“A sporty, healthy twist?”: Interrogating the deployment of health and wellness discourses in No and Low alcohol (NoLo) marketing and consumer practices

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Abstract

Little is known about how No and Low (NoLo) alcohol drinks are promoted and used, making it difficult to draw conclusions about the implications of this expanding market. Drawing on analysis of UK-based marketing materials and semi-structured interviews, this paper adopts a critical social marketing perspective and 'healthism' lens to interrogate the alcohol industry's use of health messaging in NoLo marketing and how these messages are reflected in consumer narratives. References to 'health' and 'responsibility' were explicit and implicit in NoLo marketing and consumer motivations, contributing to a 'halo effect' whereby the industry appears to 'do good' but continues to perpetuate alcohol harm (by shifting responsibility for health further onto consumers and away from the industry). Findings have implications for public health, education and regulation.

Summary Statement of Contribution

This paper enhances our understanding of the marketing and consumption of NoLo drinks, an underdeveloped research area where understandings of the benefits and risks of the expanding market remain constrained by a lack of evidence. Applying a critical social marketing perspective and theoretical lens of healthism to original primary data, the paper contributes new insights that advance our knowledge of NoLo marketing and consumer practices, considering implications for public health, consumer education and NoLo regulation.

Keywords

Alcohol; No and Low alcohol; healthism; moderation; halo effect; critical social marketing

Introduction

High-income countries such as the United Kingdom have long been recognised as 'cultures of intoxication' where drinking – at times excessively – is a normalised, expected and embedded social practice (Griffin et al., 2009; Measham & Brain, 2005). However, since the early 2000s, drinking – particularly amongst young people - has been 'in decline' across high-income countries (Vashishtha et al. 2020). At the same time, temporary abstinence initiatives have surged in popularity (Yeomans, 2019) and 'positive sobriety' communities celebrating non-drinking continue to flourish (Atkinson et al., 2023). Recent years have also seen the rapid expansion of the No and Low alcohol (NoLo)[1] market in high-income countries, yet there is a paucity of understanding around how these products are marketed and consumed. This makes it difficult to draw conclusions about the effects of this expanding market and whether/how it should be regulated. This paper draws on original primary data to help to address this gap, adopting a critical social marketing perspective and employing the theoretical lens of 'healthism' to interrogate how NoLo drinks are marketed and consumed and consider implications for public health, consumer education and regulation.

First coined in the 1980s (Crawford, 1980; 2006), healthism denotes a marked shift in responsibility for health and wellbeing to the individual and the elevation of personal health to a 'supervalue', particularly amongst the middle-classes. As healthism becomes increasingly embedded within a late-capitalist context, the pursuit of personal health and wellbeing (including through practices such as moderating alcohol intake or abstaining from alcohol) becomes the ultimate preoccupation; a personal responsibility synonymous with 'the good life'. Prioritising and managing one's health and wellbeing becomes an *individual* moral imperative

1 Defined here in line with Department of Health and Social Care (2018) guidelines as beverages designed to mimic alcohol but with an alcohol content ranging from 0.0-1.2% ABV. 'Light' products tend to be defined more flexibly but can broadly be understood as products with a lower ABV than full-strength products and/or lower calorie products

(Cederström and Spicer, 2015) rendering 'health' a socially constructed and morally loaded phenomenon (Fox and Ward, 2006) whilst downplaying the role of structural, political and social factors in entrenching health inequalities. This individualisation sits alongside social marketing tactics, whereby brands use commercial marketing to (at least in principle) encourage 'healthy' behavioural change or 'responsible' consumption. A critical approach to social marketing (CSM) recognises that in practice, this often amounts at best to superficial attempts to change individual behaviour, for example through 'nudging' individuals towards specific choices (Gordon et al., 2022). A CSM (or 'critical theory') approach also invites us to "critically… [examine] the deleterious impact of commercial marketing activities on social marketing problems" (Gordon et al., 2022, p. 1045) and critically interrogate the impacts of both social and commercial marketing (if a clear distinction between the two even exists) upon society (Gordon et al., 2010). It invites us to attend to underlying themes such as power, values, neoliberalism and late-stage capitalism in thinking about how marketing in all its guises might fall short of achieving meaningful social change and benefit, and – of particular value here – it critiques the individualising, neoliberal assumptions that underpin attempts to encourage 'healthy' or 'socially beneficial' behaviour change at the individual level whilst downplaying structural inequalities or systematic barriers to change (Gurrieri et al., 2013). It also encourages us to consider how messages encouraging 'responsible' consumption are entangled with brand promotion and commercial product marketing (Hastings and Angus, 2011), interrogate the industry motivations (e.g. profit maximisation) that may sit behind rhetorics of 'choice' and 'health' or other stated intentions to achieve social good, and expose 'halo' effects whereby industries appear to 'do good' (through promoting responsible usage or health benefits) whilst causing harms or promoting their brands (Tadajewski et al., 2014).

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the NoLo market has flourished against the backdrop of healthism as the alcohol industry responds to declining drinking rates and woos the 'health-conscious'

consumer (Keric and Stafford, 2019) with products that mimic alcohol in terms of taste, branding and appearance but without the 'harmful' alcohol content. Many leading alcohol brands now offer a NoLo equivalent of their flagship alcohol product, and whilst it could be argued these do not pose the same health risks as their alcoholic counterparts (Schaefer, 1987), a deeper, critical understanding of how NoLos are marketed and consumed is imperative. Recent research is beginning to engage with these topics. Miller et al. (2022) consider how NoLos might contribute to harm minimisation if used as 'substitutes' for alcohol (rather than in addition), whilst warning that the expanding market also brings potential risks and comes with a lack of evidence around public health impacts. Groefsema et al. (2024) find that NoLos may be drunk 'in addition' to existing alcohol intake whilst Hew and Arunogiri (2024) also caution that the expanding market may come with numerous risks. These include alibi marketing (whereby alcohol brands use NoLo marketing to promote their flagship alcoholic offering by stealth (Bartram at al., 2024)) and the potential for NoLos to act as a gateway to alcohol for young people (Miller et al., 2022) or trigger alcohol cravings amongst those with alcohol dependency (Caballeria et al., 2022). There is also a small body of research suggesting that the industry is making direct and indirect health claims through NoLo marketing (de Bruijn et al., 2012; Porretta and Donadini, 2008), yet very little is known about how such messages are interpreted by consumers (Vasiljevic et al., 2018). Enhancing our understanding of this is essential as we already know – for example – that exposure to and interpretation of alcohol marketing messaging shapes consumer drinking practices (de Bruijn et al., 2012; Smith and Foxcroft, 2009).

On balance, there is no strong evidence base to suggest that the growing NoLo market will bring public health benefits. Rather, research in this area is limited or unclear, and the alcohol industry has much to gain from NoLo promotion and sales included increased profits and potential new markets. As Waehning and Wells (2024) note, we need to further enhance our

understanding of how consumers are actually *using* NoLos before we can begin to make meaningful claims about the health – and other - implications of the expanding market. In other words, gaining a deeper understanding of the ways in which NoLo products are marketed and consumed is imperative to inform ongoing debates and policy recommendations. This paper contributes to an enhanced understanding, interrogating the ways in which the alcohol industry operates within a context of 'healthism' to circulate health claims through NoLo marketing and considering how this intersects with everyday consumption practices. Grounded in a CSM perspective, it highlights how NoLos are marketed as a 'better-for-you' choice for consumers, and the ways in which such messages are received, reworked or challenged by NoLo consumers and contribute to the shaping of their own (non)drinking practices. In doing so, this paper contributes directly to ongoing debates around the potential benefits and harms of the expanding NoLo market, highlights the risk of an industry 'halo effect' and provides lessons in relation to public health, consumer education and the future of NoLo regulation.

