



Between a rock and a hard place: Economic expansion and social responsibility in UK media discourses on the global alcohol industry



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ABSTRACT

Context: Transnational alcohol corporations (TACs) employ a range of strategies to achieve their business objectives, including attempts to frame perceptions of their activities in media debates. TACs aim to achieve a favourable regulatory environment by presenting themselves as socially responsible actors. However, the need to secure financial investment means they must also emphasise their potential for growth. This article investigates tensions between these objectives in coverage of the global alcohol industry in the UK print media.

Methods: This article examines coverage of the world's four largest TACs in five British daily newspapers and one industry publication between March 2012 and February 2013. 477 articles were identified for analysis through keyword searches of the LexisNexis database. Thematic coding of articles was conducted using Nvivo software.

Findings: Two conflicting framings of the alcohol industry emerge from our analysis. The first presents TACs as socially responsible actors; key partners to government in reducing alcohol-related harms. This is targeted at policy-makers and the public in an attempt to shape policy debates. The second framing highlights TACs' potential for economic growth by establishing new markets and identifying new customer bases. This is targeted at an audience of potential investors.

Conclusions: A fundamental contradiction lies at the heart of these framings, reflecting the tensions that exist between TACs' political and financial strategies. Alcohol industry involvement in policy-making thus involves a fundamental conflict of interests. Consequently, the UK government should reassess the prominence it currently affords to the industry in the development and delivery of alcohol policy.

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1. Introduction

Despite the high levels of alcohol-related harm (Public Health England, 2013), successive UK governments have eschewed evidence-based, population –level policies in favour of partnership-based approaches favoured by the alcohol industry (Anderson, 2007; Department of Health, 2007; Cabinet Office, 2004). Many of the world's largest transnational alcohol corporations (TACs), including Diageo and SABMiller, are headquartered in the UK and are listed on the London Stock Exchange [see Table 1] (Baggott, 2006; Hawkins et al., 2012; Hawkins and Holden, 2012). As exporters and employers, they are powerful economic actors, controlling iconic products such as Scotch whisky (Holden and

Hawkins, 2013). Reflecting this, alcohol industry actors have been afforded a prominent role in the development and implementation of alcohol policy under successive governments (Anderson, 2007; Cabinet Office, 2004; Baggott, 2006, 2010; Hawkins et al., 2012; Hawkins and Holden, 2012; Holden and Hawkins, 2013; Room, 2004; Department of Health, 2013). Industry bodies are now responsible for voluntary codes on the sale and marketing of alcohol and public information campaigns on alcohol consumption (Hawkins et al., 2012; McCambridge et al., 2014). Under the 2010–2015 Coalition Government, their role was further consolidated in the Public Health Responsibility Deal Alcohol Network (RDAN) (Department of Health, 2013; Knai et al., 2015).

Achieving a favourable regulatory environment is a key determinant of commercial success for corporations. Consequently, political strategy, designed to bring about such conditions, has long been recognised as a key component of overall corporate strategy, on an equal footing with market strategy (Baron, 1995). Like transnational tobacco corporations (TTCs) (Hurt et al., 2009;

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Table 1
World ranking of TACs according to their annual revenue.

Company	World ranking	Annual revenue in local currency	Converted to £ ^a
ABInBev	1	\$39,758 m ¹²⁷ (Anheuser Busch Inbev, 2012)	25,891 m
SABMiller	2	\$31,388 m ¹²⁸ (SABMiller, 2012)	20,441 m
Heineken	3	€18,383 m ¹²⁹ (Heineken, 2012)	15,696 m
Diageo	4	£10,692 m ¹²⁰¹²⁰ (Diageo, 2012)	10,692 m

^a Converted with XE Currency Converter on 24th June 2013.

Saloojee and Dagli, 2000), alcohol industry actors employ a range of different approaches to achieve their political objectives in the UK and beyond (Hawkins et al., 2012; Hawkins and Holden, 2012; Holden and Hawkins, 2013; Anderson, 2004; Bakke and Endal, 2010; Giesbrecht, 2000; Jernigan, 2012; Miller and Harkins, 2010; Stenius and Babor, 2010; Yoon and Lam, 2012). As Miller and Harkins suggest, communications and media strategies are a key element of their political strategy, providing businesses with ‘an opportunity to connect with popular opinion as well as elite opinion’ (Miller and Harkins, 2010).

