

‘We’re in this together’: A content analysis of marketing by alcohol brands on Facebook and Instagram during the first UK COVID-19 Lockdown, 2020’

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BACKGROUND

- 23rd March 2020, UK population instructed to ‘stay at home’ other than for a small number of permitted reasons (e.g. to shop for ‘essentials’, daily exercise).
 - On-site licenced premises closed. Some repurposed themselves as takeaways (prohibited in future lockdown).
 - Off-premises with alcohol licenses were given status of ‘essential businesses’.
- Unprecedented situation for the alcohol industry:
 - availability and supply of alcohol restricted.
 - social context of alcohol transformed.
- Had to adapt marketing and the targeting of alcohol products, predominantly using social media platforms.

Stage I

Analysis of 20 alcohol brands (N=2600) & 20 nightlife venue marketing posts (N=10,000) on Facebook & Instagram) and depictions of alcohol in women's magazines (N=20)

Analysis of marketing adherence of ASA codes and ASA (N=84) and Portman group complaints (N=110) since 2010 and 2016

Analysis of alcohol brand marketing (N=850) on social media during the first UK lockdown.

- N=850 posts by 18 alcohol brands on Facebook and Instagram.
- First UK national lockdown (from 17th March- 4th July 2020).
- Content analysis of images and textual posts.
- Thematic analysis of comments (N=3908) left by social media followers on posts advertising COVID-19 'Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives' or 'cause marketing'.

AVAILABILITY AND SUPPLY (29%, N=256)

1) Intensified delivery services, incentivised through:

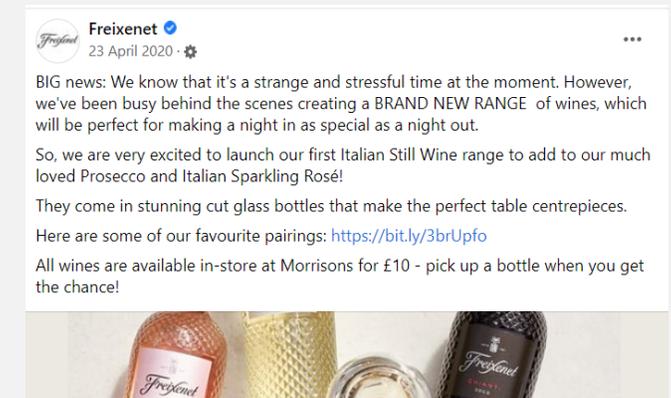
- promotions and discounts on orders
- collaborations (e.g. Delivero) for discounted takeaways when purchasing alcohol products
- Takeaway services through 'click and collect' via newly developed apps.
- 'Safe' way to shop.
 - Brands as considerate of consumer health



2) Encouraging stock piling



3) New and limited edition products



ADAPTING MARKETING TO CONTEXTUAL CHANGES IN DRINKING (46%, N=410)

I) Promoting home drinking:

- Alleviating lockdown boredom
 - lockdown entertainment suggestions (e.g. home brewing, art based activities, bingo, cooking, baking with products, brand podcasts)
- Recipe suggestions

'Bored of making banana bread? Try your hand at this cocktail instead' (Barefoot)



- Home as party context
 - ‘Staying in is the new going out’
 - E.g.. Kitchen becomes the dance floor



bacardi_uk  Who's ready to switch things up in the kitchen tonight? We're challenging you to create your own unique spin on the classic Mojito - no ingredient is off-limits! 🥑🍓🌿

- Self care narratives

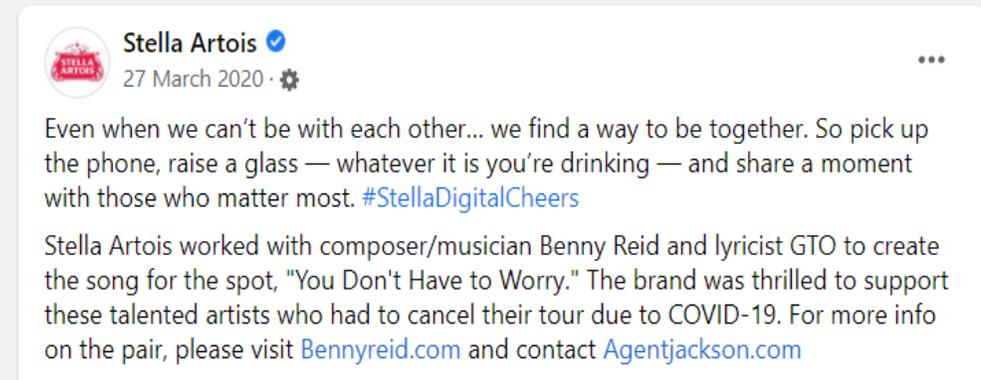
*There is some serious s**t going on right now. It may all seem super overwhelming but honestly it's ok to not be ok. Look out for your friends and family but don't forget yourself. So, if you fancy a glass of wine, or a G&T, please always do so responsibly. Stay safe love team EF x [Post promoting self-care during lockdown]*

ECHO FALLS

- 2) Virtual drinking
- promoting virtual (i.e. video call) interactions with friends and family
 - ‘Staying connected’ and ‘togetherness’



- brands hosted virtual events
 - opportunities for customers to consume their products with a wider social circle



