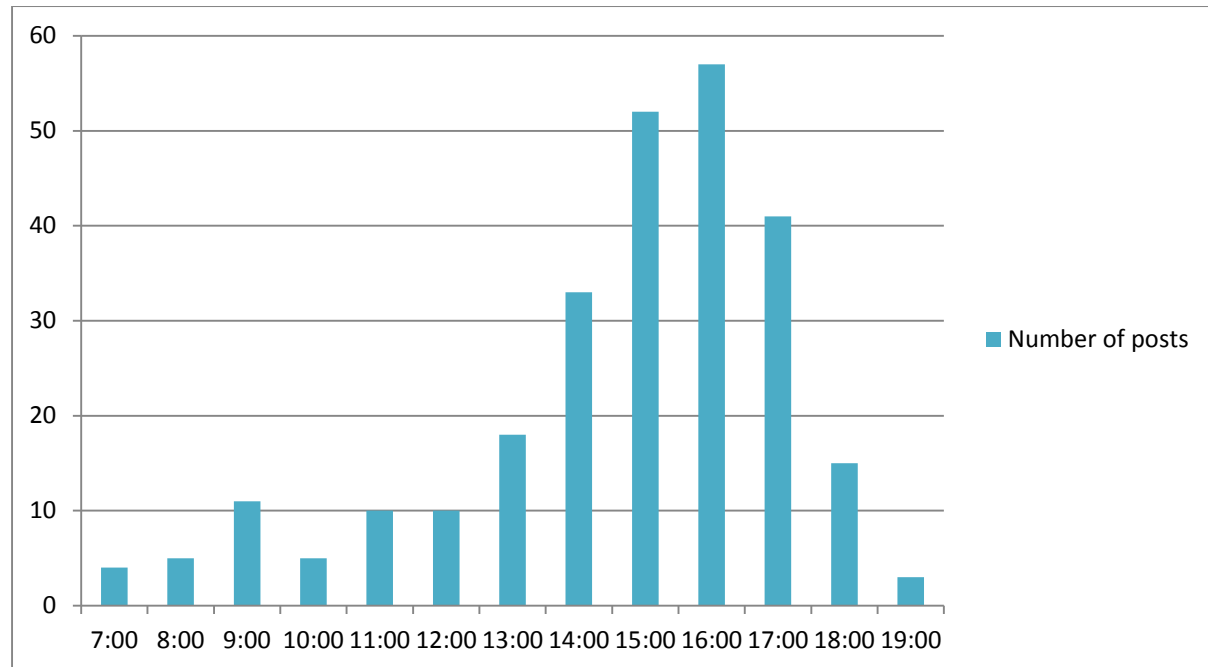
Timing of posts is important to generate interaction from fans. When a brand posts on a Friday afternoon, it prompts fans to express sentiments on its behalf. Many Facebook users will be anticipating having a drink on a Friday evening and by posting an update, question or image, the brand offers fans a way to express that sentiment. Posts that associate drinking with particular times and places were more likely to generate interactions with fans.

Table 5 over the page shows that for 16 out of 20 brands, interactions with time- and event-specific posts were higher than the average interactions for posts that did not connect consumption to specific times or events. On average, content that connects the brand to drinking at particular times or events is 1.7 times more likely to generate interaction with consumers.

Table 5: Average interactions for time and event specific drinking (TESD) posts

	Brand	TESD posts	Average interactions for TESD posts	Average interactions for non TESD posts	TESD higher or lower than non TESD posts	Interactions for TESD posts relative to non TESD posts
1	Jim Beam	98	509.65	561.13	LOWER	0.9
2	Wild Turkey	62	1731.82	1237.64	HIGHER	1.39
3	Midori	41	492.12	243.19	HIGHER	2.02
4	Absolut	32	125.78	114.50	HIGHER	1.09
5	Jagermeister	32	469.53	107.04	HIGHER	4.38
6	Rekorderlig	32	596.38	896.18	LOWER	0.66
7	Jameson Irish Whiskey	31	126.26	223.26	LOWER	0.56
8	Victoria Bitter	29	335.17	393.29	LOWER	0.85
9	Bundy R. Bear	28	640.29	383.79	HIGHER	1.66
10	Tooheys Extra Dry	27	629.74	302.38	HIGHER	2.08
11	Baileys	26	2144.12	878.43	HIGHER	2.44
12	Jack Daniel's	25	1394.20	587.95	HIGHER	2.37
13	Johnny Walker	21	974.86	566.71	HIGHER	1.72
14	Smirnoff	20	382.45	132.04	HIGHER	2.89
15	American Honey	19	917.63	736.73	HIGHER	1.24
16	XXXX Gold	16	693.69	669.99	HIGHER	1.03
17	Jacob's Creek	16	206.81	138.84	HIGHER	1.48
18	Pure Blonde	16	1437.94	951.12	HIGHER	1.51
19	Bundaberg Rum	14	1755.00	1349.82	HIGHER	1.3
20	Carlton Dry	11	284.18	125.78	HIGHER	2.25
	TOTALS		792.38	529.99	16/20 HIGHER	1.69

The pattern of posting on particular days of the week and at specific times of the day indicates that brands carefully plan the timing of their posts. Content is timed to engage with consumers around particular everyday cultural practices associated with alcohol consumption. This offers one illustration of the way brands organise and adapt their content in real time to maximise engagement with consumers' conversations and pastimes.

Weekend routines

Many brands regularly posted updates anticipating the weekend and connecting the weekend with alcohol consumption.

Bundy R. Bear

Bundaberg Rum's 'Bundy R. Bear' Facebook page personifies the brand in the character of Bundy Bear. He 'speaks' to fans using his cheeky larrikin personality, with 28 posts on the page linking drinking rum to the weekend. One continuing theme was images of Bundy R. Bear flying a plane:

- On a Wednesday (12 December) Bundaberg posted an image of Bundy as captain saying 'sorry for the turbulence we're going through the hump in the week'. The post received 511 likes, 9 comments and 145 shares.
- On a Friday (30 November) Bundaberg posted an image of Bundy R. Bear in the cockpit with the caption 'Welcome aboard Air Bundy. Destination: Friday' (see Figure 4 below). The post received 706 likes, 17 comments and 278 shares.
- On a Friday (7 December) Bundaberg posted an image of Bundy in the cockpit saying 'We are about to land in Friday, please put your tray tables down as we'll be serving Bundy shortly'. The post received 644 likes, 26 comments, and 189 shares.

Bundaberg Rum goes beyond simply posting status updates linking the weekend with consumption of alcohol. These posts evidence the creative planning involved in producing the content that facilitates interaction on Facebook (see Image 1 below).

Image 1: Image posted on Bundy R. Bear Facebook page

The Friday afternoon post on 7 December prompted 26 comments from fans where they 'extended' the Friday afternoon narrative that Bundy R. Bear prompted. Comments from fans included:

- *o yes please oops already started lol (3.29pm)*
- *me too (3.31pm)*
- *ya… flight to heaven just left… mmmmm thank you god for the best things in life (3.31pm)*
- *Bundy mate, come and have a cold one with me (3.44pm)*
- *I hope its more than one im thirsty (3.52pm)*
- *Bout 2 crack a tin now bundy bear (4.16pm)*
- *Had the first while cookin on the bbq (6.01pm)*

On Friday 2 November an image was posted of Bundy R. Bear's arm with a Bundaberg Rum-branded wristwatch, captioned '118 minutes till Rum O'Clock. Hang in there team' (see Image 2).

Image 2: Image from Bundy R. Bear Facebook page

The post received 683 likes, 53 comments and 94 shares. The post was made at 2pm and between 2pm and 2.30pm a selection of fan comments included:

- *Sorry… To late, couldn't hang in anymore!*
- *Hey look, its 4.20 somewhere*
- *Straight to the bottle shop after work!!!!*
- *Its always rum o clock on my watch!!!*
- *4 hours ago is when i had my first rum probably! Reedy U need to get ur watch checked 10 am was 4 hrs ago*
- *Na less than that already started lol.*
- *It's ALWAYS Rum o'clock*
- *Rum o'clock for me*
- *Oh hell yes, I'm hangin out for my meeting with Bundy this arvo*
- *Made it!!*
- *[name] has already started*

The posts on the Bundy R. Bear Facebook page are relatable to fans. This allows Bundy Bear to become part of their 'story' on their Facebook feeds about knocking off work for the week and having a few drinks. The brand becomes a normal and routine part of the conversation about the weekend.

Victoria Bitter

Weekend posts regularly prompted celebrations of excessive consumption from fans. On 9 March VB posted 'Is there anything better than your first cold VB on a Friday afternoon?' The post received 89 likes, 41 comments and 2 shares. Comments from fans responded to the brand's prompt and extended it to celebrate excessive and irresponsible consumption, which the brand could not do itself. For example:

- *The sound of the second one being opened.*
- *NO!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!*
- *The 2nd and 3rd ones…?*
- *No sir*
- *Yeh two cold long necks of it*
- *Yeah the second cold VB cause the first 1 don't touch the sides*
- *when you find more beer hidden at the back of the fridge.. well thats been there a while. better not let it go to waste*
- *Enough with the teasing damn it. Work is dragging on.*

- *Yeah, the 8th!*
- *NO*
- *Having my man drive me and the Esky around and checking out the highway*
- *Having a vb at midday on a Friday*
- *a few vb.s then tequila sunrises ....*
- *Nah bro*

- *Yes your first ice cold vb from your vb vending machine, on a Friday morning, keen for the footy tonight*
- *yep ya first vb saterday morning*
- *Yeh. The 2nd!!!*
- *The 18th*
- *Im On The Vb Tallies So Awesome*

VB also posts status updates prompting fans to reminisce on a weekend spent drinking VB. On Tuesday 10 April, after the Easter long weekend, VB posted 'Hey guys, how was your four-day weekend? Anybody wake up to a box of their favourite cold beer?' The post received 92 likes and 36 comments. Again we can see in the fans' responses normalised notions of excessive and irresponsible consumption practices:

- *n a good hangover*
- *I punished the vbs*
- *5 day weekend*
- *nah woke up to all the empties tho HAHAHA*
- *does vb encourage alcoholism or what?*
- *Woke up to a few empty boxes thats for sure!!*
- *a box a day mmm*
- *yeah sure did and loved it*
- *Get a vb in ya*

- *if u woke up to a box of cold vb u either didnt drink enuf or uv got really nice mates*
- *Only woke up to an empty box, because in australia you drink your beer.*
- *HELL YEAH!WOOOOOOO,HOOOOOOO!I FEEL FANTASTIC THANKS 2 U VB!LUV YA VB!XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX!*
- *Wahoo, woke up Sunday morning, 50th Birthday and good friends dropped off a carton of VB Stubbies*

VB's posts anticipating and reminiscing on the weekend prompt fans to celebrate and amplify stories of their own, often excessive, drinking practices.

Posts that 'ask' consumers to interact

Brands employ a variety of tactics to generate interaction with consumers. Many posts ask consumers to respond by posing questions about the product, sport, popular culture or cultural practices. They also prompt fans to express sentiments about the brand, their interests and cultural pastimes. Table 6 over the page ranks brands by the number of posts asking fans to interact. Almost half (46.7%) of all items of content posted by brands on Facebook asked fans to interact in some way. For some brands this was significantly higher - 80.3% of Pure Blonde posts, 80.4% of American Honey posts and 74.7% of Victoria Bitter posts asked fans for a response.