Literature Review

Drink responsibly? Alcohol marketing and moderation

Consuming alcohol remains a socially significant activity with numerous functions, from a means to display one's cultural knowledge and 'taste' (Järvinen et al., 2014) to a way to socialise and mark the transition to leisure time (Winlow and Hall, 2009). However, the health (and other) harms associated with alcohol consumption are widely documented. Alcohol contributes to over 200 chronic health conditions (Keric et al., 2021) and over 4% of the global burden of disease (World Health Organization, 2024). Amongst those aged 20-39, harmful drinking remains the primary global risk factor for premature mortality and disability (World Health Organization, 2024). Restrictions on alcohol marketing attempt to prevent it from being promoted as a 'healthy' product. However, Keric and Stafford (2019) argue that the industry

circumvents such restrictions, whilst discourses around the supposed health benefits of light/moderate drinking circulate in the popular imagination, the media and even academic literature (Hendriks, 2020; Wright et al., 2008). Alcohol marketing also continues to glamourise alcohol, associating drinking with social and sexual success and attractive lifestyles (Szmigin et al., 2011). Whilst consumers may engage critically with such messages, exposure to alcohol marketing is associated both with initiation of alcohol use and with increases in consumption among existing drinkers (de Bruijn et al., 2012). At the same time, social marketing materials, commercial marketing and public health messaging draw on notions of 'responsible' or moderate consumption to depict what a 'healthy' relationship with alcohol looks like (Gallage et al., 2020). For example, public health material encouraging consumers to have some 'dry days' in their week presupposes the existence of 'non-dry days' rather than promoting complete abstinence from alcohol. Social marketing strategies are thus already widely used by the alcohol industry to promote 'responsible' individual engagement with its products (Szmigin et al., 2011). These are often embedded within existing commercial marketing (in the form of product promotion accompanied by social responsibility messaging compelling individual consumers to 'drink responsibly').

Interrogated through the lens of healthism, the positioning of 'responsible' drinking as part of a healthy lifestyle compels the individual to manage their own consumption. The 'good' consumer-subject is idealised as a rational, competent consumer making future-focused 'choices' within a market system (Yngfalk and Fyrburg Yngfalk, 2015) despite evidence that the term 'moderation' is often viewed as vague (Green et al., 2007) or meaningless by drinkers (Gallage et al., 2020). The preoccupation with moderation has – perhaps unsurprisingly - occurred alongside the intensification of healthism since the 1980s; under late-stage capitalism the role of the state in supporting individuals and communities is minimal, personal 'choice' and 'responsibility' is key and future risk must be constantly managed by individuals (Cairns

and Johnston, 2015). Indeed, a key driver for making individual-level healthy and responsible choices is to avoid becoming a future burden on the state (Robert, 2022), and 'policy interventions are increasingly re-defined in terms of a shared logic of [individual] 'responsibility'' (Barnett et al., 2014, p. 626). The alcohol industry benefits from this approach; encouraging individual-level 'responsible' consumption depoliticises alcohol consumption and harm, downplays structural factors and social inequalities *and* helps alcohol producers appear to meet their corporate social responsibilities through encouraging 'responsible' engagement with their products whilst placing the burden for managing consumption firmly back on individuals. This functions as an example of what Tadajewski et al. term the 'neoliberal co-optation of social marketing' (2014: 1735). It may also produce a 'halo effect' whereby the industry appears to be 'self-regulating' effectively (Savell et al., 2016) and 'doing good' through its marketing messaging. The expansion of the industry into NoLo provision and moves to further encourage 'responsible drinking' through presenting NoLos as useful tools for moderation risks expanding this 'halo effect' further (Miller et al., 2022), as this paper will demonstrate.

In addition, in cultures where the consumption of a harmful product is normalised and encouraged yet taking responsibility for one's health is an increasingly salient moral imperative (Crawford, 2006), 'moderation' functions as a way to reconcile these tensions and a desirable counterbalance to the risk of 'excess' (Yeomans, 2013). The 'moderate', controlled drinker balances the instant gratification of consumption with the delayed pleasures of self-restraint (O'Malley and Valverde, 2004). The embodiment of health through these forms of self-governance becomes a way to produce and maintain the contemporary 'good' consumer-citizen; one who consumes the 'right' products in the 'right' ways (with self-restraint) and makes 'healthy', future-focused choices (Rose, 1996). Under such circumstances, self-restraint may become a pleasure in and of itself; a mode of what Caruana et al. (2019) call 'alternative

hedonism' as consumers tap into 'the good life' through their moral consumption choices. In sum, framings of 'moderation' and 'responsible' drinking become particularly salient when considered through the lens of healthism; a means for individuals to continue to participate in consumer culture but to embody self-control, and a powerful way for the industry to shift responsibility back to the consumer.

'Healthy Choices': Changing drinking practices

Since the early 2000s, declines in alcohol consumption levels have been recorded in several high-income contexts including the UK (Herring et al., 2014), and other parts of Europe and Australia (Vashishtha et al. 2020), particularly amongst younger people (who are drinking later (or not at all), drink less than previous generations and are less likely to drink to intoxication (ESPAD, 2019; Oldham et al., 2018; Pape et al., 2018)). Against this backdrop, sobriety is experiencing a 'rebrand' (Nicholls, 2021). The continued growth of what we might term a 'positive sobriety movement' sees abstinence celebrated as a positive lifestyle choice linked to health and wellness, challenging the traditional binary conceptualisation of 'normal' versus 'problem' drinking/drinkers and disrupting associations between abstinence and alcoholism (Atkinson et al., 2023). Those who drink may also be encouraged to practice 'mindful drinking' or 'sober curiosity', adopting a reflective relationship with alcohol that challenges the positioning of alcohol as the 'default' choice in social settings. In these ways non-drinking and mindful drinking become (re)framed as positive individual choices associated with self-development and wellness (Davey, 2022a).

The contemporary entrenchment of healthism can be directly associated with these changing consumption patterns and the rise of the NoLo market. For example, sobriety is often aligned with wider health and wellbeing goals such as 'fitness' and working on 'mind and body' (Carah et al., 2015, p. 215), becoming part of an ongoing process to create what Carah et al. call 'more

desirable lifestyles and identities' (2015, p. 216). Caluzzi et al. (2021) suggest young Australians view heavy drinking as undermining the mental and physical good health they feel compelled to achieve, whilst other recent research suggests that for young people in particular alcohol becomes repositioned as a product of 'risk' (rather than 'pleasure') with perceived damaging impacts on mental and physical health (Törrönen et al., 2021). Pavlidis et al. (2019) also suggest that considerations of 'health' are an important factor in people's decisions to drink lightly or abstain. At the same time, research suggests around a third of UK adults have at least tried a NoLo product and one in ten drink them once a week (Perman-Howe et al., 2024). Previous research also indicates that the contemporary NoLo consumer is stereotyped as 'health-conscious', 'disciplined' and 'rational' (Staub et al., 2022), echoing conceptualisations of the 'good' consumer-citizen.