To support the voluntary, self-regulatory approaches they favour, industry actors promote an image of themselves as socially responsible actors, committed to tackling alcohol problems through their media strategies (Hawkins and Holden, 2012; Hawkins and Holden, 2013; McCambridge et al., 2013). These strategies seek to mobilise public support for industry actors’ favoured policies, in an attempt to influence decision-makers indirectly through their constituents. Previous studies have indicated the crucial role which media framing has played in the development of alcohol policy in the UK and beyond (Holden and Hawkins, 2013; Knai et al., 2015; Yoon and Lam, 2012; Hawkins and Holden, 2013; Katikireddi et al., 2014; Hilton et al., 2014; Wood et al., 2014; Nicholls, 2011; Katikireddi and Hilton, 2015).

However, policy-makers and their electorates are not the only relevant audiences for TACs. The media also play a key role in what we may term ‘corporate financial strategy,’ through which TACs promote an image of themselves as profitable undertakings ripe for investment by key actors in the financial services sector. In this context, TTCs focus on their growth potential by opening up new markets and identifying new customer bases. A fundamental contradiction appears to emerge between these discourses of social responsibility and aggressive expansion.

The study of contradictions can be insightful when analysing corporate messaging and is now a long established approach within the fields of discourse theory and analysis. In their exegesis of ‘logics of critical explanation,’ Glynos and Howarth identify contradictions within discourse as potential markers of what they term ‘fantasmatic logics’ (Glynos and Howarth, 2007); which seek to cover over the fundamental instability and malleability in articulated social orders. Their work and the broader theoretical discourse tradition out of which it emerges (Howarth and Howarth, 2000) draw heavily on Derrida’s (Derrida, 2013) methodology of deconstruction, which seeks to identify the moments at which cracks begin to appear in the text and the discourses which they contain begin to unravel. Within this tradition, contradictions indicate ideological practices, which seek to mask agents’ deeper, underlying motivations. In the field of corporate actors research, such inconsistencies may indicate attempts by TACs to present themselves in ways which are not fully consistent with their business activities and the consequences that these have.

Previous studies have identified contradictions within alcohol industry attempts to frame policy debates in the UK (Hawkins and Holden, 2013). This article seeks to build on this by examining those contradictions that emerge *between* TACs’ political and financial strategies. This in turn has significant implications for UK alcohol

policy, underlining the fundamental conflicts of interest presented by industry involvement in policy-making and implementation.

1.1. Framing theory, political strategy and the media

Framing theory assumes that the social world is indeterminate and is open to a multitude of competing interpretations and meanings (Fischer, 2003; Hajer and Laws, 2006). Frames are ‘underlying structures of belief, perception and appreciation’ on which distinct policy positions depend (Schon and Rein, 1994). They provide an ordering logic that renders issues comprehensible (Hajer and Laws, 2006; Schon and Rein, 1994; Daviter, 2007; Scheufele and Tewksbury, 2007; Triandafyllidou and Fotiou, 1998). The specific framing of an issue influences whether it is identified as a political problem, if it warrants action by government and what the appropriate policy responses to it are. Framing defines the terms in which political debates are conducted and the assumptions on which they rest (Béland, 2009; Weiss, 1989; van Hulst and Yanow, 2016). For this reason, policy actors have an interest in framing debates in ways that are amenable to their interests and objectives (Rein and Schön, 1996; Snow and Benford, 1992). Attempts to frame issues in a particular way are thus political acts, and controversies emerge where mutually incompatible policy frames compete to define a given issue and to dictate the policy responses to it.