Table 6: Brands ranked by posts that ask consumers to interact

Brand	Ask	Total Interactions with posts that ask	Average interactions per post	Average interactions per post that asks	Ask interactions relative to overall	% of total posts that ask
Rekorderlig	205	203 920	867.46	994.73	114.67	61.38
Jim Beam	199	80 565	547.79	404.85	73.91	33
Jagermeister	177	26 179	145.57	147.9	101.6	58.8
Jacob's Creek	146	22 032	142.92	150.9	105.58	54.89
Victoria Bitter	142	44 304	384.42	312	81.16	74.74
Carlton Dry	138	21 489	135.1	155.72	115.26	73.8
Pure Blonde	118	124 509	1033.96	1055.16	102.05	80.27
Midori	117	24 762	290.22	211.64	72.92	53.92
Jack Daniel's	105	33 549	666.08	319.51	47.97	40.7
Baileys	97	77 820	1049.82	802.27	76.42	50.52
Tooheys Extra Dry	93	54 205	504.47	582.85	115.54	71.54
American Honey	82	58 629	770.43	714.99	92.8	80.39
Jameson Irish Whiskey	75	24 119	201.94	321.59	159.25	53.19
Wild Turkey	69	43 395	1406.17	628.91	44.73	42.07
XXXX Gold	66	40 496	672.74	613.58	91.21	47.83
Absolut	57	16 651	115.71	292.12	252.47	19.06
Johnnie Walker	50	25 968	618.98	519.36	83.91	30.49
Smirnoff	50	6348	156	126.96	81.38	23.92
Bundy R. Bear	39	10 083	440.34	258.54	58.71	30.71
Bundaberg Rum	8	99 667	1380.49	1261.61	91.39	42.7
Totals	2033	1 038 690	543.11	510.91	90.68	46.69

Asking about the product and drinking

Jim Beam posted 199 posts that asked fans for a response. Many of these posts prompted fans to express their views on the product. Examples included:

- An image (28 November) of a Jim Beam shot glass with the caption 'What Jim Beam would you put in it?' The post received 546 likes, 205 comments and 51 shares.
- An image (27 November) of Jim Beam Black Cherry with the caption 'Have you taken a bite of Jim Beam Black Cherry? What's your favourite way to mix it?' The image received 360 likes, 58 comments and 34 shares.
- An image of arms with goose bumps (23 November) with the request 'Tell us which song gives you goose bumps and we might play it!' This image received 422 likes, 65 comments and 19 shares.

- An image (19 November) of a man making a Jim Beam barrel with the caption 'Do you think there'd be more satisfaction in opening or closing a Jim Beam barrel?' The post received 221 likes, 36 comments and 12 shares.

Absolut posted 57 posts that asked fans for a response. Many of these posts prompted fans to respond to questions about their favourite Absolut cocktails or weekend consumption, posted under advertisements. Examples included:

- An image of two Absolut cocktails (4 December) with the question 'Which one do you prefer?' The post received 568 likes, 191 comments and 49 shares.
- An Absolut advertisement (27 September) with the caption 'Are you having visions of your first drink this weekend? This is not a mirage.' The post received 513 likes, 20 comments and 29 shares.
- An image of a cocktail (11 April) with the caption 'Thumbs up if you think every weekend should be a long weekend.' The post received 438 likes, 11 comments and 2 shares.

Absolut also ran a promotion encouraging fans to post images of Absolut Unique bottles they had purchased. Absolut Unique was a run of one million specially painted bottles. Examples of these posts included:

- A photo submitted by a fan of Absolut bottles with the caption 'Absolut Perfection'. The posted received 209 likes, 5 comments and 18 shares.
- Images of four Absolut bottles, each uniquely painted by artists, with the caption 'Which is your favourite design?' (15 November). The post received 773 likes, 370 comments and 65 shares.
- An advertisement for Absolut Unique (2 October) with the caption 'Have you spotted Absolut Unique yet?' The post received 4242 likes, 130 comments and 155 shares.

In Image 3, Tooheys Extra Dry (TED) (10 September) asked fans 'Where in Oz will you be enjoying a TED this week?'

Image 3: Post from the Tooheys Extra Dry Facebook page

The post received 285 likes, 181 comments, 20 shares and 15 tags. Fans could 'tag' themselves to the part of the map where they would be drinking beer.

Brands also post content that prompts fans to answer questions about their drinking culture in relation to the product. Fans would tell stories, make jokes, and offer sentiments that creatively connected the brand to their own personalities.

On 31 August Jack Daniel's posted an image with the question 'You're locked in one of our barrel houses. What do you do next?' (see Image 4 below).

Image 4: Post from the Jack Daniel's Facebook page

The post received 382 likes, 366 comments and 29 shares.

The posts demonstrate how people vied with each other to express their adoration and commitment to the brand in their responses:

- *DRINK!*
- *Gee Crack a barrel.. What else.. Haha*
- *Die due to alcohol poisoning*
- *Drink my way to freedom*
- *Check in on Facebook.*
- *Take a JD bath and hope they dont find me*
- *get on the drankk till someone finds you or you die...*
- *drink drink and the drink some more lol*
- *die the most wonderful death ever*
- *Drink as much as you can*
- *Drink till i die*
- *live happily ever after*

- *wake up in hospital with a tube stuffed down your throat pumping the alcohol out.....*
- *Make sure the door stays locked and party*
- *Taste test till i pass out hammered lol*
- *go straight for the top floor ahaha prime stuff up there !*
- *make the best effort i ever have n well if i die in the proccess well at least i'll die happy*
- *Die a happy man*
- *Ring and pre book the paramedics and have a new liver, kidneys and the defibrilator ready for tomorrow morning when some poor bugger saves me*

People use hyperbolic humour about alcohol overdose to express their loyalty to the brand. This activity would be visible to their own peer network who may themselves engage with the post, pushing it into other peer networks.

Jacob's Creek posted several times asking fans to post in their wine selections for particular occasions and cuisines:

- On 30 July Jacob's Creek posted an image of a bottle of Riesling paired with a meal. The caption read 'My favourite food and wine pairing is _____ served with Jacob's Creek _____ . Let us know your combination in the comments below' (see Image 5 below). The post received 123 likes, 30 comments and 17 shares. The comments offered suggestions of food and wine pairings.

Image 5: Post from the Jacob's Creek Facebook page

- On 5 May Jacob's Creek posted 'You're heading to a dinner party, and you need to take a nice wine – what bottle do you reach for?' The post received 49 likes, 54 comments and 1 share. Fans posted in offering their suggested wine choices and dinner party etiquette.
- On 24 March Jacob's Creek posted 'Let's have a get together in this status update! We're bringing the wine, post what you're bringing below and let's get this party started!' The post received 89 likes, 68 comments and 2 shares. Fan suggestions included glasses, friends, cheese, nibbles, fruit and salad.

The Jacob's Creek page had a more mature audience and tone. For instance, on 21 February when it asked fans to choose any three people they would share a bottle of Jacob's Creek with, mostly female fans wrote in nominating their husbands, closest friends, deceased relatives, and celebrities. As they explained their selections they expressed their love for their families and friends. Through these kinds of exchanges the brand embeds itself within people's deeply felt and important relationships.

Posts asking about drinking practices often reflect the brand personality and mythology. Rekorderlig's page consistently drew on both fan- and brand-generated images that conveyed a hip, urban and indie vibe.

Image 6 includes two posts. The first, on 8 June, is a fan image of people drinking Rekorderlig and smoking outside. It received 1772 likes and 71 comments.

Image 6: Posts from Rekorderlig Facebook page

The image conveys a typical Australian setting of drinking alcohol with friends at home. The caption asks users to 'hit 'like' if your weekend is going to include some Rekorderlig!'

The second post on 28 September of an idyllic outdoor home cinema received 5499 likes, 110 comments and 216 shares. The caption reads 'the only thing missing from this image is some Rekorderlig! Who wishes they were spending their weekend here?' Fans write in to say they wish they were there.

In each of these examples we see brands building a personality and relating their product to broader cultural identities and drinking practices. Each time fans interact with this content by offering their own comments, they draw their brand into their own online networks. Frequently they also extend and amplify the brand's messages – embedding it within drinking culture, and connecting it to excessive consumption.

Asking about blokes' 'rules'

Many beer and spirits brands would appeal directly to men by asking them about the rules of male rituals. These activities associated the brand with Aussie masculine identities. They make the brand authentic and credible by providing resources for men to convey how Aussie and 'blokey' they are. The brands engage with the everyday conversations of men on Facebook. The symbolic resources they provide – like in Image 7 over the page – give men visually appealing ways of communicating their identity and engaging with their mates online.
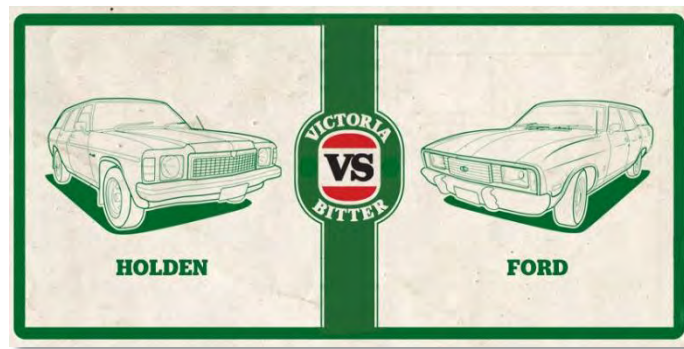
Victoria Bitter posted a series of meme-like images that asked fans to choose between various cultural products and pastimes (cars, sports and pastimes) in order to identify what kind of 'man' they are. Image 7, posted on 10 October and reposted again on 12 December, asked them to choose between Holden and Ford. The post received 600 likes, 119 comments and 92 shares.

XXXX Gold posted 66 items of content that asked for a response from fans. Many of these posts prompted fans to outline the 'rules' of various Aussie rituals and pastimes. Examples included:

- An image of beach cricket (20 December) asking fans to post the rules for beach cricket. The post received 331 likes, 101 comments and 19 shares.
- A post that read '1 beer, 4 mates, how do you decide who gets it?' (19 November). The post received 672 likes, 589 comments and 113 shares.

The posts capitalise on the fact that one way we construct and express our identities is via marking out the 'unspoken' rules of our cultural milieu. By doing this, the brand makes itself an 'insider' within these cultural groups. The brand joins in with the fans in 'understanding' things only those who are part of the culture would 'get'.

On 21 September XXXX Gold posted 'We all know thou shall NEVER wear budgie smugglers on XXXX Island, what else do you reckon is an Island no-go?' The post received 65 likes and 94 comments. Comments from fans included:

- *No bikini tops*
- *Wives and Girlfriends*
- *the word married*
- *Bikini Tops*
- *No crocs, or any other 'rivers' attire ha ha*
- *rubbing suntan lotion on other guys. Need a female assistant for that.*
- *Cambell Newman*
- *Chicks with tops on*
- *Thou shall not be on your mobile for longer then 10minutes at a time, unless organising girls for stripping*
- *Manscaping and Mankinis*

- *VB*
- *Never touch another mans beer*
- *Your wife*
- *No mobile phones or women.*
- *No TV's unless its to watch sport. No beer out of the fridge unless its being consumed.   No fat chicks...*
- *Germaine Greer*
- *Dipshits who push the boundaries and break the rules, oh and no men with little man syndrome, bahahahahaha*
- *Husbands*

In these responses men express bawdy and sexist sentiments. These views embed the brand within their identities. The brand is a bystander, part of the social network in which these views are expressed – but it doesn't explicitly endorse them.

Image 8 below (25 June) was sent in by a fan. VB's caption read, 'Matt here sent in a photo of himself working hard on his home over the weekend. Some blokes will spend the weekend in an armchair and some blokes just like getting things done. How about it… did you get something done?'

Image 8: Post from the VB Facebook page
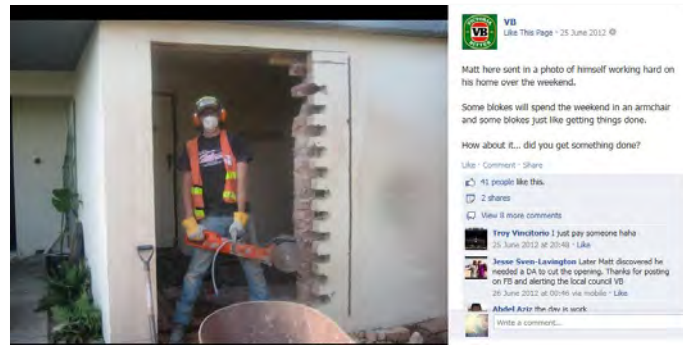
The post received 41 likes, 14 comments and 2 shares.