'Better-for-you' marketing: NoLos and illusions of healthfulness?

In 2021 the United Kingdom's NoLo market was valued at over £221 million (Holmes et al., 2024), a figure expected to nearly double by 2027 (Mintel, 2023, cited in Waehning and Wells, 2024). NoLo beer - which accounts for over three-quarters of NoLo sales - has been identified as one of the UK's fastest-growing drinks trends (Corfe et al., 2020), experiencing a 58% growth in 2019 compared to the previous year (Light Drinks, 2020) and recognised as the UK's fastest growing beer category (British Beer and Pub Association, 2024). NoLos may be marketed as 'healthy' or 'better-for-you' products targeting the health-conscious consumer, designed specifically to 'appeal to customers focused on health and wellness and/or those seeking to reduce their overall alcohol intake' (Myles et al., 2022, p. 2). A recent review of social media marketing of Finnish and Swedish NoLos found health-related posts mentioning healthy recipes, details of ingredients and calorie comparisons to alcohol (Kaupilla et al., 2019), whilst UK-based research exploring NoLo marketing content on major retailer websites identified 'health-related associations' as one of four main themes presented in imagery (for

example fruit) and text (calorie/carbohydrate content or encouragement to consume NoLos after exercise) (Vasiljevic et al., 2018). NoLos are often marketed as a 'healthy' option, for example in the promotion of low calorie count (Shemilt et al., 2017) or through highlighting the perceived health benefits of particular ingredients (such as B vitamins or minerals) (Myles et al., 2022). NoLo drinks may be marketed as aiding 'recovery' after exercise (Hagemann et al., 2017) or be directly associated with active lifestyles (Taylor Jr et al., 2023), mirroring the marketing of energy drinks as 'performance-enhancing' (Buchanan et al., 2018). Whilst some researchers suggest consumers are likely to express uncertainty about the health implications of products such as 'light' beers (Niva et al. 2013), others argue that light beer is perceived as healthier (Chrysochou, 2014). Furthermore, low(er) calorie count, weight management and 'health' are prime motivators for the consumption of light beers, partially-dealcoholized wines (Meillon et al., 2010) and NoLos generally (Staub et al., 2022; Waehning and Wells, 2024).

However, whilst NoLo drinks do not pose the same health risks as their alcoholic counterparts (Schaefer, 1987) and may contain fewer calories and less sugar than full-strength alcohol (Mellor et al., 2020), this does not necessarily mean that they are particularly 'healthy' options. Anderson et al. (2021) suggest that evidence of the health benefits of NoLos remains scarce and note that out of 12 studies they reviewed on this topic, only two were not funded by the alcohol industry or industry-related organisations. Brownbill et al. (2018) stress that NoLos frequently contain more sugar than soft drinks, and White et al. (2018) argue that better-for-you products more generally employ a 'rhetoric of health' but have few proven health benefits. Further research in this area is required to understand in more depth how such approaches work in NoLo marketing, how such messages are received by consumers (Corfe et al., 2020) and the implications in relation to critical social marketing and more widely.

Methods

This small-scale exploratory study into the ways in which NoLo products are marketed and consumed was conducted in the UK in 2021. The research set out to address the following research questions:

1. How do Heineken and Seedlip market and promote their NoLo products, and how are these messages received by consumers?

2. How do consumers incorporate NoLo products into their own social / drinking practices?

3. In what ways do these marketing campaigns and consumer practices draw on 'health claims' and reinforce or challenge dominant social norms around (a) gender and drinking, and (b) alcohol consumption more widely?

4.What are the implications of findings for policy debates, including ways in which the expansion of the NoLo market might reduce or perpetuate alcohol-related harm?

The project was funded by the Institute of Alcohol Studies (see Nicholls, 2022) and full ethical approval was obtained from the Economics, Law, Management, Politics and Sociology (ELMPS) Research Committee at the University of York prior to data collection.

Media Analysis

The research adopted a case study approach designed to provide a 'snapshot' of two major NoLo marketing campaigns and their brand's wider usage of social media. Preliminary research identified two leading NoLo products (Heineken 0.0 and Seedlip) that had been the focus of a dedicated marketing campaign in the last five years. The two products are produced by major alcohol companies; Seedlip is a <0.5% ABV non-alcoholic spirit resembling gin, Heineken 0.0 a 0.03% ABV equivalent of a globally popular lager. Whilst some NoLos are produced by small craft and/or independent producers, the focus on these two products allows a consideration of

marketing strategies employed by the alcohol industry. Heineken's 2018 £6 million 'Now You Can' campaign (featuring TV and cinema advertisements, digital and social media material and billboards) represented at the time the UK's largest ever marketing campaign for a NoLo beer (beertoday, 2018) and by 2019 Heineken 0.0 was the UK's second best-selling – and most rapidly growing - NoLo beer (Stone, 2019). Following its acquisition by major company Diageo in 2019, Seedlip launched its first major UK marketing campaign across buses, the London underground, billboards and digital platforms in 2020 – the 'Drink to the Future' Campaign – and is the most widely-stocked non-alcoholic spirit in UK licensed venues (Dodd, 2022).

The case study incorporated the marketing campaigns themselves and snapshots of social media marketing – generating 110 posts, posters, images and videos for analysis, alongside text and images from product webpages:

Mode of identification	**Heineken 0.0**	**Seedlip**
Google Search	Five 'Now you Can' video advertisements (UK)	Five 'Drink to the future' advert images (billboard images, bus adverts, digital adverts)
	10 Now you Can billboards or images (UK and global)	10 website 'journal' posts (one in every nine posts was selected, starting with the most recent, to derive a sample of 10 posts)
	UK Campaign website and product page on global website	Seedlip UK website homepage and 'our story' page with founder video
Social media snapshot	40 Instagram posts	40 Instagram posts

Table One: Summary of content included in case study analysis

The main materials for each marketing campaign were initially identified through targeted Google searches (using search terms such as 'Heineken 0.0 Now You Can' and 'Seedlip Drink to the Future'). All examples of campaign and supplementary materials that captured the overall message of each campaign were collated and saved, including digital materials and

images of billboards and ‘real-world’ advertising linked to each campaign. A sample of specific campaign material that was felt to capture the essence, focus, tone and aesthetic of each campaign was manually selected, and a second online search elicited further materials which helped to give a holistic picture of the ways in which the two products are promoted more broadly. Matching mediums and materials were not always available (for example Heineken 0.0 produced videos for its campaign whilst Seedlip did not, and there were fewer distinct campaign materials available for Seedlip, so the decision was made to include ‘journal’ posts to capture branding and identity). Nonetheless, an effort was made to choose broadly parallel material that provided a ‘snapshot’ of the overall brand identity of each product (see Table One).