The media play a crucial role in contemporary political debates, providing citizens’ principal source of information about policy issues (Edelman, 1988). As such, they are a key terrain on which political contestation occurs (Terkildsen et al., 1998; Voltmer and Koch-Baumgarten, 2010). Groups aiming to influence media content may employ public relations (PR) consultants to frame and deliver their messages to media outlets (Terkildsen et al., 1998; Strömberg, 2001). In addition, the conditions under which many journalists now operate has increased the ability of PR agencies to frame media debates on behalf of their clients. Structural changes within the industry have led to significant reductions in the size of editorial staff across British national newspapers (Lewis et al., 2008). At the same time, pressure has risen to produce increasing amounts of content to fill not just print editions, but online content and social media, with a noticeable impact on the origin of many news stories (Lewis et al., 2008; Davis, 2009). Increasingly, resource-poor journalists derive stories from external sources, notably agency services (e.g. The Press Association) and press releases (Davis, 2009; Lewis et al., 2008).

In their 2006 analysis of UK news media Lewis et al. (Lewis et al., 2008) found just that under half of the new items sampled across a random two week period were either heavily reliant (19%) or exact duplicates (30%) of agency wires. A fifth of the stories were identifiably derived from PR material. The increasing reliance of journalists on externally produced copy provides resource rich actors, including corporations, a powerful opportunity to frame media debates in ways amenable to their interests, and to project a certain image of themselves to consumers, voters, regulators and potential investors. Other policy actors, including public health and NGOs are engaged in similar processes but, in comparison with the alcohol

industry, they have extremely limited resources to dedicate to political advocacy, including interventions in the media (Hawkins and Holden, 2012).

The concept of framing has been central to the development of, and debates surrounding UK, alcohol policy. This was evident during the debates about MUP in Scotland. Policy actors have indicated that reframing Scotland alcohol policy debates away from individual level interventions targeted at a supposedly small minority of problem drinkers to whole population measures played a key role in shifting policy agenda towards MUP (Hawkins and Holden, 2013; Katikireddi et al., 2014; Wood et al., 2014). This required advocates to reframe policy debates from being about binge drinking and public order issue to a focus on the population health effects of alcohol (Katikireddi et al., 2014; Hilton et al., 2014). Further studies of policy debates throughout the UK demonstrate that policy actors are acutely aware of the importance of media debates in shaping public opinion, framing messages in subtly different ways to target different audiences in order to influence policy (Katikireddi and Hilton, 2015). This has implications for public health actors seeking to tailor policy messages in ways likely to influence policy debates (Hilton et al., 2014). The present study aims to build on these insights by identifying ways in which alcohol industry actors frame their messaging to target different audiences in order to meet their policy and wider commercial objectives.

2. Methods

The coverage of the world's four largest TACs – AB-InBev, Diageo, Heineken and SABMiller – was analysed in five British daily newspapers (*The Sun*, *The Daily Mail*, *The Daily Telegraph*, *Daily Mirror* and *The Guardian*). The decision to focus on newspapers, versus other forms of media output, reflects both the amenability of printed texts to this form of analysis and the ongoing importance of the outlets as agenda setters in wider media discourses (Hawkins, 2012). The titles selected represent the different political alignments (left-wing and right-wing) and genres of newspapers (tabloid, broadsheet and midrange) in the British market [see Table 2]. The highest selling paper in each section was chosen according to ABC circulation figures from April 2013 (*The Guardian*, 2013).

Articles were sourced through key word searches of the *LexisNexis* database. Both daily and Sunday versions of the newspapers were included, as were regional editions (e.g. those for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland; but not the Republic of Ireland). In addition, industry publication *The Publican's Morning Advertiser* was selected to facilitate comparison of the coverage in general versus specialist publications, with articles accessed through keyword search of the publication's website. Articles published from 1 March 2012 to 28 February 2013 were included, encompassing the period surrounding the release of the UK Government Alcohol Strategy in March 2012 (Home Office, 2012) and the subsequent consultation, which ran from the 28 November 2012 until the 6 February 2013 (Home Office, 2013); a period of heightened debate about alcohol policy and the alcohol industry.

Retrieved articles were screened and analysed by the first

author. Duplicates were removed and all articles that mentioned ABInBev, Diageo, Heineken and SABMiller were included unless they: i) solely referenced company share prices, without additional text; ii) did not contain information relating to the activity of the company (e.g. a story describing Guinness factory staff finding a snake in a keg). No advertisements featured in the sample.