Fan comments sketch out these unspoken rules:

- *thanks to VB i got nothing done*
- *That blokes missing a VB in his hand*
- *Real VB men don't use safety gear*

- *bet that guys only widening the door so he can get his pallet of vb indoors*
- *bet the person takeing the photo (the forman) is haveing a VB*

In this example men express their bravado in association with the brand. 'Real' men not only renovate their homes, they do so without safety gear and while drinking beer.

Brands can also encourage and prompt their fans' sense of humour. XXXX Gold and Victoria Bitter ask their predominantly male fans what they will buy their wives or girlfriends for Valentine's Day. The questions prompt mostly 'amusing' (within the cultural norms of the brand's target audience) and sexist responses. The fans convey larrikin male sentiments. Some of the responses are also menacing and violent.

On 9 February, XXXX Gold posted 'Valentine's Day is next week, anyone got some ideas what to get for the lady folk?' The post received 8 likes and 31 comments.[8]

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[8] Victoria Bitter also had a Valentines Day post that garnered similar comments.

Gift ideas posted by fans included:

- *A new dishwasher lol*
- *I hear they like diamonds, but I can't find a beer called diamond, so she'll have to just accept Gold!*
- *WHY WHY WHY is it all about the ladies????????????????????????? Wot about us poor Bloke folk??*
- *A new iron*
- *I'm giving mine a good old fashioned rogering!!!!!!!!!*
- *a lawn mower, whipper snipper, lol lol lol lol...*
- *i normally give her the shits, apparently*

- *Bag of mixed lollies n a packet of fruit tingles n a kick in the ass if she complaints*
- *Block of XXXX of course!!!!!!!!!*
- *A Carton of XXXX Gold ....how sweet!*
- *New drill and hammer. Cnt go wrong*
- *gold block should do her.*
- *Just give her a bit of XXXX action*
- *A diamond ring around the neck of a xxxx Gold.*
- *A fairly good old romantic anal fisting she loves it... Good girl my missus*
- *Some xxxx tallies might do her good*
- *the keys to the ute 2 go to the bottleshop 2 get a box of gold*

The gift suggestions posted in by fans enable the brand to embed itself within 'blokey' Aussie identities. The fans say things on the brand's behalf that the brand can only 'wink' at indirectly. Making sexist jokes about their wives is a male ritual that the brand can articulate itself with. Additionally, the fans can associate the cultural rituals and identities with alcohol consumption. The several fans who indicated they would buy their wives a box of XXXX Gold made a joke that associated consumption of the product with everyday life. Typically, questions such as these prompt comments from fans that are clearly demeaning to women and whether the brand intends it or not, these interactions create value for the brand via the conversations of among their 'blokey' customers.

Asking about women's pastimes

Brands such as Baileys, Midori and Rekorderlig targeted women. In the examples below they pose questions directly to women.

On 20 April Baileys asked 'There's nothing better than a good Girls' Night Out. When was your last one?' Responses from fans define what a 'girls' night out' is to them:

- *Tonight woohoo Cant wait a night in Broadbeach Hope you are ready for us*
- *About 6 weeks ago, with my good best girlfriends, whom have known each other in excess of 30 years. Dinner, drinking, gabfest, clothes, eye candy - lots of fun*
- *lol probably back in the 70's and I don't think it would have been so 'good' lol*
- *Nov last year joys of being a mum to 3 boys under 5 and no volunteers for babysitters unless payed for!*

- *A friend started a girls only dinner club, where we go out once a month trying new restaurants/cafes. And its something to look forward to each time. We are currently doing around the world, trying various cuisines!*
- *proper girls night out... would have been just before christmas with the events committee for uni (all girls) had a girls night in in Feb*

- *lol i got 7 kids it been 18 year my last one i would love one please just night out yes please*
- *im right behind you gabrielle i have 6 kids hahaha (thats why i need to drink baileys!!) LMAO*
- *Might just crack the glass and ice out for my night time Baileys!*

- *about 13 years ago before hubby and kids!*
- *Last Saturday, wow what a night, have blisters from catching a curling iron while doing my friends hair and a massive bruise on my leg from tripping over a speed bump lol. OMG fantastic night and we are having another one tomorrow for my birthday and can't wait*

In Image 9, Baileys advises women that the most 'rewarding way to finish a retail therapy session is with a Baileys on ice.'

Image 9: Post from the Baileys Facebook page

The post received 1476 likes, 117 comments and 131 shares.

In Image 10 Midori ask women to 'like' the image if they think James Bond actor Daniel Craig should 'cool off with a Midori.' The post received 201 likes, 9 comments and 1 share.

Image 10: Post from the Midori Facebook page

The brand prompts fans to comment on the actor's physical appearance and in this way they 'define' what is sexually attractive:

- *Like I love it id like every bit off him!!*
- *Yummy*
- *Daniel is handsome as :)))*

- *I think he needs to b in my pool*
- *Haha in mine too… we will take turns!!!*
- *dat body*

Rekorderlig targets a young and hip female audience. It targets content at women, though in a more subtle way than Baileys and Midori. In the examples below (Image 11) Rekorderlig uses images that evoke the tone and style of lifestyle magazines.

Image 11: Posts from Rekorderlig Facebook page

In the examples given here brands engage with the everyday discussions that women have on Facebook about shopping, fashion, sex and popular culture. In most cases alcohol is incorporated into those discussions as part of a girls' night out, a 'reward' after shopping or lifestyle imagery.

Alcohol brands use Facebook to target both female and male consumers via their identities and cultural practices. Significantly, the pages targeted at women occasionally objectify men (as shown in Image 10 for instance), whereas the pages targeted at men regularly demean women. Although the brands do not do this expressly in their posts, they prompt fans to do so in their comments and the brand profits from this interaction in the form of higher engagement and visibility.

Asking about sport

The Bundy R. Bear Facebook page had 16 posts that asked fans about sport. On 25 May Bundy R. Bear posted an image of a Bundaberg 'Pea 'n Penguin Pie' with the caption, 'On the couch with my customary NRL, Bundy and pie. How do you get into Friday Night Footy?' (see Image 12 below). The post received 484 likes, 60 comments and 99 shares. Responses from fans reaffirm the notion of alcohol consumption as part of the ritual of watching sport:

Image 12: Post from the Bundy R. Bear Facebook page

- *Send some my way please Bundy*
- *booze babes n billies*
- *I'll have 100 of them*
- *Cheers to that… It just not friday nite footy without a 10pk of bundy's and yeah..... Where you get those pies i sooo want some*
- *Can't beat a couple (or more) Bundy Reds to wind down after a hectic week at work.*
- *I'll have one with sauce*
- *How do I get into anything. Simple with a 40 oz bottle of OP rum…*
- *Just had 2 bundy 100 proof 2 warm me up it worked*
- *On my 10 bundy on phillip island that pie sounds the go woopwoop*

By regularly asking fans about live sporting events, brands embed themselves within 'real' discussions on Facebook. Users regularly post updates about sporting games they watch on television on their personal Facebook profiles. When brands do the same thing they increase the affinity between their posts and their users' interests, which increases the likelihood their content will be seen in news feeds.

Furthermore, they offer fans a piece of content that expresses how they feel or what they want to say, increasing the likelihood the fans will like, comment or share the brand's content. Instead of simply typing a status update about their favourite team, they can like an image posted by a brand. The brand provides them with cultural resources they can use to communicate their own identity and interests. In the case here, drinking alcohol, eating a pie and watching the footy on TV can be communicated using Bundaberg's joke about 'Pea 'n Penguin Pie'.

Competitions that ask for user photos

Several brands ran competitions that asked users to post photos. Rekorderlig asked fans to post images of 'life in orange and ginger' in anticipation of the release of their new orange and ginger flavoured cider. In another competition fans were asked to post in images of their 'perfect summer moment'. They were encouraged to include a bottle of Rekorderlig in their images of their perfect moment (see Image 13 below).

Image 13: Photos from Rekorderlig Facebook page
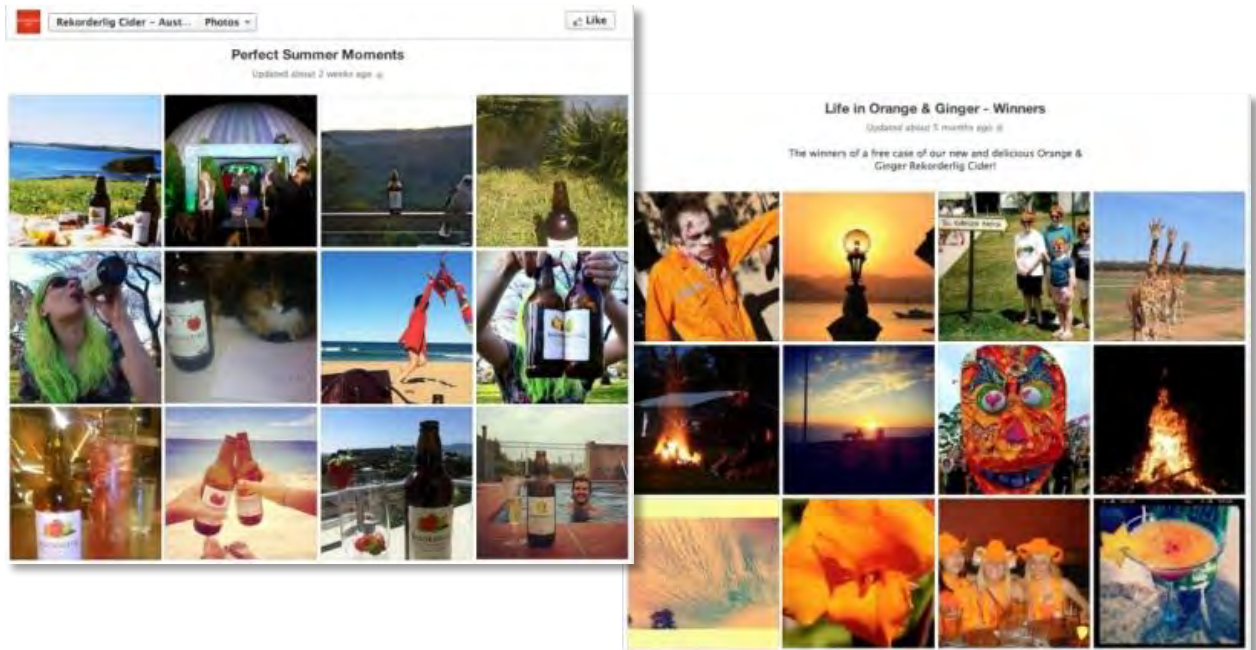
The images sent in by fans convey the brand's intended personality, feelings and aesthetics. The fan images of 'ginger and orange' reference the orange theme in the Rekorderlig advertisements for the new flavour.

Johnnie Walker asked fans to submit images for 'The Important Profile Picture Project' (see Image 14 below).

Image 14: Photos from Johnnie Walker Facebook page
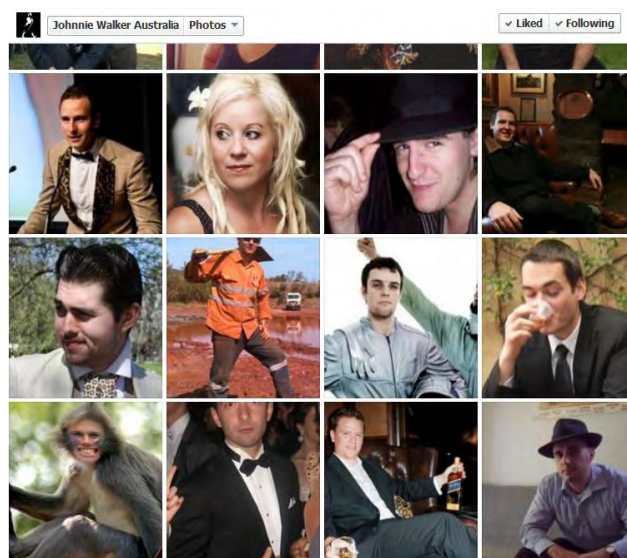
The Johnnie Walker images convey the brand's sense of masculine style. Each of these competitions drew on the creativity of fans and their capacity to relate their identity and life to the product. As these items of content are fan-generated, they have a high chance of circulating within the news feeds of their friends. The images function as micro-advertisements that package the product into the individual cultural moments and memories of fans.