A snapshot of each brand’s social media presence was also collated and analysed. This dual approach allowed for both a ‘deep dive’ into a specific marketing campaign and a broader overview of social media marketing strategies. Instagram was selected as this represents a major social media platform increasingly popular with the alcohol industry where marketing plays a key role in cementing social norms around drinking and encouraging pro-drinking attitudes (Kauppila et al., 2019; Moewaka Barnes et al., 2016). Instagram was actively used by both brands (Seedlip has a separate, dedicated account with over 200,000 followers, and Heineken 0.0 does not have a separate account but is increasingly visible on Heineken’s account which has over 800,000 followers). A sample of posts and images from each brand’s Instagram account was pulled for analysis between 01/01/2018-31/01/2021 (incorporating both campaigns and three ‘Dry Januarys’, and – for Heineken – including only those posts that featured Heineken 0.0). To ensure parity across the two brands, systematic sampling was used to select every 10th post until a sample of 40 posts for each product covering the relevant timeframe was obtained.

Material was coded and subjected to a multi-stage analysis process drawing in part on Buchanan et al.'s (2018) combined approach of content and thematic analysis in a study of energy drink marketing (see Nicholls, 2022 for more detail on the analysis process). Initially, all 80 Instagram posts were broadly categorised into a predominant overarching category (16 codes, examples included 'sport', 'nature and conservation'). At stage two, a content analysis was conducted on all 211 Instagram hashtags (14 codes derived, examples included 'productivity/control', 'travel'). These stages were largely inductive (led by the data) but possible/likely codes were also derived based on the research questions and existing literature. The final stage – a thematic analysis – identified dominant themes across all Instagram posts, with all images/video, text, captions and hashtags considered holistically (as per Laestadius et al., 2019) to capture the overall 'theme(s)' of the posts. 12 themes were identified at this stage (most encapsulating a number of subthemes based on the coding of material). Whilst the potential for entirely new themes to emerge inductively from the data was recognised and coding was undertaken independently of earlier stages, the resulting themes broadly mirrored or built upon those from earlier stages of analysis (again, with an eye to possible/likely codes that might be relevant when considering the research questions and existing literature (see Laestadius et al., 2019)). Reflecting the CSM approach, material was not taken at face value but was analysed with due consideration to underlying meanings, potential power relations and the role of dominant discourses (such as drinking norms, healthism, the industry's 'responsible drinking' agenda). The thematic analysis was then broadened to combine the analysis for the two products and include all the additional material (campaign videos, images, posts and websites), leading to adjustments of themes as necessary and allowing each theme to encompass a mix of media and campaign materials. After merging, four over-arching themes were identified: Substitution and expanding temporal and spatial opportunities for

consumption, Benefits of consumption, Lifestyle / image / identity and Consumption cues/guidelines.

The themes helped shape and inform the interview schedule, which covered four thematic areas; participants' relationships with alcohol, the role of NoLo drinks in their lives, their perceptions around NoLo drinks and how they are marketed and their specific feelings about Heineken 0.0 and Seedlip. This fourth section of the interview was the most directly informed by the media analysis, and incorporated a curated 'moodboard' which included several visual examples of materials from each marketing campaign and Instagram account to help prompt discussion and gauge consumer reactions.

Interviews

15 UK-based drinkers and non-drinkers who had consumed NoLos at least three times within the last six months were recruited through social media to participate in semi-structured, in-depth interviews regarding their NoLo consumption (see Table Two). All participants resided in the UK and most were White British, with a broadly even split in terms of gender. Ages ranged from 22 to 68, with three participants in their 20s, six in their 30s, four in their 40s and three in their 50s or 60s. Most participants identified as middle-class, potentially highlighting who is primarily consuming NoLos (Anderson et al., 2021) (but perhaps also reflecting the recruitment strategy via social media).

Pattern of consumption at time of interview	**Pseudonym**	**Self-definition**	**Reason for consumption patterns**
1) Exclusively drink NoLo, short-term (defined period of sobriety)	Alice (32)	Drinker (D)	Pregnancy. Planning to resume drinking but reflected on whether she might continue to drink NoLos at times
	Pete (38)	D	Year off drinking (health and fitness) for 2021. Planning to resume drinking

	Nina (45)	Moderating Drinker	Dry July. Questioning wider relationship with alcohol and hoping she can drink moderately in future
2) Exclusively drink NoLo, long-term (stopping drinking as long-term or permanent choice)	Adam (37)	Former Drinker (FD)	Sober for 10 months, connected to mental health. No plans to resume drinking
	Luke (29)	FD	Sober for 7 months, health scare from his previous drinking. Unsure about future relationship with alcohol
	Suzanne (52)	FD	Sober for 4 years after a number of dry spells, suffered very bad hangovers. No plans to resume drinking
	Hannah (30)	FD	Sober for 1 month, connected to mental health (sees herself as a hybrid drinker in future having a very occasional drink)
3) Hybrid model (drink a mix of Alcohol and NoLo drinks)	Emma (31)	D	Drinks alcohol as a treat and NoLo as a substitute for drinking without the ill effects when she doesn't want to feel tired or hungover
	Christiaan (41)	D	Drinking NoLo linked to running/race training but also wider health choices
	Liam (26)	D	Drinks NoLo at home or when out, doesn't currently drink alcohol at home (largely connected to mental health and wellbeing)
	Ed (42)	D	Drinks NoLo during the week and alcohol at weekends (largely for reasons relating to productivity and health)
	Georgie (22)	D	Drinking NoLo whilst on a health kick, drinks alcohol for special occasions and a bit more now lockdown is easing
4) Hybrid model (but drink almost exclusively NoLo and consume alcohol rarely or very rarely)	Rob (34)	FD	Mostly sober since 2019, does drink very occasionally
	Jacqueline (68)	Low level Drinker	Prefers the taste of NoLo drinks, but will drink alcohol a few times a year
	Zara (42)	FD	Drank NoLo drinks during pregnancy and breastfeeding, now not drinking at all during 'fitness mission', but anticipating a return to hybrid drinking (mostly NoLo)

Table Two: Participant Information

At the point of data collection, nine participants identified as 'drinkers'. Three had stopped drinking for a short-term, defined period (for example due to a 'health kick') but did plan to continue incorporating NoLos into their drinking routines on resuming alcohol consumption. The remaining drinkers were 'hybrid' consumers who regularly consumed both alcohol and NoLo products, and six participants were former drinkers (sober between 1 month and 4 years) who drank NoLos but not alcohol (and did not intend to resume the consumption of alcohol). All participants were allocated a pseudonym.

After reading a Project Information Sheet and asking any questions, all participants supplied full written consent and participated in in-depth, semi-structured online interviews exploring their (non)drinking biographies and histories, how and why they drank NoLo drinks and their feelings about NoLo marketing and the two case study products. As a non-drinker at the time of data collection, I was able to build rapport with participants. For example, several were keen to recommend their favourite NoLo products to me and I was able to connect with them over shared experiences with NoLos and social non-drinking (e.g. having to ask for the dusty, hidden bottle of NoLo beer somewhere out of sight behind the bar). Interviews lasted 45-90 minutes and were conducted online using Zoom videocalls in June and July 2021. As discussed above, participants discussed their own relationships with and use of alcohol and NoLo drinks, their general perceptions around how NoLos are marketed and branded and their more specific reactions to Heineken 0.0 and Seedlip and their recent marketing campaigns (facilitated through the use of moodboards and viewing one of the Heineken 0.0 campaign videos). Audio was recorded and transcribed and data was then subjected to coding and thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006). This naturally again involved both an inductive and deductive approach (Joffe, 2012); for example building on themes already identified in the media analysis (e.g. benefits of NoLo drinks, lifestyle marketing) but also generating new themes that could

only come from the aspect of the research that involved engaging with consumers (e.g. everyday (non)drinking practices and routines, responses to marketing material). Analysis was an iterative process, with the coding and analysis from the phase one media analysis revisited upon completion of phase two (interviews). Again, in line with a focus on CSM, consumer responses and resistance to marketing approaches were explicitly considered. Whilst the two-phase data collection process was useful as the media analysis helped shape the interviews (and directly provided interview prompts in the form of moodboards), it was also possible to see themes (such as 'health') that featured prominently in both datasets. These crossovers allowed for marketing materials and consumer responses and perceptions to be considered in conjunction, making space for a simultaneous consideration of both the meso and the micro level, the ways in which marketing and branded material is both produced and engaged with and the critical overlaps, gaps and tensions between the discourses circulated through marketing and everyday, lived practices.