Included articles were initially read for familiarisation and to elicit key codes. They were then imported into Nvivo10 for thematic content analysis using the identified codes (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The articles were then re-read to ensure all information had been correctly coded and that no new codes emerged. A total of 1997 articles were yielded from the two data collections, 76.1% (n = 1520) were excluded following initial screening, leaving 477 articles in the sample for thematic analysis [see Table 3]. Industry publications represented just over one fifth (n = 76) of the total sample. Over a third of articles (39.4%) were found in newspapers' business, market and finance sections [see Table 4].

In many cases, the articles examined explicitly acknowledged the contribution of industry voices through the reproduction of direct quotations from key individuals, references to industry publications (e.g. annual reports and accounts), or reports from company meetings. Where this is the case we attribute the arguments presented to the companies themselves, and interpret these statements as attempts to shape the perception of the industry amongst the key political and business audiences we identify. At other times journalists may make reference to industry sources or identify industry positions without direct quotations. Where no direct references to industry positions are present, it is impossible to know whether the content of the article represents the views of the organisations on which the article reports, or are examples of industry attempts to frame the policy debate. Nonetheless, these articles are of great relevance for the current article since they provide evidence of the key issues facing the alcohol industry from both a business and regulatory perspective, and thus the challenges to which their financial and political strategies must respond. As such, they capture the dynamics of current alcohol policy debates, and the conflicting pressures on industry actors facing different audiences with competing priorities.

3. Results

Two principle framings of the alcohol industry emerged from the texts analysed: *global expansion* and *social responsibility*. Whilst we analysed a range of different publications in terms of genre and political orientation, a remarkable degree of consistency emerged between the coverage of the industry across the titles selected. This reflects the reliance of journalists on similar sources for their stories, including industry briefings and press releases. As a result of this we do not structure our analysis around different titles but instead examine the emergence of the two framings across all the sources we examined. In addition, we did not find significant variation between the companies examined in terms of the framing of issues and so we do not distinguish between companies.

Previous studies have indicated potentially significant divergence between alcohol industry actors on policy issues (Holden et al., 2012), with close collaboration elsewhere. In keeping with these findings, the degree of convergence between companies here may be explained by the fact they are all from the same sector of the industry (i.e. producer organisations) facing similar policy challenges and pursuing closely aligned strategic objectives. As such they face similar tensions within their corporate messaging in the context of closer scrutiny by policy makers in established markets whilst seeking concurrently to demonstrate profitability and expand into LMICs. It is, however, noteworthy that Diageo and SABMiller were the most frequently covered companies receiving

Table 2
Newspapers selected according to political stance and readership.

Genre	Political stance	
	Left of centre (daily circulation)	Right of centre (daily circulation)
Quality	The Guardian (196,004)	The Daily Telegraph (549,037)
Mid		The Daily Mail (1803,327)
Tabloid	The Mirror (1042,098)	The Sun (2281,844)

Table 3
Summary of articles selected according to newspaper.

Name of source - Daily/Sunday	Number of articles included by source (% of total sample)
The Daily Telegraph/The Sunday Telegraph	157 (32.9)
The Daily Mail/The Mail on Sunday	92 (19.3)
The Publican's Morning Advertiser	76 (15.9)
The Guardian/The Observer	62 (13.0)
The Sun	55 (11.5)
The Mirror/The Sunday Mirror	35 (7.3)

Table 4
Summary of articles selected according to newspaper sections.

Name of section	Number of articles included by section (% of total sample)
Business, Finance or Markets	188 (39.4)
Not classified	95 (20.0)
Industry Press (Articles from The Morning Advertiser)	76 (15.9)
News	74 (15.5)
Features	24 (5.0)
Sport	5 (1.0)
Editorial	4 (0.8)
Travel	3 (0.6)
Letters	2 (0.4)
Society	2 (0.4)
International	2 (0.4)
Health	1 (0.2)
Culture	1 (0.2)

more expose than AbInbev and Heineken. This may also be explained by the fact these companies are headquartered in the UK and thus may be particularly attuned to policy developments and public opinion there. This is in keeping with previous findings that connection to a domestic market affords certain sectors and companies a crucial role in policy debates there (Holden and Hawkins, 2013).

