



# Big Alcohol

Young people are being targeted by the alcohol industry for ongoing profit



## What is Big Alcohol?

'Big Alcohol' is a phrase used to describe the alcohol industry.

This includes producers, distributors, retailers and marketers of alcohol products.

This also includes 'front groups': affiliated organisations, industry allies and commissioned third parties that benefit from the sale of alcohol products or sponsorship.

Lots of soft drinks companies are owned by parent alcohol companies

'Big Alcohol' has accumulated so much power that it can block and alter public policies that protect against alcohol harm. They try to undermine evidence-based policy that ensure health and wellbeing, to protect their profits.

Big industry like this is well connected. Many big corporations are interconnected, both among themselves and with other health harmful industries, including the tobacco and gambling industries.

## What do they do to attract young people?

- **Social Media**

Can be used to blur the lines between marketing and advertising. Interacting with marketing increases exposure and influence, for example with 'swipe up' features and alcohol associated filters.

Digital campaigns deliberately set out to encourage young people to share messages with their friends.

- Their aim is to gain credibility, by making it seem as if the message is from trustworthy friends, celebrities or influencers (who are paid to promote their products), rather than an alcohol company.
- There is no way to control who receives these messages (e.g. by age restriction).

As social media users interact with alcohol content, platforms learn from and use that information to further target users accounts with more alcohol related content.

- **Product placement**

Used to show alcohol brands or products and drinking in film and TV, with specific promotional aim.

- **Product Reach**

Creating new products which might appeal to new young audiences, like different flavours or 'lite' options, alcohol branded merchandise, and food.

- **Sport Sponsorship**

Major alcohol brands are associated with almost every high profile sporting event, from the Olympics to the Champions League, Ryder Cup, Formula One and Wimbledon. The Scottish Football Association has a seven figure 'official beer partner' sponsorship deal. Scottish Rugby has several alcohol deals, with the brands on display all over Murrayfield.

Alcohol companies are eager to align themselves with the positive, healthy image of sport and gain access to new customers. This happens with other harmful products, including gambling and junk food.

Sponsoring sport enables direct and regular access to young people. Scottish children as young as 10 years old are very familiar with alcohol brands, with boys in particular associating beer brands with the football teams and tournaments they sponsor.

Alcohol companies spend over £300 million on sponsoring sport in the UK



**Scottish Women's Football** showed

fantastic leadership when they decided not to accept sponsorship from companies in the alcohol or gambling industries.

## Why do they attract young people?

The alcohol industry target young people, because alcohol advertising and marketing encourages children to:

- Start drinking at a younger age
- Drink more heavily when they do drink
- Continue to drink throughout their lives
- Equals more profits for the alcohol industry.

How people drink is influenced by culture, environment and social norms. Advertising and marketing try to change culture, by embedding alcohol in target audiences' lives.

36% of 13 year olds and 71% of 15 year olds in Scotland have had an alcoholic drink. The most common age young people have their first drink is age 13. More young people think it's acceptable to drink than they used to. Marketing is likely influencing this opinion.

### What can young people do?

Children in Scotland are calling for increased restrictions to alcohol marketing, as shown in this link: <https://bit.ly/2F4XQO8>

Despite the millions that Big Alcohol spends to try to influence you to drink, you can:

- Detect when industry is trying to manipulate you
- Snub their tactics and attempts to entice you into becoming their customer, for example by not liking or sharing their online content, or questioning why characters in film and TV drink
- Stand up to them by choosing not to drink, or not to drink yet
- Encourage your friends and family members not to drink, not to drink yet, or to drink less, and recognise when they are being targeted

We can all make complaints about alcohol marketing. Find out more at this link: <https://bit.ly/3d3DPUF>