Findings

Both the content and thematic analysis identified themes pertinent to 'health' across marketing material. One overarching theme around 'spatial expansion and new drinking occasions' identified 'exercise contexts' as a subtheme, whilst 'fitness/health' was one of four subthemes under 'benefits of consumption' and the 'lifestyle / image / identity' theme included subthemes 'sport' and 'futures'. Similarly, relevant subthemes were identified in the interviews including 'light drinking and moderation', 'mental health', 'physical health', 'calories / weight' and ''better' version of self'.

'Less sugar and stuff': NoLos as 'healthy' products for health-conscious consumers

There was clear evidence across the marketing campaigns and wider social media and promotional material for both NoLos that these products are being promoted as intrinsically

‘healthy’ or better-for-you products aimed at health-conscious consumers, and that such messages have been internalised to an extent by consumers. For example, Heineken’s UK campaign website explicitly identified the ‘health conscious’, the ‘active’ consumer and the ‘gym goer’ as target markets:

> We target the ‘Can’ters’ and ‘Don’t Wanters’, who are specifically professionals, active parents and the health conscious, who can’t drink alcohol or simply do not want it at the moment because they are a gym-goer or have an after lunch meeting (Heineken UK Campaign website)

This image of the ‘typical’ NoLo drinker is also perpetuated in the mainstream media through the depiction of the NoLo drinker as young, middle-class and health-conscious (Corfe et al., 2020). To appeal to this type of consumer, the low calorie count of Heineken 0.0 was prominently displayed in promotional material, featuring directly in the product tagline in moves that typify ‘better-for-you’ marketing (Pitt et al., 2023; Shemilt et al., 2017). Interestingly, Seedlip did not explicitly stress calorific value, but drew on other phrasing that consumers might associate with ‘health’ through an emphasis on the product as ‘sugar-free and sweetener-free’ and ‘free from artificial flavours’ and through explicitly contrasting the product with ‘sugary carbonated or fruit juice-based drinks’ (Seedlip website). As Keric and Stafford (2019) argue, whilst ‘health’ cannot be equated simply with reduced calorie or sugar content, these statements serve as ‘healthy cues’, a shorthand way to associate the product with ‘health’ in consumers’ minds. Indeed, ‘health’, ‘low sugar’ and ‘low calorie’ *were* often conflated by research participants, and when asked about benefits of NoLos, there was some suggestion across participants of all ages that NoLos might be healthier, good for those ‘watching their weight’ (Nina, 45), ‘less fattening’ (Ed, 42) and contain less sugar than what Suzanne called ‘full-fat alcohol’ (see also Moss et al., 2022):

> I can have it and I don't have to think so much about the calories and what I'm consuming as much as I would with, like, an ordinary glass of wine (Emma, 31)

> They have probably got less sugar and stuff in. So I guess it is healthier overall (Suzanne, 52)

Here, Emma feels she can be less vigilant about the calorie count when consuming NoLos instead of 'ordinary' alcohol. She frequently associated alcohol with 'empty calories' and stressed that she and her female friends are all very aware that Seedlip can be consumed as part of weight loss programmes such as Slimming World. There may be a gendered dimension here, with Staub et al. (2022) reporting that health-consciousness is a key motivator for NoLo consumption amongst women. Suzanne positioned NoLos as 'healthier overall' due to their reduced sugar content (and whilst it is not clear what she means here by 'stuff', it might be inferred that artificial flavours, additives or sweeteners fall into this category). Other participants explicitly associated NoLo consumption with dieting or a 'health kick', often explaining that this was a key factor motivating their own NoLo consumption. This was evident across both male and female participants and participants of a range of ages; Zara (42) described being on a weight loss and fitness 'mission', Luke (29) expressed a preference for lower-calorie NoLos, and Pete (37) was embarking on a 'fitness journey' after previous weight gain and had switched to drinking NoLos instead of alcohol for a year.

However, it is important to stress that male and female participants of all ages primarily drank NoLos because of their low alcohol content. The low sugar and calorie content were an 'added bonus' rather than the main motivation for NoLo consumption (although here Hannah does show an awareness of the calorie content of some of the products she chooses):

> I think I see it [the lower calorie count] as an added benefit of non-alcoholic beers. Especially some of the non-alcoholic beers I am trying, they are like 18 calories a glass.

> It's not something I look for. I don't look and say, "I am going to have that alcohol-free wine because it is less calories." It hasn't, if I am honest, been a factor in why I don't drink. It is more of an added bonus (Hannah, 30)

Some participants also displayed an ambivalence towards the healthiness of NoLo products echoed in previous research (Niva et al., 2013) and indicative of a more critical form of engagement with social marketing messages. For example, even Suzanne's claim above shows some hesitation around the health values of NoLos (through the use of qualifiers such as 'probably' and 'I guess'). Rob (34) emphatically said that despite the reduced calorie count, if you drink NoLos 'you're not being ultra-healthy', whilst Pete reflected on the reasons for the expanding choice and availability of NoLos:

> Would the brands be doing it purely on health? I don't know. At the end of the day, I think they answer to the shareholders… [cut]… the choice is positive. I think it definitely does have health benefits. Maybe I am being cynical, but I don't think it's purely on the basis of, you know, for the good of people. I think that there are margins and profits there to consider as well. And if you can achieve both, fantastic, but I think if companies are going to pick one, it's likely going to be making the money (Pete, 37)

Here, Pete notes the 'positive' factors associated with the expanding NoLo market (including 'choice' and 'health benefits') but argues that the alcohol industry is likely more concerned with 'making money' than promoting public health. Christiaan (41) claimed early in the interview (and before viewing the moodboards) that the dominant message in NoLo marketing is 'if you drink this it's really healthy' but stressed that he feels the alcohol industry 'doesn't really care about healthy life choices'. The expanding NoLo market was thus attributed not to the alcohol industry's desire to encourage light, moderate or non-drinking practices or improve public health but rather to the possibility of widening their brand portfolio, tapping into new

markets and ultimately increasing profit. In this sense, consumers showed a degree of reflexivity and criticality in their engagements with messages about the 'healthiness' of NoLo products and in their considerations of industry motivations.