Personality

Brands have long used cultural mythologies, characters and popular culture to personify themselves. Facebook's interactive and conversational nature enables brands to create and play particular characters, have personable conversations with fans about popular culture, shared sentiments and values, to make jokes and to build up myths or narratives about their history, founders and production. More than half (58.5%) of the content posted by alcohol brands enacted these personality practices (see Table 7 over the page). Personality posts build a backbone narrative for a page with audiences who share similar tastes and dispositions. Over time, the consistency and quality of this content may increase the affinity ranking of the page. Consistent themes, quality of content and interactions mean it is more likely to be visible in the news feeds of fans.

Jacob's Creek, Jack Daniel's, Rekorderlig, Victoria Bitter, Bundaberg Rum and Bundy R. Bear pages all used brand mythology. For Jacob's Creek and Bundaberg Rum these mythologies focused on the manufacture of the product and its connection to a specific region. Jacob's Creek offered images and stories about its winery region and history. Bundaberg Rum developed the character of the Founding Father who narrated a fairytale-like story about the birth of the Bundaberg distillery. Other spirit brands like Jack Daniel's also told stories about the history of their distillery, manufacturing process, and founders. Victoria Bitter and Rekorderlig developed a brand mythology closely tied to national identity. VB borrowed the Anzac mythology to associate the brand with founding Australian values. Rekorderlig referenced Swedish culture, design and history in its brand personality. For instance, it ran a 'Swedish School' that included a series of videos 'educating' viewers on aspects of Swedish culture. This kind of content circulates within Facebook more like 'editorial content' or 'news' rather than directly promotional advertisements.

Jagermeister, Carlton Dry, Smirnoff , Jameson Irish Whiskey and American Honey all used popular culture. These brands displayed a sense of taste by posting content or commenting on popular music, art and sport. Carlton Dry and Pure Blonde displayed a sense of humour and irony by posting internet memes. Over a quarter (29.95%) of Carlton Dry posts and 37.41% of Pure Blonde posts were memes. For each brand these memes significantly increased average interactions. For meme posts, Carlton Dry's average interactions rose from 135 to 214 and Pure Blonde's average interactions rose from 1034 to 1471.

Table 7: Overview of brands' personality practices

Brand	Personality	Personality % total	Popular culture	Popular culture % total	Meme	Meme % total	Mythology	Mythology % total
Jagermeister	246	81.73	201	66.78	0	0.00	38	12.62
Jim Beam	218	36.15	67	11.11	93	15.42	25	4.15
Jacob's Creek	204	76.69	113	42.48	6	2.26	76	28.57
Jack Daniel's	178	68.99	74	28.68	0	0.00	106	41.09
Rekorderlig	178	53.29	55	16.47	0	0.00	82	24.55
Carlton Dry	158	84.49	107	57.22	56	29.95	3	1.60
Victoria Bitter	158	83.16	87	45.79	0	0.00	68	35.79
Baileys	141	73.44	52	27.08	0	0.00	23	11.98
Midori	131	60.37	53	24.42	20	9.22	3	1.38
Johnnie Walker	124	75.61	47	28.66	0	0.00	45	27.44
Bundaberg Rum	116	62.70	34	18.38	31	16.76	62	33.51
Smirnoff	113	54.07	82	39.23	17	8.13	10	4.78
Bundy R. Bear	104	81.89	6	4.72	4	3.15	92	72.44
Jameson Irish Whiskey	103	73.05	58	41.13	2	1.42	47	33.33
Absolut	102	34.11	60	20.07	2	0.67	48	16.05
Pure Blonde	74	50.34	6	4.08	55	37.41	3	2.04
Tooheys Extra Dry	70	53.85	41	31.54	4	3.08	11	8.46
American Honey	62	60.78	43	42.16	2	1.96	1	0.98
Wild Turkey	42	25.61	22	13.41	0	0.00	15	9.15
XXXX Gold	23	16.67	0	0.00	0	0.00	36	26.09
Totals	2545	58.45	1208	27.74	292	6.71	794	18.24

Mythology

VB and Anzac Day

Leading up to Anzac Day, VB promoted its Raise a Glass campaign for Legacy. It asked fans to write in and tell who they would 'raise a glass' to on Anzac day. VB would then accompany these posts with archive photographs of soldiers drinking VB. Fans expressed Australian sentiments about Anzac Day and honoured the service of their family and friends in the Armed Services (see Image 15 over the page).

On 26 April VB posted 'Hope everyone had an awesome Anzac Day. A few VBs, some two-up and most importantly a big thank you to all the servicemen and women, past and present for their hard work and sacrifice. Anyone got any good Anzac Day stories to share?'

The fan comments frequently associated consumption of VB with Anzac Day:

- *I drank some VB, the end.*
- *went out to rooty hill rsl on tuesday night and picked up a cougar named dawn... long story short i had my own dawn service!*
- *a mate and myself were standing at a hot dog stand late lastnight when a rotweiler came up and sat beside us.. we fed her some of our hotdogs and she wouldnt leave.. so we did the most responsible thing and took her to the pub with us.. had a few vb's, used her to pull some babes and then we left the pub and parted our separate ways.. appropriately, we named her schooner.. she made our anzac day!!*

- *Well around 2 I had my ex telling me that I should stop drinking... I found out that an hour later she got kicked out for being too intoxicated Me and the lads dug a trench and spent a night in it replicating what the diggers did was a awesome experience we were lucky enough to have beer*
- *We had a very interesting tour in Fort Scratchley's Tunnels learning about how our men and women used the Fort to defend Novocastrians from enemy attacks. Such an honour. We watched the cannons fire 4 times at 3 o'clock... awesome!*
- *Vb my life so here's 2 those who gave thiers*

Origin myths

Founding Fathers: Bundaberg Rum, Jameson Irish Whiskey, Jack Daniel's

Bundaberg Rum's Facebook page was organised around the mascot of the 'Founding Father'. The Founding Father is an older, white male figure dressed in formal black and white attire, including a top hat, who speaks with an Old English accent. The Founding Father narrates a mythological history for Bundaberg Rum, such as a series of videos explaining how the rum is made (Image 16).

Image 16: Post from the Bundaberg Rum Facebook page
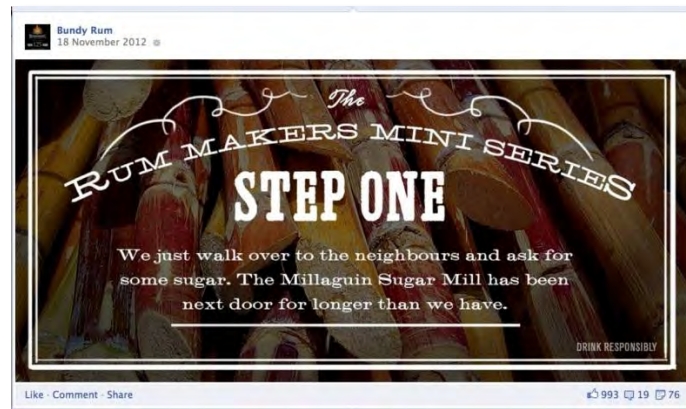
Bundaberg use the Founding Father in a mimetic way on the page, often using puns and pop culture references to engage users. He also appears to be the primary 'speaker' on the page. Many posts use an Old English accent and style.

In Image 17 on a Friday afternoon (19 October) the Founding Father tells fans that the 'hour of rum is upon us'. The post received 2,842 likes, 91 comments and 571 shares.

Image 17: Post from the Bundaberg Rum Facebook page

In Image 18 the Founding Father is incorporated into the popular 99 problems internet meme.[9] This meme is an adaptation of a hit song '99 problems' by American rapper Jay-Z. The Founding Father is also making a hand gesture commonly associated with the American rap scene. Bundaberg's fictional founding father character is used as a device to convey the whole personality of the brand.

Image 18: Post from the Bundaberg Rum Facebook page

Other spirit brands such as Jameson Irish Whiskey (Image 19), Jack Daniel's (Image 20 over the page) and Jim Beam depict and tell stories about their foundation. These images and stories convey the personality of the brand and its authenticity.

Image 19: Post from Jameson Irish Whiskey Facebook page

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[9] See Section 5.3.3 for an explanation of memes.

Image 20: Posts from the Jack Daniel's Facebook page

By telling stories about their history, brands create 'newsworthy' content that fits the communicative practices of Facebook. Facebook is used to construct stories about ourselves. Brands fit in with these communicative practices by constructing themselves as people with stories, histories and values. This creates content that people are likely to interact with and share because it isn't directly promotional. Instead, it is more like a cultural resource that fans can incorporate into their own online stories about themselves, their interests and values.

Jacob's Creek: place, region and history

Jacob's Creek developed a narrative about the history of its winery and the identity and skill of its winemakers. In Image 21 (28 November) a winemaker offers advice on one of the company's latest wines.

Image 21: Post from the Jacob's Creek Facebook page

In Image 22 Jacob's Creek explains how its wine attains its flavour. These images and stories locate the product in a specific region and present it as the labour of skilled people. These stories make the brand part of real communities, regions and livelihoods.

Image 22: Post from the Jacob's Creek Facebook page

Content that communicates a brand's personality fits within the broader flow of information on Facebook. Users tell stories about themselves, where they live and what they do for a living. When brands tell stories that locate the product in particular places and ways of life, they are producing content that flows seamlessly through Facebook's news feeds. Fans are more likely to interact with an item of content that 'fits' their profile rather than looks like an advertisement. In the case of Jacob's Creek, fans are likely to engage with these stories about a particular region, production process or livelihood. As they do, Jacob's Creek becomes a part of their story and online identity.

Memes

Memes refer to viral images, phrases or expressions that circulate within online communities. They are often satirical, ironic and humorous. Many memes rely on the reader's knowledge of popular culture references and in-jokes. Memes are an effective way of engaging with fans on Facebook as they enable the brand to display a sense of humour and belonging on Facebook. Many Facebook users commonly share and like memes on their profiles. When alcohol brands create variations on a meme, they demonstrate that they are 'in' on the jokes of particular social groups. For example, 88 of Jim Beam's 603 posts used internet memes to express a sense of humour. Jim Beam averaged 548 interactions per item of content across the whole year for these meme posts, while the average interactions jumped to 1118.48. Meme posts get higher interaction for some brands because they are the kind of content their target audiences regularly shares on Facebook. Most often brands adapt memes so that they reference the product directly.

Jim Beam posted the meme in the left of Image 23 (12 December) as an adaptation of the 'Matrix Morpheus' meme. The meme is based on the film *The Matrix,* a science fiction movie in which the perceived reality of humans is actually a simulation called the Matrix. The still image features the character Morpheus who reveals the Matrix to the protagonist, freeing him from 'false reality'. Memes work by repeating a gesture from image to image; in this case the gesture that is repeated is Morpheus 'revealing' how 'things really are' to a savvy and cynical reader. The meme works by 'revealing' a truth that would be 'obvious' to a reader who is already in on the joke. The 'truth' that Jim Beam is best served on days ending in Y is taken to be self-evident to Jim Beam drinkers who, via the meme, distinguish themselves from 'dupes' who don't know this 'true reality'. This is an ironic gesture that works because the readers of the meme take themselves to be 'in the know' at the expense of some imagined 'ignorant' other. The post garnered 2023 likes, 52 comments and 402 shares. Commenters embraced and extended this notion:

- *What if I told you your absolutely Right?!!!*
- *I'd say, 'where is it then?'*
- *I would definitely believe you*
- *I'd say I'd have to find out for myself!*
- *You would be right*
- *Most definitely correct about that*
- *Hell yea everydays a jimmy day*
- *I would say, 'that sounds about right'.*
- *Everyday, kool*
- *I know I drink it every day lol*
- *I would agree with you*
- *That is an unwritten rule for me lol*
- *I would wholeheartedly agree but only days that in y ok lol*
- *And your only an alcoholic on days ending in y. Coincidence?*

- *How can I send this photo to my email address. I'm going to print it on canvas and put it in my man cave!! Perfect*
- *no days end in ' Y ' in OZ Sundie Mondie Tuesdie Wenzdie Thurzdie Fridie Saddie*
- *Mmmmm feel like uncapping a bottle now!*
- *Indeed and so true to jim beam lol*
- *I only drink with the ones that end in day.*
- *I'D AGREE WITH YOU!*
- *i would believe you*
- *hell yeah*
- *i only drink mon wed fri and everyday in between!!! hehe..........*

A meme image from 20 December (Image 24, next page) plays on the 'one does not simply walk into Mordor' meme based on the science fiction movie *Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring*. The

series follows the journey of the main characters to destroy an evil ring. The still image in the meme is from the scene where the characters learn that the only way to destroy the ring is by throwing it into a volcano within Mordor. The character featured in the meme points out the difficulty of this task by saying 'one does not simply walk into Mordor'.