3.1. Global expansion

Within the corpus of texts analysed, coverage of TACs' economic strategies focuses on their entry into key emerging markets such as China, India, Brazil and in Africa. Opening these new markets is seen as key generator of profits and growth in the context of the stagnation or declines within established markets (Daily Mail, 2013; Steiner, 2012; Telegraph, 2013). The ability of profits from key emerging markets to offset weaker performances elsewhere, implies companies possess great durability and a power to stave off 'shocks' emanating from individual markets or regions.

Market entry in LMICs was being undertaken through the acquisition of local brands and producers (Pratley, 2012). ABInBev's proposed takeover of Mexican brewer Grupo Modelo, it was argued, would 'cement its dominance' in that market (Thomas, 2012). Diageo's purchase of local producer United Spirits was described as the 'key to unlocking the massive potential of the Indian market, where 4 m new consumers reach drinking age annually' (Reece, 2012). Similarly, its acquisition of cachaça producer Ypioca would provide an 'enhanced platform from which to accelerate the long term growth of our premium international spirits brands in Brazil' (This Is Money Reporter, 2012).

Two main groups of target consumer groups were repeatedly identified: "premium" consumers and "untapped" consumers. Premium consumers referred both to the emerging middle-class in LMICs for whom economic empowerment was driving demand for premium international brands (Hawkes, 2013; Thomas, 2012) and

individuals in established markets whose alcohol spending was untouched by the recession (Black, 2012; Hunter, 2012; Thomas, 2012). The processes of "premiumisation," in which more affluent consumers are encouraged to trade up to more expensive imported products, was presented as integral to the TACs' model for growth (Griffiths, 2012). As one article stated: 'A growing middle class in countries as diverse as Nigeria and China are keen to drink classic global brands, which carry status, rather than local brews' (Baird, 2012; Mail, 2012; Thomas, 2012).

The category "untapped consumers" referred to the two billion consumers around the world, principally in LMICs not currently drinking commercially produced alcohol. This included both young people coming into legal drinking age over the next 15–20 years (Thomas, 2012), and those adult consumers who are teetotal or who drink 'homebrew' or 'moonshine.' According to WHO, 67.6% of African countries for whom data is available, have population lifetime abstinence rates of over 50% (World Health Organisation, 2011). The informal alcohol market in Africa is estimated to be worth approximately £20 billion annually and TACs aim to target these drinkers with the promise of safer, higher quality products (Thomas, 2012). Heineken, SABMiller and Diageo have all created cheap, locally produced, 'entry level' products for new consumers which aim to replace informal produced alcohol and home-brews (Thomas, 2012).

Absent from the discussions of emerging market expansion was any considerations of the health and social consequences of the entry of TACs into these markets will be. Evidence from the tobacco industry suggests that when transnational corporations enter markets, they bring with them sophisticated branding and marketing techniques which drives sales, consumption and also harms (Taylor et al., 2000). As such, the proposed expansion for alcohol industry actors into LMICs must be viewed not just from the perspective of economic growth but health consequences for local populations and the associated burden on health services and other government spending.

3.2. Social responsibility

The social responsibility framing focuses on the alcohol industry's contribution to society both as economic actors and through corporate social responsibility (CSR) programmes. Whereas the market strategy of corporations focused principally on their expansion into emerging economies, much of their CSR activity featuring in the articles analysed centred on the UK and Ireland. The social impact of TAC expansion into emerging markets was not widely acknowledged. This reflects the targeting of their CSR messaging to a domestic audience within UK newspapers.

3.3. Economics benefits

The economic impact that the TACs would have on LMICs was not widely discussed in the articles examined. On the occasions this theme did emerge, however, the positive impact of working with the local farmers to create jobs and sustainable incomes were

highlighted. For example, SABMiller's CEO stated:

We recognise that operating in Africa is not just about being a multi-national making a profit and leaving ... There's nothing more powerful than having several thousand farmers dependent upon us for their success (Thomas, 2012).