Salad, gym and nature: wider health associations in NoLo marketing and consumption

In addition to implying NoLo products are *intrinsically* 'better-for-you', the marketing materials revealed a more general association of the products with healthy lifestyles. The focus was not just on the internal features of the product, but also on drawing connections between the product and wider symbols of 'health' through making salient associations that locate NoLos within a wider framework of 'healthiness'. A prominent example of this is the frequent reference to exercise and fitness in Heineken 0.0 marketing materials. One of a set of five promotional videos associated with the main marketing campaign – all designed to show the product being consumed in 'unexpected' places - depicts a slim, toned woman finishing her exercise routine before immediately grabbing and enjoying a cold NoLo beer as she strolls past treadmills on her way to the gym changing room (Now You Can – Locker Room advert). Other campaign and social media material drew on strategies heavily adopted in marketing the flagship alcohol product, depicting Heineken 0.0 being consumed by highly successful sportspeople (for example Instagram posts 7, 8, 9, 10, 24 and 26). Further examples encouraged consumers to mix 'yoga and beer' (Instagram post 39), to 'meet someone for a drink at the gym' (image 8 – photo of billboard) and 'make barre class feel like a bar' (image 9 – photo of billboard), or used simple word association to link the product with 'health'.

Through the adoption of these strategies, NoLo consumption is implied to be part of a balanced, healthy lifestyle. Heineken 0.0's partnerships with sporting individuals send the message that successful athletes drink NoLos[2], whilst word association in one example – 'Salad: Check.

[2] The data included numerous examples of partnerships / promotional materials 'tagging' Formula One drivers including David Coulthard and Nico Rosberg and/or showing them consuming Heineken 0.0

Gym: Check. Beer? Check (image 7) - draws connections between NoLos, ‘healthy’ food and exercise spaces. These examples sit alongside the explicit positioning of the product as a refreshing option immediately after (or during) a workout, in the same way that energy drinks are promoted to young consumers (Buchanan et al., 2018). This is also mirrored in previous research on NoLos; Taylor Jr. et al. (2023) describe the targeting of the ‘active lifestyle’ market by companies such as the aptly-named Athletic Brewing Co (featuring NoLo beers designed to appeal to cyclists and runners), whilst Vasiljevic at al. identify examples of NoLo products being marketed as products ‘to refresh thirsty sportsmen’ (2018, p. 3).

Seedlip was a little more subtle in its wider health associations. Rather than focusing directly on sports, exercise and diet, themes of ‘nature’ were extremely prominent across all marketing materials and integral to the overall brand image and identity. Posts described making drinks ‘from nature’ (Seedlip website), alluded to the ‘naturalness’ of ingredients and celebrated ‘the power of plants’ (Instagram post 34). The main advertising campaign also draws heavily on a feminine aesthetic incorporating artwork featuring flowers, leaves and fruit to again evoke ideas of ‘nature’ and ‘naturalness’ (Seedlip Drink to the Future advertising images 1-5). Such strategies echo those already being utilised by the alcohol industry in the social marketing of ‘better-for-you’ products which are supposedly healthy because they are ‘natural’, ‘botanical’ and free from ‘artificial’ ingredients and additives (Keric and Stafford, 2019).

Echoing previous findings around the stereotypes of who is drinking NoLos (Staub et al., 2022), participants felt both products were targeted at ‘health-conscious’ consumers. After viewing Heineken 0.0 materials, Adam (37) described ‘young, professional gym-goers’ as the target audience, whilst Ed (42) commented after viewing the Seedlip moodboard, ‘you can imagine somebody coming out of the yoga studio and drinking this’. When asked about her initial associations with Heineken 0.0 prior to viewing marketing material, Jacqueline identified what she called a ‘sporty, healthy twist’ in their branding and marketing:

> I see it as linked with a healthy… If you do sport, if you care about your physical fitness, if you care about your health, then this is the healthy alternative that is just as good... a sporty, healthy, twist (Jacqueline, 68)

Others agreed that 'linking into sports and the gym' (Suzanne, 52) helps to position products as part of a healthy lifestyle by proxy. This was linked by participants to wider moves amongst consumers towards 'health consciousness' and a growing 'gym culture' (Ed, 42) echoed directly on Heineken's global site where their NoLo offering is explicitly positioned as 'responding to the growing trend of healthy living' (Heineken global website). Pete (37), who worked in the health and fitness industry, talked at length about men in particular becoming much more concerned with fitness and nutrition and likely to find NoLo products appealing (indeed, he very much felt health-conscious young men were the target market for products such as Heineken 0.0). This is an interesting reflection as White et al. (2018) observe that better-for-you marketing is increasingly targeted at men.

However, once again this was problematised or challenged by some participants who showed critical engagement with marketing messages. Whilst Liam (26) noted that his exercise coaches had recommended he drink a particular NoLo beer after sport, others were critical of messaging that associated NoLos directly with exercise or tried to position it as adjacent to functional sports drinks designed to enhance recovery and/or performance (Hagemann et al., 2017), as indicated by Rob's strong reaction to the Heineken 0.0 moodboard:

> Is this some kind of sports non-alcohol drink?! What, am I drinking this before I go on the pitch? (Rob, 34)

The idea of consuming NoLos at the gym (discussed after viewing the Now You Can 'Locker' video) was felt by almost all participants to be 'weird' and unreflective of how these products might be used; participants stressed that they wanted to drink NoLos in settings where alcohol

would normally be consumed, such as in pubs or when unwinding at home. This suggests that at least some of the attempts to draw wider associations between NoLos and healthy lifestyles felt jarring for consumers.

Thinking about the future: NoLos as part of 'balanced' lifestyles

Alongside drawing immediate associations between NoLos and health practices such as dieting and exercising, both marketing materials and consumer narratives also drew on wider framings of NoLos as a mechanism to enable consumers to secure longer-term 'healthy futures'. The notion of the 'future' was particularly prominent in marketing material for Seedlip, which implored consumers to 'drink to the future' in its marketing campaign (Seedlip Drink to the Future adverts 1 and 2) and promoted an exclusive club night on social media, 'Futureproof' (Instagram post 33). Whilst allusions to the future here may serve in part to position the product as groundbreaking or changing what the future landscape of (non)drinking might look like, this also spoke to both male and female participants of all ages in terms of the ways in which they framed their individual NoLo consumption as a 'future-focused' choice. For example, on viewing the Seedlip moodboard, Emma (31) immediately described the tagline 'drinking to the future' as a way of 'thinking about the impact that your drinking is having on your health'.

This was evidenced in the short-term, particularly for drinkers who reported that they would switch from an alcoholic product to a NoLo as a way to 'think about tomorrow' when they wanted to wake up energised and hangover-free, be more 'productive' and engage in exercise:

> You made that conscious choice to not drink and it makes you feel proud, as in, hey, I'm not just living in the moment. I'm already thinking about tomorrow… especially with the running. It's like, hey, I've got a three-hour run planned tomorrow. I really want to be in a good shape for that (Christiaan, 41)

In a society where the maintenance of individual health is key, even one's leisure time must be 'productive' and maximised to aid in the pursuit of this goal (Caluzzi et al., 2021), with the short-term effects of drinking associated with a 'spiral' of 'unhealthy' activities such as skipping exercise, lying hungover on the sofa or binging on fast food. Here, 'living in the moment' affords instant, short-term gratification, but showing self-control and restraint emerges as the 'smart' choice, something to – in Christiaan's words - 'feel proud' of.

