

## THE CAMPAIGN AND DRUNKENNESS

Conclusions:

Source:

Piispa, M & Soikkeli, M. & Salasuo, M & Hoikkala, T. (2008) *The Campaign and Drunkenness. Evaluator of the campaign ('Drunk you're a fool campaign')*". Helsinki: Finnish Federation of the Brewing and Soft Drinks Industry.

Contact:

Mikko Salasuo, Adjunct Professor, Finnish Youth Research Network  
mikko.salasuo@nuorisotutkimus.fi  
p. +358 40 5485520

### **Assessments of the influence of alcohol education**

The EU Alcohol Strategy was completed in 2006, during Finland's Presidency of the EU. The Alcohol & Health Forum was founded on the basis of this strategy on the initiative of the European Commission. The Forum is a common platform where businesses, together with the authorities and NGOs, can present their own actions to prevent alcohol-related harm. Member companies of the Finnish Federation of the Brewing and Soft Drinks Industry participated in the Forum with an extensive campaign against irresponsible alcohol abuse and its adverse consequences. The *Drunk, You're a Fool* campaign was launched in August 2007. An independent academic assessment of the campaign was carried out. The key observations are presented below.

This report deals with the *Drunk, You're a Fool* campaign of the Federation of the Brewing and Soft Drinks Industry, implemented in autumn 2007. The aim of the campaign was to "change Finnish attitudes" such that "alcohol should be used responsibly and in moderation". In other words, the campaign targeted one of the great narratives embedded in the deep structure of Finnish culture – drunkenness and its control.

Cultural or social changes – that is, the *influence* of the campaign – cannot be measured reliably and no such changes should even be expected in the short term. This report therefore does not evaluate the extent to which the campaign swayed attitudes in opposition to drunkenness. Instead of influence, the report studies the *effects* of the campaign, covering the types of discussions and reactions that the campaign sparked in autumn 2007.

To shed light on these effects, we must first understand the issues the control of drunkenness is linked to in modern society. Docent Tommi Hoikkala primes the reader on these themes in the first chapter. In the second article, Matti Piispa, D.Soc.Sc., focuses on the effects of the *Drunk, You're a Fool* campaign in the context of Finnish culture and binge drinking. Piispa's article comprises the "hard core" of the report. He analyses the effects of the campaign through different media, interviews on the theme and Internet discussions.

In his section, Docent Mikko Salasuo overviews the initial reactions to the campaign of those working in alcohol and drug intervention. The launch of the campaign came as a surprise to many of them. There was interest in the campaign and thoughts about it varied greatly. Judgements of the campaign were also subject to preconceived notions.

In the last section, Markku Soikkeli, Senior Planning Officer in the Prevention of Substance Abuse, examines drug and alcohol education as part of the prevention of substance abuse. He sheds lights on research and discussions on the quality and influence of such education.

To conclude the report, the working group behind the study presents recommendations on the development of the campaign theme and its future utilisation.

### **Key observations**

The *Drunk, You're a Fool* campaign achieved broad visibility and became the subject of wide-ranging discussion among citizens. The campaign's slogan, 'Drunk, you're a fool', caught on and became a popular catchphrase. Drinking habits have in certain respects become more moderate in recent years, which meant that the campaign was well poised to influence attitudes.

Drunkenness and loutish behaviour are on the wane, and in our estimation the campaign supported and provided further momentum to this ongoing trend. Furthermore, the campaign struck a chord, as people consider obnoxious drunks to be an irritating and disgusting nuisance. The campaign can help people express their disapproval by taking action – to encourage people to be more proactive in intervening in loutish behaviour.

However, Finns consider it polite to leave other people be and seldom confront strangers. This gives drunks a great deal of space. Changing cultural mores is a slow and difficult process. The

campaign's photos and videos were roundly praised as professional, modern and attention grabbing. The reactions to the campaign and its high attention value show that the designers had their fingers on the pulse of the culture. The communications style spoke to the target audience. The campaign successfully steered away from excessive caution and conventionality.

The Internet implementation of the *Drunk, You're a Fool* campaign opened up two-way dialogue. These online discussions changed the nature of modern campaigns, ushering in greater interactivity. Engaging in direct conversation with the target audience can bolster credibility in the boundless Internet. The campaign achieved this successfully.

*Drunk, You're a Fool* may also be interpreted as a campaign to reduce alcohol-related harm. The campaign's web site provides facts about the harm caused by alcohol, supporting this interpretation. This theme could be deepened and developed in further campaign actions or new interventions. Most people viewed the campaign in a positive light. The Federation of the Brewing and Soft Drinks Industry and its partners were thus considered to have shown that they are socially responsible. The initial reactions of people working in the alcohol sector were also cautiously positive.

In a country the size and type of Finland, it would be desirable for the parties involved to co-operate in alcohol education in spite of their differences in opinion on alcohol policy. Historical oppositions in questions of alcohol policy often seem to dominate alcohol education, overshadowing the work itself and its objectives.

*Drunk, You're a Fool* was a solitary campaign. Due to its limited scale, it could not fulfil all the quality criteria set for actions to prevent substance abuse, in which campaigns and education are ideally integrated into multisectoral intervention. That said, the implementation of the campaign was well thought through, strategic and surprising, which increased its impact and visibility.

Furthermore, the theme and materials of the campaign stimulated social and political debate on a broader scale: the campaign sparked off discussions about alcohol policy, child raising and sexual violence. In the case of the latter, debates about the so-called "rape video" had a negative impact on the campaign, drawing attention away from its theme.

Linking the campaign and any subsequent measures geared towards taming drunkenness to strategic co-operation on a broader scale and finding partners would serve to increase their influence.

Expertise in the development of alcohol and drug intervention should be tapped when planning and implementing activities. Activities will have a greater influence when intervention encompasses a higher number of sectors and more aligned actions are taken in different arenas.

International research literature has widely concluded that binge drinking is particularly risky and harmful, with outcomes ranging from accidents, violence, traffic accidents and the consequences of unprotected sex to a wide range of psychosocial problems. Binge drinking as a youth is a predictor of adult substance addiction. Studies show that young people do not realise that binge drinking is a problem, as such behaviour is so common and serves as a rite of passage to adulthood. A great deal of research has been done into binge drinking and prevention strategies, but good results have been in short supply. The research data remains narrow and incomplete. To date, research in Finland has focused little attention on this issue in comparison with general prevention of alcohol consumption. Accordingly, it would be important to disseminate international discussions on binge drinking, focus research on the issue and launch well-judged prevention projects.