Diageo similarly worked to enable small hold farmers, so they could become part of the supply chain. These two companies received grants from the Department for International Development (DFID) to subsidize these farmers (Duval-Smith, 2012; Lawrence, 2012). Emphasising the positive economic impact of market entry provides TACs with a strong platform from which to negotiate for favourable policy regimes from host governments. For example, we are told that SABMiller has negotiated with the government for a lower rate of excise duty on cassava beer in return for its support of small farmers (Thomas, 2012).

In the UK, the clearest example of the alcohol industry's contribution to the economy was Diageo's £1billion investment to expand its distilleries in Scotland. According to Diageo CEO Paul Walsh, the impact of this investment was not limited to the 100 jobs created in the plant itself, but would 'stimulate job creation throughout the economy' (Boyle, 2012). The article noted that this followed the closure of a bottling plant in Kilmarnock in March 2012 which led to 700 redundancies (Houston, 2012). This story of Diageo's investment into Scotland appeared in multiple articles across different titles within the sample (Boyle, 2012; Brummer, 2012; Cramb, 2012; Mail, 2012; Hawkes, 2012; Hiscott, 2012; Miller, 2012; Reece, 2012; Steiner, 2012; Thomas, 2012; Wood and Carrell, 2012). References to the employment generated by TACs often arose in the context of articles on MUP, which industry actors such as Diageo and SABMiller opposed (Thomas, 2012), claiming it would threaten employment in the whisky industry in Scotland (Hawkins and Holden, 2013).

In addition to the economic impact on the communities in which they operate, examples of charitable contributions arose frequently within the articles. For example, Diageo donated £5million to community initiatives in Scotland (Boyle, 2012) and 'aimed to tackle youth unemployment by taking on 100 apprentices' (This Is Money Reporter, 2012). As a representative of Diageo remarked: 'We are committed to building on this legacy [of a sustainable business] and making a significant and transformational impact on local communities through a wide variety of programmes' (Moran, 2012). These donations and programmes are part of a wider focus on sustainable, socially responsible business practices.

3.4. CSR

TACs engage in a range of CSR activities, which receive extensive media coverage. Support for co-regulatory regimes like the RDAN and industry funded programme such as Drinkaware were cited as evidence of the industry's commitment to reduce alcohol-related harm (Harrington, 2012; Degun, 2012). It was reported that TACs had signed up to the European Union's Responsible Marketing Pact (European Union, 2012; Harrington, 2012), and unilaterally implemented their own moderate-drinking campaigns (Black, 2012). The existence of co- and self-regulatory regimes was seen to obviate the need for further regulation, including MUP. A representative of Diageo claimed that MUP may even undermine what the company claims are successful models of co-regulation:

Diageo has consistently supported this Government and its predecessors to tackle alcohol misuse ... However, the intended introduction of a 9% alcohol tax intervention is misguided and appears to run counter to the Responsibility Deal set out by this Government (Thomas, 2012).

Depictions of CSR in relation to responsible drinking schemes were particularly prominent in the trade press. Here approximately 20% of articles were devoted to these activities such as Pubwatch (Degun, 2012), Best Bar None (Pescod, 2012) and the PASS identification scheme (Degun, 2012) to prevent under-age drinking and excessive alcohol consumption. SABMiller also invested £280,000 in their Scholars scheme to educate those selling alcohol (Degun, 2012). Other CSR activities were not directly related to alcohol consumption and health, but focused on broader issues of relevance to their businesses such as environmental sustainability, including water supply (Hawkes, 2012; Hilsdon, 2012; Shackleman, 2013; Smedley, 2013; Confino, 2012).

Some CSR activities can be commercially lucrative. Diageo's commercial partnership with Derry as UK City of Culture 2013 gave them sole pouring rights at related events (Mirror, 2012). Bells Help for Heroes campaign encouraged fundraising for injured soldiers within pubs, but an article in the *Morning Advertiser* urging 'outlets to stock up on limited Edition bottles to help the cause, and for consumers to raise a glass of Bell's to our heroes' highlights how this may lead also to the increased sales of the Diageo brand (Harvey, 2012).