Image 24: Post from the Jim Beam Facebook page (below left) and user examples of the meme (centre, right)
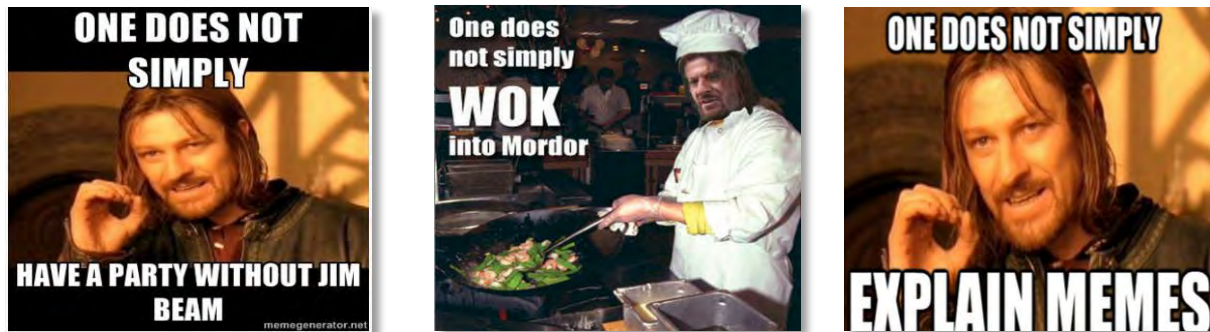
The original versions of this meme play on the full quote (Image 24, centre); however, the meme has evolved. It is now more common to see the shortened version 'one does not simply' (Image 24, right), which is used to express the difficulty or complexity of an action. This meme repeats a gesture of 'savvy cynicism', where viewers are encouraged to be 'knowing' about the futility of a task and sceptical about completing it. Memes are often circulated as part of an in-group identity. In the Jim Beam version of the meme, Jim Beam fans 'know' a party is not possible without Jim Beam.

 It garnered 2066 likes, 38 comments and 464 shares. The commenters confirm and extend the brand's use of the meme, which gives the brand credibility and generates affinity:

- *True dat*
- *Very true love it*
- *One does not simply..not get magget in Australia*
- *Ain't a party without jimmy!!*

- *Actually I have parties without alcohol cuz I hate the stuff!! to which someone replies YEAH RIGHT*
- *I don't need to cause a cool work mate knows me well . Been dating Jim since clock off yesterday.*

Carlton Dry often paired meme-like images with questions (Image 25 below). They would post a 'funny' photo from the internet and then ask a question. These posts would prompt likes, comments and shares from the audience.

Image 25: Posts from the Carlton Dry Facebook page

Pure Blonde posted amusing images that it connected with its brand (Image 26) and alcohol consumption (Image 27 below). As a caption to Image 26 (15 June) Pure Blonde wrote 'Road = 0, Water = 1. Hit 'like' if you hope he didn't leave a case of Pure Blonde in the trunk!'

Image 26: Post from Pure Blonde Facebook page

The image received 2631 likes, 77 comments, 246 shares.

Image 27: Post from the Pure Blonde Facebook page

In Image 27 Pure Blonde creates an image that plays on the common internet security check, with the phrase 'infinite beer' and the comment 'the rare moment when your computer reads your mind'.

In each of these examples brands use and adapt memes to display a sense of humour. Memes are commonly circulated in Facebook by savvy individuals. To 'get' them you need to be 'in' on the joke or popular culture reference. By embedding themselves within memes, brands position themselves as 'insiders' within social networks. The meme becomes a micro-advertisement that communicates that the brand is 'in the know'. Additionally, as a highly shareable item of content it travels out into peer networks via likes, comments and shares. Fans share it to convey their own savviness and sense of humour.

Popular culture

Brands use popular culture as a resource for creating content on Facebook. Vodka brands Absolut and Smirnoff interacted extensively with contemporary and street artists. Absolut partnered with events at art galleries (Image 28 below), sponsored charity art auctions, and asked prominent artists to paint their vodka bottles.
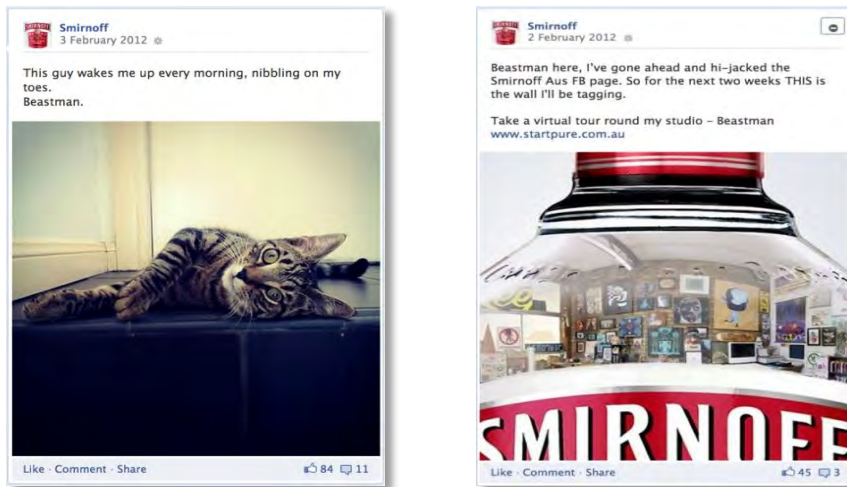
Image 28: Photos from Absolut's Facebook page

Partnering with art and fashion events (Image 28) generated content that connected the brand with hip, creative, inner-city consumers.

Smirnoff commissioned two street artists to 'curate' its page for a period of time (Image 29).

Jameson Irish Whiskey (Image 30) sponsored pop star Joel Madden to appear at several promotional events posing for photographs with fans.

Image 30: Photo from Jameson Irish Whiskey's Facebook page

In the examples given here of Absolut, Smirnoff and Jameson, the brands partner with creative and cultural producers who make content for the brand and use their identity to convey the brand's sense of taste. In the case of Absolut, artists use their creativity to paint vodka bottles and give their art to events that attract the attention of the hip consumers the brand is targeting. In the case of Smirnoff, the street artists that curate content for the Facebook page use their own identity and sense of taste to craft the brand's image. For Jameson, Joel Madden uses his celebrity power to attract attention. Images from the event circulate widely through Facebook.

In addition to art and music, brands also engaged routinely with sporting culture. VB leveraged its sponsorship of the NSW State of Origin rugby league team (Image 31 over the page).

On 23 May VB posted, 'Click like if you've got your fridge stocked with VB for a ferocious 80 minutes of Origin footy tonight! Go the Blues!' And on 5 July they posted 'Second half just kicked off. Maroons lead 16-8. Restock your stubby holder. We're in for a big second half!'

Image 31: Post from the VB Facebook page

Jacob's Creek leveraged its major sponsorship of the Australian Open tennis on Facebook. Partnering with stars such as Andre Agassi, it has produced content that connects the mythology of tennis to its brand under their 'true character' slogan. It also built a themed bar at the Australian Open.

On 23 January Jacob's Creek posted 'There are many things of beauty and a product of hard work at the Aus Open. We certainly like this combination! Well done to the girls tonight for a great match full of entertainment' (Image 32 below). Fans wrote in to say they were drinking Jacob's Creek and watching the tennis. They congratulated the players and Jacob's Creek.

Image 32: Post from Jacob's Creek Facebook page
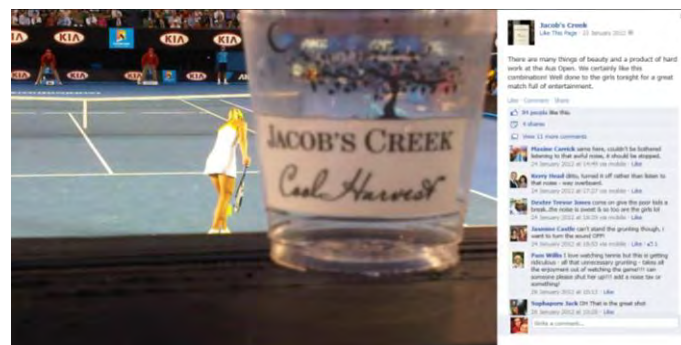
In the examples given here, brands use popular culture to produce content for their Facebook pages. In some cases niche popular culture – like art gallery openings – is used to attract the attention of hip inner-city creatives and convey the brands' refined sense of taste. In other cases, mainstream popular culture like national sporting events are used to position the brands in the everyday conversations of their fans on Facebook.

Activations

Activations are an important part of brands' Facebook strategies. Activations are 'real-world' installations that brands construct at cultural events. These activations are used to create branded content and interactions with fans. Typically a brand builds a themed area that embodies the brand's personality. The activation usually includes a bar, cultural entertainment and activities to engage fans. Brands also employ promotional staff who interact with fans, encouraging them to take photos and check in on Facebook.

XXXX Gold's XXXX Island

XXXX Gold's Facebook page mostly revolved around its XXXX Island activation. XXXX acquired an island on the Great Barrier Reef on which it built a XXXX themed resort. XXXX customers could win a chance to spend time on the island with their mates. More than half (76) of the brand's 138 Facebook posts during 2012 related directly to XXXX Island.

XXXX Island served as a constant source of content and conversation on the page. On 8 October 2012 XXXX Gold asked 'if you were setting foot on XXXX Island, what's the first thing you'd do?' The post received 585 likes, 579 comments and 53 shares. A majority (512 or 89%) of the comments referred to drinking XXXX Gold. In their responses to the question fans demonstrated how they could use their language, identity and sense of humour to make the XXXX Island 'come to life' as a kind of bloke's paradise. Via their responses they could connect XXXX Gold to several aspects of Aussie male identity and pastimes.