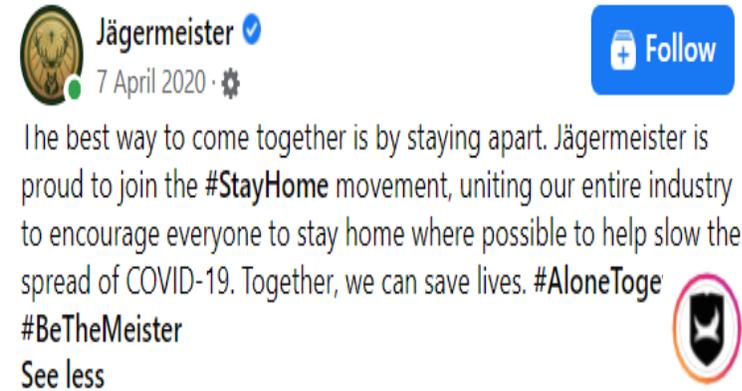
- E.g. online bars and pubs, cocktail making, quizzes and bingo, wine and beer tasting beer courses, live streamed music events, ‘cook alongs’, virtual brewery tours and art and flower arranging sessions



COMBATING THE PANDEMIC, CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AND SOCIAL CAUSE MARKETING (12%, N=106)

I) Promoting transmission suppression activities

- encouraging staying at home and social distancing in an effort to 'stay safe' and 'save lives'.
- 'togetherness'- 'together we can save lives'.
- Returning to venues in a socially distanced way



brewdogofficial 🌐 HOW TO ENJOY A SUNNY WEEKEND:

- Step 1. Grab a beer.
- Step 2. Stay at home.

#StayHomeSaveLives 📷: @heidicat93



bacardi_uk 🌐 Today some of our favourite bars in England are opening again 🍷 We know you're as excited as we are, and to help us all keep distance we've created a BACARDÍ Sociable Distancing Snap Lens. Check the link in bio to give it a go 😊🍷🍸🍹

#BACARDI #SociableDistancing
#DoWhatMovesYou

2) Corporate responsibility responses and 'social cause' marketing

- Provision of PPE
- Philanthropic donations
- Social justice issues- free school meals
- Critical political commentary to appeal to community of consumers



jagermeisteruk A world without nightlife is unimaginable... We're donating an extra €1Million to help support nightlife venues and artists right now, when they need it most.

Join us and [#SaveTheNight](#) with our Limited Edition bottle → Click the link in our bio and choose Save The Night to get yours.

Bacardi
26 March 2020

We've shifted some of our production across the globe to help make more than 1.1 million litres of hand sanitizer for the local communities we call home 🌍❤️
[#BACARDI](#) [#RaiseYourSpirit](#)



brewdogofficial • Following

brewdogofficial Starting today, we're using our trucks & drivers to do free home deliveries of school lunches to those in isolation in our local community.

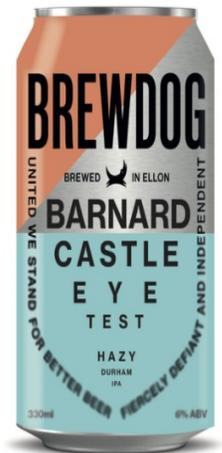
Stay safe. Be kind.

82 w



5,651 likes

MARCH 23, 2020



AUDIENCE RESPONSES TO COVID-19 CSR POSTS

Support for CSR

Brand thanked and congratulated	This just goes beyond awesome.Thank you!! (Bombay sapphire hand sanitiser production) Shame the government couldn't step up like this ...well done guys (Brew Dog's production of hand sanitiser)
Good news story	These are the kind of news we need, well done 🍷👍❤️ (Bacardi's donations to hospitality sector)
Brand's labelled as 'heroes' and as 'saving lives'	Not all heroes wear capes ❤️ (Brew Dog's provision of free school meals)
Community before profit	This is why I bought shares in Brewdog. Not profiteering in a time of crisis.👏 (Brew Dog's production of hand sanitiser)

Enhancing brand image

Reinforcing brand preference We always knew Bacardi was the best! (Bacardi's hand sanitiser production)

Proud consumers A drink we can be proud to drink! (Bacardi's hand sanitiser production)

Long lasting impact on loyalty/purchasing People won't forget who stepped up 🐶 (Brew Dog's production of hand sanitiser)

Influence on purchasing

Future purchasing Another reason to love you. Will continue to buy your brand (Barefoot funds to support hospitality personal and their families)

Immediate purchase and/or consumption Well I've smashed a four pack of punk to support breeding and thus support the NHS (Brew Dog's production of hand sanitiser)

Encouraging others to purchase We should get one for our bar 😍 [Tags friend] (Jägermeister's Limited Edition COVID edition to support hospitality sector)

Criticism of COVID-19 related CSR posts

Following brands	other	Jameson did it first lol that's probably why Jägermeister have (Jägermeister's support for hospitality industry)
Inappropriate marketing ploy		I commend you for producing it, but plastering your branding all over the bottle is beyond tacky (Brew Dog's production of hand sanitiser)
Political commentary		Last Brew Dog beer I buy I'm afraid. You should have stuck to brewing and left politics alone (Brew Dog's limited edition product commenting of Government advisor breaking lockdown restrictions, profits to NHS)
Contradictory actions		Yes it is great you are helping the cause with the sanitiser, however it's one step forward and two steps back if social distancing isn't being applied (Brew Dog's production of hand sanitiser)

SUMMARY

- Closure of onsite premises and self-isolation within the home forced brands to creatively pivot their marketing to remain relevant through 'COVID-washing'
- Referenced the health and social concerns associated with COVID-19, in an attempt to frame themselves as 'doing good' in times of crisis.
- CSR actions overwhelmingly received positively by potential consumers- 'doing well from doing good'
- COVID-19 restrictions affected drinking patterns and sales in the UK in different ways, yet strong evidence base that marketing has influence.

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