It can be argued that CSR programmes of this type are designed to distract attention from the harms caused by alcohol consumption and to shape perceptions of TACs amongst consumers and policy-makers. However, corporations denied claims that their CSR programmes were merely an extension of their political and marketing strategies. Heineken claimed, for example, that their decision to withdraw super-strength beverages was not about 'creating corporate commercial kudos with the consumer, but was part of creating a business model based on 'profitable and sustainable brands' (Smith, 2013).

3.5. Protecting consumers

TACs are shown to be protecting their consumers in different ways in established and emerging economies. In LMICs, they claimed to be solving the problem of 'lethal' home brewed products, widely consumed in Africa, by creating low cost beer that industry could 'wean' this informal market on to commercially produced products (Thomas, 2012, Thomas, 2012). Framing their products in these terms has helped present TACs as potential partners with government to tackle an important health issues. It was reported that SABMiller, Diageo and Heineken, 'have been given a seat at the table with African policy-makers who are eager to find ways of reducing alcohol-related deaths' (Thomas, 2012). Whilst the assumption of the article is that the introduction of these drinks will reduce alcohol related deaths by turning drinkers away from 'moonshine,' it remains unclear whether this will lead to an overall increase in alcohol consumption and thus harms at the population level (Room and Jernigan, 2000).

In the UK, consumer protection emerged as a theme in the context of the debates around MUP. TACs claimed it was an unfair policy that would 'exacerbate the financial challenge facing the moderate drinkers on low incomes,' and 'disproportionately hit working parents with children' (Hennessy, 2012). These arguments were often backed up with industry-funded reports (Centre for Economics and Business Research, 2012), which were cited as evidence that the poorest fifth of drinkers would be disproportionately affected by the policy (Hennessy, 2012; Martin, 2012; Peev, 2012; Pescod, 2013).

Industry actors argued that MUP would be ineffective for the allegedly small minority of problem drinkers towards whom government policy should be directed (Hawkins and Holden, 2013; Martin, 2012; Boseley, 2012; Thomas, 2012). This relinquishes

them of responsibility for the social burden of alcohol and provides foundations for industry-favoured policies. At the same time, TACs defended the rights of the majority of 'moderate consumers,' not to be penalised by MUP (Hennessy, 2012; Martin, 2012; Thomas, 2012). This defence of consumer rights presents TACs as citizens' allies in the debate against an overbearing state that wants to limit their choices and freedoms.

4. Discussion and limitations

Two principle framings of the alcohol industry arose from our analysis: *global expansion* and *social responsibility*. A clear contradiction exists between the depiction of TACs as aggressive, profit maximising entities and their apparent concern to do good in the environments in which they are active. This reflects the conflicting objectives at the heart of corporate strategy. Corporations must seek to maximise profits and thus returns for shareholders through increasing sales and creating new markets for their products, including in LMICs. Industry marketing, on which for example Diageo spends £1.6 billion a year globally (Diageo, 2012), seeks to mould cultural norms, expectations and drinking practices to create new consumers for their products (Jernigan, 2000). It seeks to foster drinking cultures where none exist, and drives demand for products that TACs can supply. As Casswell (Casswell, 2013) argues, the alcohol industry is:

engaged in a race against time, to ensure the diffusion and normalization of drinking in emerging markets, before governments and civil society are able to ensure adequate policies to limit the spread of heavy drinking and alcohol-related harm in the population.

Against this they must seek to protect their business from the threat posed by unfavourable regulation, particularly in their established markets. Corporations in health-harming industries must ensure their products remain legal; that they can be widely sold and consumed; and that they can be marketed in ways that allow them to expand markets and win new consumers. Policy regimes are influenced by the perception of both the issue at hand and the key actors involved. Presenting themselves as responsible actors and key partners in policy-making processes and co-regulatory regimes is thus a key alcohol industry objective.