Firstly, they incorporated drinking XXXX Gold into their identities and explicitly made it the primary practice on XXXX Island:

- *Crack a stubbie n enjoy the view*
- *crack a gold*
- *crack a tinny*
- *snap the top off a stubbie*
- *rip the ears off a XXXX Gold*
- *Have a stubby of Australia's best beer - the XXXX Gold and then have another after another*
- *Have a xxxx in hand and then some more xxxx*

- *crack a tinny. straight up*
- *drink all of the xxxx on the island*
- *Get off the boat, crack a can open, sink the boat, now I'm stuck there forever*
- *Grab a XXXX and a mean feed......then hit it hard*
- *Look for the beer and open a Goldie and drink till my thirst was quenched or I retired. Which ever came first.*

Secondly, they extended the 'mythology' of XXXX Island as a bloke's paradise:

- *cry tears of joy*
- *Have a xxxx gold and slap myself to see if I were in a dream or reality!!!*
- *get down on my knees and worship the ground it has been built on. XXXX rules*
- *Say gday to St Peter - cause this gotta be heaven !*

- *i would jump on face book and prove two everyone that their is a god*
- *drop to your knees and thank the beer gods for allowing me to be part beer heaven ahmen then crack a coldi*

Thirdly, they could articulate XXXX Island, and drinking XXXX Gold with male pastimes like fishing:

- *Go fishing with a beer!*
- *crack a coldie and find out where the best fishing is*

- *catch a few cans and go fishing*
- *Grab a carton and head to the best fishing spot!*

Fourthly, they could also use colloquial language and Aussie jokes to make the brand sound real and credible. Their own identities and vocabularies became ambassadors for the brand, linked to their own sense of humour and values:

- *Head to the 19th hole....*
- *the bar first for some neck oil*
- *have a froffy*
- *have a cold one while backing one out on the loo with a view*
- *beer in the dunny with a view*
- *I'd say ,I'm in heaven and now I need a GOLD to quench my thirst from the long trip*

- *start the day with a AGB at the loo with a view then head to one of the beaches for a fish!*
- *crackatinny*
- *Tip a gold beer down you neck*
- *Can on like a mongrel*
- *address my parched throat problem*
- *Gobble a Goldie!!*
- *Help others off the boat with their bags....*
- *not shake my beer up getting off the boat*

Finally, in addition to embedding drinking within their male identities, some fans also expressed ribald and sexist views in connection with the brand:

- *After grabbing some cold golds from the bar I would approach the beach with the lads on bombed out quad bikes fitted out with rod holders & eskimo beer coolers, then after many shits & giggles we would return to the main bar after catching our fair share of tiger sharks to liaise with the topples pantie less waitresses*
- *ask for a rum can and get the xxxx girls to give me a blow job*
- *Find the hot chicks then get some XXXX*
- *Look for the bar and strippers and an atm*
- *crack a beer and pinch one of the xxxx girls on the bum*

XXXX Island was a product promotion and advertising campaign and has been used in sponsorship of sporting events. Consumers had to purchase cartons of XXXX Gold to win a trip to the island. The activity on the Facebook page demonstrates how real-world brand activations also generate continuous interaction online. The fans extend the activation by mythologising it in connection with their own identities, jokes and dreams. While here we have examined posts on XXXX Gold's Facebook page, it is important to note also that throughout the past year many hundreds of XXXX Gold consumers have visited XXXX Island after they or their friends won a competition. No doubt many of those consumers produced extensive content that they distributed through their own Facebook pages. The brand activation provides a way for the brand to prompt consumers to narrate the brand using their own voice. The activation is a site of brand production that creates content that 'bypasses' official online brand channels. This fan-generated content would be highly credible and authentic, but because it circulates in peer networks it cannot be viewed publicly.

Rekorderlig's Winter Forest

Rekorderlig created a Winter Forest activation that played on Rekorderlig's mythology as a Swedish company with motifs of pine trees, snow, promotional models dressed in white with fur vests and a husky that posed with guests as they were photographed (Image 33 below).

Image 33: Photos of Rekorderlig's Winter Forest and Sparkle Cupcakery from their Facebook page
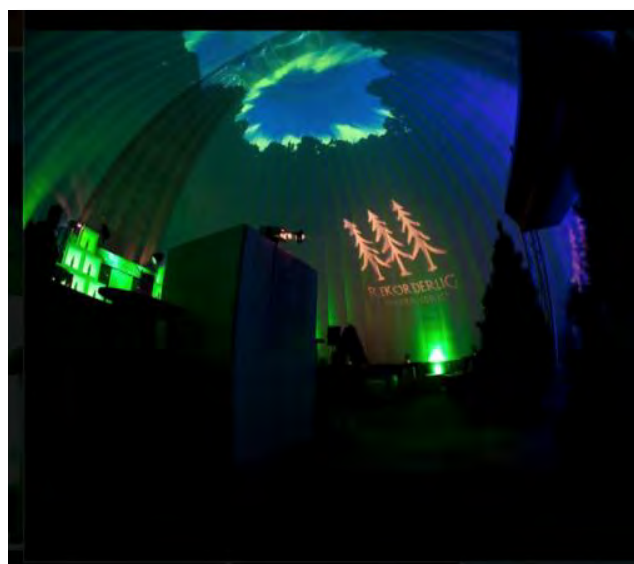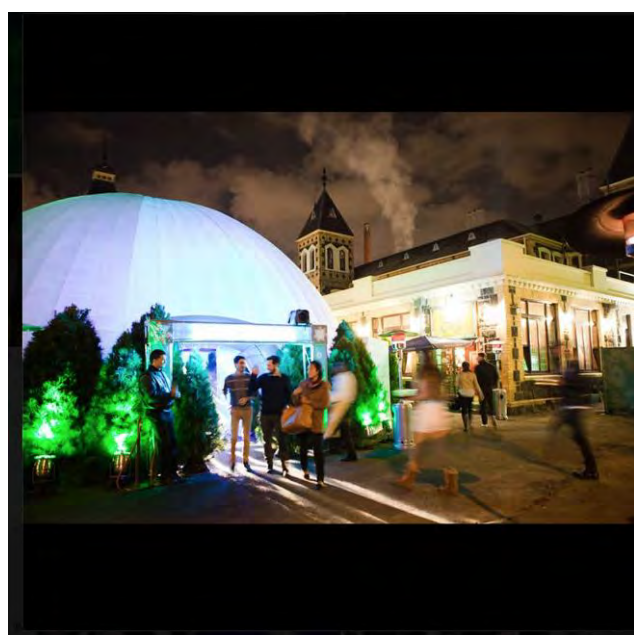
In a separate activation, Rekorderlig also partnered with Sparkle Cupcakery, hosting a themed night at the store where Rekorderlig was served with Rekorderlig-flavoured cupcakes. The cupcake recipes were also made available on the Facebook page (Image 33 right hand side).

Rekorderlig's Winter Forest offers a useful comparison with XXXX Island. Each demonstrates how brands build activations that link the brand personality to the identities of their target markets. Activations embed consumption of the product within specific lifestyles.

Music festivals

Music festivals are a common site for brand activations. Brands invest considerable resources buying access to festival sites and building elaborate, themed bars. Examples of activations at music festivals in 2012 include Jack Daniel's two-story White Rabbit Saloon, Pure Blonde's Dome featuring holograms and live performances, and Strongbow's sailing ship. In addition to serving alcohol, these bars often also feature exclusive performances by DJs and bands appearing at the festival.

Image 34: Photos from Jack Daniel's, Pure Blonde, Strongbow and Smirnoff Facebook pages of their activations at music festivals

Brands leverage their music activations in a variety of ways including:

- Encouraging fans to check in on Facebook.
- Taking photos of fans which they upload to Facebook.
- Encouraging fans to take photos of themselves and posting them to Facebook.
- Posting images and videos from performances within the activation to Facebook where fans like, comment and share them.
- Posting live updates from the activation capturing the festival atmosphere.
- Distributing exclusive cocktail recipes specially prepared for the festival (Image 35 next page).
- Sending promoted posts to fans or consumers in the target demographic of the festival.
- Packaging fans' 'likes' or 'check-ins' as social ads that promote the activation to their peer network.

Jagermeister's Hunting Lodge

Jagermeister built its Hunting Lodge at the Splendour in the Grass music festival in late July (the Lodge was also used at the Sydney Festival later in the year). The Hunting Lodge was a Northern European-themed venue with moose heads, chandeliers, a fireplace, a bar, flat screen TVs, wooden stools and benches, DJs and a dance floor. Several artists playing at the festival performed DJ sets at the Hunting Lodge. These intimate performances attracted fans to the branded venue, which served Jagermeister in combinations new to the Australian market - like Jagermeister and ginger beer - as part of a revised marketing plan to encourage Australian drinkers to consume it as a sipping drink. While the Hunting Lodge may have promoted a wider array of consumption practices, it also associated the consumption of Jagermeister with popular music, dancing and socialising in the Splendour 'wonderland'. The product strategy was interwoven with associational cultural objectives. The Hunting Lodge embodied the Germanic personality of the brand. It was also a dark, warm and inviting space within the often wet and cold winter festival. Patrons would flock to the bar late at night when performances on other stages finished, making the Hunting Lodge a late-night venue for partying and dancing. Activations like the Hunting Lodge become part of the memories of festival patrons.

Jagermeister employed photographers who took photos of audience members in the Hunting Lodge and uploaded them to Facebook. These images became part of the stream of images and updates that narrated the festival experience in peer networks. This embeds the Hunting Lodge, and Jagermeister, within the broader narratives about the festival told by fans. Many of the images Jagermeister uploaded to its own page feature partying and consumption within the venue (Images, 36 and 37 on next page).

Image 36: Photos from Jagermeister's Hunting Lodge photo albums

Jagermeister posted 23 photo albums during the year from activations at festivals, sponsored club nights and music events. Like the images from the Hunting Lodge these often featured hip consumers, dancing and enjoying music, while consuming Jagermeister. The photos capture fans incorporating Jagermeister into their enjoyment of nightlife.

Image 37: Photos from Jagermeister's Facebook photo albums

Jim Beam Party Crew

The Jim Beam Party Crew attended events and venues throughout 2012. These activities generated 6812 photos that were uploaded to the Facebook page for a total of 12,099 likes, 732 comments and 277 shares. Several photos albums featured Jim Beam promotional models posing with the Jim Beam V8s and motorsport fans. In some images Jim Beam Party Crew promotions staff posed with a cut out of Jim Beam V8 drivers in a bar. Patrons posed as the V8 drivers while drinking Jim Beam (Figure 38 below).

Image 38: Photos from Jim Beam Facebook photo album

Image 39 below is typical of the thousands of photos in the Jim Beam Party Crew albums. Promotional staff pose with members of the public, mostly young men, in cheeky and provocative ways. Often these images, if not overtly sexualised, play on the sexuality of the flirtatious 'desirable' models. While most of these images were taken in licensed venues or at motorsport venues, some images (left photo in Image 39) were taken in public spaces like Melbourne's Federation Square as part of product promotions.

Image 39: Photos from Jim Beam Facebook page photo album

Consumption suggestions

Several brands posted consumption suggestions. These took two forms, cocktail recipes or food recipes. Eighty-five of Absolut's 299 posts were cocktail recipes (Image 40 below, left). Absolut regularly posted images of cocktails and recipes in the afternoon as a suggestion for the evening. These recipes were also accompanied by promotion of their Drinkspiration smartphone app. Smirnoff also posted cocktail recipes and ran 'name this cocktail' competitions (Image 40 below, centre). While Rekorderlig included more 'traditional' consumption suggestions in the form of cocktail recipes (of which it has a free downloadable e-book for users), it also offered food recipes such as desserts, and 'food pairing' advice. In the image below (Image 40, right) its recipe for cupcakes which contain Rekorderlig received 5,138 likes, 253 comments and 586 shares.

Image 40: Posts from Absolut, Smirnoff and Rekorderlig's Facebook pages

Advertisements

Many brands posted advertisements to their Facebook pages. Many of these advertisements were also used in print and television channels. Other images were produced specifically for the Facebook page, but followed established conventions of advertising and were easily recognisable as advertisements. Table 8 illustrates the number of advertisements posted, together with the percentage that displayed responsible consumption messages or watermarks. Of the advertisements on Facebook pages, 14% displayed responsible consumption watermarks or contained responsible consumption messages.

Table 8: Advertisements brands posted to Facebook

Brand	Fans	Advertisement	Responsible consumption message	% post with responsible consumption	Ads with responsible consumption	% of ads with responsible consumption
Jim Beam	166001	111	5	0.83	0	0.00
Jack Daniel's	138557	84	34	13.18	3	3.57
Johnnie Walker	144678	84	55	33.54	44	52.38
Rekorderlig	223687	82	0	0.00	0	0.00
Jagermeister	79022	79	6	1.99	9	11.39
Wild Turkey	221120	69	8	4.88	7	10.14
Absolut	63362	63	3	1.00	3	4.76
Bundaberg Rum	187197	61	1	0.54	1	1.64
Baileys	141863	60	47	24.48	21	35.00
Smirnoff	180000	55	55	26.32	22	40.00
Midori	55579	54	10	4.61	0	0.00
Jacob's Creek	134993	53	13	4.89	0	0.00
Jameson Irish Whiskey	59056	48	15	10.64	13	27.08
Bundy R. Bear	78906	32	19	14.96	19	59.38
Victoria Bitter	65885	26	9	4.74	4	15.38
Tooheys Extra Dry	111128	23	0	0.00	0	0.00
Carlton Dry	76698	20	5	2.67	0	0.00
Pure Blonde	215369	19	33	22.45	5	26.32
American Honey	93867	18	6	5.88	1	5.56
XXXX Gold	63708	12	0	0.00	0	0.00
TOTALS	2500676	1018	324	7.44	152	14.43

Wild Turkey's 'Bird Up' advertisements generated extensive interaction on its Facebook page. Image 41 illustrates the use of the 'Bird Up' slogan in its posts and images. Fans would appropriate the 'Bird Up'

moniker in their comments and posts. 'Bird Up' refers both to drinking The Bird (Wild Turkey), but also to being tough and brave. These sentiments are connected with excessive consumption where fans are encouraged to 'bird up' and have a 'wild weekend', which is a play on Wild Turkey but also means 'wild' in terms of excessive consumption. While the brand doesn't explicitly promote excessive consumption, it provides cultural resources that fans can incorporate into their own identities and narratives that glorify excessive consumption. The brand subtly nods to excessive consumption in its 'Bird Up' moniker, and fans do the work of extending it and linking it to their own drinking cultures. To 'bird up' also takes on many different meanings as fans appropriate and reuse it.