Thinking about the 'future' could be about more than just thinking about the day after drinking. Christiaan for example also adopted longer stints of exclusive NoLo consumption in the build-up to an ultra-marathon. He went on to talk about being 'driven' and wanting to 'achieve', specifically in relation to long-distance running, switching to NoLo products 'as a performance thing' at specific points in his training because alcohol 'impacts training and recovery' (see Törrönen et al., 2021).

Long-term mental and physical wellbeing were also key factors in several participants' decisions to switch to NoLos, stop drinking or drink less alcohol. Mental health was frequented cited as a key motivator amongst those who had stopped drinking completely, and – for drinkers – a key factor in weighing up whether to switch to a NoLo on a particular occasion. This was notable particularly amongst the younger participants. For example, hybrid drinker Liam (26) described undertaking a 'cost-benefit analysis' on each potential drinking occasion to weigh up whether it would be worth drinking alcohol or better to switch to NoLos to avoid consequences such as low mood. Discussions of mental health were more prominent than discussions of physical health, however both were mentioned in relation to decisions to drink more NoLos and less alcohol by drinkers. Physical health was mentioned more frequently by older participants as something they had become 'increasingly aware of' (Jacqueline, 68), with individuals mentioning health conditions such as cancer, cirrhosis and the health implications of weight gain such as limited mobility.

For drinkers, NoLos were also explicitly constructed as a tool to support a moderate, balanced relationship with alcohol; Heineken actively tapped into this and stressed how their NoLo offering helps to address 'the cultural trend around the importance of living a balanced lifestyle' (Heineken global website). Several participants discussed the value of a 'hybrid' model (incorporating both NoLos and alcohol) and had already started to adopt this (for example drinking alcohol during the weekend and NoLos during the week). Terms such as 'happy medium' were deployed to describe preferred consumption practices and these 'responsible' drinking practices were framed as a way to support 'healthy futures':

> I have always, always loved my fitness and things like that. So that has become more and more important as I have got older. You only get one body, don't you? You really have to look after it as much as you can… I just don't want to be that guy who is 50, struggling, pulling a massive beer gut around, and struggling with knees and all that sort of stuff. Yes, if I view the future, that is not really what I want to see, so, yes, that is a big reason for managing drinking a bit as well… [cut]… I just think if you get yourself into quite an unhealthy state, it takes such a colossal turnaround of- It is like turning a tanker around, isn't it, of trying to lose weight and lifestyle changes, the whole lot? I just think it is easier just to head stuff off at the pass and keep everything moderate and keep yourself healthy (Ed, 42)

Here, Ed works to position himself as the 'good' citizen who values health and has 'always loved my fitness'. The heavy-drinking body is 'failing'; the evocative phrasing of 'pulling a massive beer gut around and struggling with knees' positions this type of body as 'out of control' and overweight ('a tanker'), challenging notions of the restrained, contained and 'healthy' body (Harjunen, 2016). Ed has clearly co-opted the language of 'responsible drinking' here; 'moderation' becomes a strategy to 'head stuff off at the pass' and make the 'right' choices now to avoid trying to achieve a 'colossal turnaround' in the future. Such strategies create what

Crawford calls a ‘fantasy of individual control’ (2006, p. 417) over one’s future health. Ed’s point that ‘you only get one body’ also serves as a reminder that it is the individual’s responsibility to ‘make the most’ of one’s body and implies there are no ‘quick fixes’ from medicine and healthcare. Responsibility is placed on the individual; a strategy echoed across the interview data whereby participants described themselves as ‘an active consumer’ (Georgie, 22) and stressed the importance of making ‘informed choices’ (Liam, 26), about (non)drinking.

Discussion

This paper highlights three key ways in which discourses of healthism become visible in NoLo marketing. Firstly, NoLo products may be presented as ‘better-for-you’, healthy options, drawing directly on product features that function as ‘healthy cues’ for consumers. Secondly, NoLo advertising may draw on wider associations between NoLo consumption and other ‘healthy’ practices, spaces and objects. Finally, narratives of ‘healthy futures’ are significant in the presentation of NoLo products. Through such mechanisms, NoLo producers respond to and engage with the pervasive expansion of healthism in late-capitalist contexts and target the health-conscious consumer. Messages around ‘healthy futures’ – and notions of NoLos as ‘healthy’ options - also resonated with consumers and shaped their own narratives around NoLo consumption. Hybrid consumers framed NoLo use as a way to enjoy a balanced, healthy lifestyle and a ‘moderate’ or ‘responsible’ relationship with alcohol (Davey, 2022b). These messages around health and ‘futures’ are likely to appeal to both male and female consumers; however participants did observe differences in how the products were branded, with Heineken 0.0 felt to offer a ‘sporty’, no-nonsense vibe to appeal to young men, in contrast to Seedlip’s feminine aesthetic and focus on ‘nature’, pastel colours and floral imagery. This may be a fruitful arena for further research, particularly as this mirrors wider associations between – for example – beer, sport and masculinity (Gee and Jackson, 2012). There was also some evidence that mental health is more of a motivator for managing alcohol intake amongst younger

consumers, whilst physical health was more important for older participants. Further research could explore these nuances in more detail and consider how public health approaches to encourage alcohol reduction might be effectively tailored to different cohorts.

A CSM lens facilitates the 'critical scrutiny' of alcohol industry wellbeing claims (Tadajewski et al., 2014, p. 1756) and reveals the ways in which discourses of healthism pervade and intersect with marketing and consumption practices in relation to the expanding NoLo market. As the data illustrates, leading alcohol producers engage with dominant healthism discourses to target the health-conscious consumer, whilst appearing to 'do good' through encouraging the responsible consumption of supposedly 'healthy' products. This direct engagement with healthism is evident not only in marketing material, but also where companies have explicitly positioned the development of their NoLo offerings as a deliberate strategy 'responding to the growing trend of healthy living' (Heineken global website).

As Keric et al. note, products marketed as 'better-for-you' rely on 'an illusion of healthfulness' (2021, p. 785) that is readily exposed when adopting a critical approach towards social and commercial marketing. There was evidence in the data that strategies used within the food, tobacco and alcohol industry - such as making 'meaningless' or empty claims around the 'naturalness' of products (Keric and Stafford, 2019) - are adopted and reworked through NoLo marketing, along with a 'healthy by proxy' approach whereby NoLos are positioned in proximity to 'healthy' practices and spaces and associations are drawn between things that might usually be juxtapositioned, including 'beer' and 'yoga' (itself a highly commodified practice that has been interrogated through the lens of neoliberal healthism (Mintz, 2021)). Whilst the alcohol industry also at times draws directly on 'health claims' in relation to NoLo products (e.g. low calorie and sugar count), it is interesting that marketing did *not* emphasise the lower alcohol content as a health benefit, despite this potentially being an effective tool to encourage behavioural change (indeed the data suggests this was a key health motivator for

consumers (see Nicholls, 2022)). The sceptical CSM scholar might argue that when NoLos are produced alongside flagship alcoholic offerings, alcohol producers must balance the promotion of different products, seeking to showcase NoLos without drawing too much attention to the serious, short and long-term health side effects of their full-strength alcoholic offerings. The promotion of NoLo consumption before or during exercise is one example of a strategy where NoLo marketing is designed to avoid encroaching on alcohol consumption. Expanding the opportunities where NoLos can be drunk (e.g. during or after exercise) opens up new consumption contexts without threatening the traditional drinking spaces which are 'reserved' for alcohol (indeed, very little social media and marketing material showed Heineken 0.0 being consumed in a pub or bar). A CSM perspective highlights the profit – rather than public health - motivations that likely sit behind such approaches, whilst recognising that the normalisation of NoLos (i.e. products that look, smell and taste like alcohol) in exercise spaces may ultimately risk contributing to greater acceptance of *alcohol* in such contexts.