The findings presented here are of key relevance in assessing the appropriate role of the alcohol industry in the development and implementation of health policy. While TACs may present themselves as socially responsible actors, their market strategies run counter to their stated social objectives and pose a significant risk factor for public health. This is particularly the case in LMICs, where the alcohol industry is identified as a key vector of non-communicable diseases, and which may be ill equipped to deal with the consequences of increased alcohol consumption (Gilmore et al., 2011). Given that corporations have a fiduciary responsibility to maximise shareholder value, any wider social ambitions they claim to have must be of secondary importance to the profit motive, or designed in some way to support their overarching business aims.

This article builds on existing studies of the media in the development of UK alcohol policy (Holden and Hawkins, 2013; Hawkins and Holden, 2013; Hilton et al., 2014; Wood et al., 2014; Nicholls, 2011; Katikireddi and Hilton, 2015), and further underlines the importance of media framing as a key component of corporate political strategy. The analytical approach used here allowed for detailed investigation into four influential producer organisations, during a time of heightened debate surrounding the UK government's alcohol strategy. It supports previous studies which found that policy actors tailor their messaging to particular

audiences in an effort to influence policy debates (Katikireddi and Hilton, 2015). The media offer a powerful means to shape policy debates and marshal public opinion, and have played a key role in recent developments in UK alcohol policy (Holden and Hawkins, 2013; Hawkins and Holden, 2013; Katikireddi et al., 2014). The analysis presented here suggests that the alcohol industry is acutely aware of the importance of media framing in furthering their business objectives and promote differentiated framing targeted at different actors to pursue their political and financial strategies.

This article analysed the way in which producers' activities in LMICs were framed for a UK audience. As TACs expand into LMIC markets, similar analysis of their attempts to influence the policy environment in these countries will be necessary. This is particularly important given the identification of alcohol industry actors as key vectors of disease in these countries (Gilmore et al., 2011), and the need for effective regulations opposed by industry actors. In addition, much of the focus of the articles analysed here was on Asian and African markets and a more systematic analysis of industry strategy and media framings of emerging markets in other geographical and cultural contexts (e.g. in predominantly Muslim countries) would offer interesting points of comparison. Analyses of other producers with different brand portfolios and companies in different sectors of the alcohol industry (i.e. retailers) would provide further insights. Comparative analysis could reveal further contradictions between the narratives promoted across markets. In addition, comparisons with other sectors (e.g. the food and beverage industry) undergoing similar processes of expansion into LMICs, and facing similar tensions with their objectives in established markets would provide additional insights.

The study only included mainstream newspapers and one industry publication and could be supplemented by wider analyses of other media and over different time periods. Previous studies, for example, have examined television and print media and online sources (Nicholls, 2011) and social media are of ever increasing importance (Freeman, 2012) in the marketing practices of harmful commodities. Investigation of other sources, such as new media, business publications, press releases and think tank reports, would provide greater depth, but the audience reach and therefore impact of these would need to be considered during analysis. Aside from the limited number of examples in which industry funded research was explicitly referred to in articles, we did not investigate the potential impact of other industry funded research in our analysis. Further analysis could also look to include non-media sources of policy framing including industry sponsored research and reports conducted by third parties such as think tanks and consultancies which scholars have begun to examine (Hawkins and McCambridge, 2014).

5. Conclusion

The above analysis, and the existing literature on corporate political strategy on which it builds, suggest that the prominent position currently afforded to the alcohol industry in UK alcohol policy must be called into question. Policy-makers should only engage with TACs in their capacity as economic actors and they must be clearly viewed as vested interests in policy debates. This raises important questions about a range of existing self- and co-regulatory regimes currently in place in the UK (Baggott, 2006; McCambridge et al., 2014; Harkins, 2010), and the institutionalisation of industry participation in policy-making via the Government's flagship Responsibility Deal. It suggests also that other national governments, as well as policy-makers at the regional (e.g. EU) and global (e.g. the World Health Organization) levels should also reassess both the policies they advocate and their engagement with industry. Public health actors may take note of these findings

and seek to counter industry narratives in different settings with tailored media responses. Finally, the type of analysis presented here, which seeks tensions and contradictions in industry discourses, can be expanded to additional studies of the alcohol industry and applied to other industries and policy debates.

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