Image 41: Bird Up advertisements from Wild Turkey Facebook page

Responsible consumption

Fewer than one in 10 (7.35%) items of content examined featured responsible consumption messages. These were predominantly in the form of a watermark in brand images or advertisements. Only four brands used a responsible consumption watermark or message in more than 20% of their content (Table 9).

Table 9: Brands ranked by responsible consumption messages and watermarks

| Brand	Responsible Consumption	% post with responsible consumption
Johnnie Walker	55	33.54
Baileys	47	24.48
Smirnoff	51	24.40
Pure Blonde	33	22.45
Bundy R. Bear	19	14.96
Jack Daniel's	34	13.18
Jameson Irish Whiskey	15	10.64
American Honey	6	5.88
Jacob's Creek	13	4.89
Wild Turkey	8	4.88
Victoria Bitter	9	4.74
Midori	10	4.61
Carlton Dry	5	2.67
Jagermeister	6	1.99
Absolut	3	1.00
Jim Beam	5	0.83
Bundaberg Rum	1	0.54
XXXX Gold	0	0.00
Tooheys Extra Dry	0	0.00
Rekorderlig	0	0.00
Total	320	7.35

On a handful of occasions brands posted an item of content that explicitly promoted responsible consumption. These posts, though, were easily re-appropriated by fans into their narratives of excessive consumption. In Image 42 over the page, Jacob's Creek posts 'The recommended maximum daily intake of alcohol for women is 2- 3 units per day, which is at least a glass half full!'

Fan comments altered this message:

- *So the rest is just for fun?*
- *i need a bigger glass*
- *And the rest!*
- *oh dear - i'm on my second!!*

- *Unfortunately not during dry July!*
- *Nothin Dry about it in my house.*
- *No I am sure 3 glasses of Jacobs Creek Red is what they mean, anyway that's what I am having lol xo*
- *Don't panic everyone. One unit =one bottle I'm sure!!!*
- *I would like 2 Imperial Pints a Day.*

Image 42: Jacob's Creek responsible consumption post
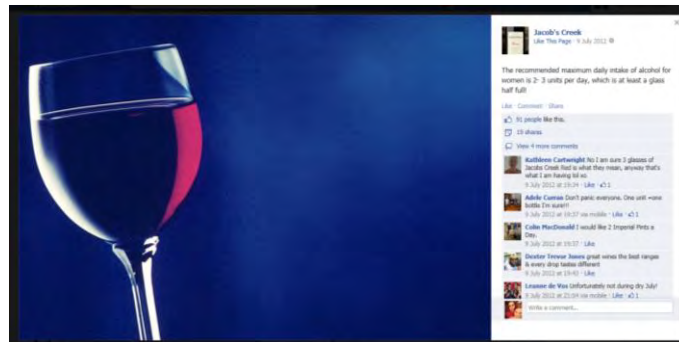
Conclusions and implications for policy

Facebook has become an important marketing tool for alcohol brands in Australia. Brands are investing resources to create high-quality content, employing professionals to manage and communicate with users through their pages and developing innovative strategies for engagement. Facebook also provides a number of unique tools that brands employ to increase their value.

Brands interact with consumers in real time, imitating their intimate conversations and timing their posts to intersect with cultural moments and events. Brand activity on Facebook is also continuous and dynamic, with brands interacting with consumers in an ongoing and fluid way. Interaction does not stop after the brand has posted the content. Consumers like, comment on and share content, giving it value and distributing it throughout their friendship networks. So Facebook provides brands with large amounts of data, both about users and about the success of its interactions with users. Facebook can also measure the reach, affinity and weight of how users interact with brand content. Brands capitalise on Facebook's algorithms and analytics to refine and target their marketing to greatly increase its effectiveness. Using this information, brands can also control who sees their content.

The 20 brands studied in this research make sophisticated use of social media to maximise interaction with fans. Brands leverage popular culture and other cultural resources to develop 'personalities' that their target markets identify with. As users interact with this content, it gets pushed into their peer networks and so embeds brands into the everyday lives and identities of their fans. Brands also use real-life promotions to further engage with users online - it is not uncommon to see alcohol brand activations at cultural occasions like music festivals or sporting events. This means that consumers connect the brand to their identities, locations, pastimes and social networks as they interact with it over Facebook.

The sophisticated use of social media by brands identified in this research has identified seven issues currently not addressed by existing regulation that should be considered in determining future directions for the regulatory environment:

1. **Extensiveness** – The activity by brands on Facebook is extensive and continuous in terms of audience size, volume and frequency, interaction and timing.
2. **Collaboration with consumers** - Brands focus on interacting with consumers, with consumer contributions being a regular and intrinsic part of brand messages on Facebook.
3. **Activations** - Brands invest significant resources in real-world promotional activities. They build themed social spaces in nightlife precincts, music festivals and sporting events, using these to generate content and engagement on their Facebook pages.
4. **Everyday life** – Brands engage with consumers' routine conversations about everyday life. The more embedded in everyday life alcohol consumption is, the more valuable alcohol brands are because they become increasingly impervious to regulation.
5. **Global pages** - Brands are using Facebook to develop global approaches to branding, allowing them to use global strategies and to gain information on millions of consumers.
6. **Surveillance and targeting** - Brands and Facebook together have accumulated an extensive amount of data about consumers, allowing them to target messaging in ways that they were unable to previously.
7. **Transparency** - Regulating alcohol brands depends to a large extent on brand activity being subject to public scrutiny. However, as branding activities go 'below the line' on Facebook, it is

not possible for regulators, researchers, policy makers and the public to observe and scrutinise the activities of brands.

Each of these issues is explored in greater detail below.

1. Extensiveness

Alcohol brands are investing significant resources in producing content and managing interaction on their Facebook pages. Their activity on Facebook is extensive and continuous in terms of audience size, volume and frequency, interaction and timing:

- *The size of the audience*: Brands collectively have 2.5 million followers.
- *The volume and frequency of posts*: Brands post on average four times per week. During 2012 the top 20 brands posted 4500 items of content.
- *The amount of interaction*: Each post generates on average 543 interactions. During 2012 the top 20 brands garnered 2.3 million interactions with fans.
- *The timing of posts*: Brands carefully time their posts to particular days, times and events to engage with conversations taking place on Facebook as part of consumers' everyday lives. Posts are also targeted to individual consumers, in particular places and at specific times.

These changes shift what we mean by 'volume' when considering alcohol marketing.

Volume needs to include a consideration of the ways that alcohol marketing is embedded in other cultural texts, practices and spaces. The activity of brands on Facebook is interwoven with consumers' continuous mediation of everyday life.

We can only roughly estimate the organic reach of the content in this study. There is no way to estimate the true organic, paid and viral reach without having access to Facebook's analytics. The average fan base of a brand in this study is 125,000. The top 20 brands produced 4,500 posts collectively in 2012. Facebook has advised page owners that the average post reaches only 16% of the fan base. However, there is extensive variance across brands depending on the size of their fan base, the quality of the content, and the extent of user engagement. Some industry estimates suggest posts can reach anywhere between 5% and 45% of the fan base. Assuming that each item of content goes out to a fan base with an average size of 125,000 and there were 4,500 items of content distributed, then here are some potential examples of the reach of this content:

- If posts reached on average 10% of the fan base the 4,500 items of content would generate 56.25 million impressions.
- If posts reached on average 16% of the fan base the 4,500 items of content would generate 90 million impressions.
- If posts reached on average 20% of the fan base the 4,500 items of content would generate 112.5 million impressions.
- If posts reached on average 30% of the fan base the 4,500 items of content would generate 168.75 million impressions.
- If posts reached on average 40% of the fan base the 4,500 items of content would generate 225 million impressions.

These estimates consider only the organic reach of posts - they do not take into account the viral reach generated as fans like, comment or share the content.

Alcohol brands in this study generated on average 543 interactions per post. These interactions increase the reach of the content by both increasing its affinity score in the Facebook algorithm and pushing it out into the news feeds of fans' friends. As a brief experiment, if each item of content is interacted with 543 times, and the average Facebook user has 245 friends, then the viral reach of each post could potentially generate up to 132,545 additional impressions. This would depend on the affinity between the liked content and the friends of the user.

It is important to note that since this study was undertaken, the activity of these brands has continued to increase. As at 11 April 2014 of the 20 brands in this study, six have since incorporated their Australian activities into global pages so Australian numbers can't be separated from global numbers.

Among the 14 brands that still have dedicated Australian pages there has been substantial growth. Those 14 brands had 1,725,750 fans at the end of 2012. Today they have 2,491,882 fans. That is a growth rate of 44.39% since the end of 2012. Some of the brands to experience the largest growth include:

- Rekorderlig from 223,687 to 295,410.
- Wild Turkey from 221,120 to 308,858.
- Pure Blonde from 215,369 to 226,661.
- Bundaberg Rum from 187,197 to 256,209.
- Jacob's Creek from 134,993 to 394,146.
- American Honey from 93,867 to 157,949.
- Carlton Dry from 76,698 to 137,241.

2. Collaboration with consumers

Current regulatory approaches assume that brands are planned and deliberate messages delivered via media texts like advertisements. They focus on reception of meanings by particular audiences. This does not reflect how branding on social media works (Brodmerkel and Carah 2013).

Alcohol brands in this study average 543 interactions per item of content. Four of these brands -Pure Blonde, Baileys, Bundaberg Rum and Wild Turkey - averaged more than 1000 interactions per post.

Consumers' contributions are a regular and intrinsic part of brand messages on Facebook. In this study we observed brands rely on consumer participation by:

- Asking questions.
- Prompting conversations.
- Circulating memes and jokes.
- Offering consumption suggestions and recipes.
- Running competitions.
- Encouraging photography.
- Using real-world 'activations'.

Consumers add meaning to, extend and amplify brand messages on Facebook. Each time a consumer interacts with a brand on Facebook, that interaction incorporates the brand into his or her personal online portrait. This makes the brand an authentic and credible part of the consumer's identity and

cultural world. It also makes the brand flexible and adaptable, and visible to the consumer's wider peer network. Each time a person interacts with a brand on Facebook, that interaction is distributed into the news feeds of the consumer's friends. If those friends then interact with the content, the brand is pushed further into those peer networks. As consumers interact with social media they generate extensive portraits of their identities, cultural practices and social networks which brands can use to target them more continuously and effectively.

Below the line

Value is created when fans interact with brand content and push it out into their peer network. Much of the interaction consumers have with brand content is in their own news feeds. After liking a brand's official page, very few ever return to it.

This means that much brand activity on Facebook disappears 'below the line' into the individual profiles and niche networks of users. It is embedded in peer-to-peer exchanges and not open to public scrutiny.

The placement and meaning of brand content on Facebook is highly dynamic. A brand's message will appear in many different contexts as consumers interact with it and incorporate it into their online identities and conversations. Many of these brand messages will be incorporated in consumers' own representation of their drinking culture (including excessive consumption and alcohol-related violence).

A regulatory code centred on the 'interpretation' of an individual media text in relation to a particular context cannot adequately account for the fluid nature of content production and dissemination on social media sites. Furthermore, attempts by regulators to judge the meaning of texts are increasingly futile when a singular text is appropriated in a variety of ways in a social media network.

While it may be argued that ordinary members of the public ought to be free to celebrate excessive consumption on their social media profiles, the fact is that brands are appropriating and profiting from this mediation of drinking culture. At the very least, the extent to which brand messages are being incorporated in consumer-generated representations of drinking culture deserves attention.