Healthism discourses are also entangled with everyday practices. Whilst critical approaches to social marketing are not the sole preserve of the researcher and there was evidence that consumers are challenging (some) marketing messages and industry motivations, NoLo consumption may also be embraced as a moral strategy to practice individual self-restraint, embrace 'choice', achieve 'hybrid' drinking identities and work towards 'healthy futures'. In this sense, morality, consumption and pleasure are not mutually exclusive (Caruana et al., 2019). The NoLo market functions as a 'moral market' that offers opportunities to affirm one's identity and practices as a non, light or moderate drinker and may afford embodied pleasures derived not only from the taste and sensations of consuming NoLos but also from the 'moral' choice to invest in one's health and wellbeing. As Caruana et al. (2019) note in their work on alternative hedonism, 'moral modes' of consumption may bring inherent pleasures and 'self-policing strategies have a powerful moral appeal - as the right kinds of pleasure - while being

pleasurable in themselves' (2019, p. 147). Moderation and balance may function not just as modes of 'alternative hedonism' and ways to achieve 'the good life', but also as routes to 'salvation' in an increasingly secular society where 'this one-and-only life [or body] becomes everything' (Crawford, 2006, p. 404). As suggested by Ed in his description of current labour to protect against the 'failing body' later in life, in the absence of an afterlife one's only shot at life must be 'maximised' and 'optimised' (Race, 2012); as Ed remarks 'you only get one body, don't you?'.

The narratives of individual choice and responsibility prevalent in the data can also be understood through the lens of healthism, as participants praised the 'choice' the expanding NoLo market brings and drew on discourses of personal responsibility in their discussions of alcohol and NoLo consumption. The industry's calls to 'drink responsibility' had been internalised by participants who emphasised their own position as an 'active consumer' who makes 'informed choices' and offered some criticism of those who were not suitably 'mindful' (Pete, 38) of the consequences of their drinking practices. The expanding market was presented as a positive development, responding to consumers' needs and supporting them to make the 'right' choices. A CSM approach recognises that such moves may benefit the alcohol industry and expand its 'halo' as it is seen to offer consumers choice and flexibility around their drinking, and to be directly supporting moderation, balance and 'healthy' lifestyles. The illusion persists that the industry is 'doing good' by making NoLo products increasingly available (and appealing), and the onus is firmly on the individual consumer to engage with these products in an 'active' and 'informed' way (although of course there is a tension here as – as participants themselves identified - consumers may still experience uncertainty or ambiguity around the potential health implications or benefits of NoLos). The expanding NoLo market thus further pushes responsibility for the 'right' modes of consumption onto the individual. This of course contributes to the 'halo effect' which allows the alcohol industry to

simultaneously market their products and appear to be 'doing good' in relation to their corporate social responsibilities (Miller et al. 2022). This may reflect 'political' strategies adopted by the industry to push its own 'responsible' marketing and the focus on the individual consumer as evidence that further external or formal regulation is unnecessary and self-regulation is effective; indeed, in the UK the industry has argued that further advertising regulation would actually hinder the introduction of new, lower-strength and 'healthier' products to the market (House of Commons: Health Committee, 2010 cited in Savell et al., 2016, p.27). The individualisation of drinking is also an example of how healthism *depoliticises* health and confines it to the realm of individual responsibility, neglecting a consideration of wider social inequalities and structural factors that contribute to the patterning of poor health outcomes and continuing to 'shift the blame for alcohol misuse to the consumer and away from [industry] products and marketing' (Savell et al., 2016, p. 26). To 'do' health is a signifying practice (Crawford, 2006) and a 'failure' to do it correctly can be associated with blame and shame, as indicated by participants' work in distancing themselves from the irresponsible 'other'.

This is also a powerful example of the ways in which health is intrinsically bound to consumption as marketing becomes increasingly entangled with 'neoliberal governance ideas about marketization in which commercial rationalities are believed to improve consumer health and well-being' (Yngfalk and Fyrburg Yngfalk, 2015, p. 435). Better-for-you products fundamentally exist 'to promote consumption rather than health' (White et al., 2014, p. 121) and NoLo consumption is a key way to 'do' health through consumption.; a distinct practice that supports consumers to embody particular (non)drinking identities of moderation or abstinence, allowing them to show 'responsible' and future-focused behaviour without disengaging from dominant drinking cultures completely.

Conclusion

As this paper has shown, NoLo marketing and consumption strategies function as tools to enact the commodification of health. This exploratory, small-scale study is limited to the analysis of two NoLo products and it is not possible to generalise findings from the small number of interviews undertaken with primarily middle-class participants (who are arguably the most readily able to deploy narratives of healthism in their everyday (non)drinking practices). Nonetheless, the adoption of a CSM approach that considers the expanding NoLo market through the conceptual lens of healthism has provided new and meaningful insights into the ways in which these products are marketed and consumed, with possible wider implications. This approach has facilitated the interrogation of marketing and consumption practices and a critical consideration of the ways in which the expanding NoLo market bolsters the industry's 'drink responsibly' messages. This in turn generates a 'halo effect' that presents the industry as offering 'choice' whilst continuing to compel the savvy, responsible and informed consumer to enact a hybrid, balanced and ultimately 'morally good' drinking identity through the incorporation of NoLos into their drinking repertoires. Both CSM and healthism could be adapted (either separately or together) to consider the marketing and consumption of other supposedly 'better-for-you' products (for example plant-based alternative food products or 'functional' drinks).

These findings have implications in the areas of NoLo regulation, public health and consumer education. Firstly, firmer regulation of NoLo marketing is needed, including a robust policy to prevent potentially misleading health marketing, such as the promotion of NoLos as products to be consumed during exercise. Secondly, health promotion strategies might seek to harness the focus on 'healthy futures' and promote a 'hybrid' model of alcohol and NoLo consumption amongst drinkers as a way to reduce individuals' overall alcohol consumption (through substituting NoLos for full-strength products). However, such approaches must be met with caution in the continued absence of any real evidence about the potential of the NoLo market

to reduce alcohol harms and in the face of a real risk that the NoLo market might *exacerbate* harm. Finally, as Tadajewski et al. (2014) argue, critical research on social marketing should seek to empower and raise the consciousness of consumers through exposing how claims of consumer benefit (for example 'health benefits') obscure the real, market-driven objectives (e.g. profit) behind industry strategies and marketing practices. Such work, we could argue, is particularly important in relation to industries – such as the alcohol industry - who have widespread reach and political influence and who market products that are harmful yet normalised. Whilst the data indicates that consumers may have some scepticism towards industry motives and marketing practices, more could be done in terms of consumer education and awareness raising to develop consumers' explicit ability to engage critically with industry messages and with the promises of new, 'healthy' products.

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