3. Activations

Distinctions between advertising and the real-world activities of brands are obsolete. Alcohol brands invest significant resources in real-world promotional activities. They build themed social spaces in nightlife precincts, music festivals and sporting events. These spaces are a significant site of brand production and are used to generate content and engagement on the brands' Facebook pages. Current regulatory approaches do not cover these culturally embedded marketing activities.

In 2012 alcohol brands used the following activations to create content for their Facebook pages:

- Brands created stand-alone themed installations that embodied the brand's identity and mythology. For example, XXXX Gold created XXXX Island, consistently promoting the island and asking fans to contribute to its mythology on its Facebook page.
- Several brands sponsored music festivals where they built large themed bars. In addition to serving alcohol and having exclusive performances at the festival, they used these spaces to generate

extensive Facebook content via their own profiles and by encouraging fans to upload content to their individual profiles. These activations included Jagermeister's Hunting Lodge, Strongbow's sailing ship and Smirnoff's multi-level cocktail bar at Splendour in the Grass.

- Several brands sponsored sporting events where they built themed bars, creating content about the events and photographing fans. For example, Carlton Dry sponsored snowboarding events and Jacob's Creek sponsored the Australian Open tennis and built a large themed bar at the event.
- Several brands sponsored cultural events. These sponsorships included Absolut Vodka's sponsorship of events in art galleries and fashion stores where they took photographs of 'hip' consumers and artists.

Activations are central to embedding the brand in the cultural experiences and memories of consumers. Brands use activations to get consumers to incorporate the brand in their mediation of their identities and social lives. Brands take and upload photos of consumers, encourage them to 'check in' on Facebook, and hand out branded artefacts like hats, sunglasses, and beach balls. As brands and consumers generate updates and images and circulate them online, they become peer-to-peer advertisements that embed the brands in the identities and cultural world of consumers.

This activity is difficult to regulate because consumption of the product in everyday life and the construction of the brand are integrated. While the brand provides the cultural context and resources, it is often the consumers who create and circulate the media text on social media that promotes the brand. Furthermore, most of this content is 'below the line' and only visible to those consumers featured in it, their friends, the brand and Facebook.

4. Everyday life

Alcohol brands engage with consumers' routine conversations about everyday life. Alcohol brands are more likely to post on a Friday than any other day of the week, and these Friday posts receive more interactions than those on other days of the week. Brands are more likely to post between 2pm and 6pm. Posts that link drinking to specific times or events generate 1.7 times as many interactions as posts that do not connect drinking to a specific time and place.

The more embedded in everyday life alcohol consumption is, the more valuable alcohol brands are because they become increasingly impervious to regulation. Facebook demonstrates the capacity of the industry to develop a range of strategies that embed branding and consumption in everyday life. Consumers do the work of appropriating, extending and circulating brand messages.

This works in two ways:

- Ordinary people consume alcohol in everyday life and use Facebook to turn those pastimes and cultural practices into media texts that the industry can channel, track and respond to. Users make extensive media that serves industry interests.
- Using Facebook, brands can connect alcohol consumption to music, sport and other kinds of popular culture as part of ordinary people's everyday mediation of their lives.

5. Global pages

Alcohol brands are using Facebook to develop global approaches to branding. Some brands have already moved to global brand pages that have several million fans. During this study, Absolut and

Smirnoff converted their Australian pages into global pages. As at 11 April 2014, Smirnoff has 10.8 million fans, Johnnie Walker has 8.9 million, Absolut has 4.8 million, Jagermeister has 3.3 million and Jim Beam has 1.9 million fans on their global pages. Some brands were not included in this study because they only have a global page. For instance, Heineken has 14.2 million fans on its global page. These pages offer a direct channel to an enormous target market. They also enable the centralisation of content production and data collection about that audience and demonstrate the extensive reach of alcohol branding on Facebook at a global level. Many of the brands in this study are part of global distribution groups. A brand with several million fans can collect data about consumers across multiple countries. With the ability to reach several million targets without paying for any advertising space comes the capacity to invest extensively in the development of more culturally embedded forms of marketing including sponsorships, popular culture, viral content and real-world activations. Facebook enables the industry to reorganise its promotional tactics and marketing spend. As it shifts its marketing resources below the line, its activities become less visible to the public and regulators.

6. Surveillance and targeting

The alcohol industry and Facebook together have accumulated an extensive amount of data about consumers. This data is not a by-product of what the industry is doing on Facebook - it is increasingly central to how it builds and manages brands.

The mode of branding evolving on Facebook involves extensive surveillance of consumers and targeting of content in real time. Over time brands accumulate large online networks of followers. Of alcohol brands with a dedicated Australian presence on Facebook, the top 10 have more than 100,000 followers each. These pages generate extensive interaction with Australian consumers. Each interaction generates data that enables more refined targeting and gives brands extensive insights into the everyday lives of social media users. We need to turn our attention not only to the messages brands produce, but also the kinds of data their branding activities generate and how they use that data.

Each time individuals interact with a brand they add a piece of information to the network around the brand. The denser social networks around brands on social media are, the more information the brands can use to track, segment and target consumers. For example, photographs of branded bars, promotional material, logos, and products that circulate on social media are not only images that might promote the brand, they also assemble networks that can be watched as those images circulate. The images that brands and consumers circulate are not just advertisements that contain meaning, they are also devices that hold in place a network of social connections around the brand. Each interaction 'connects' that person's social graph to the brand, that is, that person's network of preferences, interests and social connections. This enables the brand to create messages that target consumers in sophisticated ways based on who they are, their cultural preferences, their peer network, and where they are. More and more of these activities are invisible to regulators and researchers because the Facebook pages and news feeds of particular users are only accessible to those individuals and their peers. The surveillance capacities of social media enable alcohol branding to move further 'below-the-line' and become more deeply embedded in everyday cultural life.

Regulation does not currently address how alcohol brands collect information about consumers, the kind of information they collect and how this information is being used to target consumers. This is not just a matter of consumer privacy, but of considering how surveillance enables more embedded, real-

time and below-the-line interactions with consumers. The surveillance capacities of social media are central to the management of more participatory, targeted and below-the-line forms of brand management.

7. Transparency

Until now we have relied on forms of marketing regulation that mostly work at the level of content, i.e. what brands can and cannot say, when and where they say it and who they say it to. Regulating alcohol brands depends to a large extent on brand activity being subject to public scrutiny. For regulation to work we need to be able to see what they say, who they say it to and in what context. As branding activities go 'below the line' on Facebook it is not possible for regulators, researchers, policy makers and the public to observe and scrutinise the activities of brands. At the same time Facebook dramatically increases the 'visibility' of users and consumers to brands. Brands know much more about consumers' identities, cultural practices and social networks, but the public knows far less about what brands are doing. Increasingly, brands will use targeted messages and forms of content that are shaped to be visible to specific kinds of users. More and more of these activities are invisible to regulators and researchers because the Facebook pages and news feeds of particular users are not publicly accessible. Brand activity is 'hidden' in micro-level exchanges in niche peer groups. Much of the activity detailed in this report offers insight into the trajectory of the system of communication and data collection brands are developing. Facebook may soon offer brands the capacity to 'gate' content in increasingly refined ways. At present, alcohol brands age-gate content on Facebook to prevent under-18s from viewing it. These technologies could be extended to enable brands to gate content so that only people of a certain age, gender or with specific demographic characteristics can see it. These tools may increase the capacity of brands to ensure their activities are not scrutinised by people outside the target market. These activities and technologies significantly diminish the role that public scrutiny plays in regulating alcohol brands.

Facebook, and alcohol brands, already have extensive data on the extent of impressions and interactions with brand messages by various demographics. They know how many impressions are being made, what interaction they get and how these vary with demographics, locations and times of day or week. Researchers and policy makers could work to compel the industry to disclose this information; failing that, audience research into the extent of alcohol brand content in individual Facebook profiles would demonstrate how brand activity extends beyond their official pages.

Recommendations for researchers, policy makers and regulators

In light of the issues raised above, the following needs to be considered in regulating alcohol marketing on Facebook:

How extensive and continuous should alcohol branding be?

Current regulation of alcohol marketing does not address the volume or extensiveness of alcohol promotions. On Facebook, alcohol brands distribute a continuous stream of marketing content through the news feeds of their fans. This content is often interrelated with everyday practices and events. Facebook is being used to embed alcohol consumption in everyday life. Branding on Facebook is integrated with consumers' visual, mobile and continuous mediation of everyday life. Regulatory frameworks should clearly address not only the content of promotional messages but also the volume, reach and impressions of those messages, together with the level of engagement they generate as consumers interact with them.

What kind of collaboration with consumers is appropriate?

Alcohol brands are using Facebook to get consumers to collaborate in the creation and circulation of brand messages. Current regulation of alcohol marketing does not address what kind of collaboration with consumers is appropriate. Policy makers need to explicitly address in regulatory approaches the role that marketers get consumers to play in their alcohol marketing activities.

What kind of engagement with everyday life is appropriate?

Alcohol brands are using Facebook to leverage real-world promotions. Current regulatory approaches make a distinction between traditional forms of advertising and real-world promotional activities. However, on Facebook real-world promotions are used to produce media content. Policy makers need to develop regulatory approaches that encompass all forms of alcohol marketing activity in one framework.

How should global branding activities be addressed?

Alcohol brands are using Facebook to develop global approaches to branding. Some brands have already moved to global brand pages that have several million fans and so offer a direct channel to an enormous target market. They also enable the centralisation of content production and data collection about that audience. Policy makers need to address the global strategies of the alcohol industry.

What kind of surveillance and targeting is appropriate?

The mode of branding evolving on Facebook involves extensive surveillance of fans and targeting of content in real time. Regulation of alcohol brands needs to address not just the content and messages distributed by brands, but also what information is collected about consumers and how it is used. Policy makers should challenge the industry to be transparent about what information is collected about consumers and how it is used.

How transparent should alcohol brands be about their activities?

The activities of alcohol brands on Facebook are not all public. This makes it difficult for governments, policy makers and researchers cannot scrutinise their activities. At the same time the industry is

amassing large amounts of data about target markets and the extent to which content is seen and interacted with. Considering the industry has extensive data about the extent of interaction online, policy makers should challenge the industry to be more transparent about its marketing activities.

Regulation of alcohol marketing on social media should consider the following:

- Volume in assessing alcohol marketing, i.e. conceptualising volume not only in terms of number of discrete marketing messages, but also the density and continuity of flow of messages through particular channels. This could include the volume of messages targeted to specific demographics, and the volume of interactions with those messages.
- Conceptualising branding as predominantly participatory and collaborative. Current conceptualisations of branding as the work of creating and distributing discrete messages is a misconception of how the alcohol industry creates valuable brands.
- Facebook is a significant institutional actor in the alcohol industry. Brand activities should be assessed in relation to the broader mediation of drinking culture by consumers and cultural intermediaries, and the role social media platforms play in facilitating those interactions. Alcohol brands do not work in isolation from the broader drinking culture; they rely on consumers' own mediations of drinking culture. The alcohol industry and platforms like Facebook can clearly see how these connections work. They are largely invisible to the public – including researchers and policy makers.
- The distinction between a brand's advertising and other promotional activities is no longer appropriate. Branding is fundamentally a suite of multiple communicative and cultural practices. All these activities should fall under the scope of regulation and be seen as mutually entwined. Just as Facebook is a significant institutional player in alcohol marketing, so are the array of cultural, sporting and music events that sell space and sponsorships to alcohol brands. These institutions could be included in the management of alcohol marketing. Many of these events have license conditions for the sale of alcohol that could extend to their role in building alcohol brands.

More specifically, current regulatory measures for alcohol marketing on social media are inadequate. For regulatory measures to address alcohol industry activity on Facebook, regulation must consider the:

- Volume and extensiveness of alcohol promotions.
- Context in which the marketing activity occurs, including consideration of multiple comments and the interaction between social media and real-world promotions.
- Appropriate forms of collaboration with consumers.
- Global nature of alcohol marketing.
- Collection of information from consumers and how this information is used.
- Need to gain access to activities that are not public.

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