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Editorial - Perspectives on drinking, manufacture and drinking spaces and places

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Globally, approximately one in three people (32.5%) drink alcohol equating to roughly 2.4 billion people (Griswold et al., 2018). Behind this consumption there are a range of brewers, distillers and winemakers who produce alcohol and suppliers and retailers of various types who bring the product to the consumer. Statista (2025) highlights the revenue of the alcoholic drinks market in 2025 at 69.7 billion US dollars highlighting the significant size of this industry. Through this special issue we examine the current state of the industry and consumers within it from the perspective of marketing management and consumer behaviour. The editorial, and the special issue itself can be broken into five sections highlighting the contemporary interests of researchers in this area. These are (1) Drinking and alcohol; (2) Drinking places and spaces; (3) Manufacture; (4) Marketing and Product Development; and (5) Diversity and Inclusion. In addition, we have also included a conversation, which brings the views of practitioners to the forefront and will be discussed further below.

Drinking and alcohol

While as detailed above, drinking is seen worldwide, alcohol consumption varies geographically, with higher levels in Europe, North America, and Australasia, and lower levels in North Africa and the Middle East, reflecting religious and cultural norms (Ritchie and Roser, 2024). Binge drinking sees higher levels in Russia and some African countries, though research is limited outside the USA (D'Alessandro et al., 2023; Zyoud, 2025). Men generally consume more alcohol than women, as observed in China, Romania, and the UK (Im et al., 2022; Nasui et al., 2021; Oldham et al., 2021).

Much research focuses on the negative health impacts of alcohol, such as liver cirrhosis and cancer (Bryazka et al., 2022), and its role in drink driving (Friesen et al., 2022; Love et al., 2024), violence (Khajji et al., 2022), and mental health issues (Schäfer et al., 2022). This has driven discussions on alcohol labelling, promotion, and social marketing to reduce harm (Diouf et al., 2023). Recent policies such as Minimum Unit Pricing (MUP) in Scotland have shown reductions in consumption but little is known yet about the full- and long-term impacts of these initiatives (O'Donnell et al., 2019; Maharaj, et al., 2023). The UK has also introduced new alcohol duties targeting high strength drinks (Office for Budget Responsibility, 2024; HM Revenue and Customs, 2023).

Despite the focus on problematic drinking, most drinkers consume alcohol moderately (Drinkaware, 2022) and because of this, recent discussions advocate for acknowledging the

pleasure of drinking and its role in social interaction, cooperation and innovative thinking (Nicholls and Hunt, 2025; Slingerland, 2021).

Additionally, alcohol consumption patterns are evolving. For example, wine consumption has increased significantly in the UK (Ritchie and Roser, 2024) over the last 30 years, and youth drinking has declined, with more individuals choosing moderation or abstinence (Whitaker et al, 2023; Nicholls, 2022). Little research has explored these changing behaviours in enough depth.

Our special issue's first paper takes the time to examine drinking behaviour. Entitled, 'Predicting transitions in alcohol buying behaviour' by Giang Trinh, John Dawes and Byron Sharp, the work uses an NBD model to analyze alcohol purchase patterns in the US and UK, examining changes in heavy, medium, and light buyers to understand how interventions might reduce heavy alcohol consumption.

Drinking places and spaces

Alcohol consumption occurs in diverse settings, both at home and in public venues. In the UK, off-licence purchases from shops and supermarkets fuel home drinking, (which has surged post-COVID) driven by affordability and availability of home entertainment options (Conroy & Nicholls, 2022; Ou et al., 2024; Sandiford & Divers, 2011). In 2021, 80% of UK adults reported drinking at home, and 19% at friends' homes (Drinkaware, 2022).

On-licence consumption in pubs, bars, and restaurants provides social contexts for drinking. In the UK, 36% of adults drank in such venues in 2021. However, pubs, often vital community hubs, face an alarming level of closures due to economic pressures and policy impacts (Fyans & McLinden, 2023; Weller, 2023; Kollwe, 2024; Deakin and Thurnell-Read, 2025). The impact of this decline on drinking habits and communities remains uncertain. Conversely, taprooms and micropubs have gained popularity, linked to the rise of local breweries (Taylor et al., 2021).

Globally, on-trade venues face varying trends. European pubs and bars have generally declined (IBISWorld, 2024), while US bars and nightclubs have seen a rise (IBISWorld, 2025). Australian pubs have also increased (Statista, 2024). How and why different patterns are seen globally has not been researched.

The "prinks" effect, or pre-drinking/pre-loading highlights the interaction between off-licence and on-licence consumption, where individuals drink at home before going out (Foster and Ferguson, 2014; Zahnow, 2022; O'Connor and Waehning, 2023).

Two papers in this special issue explore the role of place in drinking. Sara Parry's 'Place attachment and in-home drinking: A qualitative study and research agenda' investigates motivations for home drinking and attachment to home, building on the fact that home drinking has become increasingly popular. Gellatly, Webster, Carter and Alessandro's 'Place in Young Adults' Alcohol Journeys' examines how place influences drinking levels and consumer journeys across different drinking environments.

Manufacture

The UK's alcohol production landscape has evolved significantly. Craft breweries surged in the UK in the past 15 years, reaching 1,826 in 2023, up from 500 in the year 2000 (Statista, 2023). However, COVID-19 and rising costs have severely impacted the industry, leading to numerous recent closures (Watterson, 2023). This picture is mirrored across Europe, with beer production levels in 2023 at 3.87million HL, down from 4.02million HL in 2022, and remaining below pre-Covid levels of 4.13 million HL in 2019 (Brewers of Europe, 2024). Declining trends for 2023 were also observed in the USA, with both craft beer production and beer sales down 5.1% on 2022 (Brewers Association, 2025). Breweries have in some cases adapted by shifting to direct-to-consumer sales (Cabras et al., 2023; Waehning et al., 2023). Post-pandemic, they are grappling with strategic decisions regarding internationalization, sales channels, and marketing. Coopetition, collaborative efforts among competitors, has also become prevalent (Mathais et al., 2017). Despite these efforts, 100 breweries closed in the UK in 2024 (Davies, 2025).

British wine production is also expanding, attracting investment and increasing vineyard land (Stoughton, 2023; Green, 2023). Distilling has also seen substantial growth (Bellwood, 2021). While research on these trends has begun (Hall, 2014), more is needed to understand their impact and issues related to success or failure.

Our special issue includes one paper in this area, 'Collaborative Marketing Practices Among Rival Cluster-Based Firms' by Dave Crick and James Crick, which explores coopetition among New Zealand wine producers, highlighting place-based marketing strategies.

Marketing and Product Development

Research on craft beer marketing, an area of recent growth has examined its place-based nature, authenticity, branding, and role within tourism (Gatrell et al., 2018; Waehning et al., 2018; Hede & Watne, 2013; Miller & Bowen, 2023; Melewar & Skinner, 2020; Cabras et al., 2020). Provenance representations on labels and the "social terroir" of craft beer, highlighting community ties, are crucial (Bowen & Miller, 2023; Sjölander-Lindqvist et al., 2020).

Changing drinking trends, including declining youth consumption (Williams & Katwala, 2022), have spurred the growth of no and low alcohol (NoLo) products, projected to reach £432 million by 2027 (Mintel, 2022). Manufacturers face cost challenges, and the integration of NoLo products in on-trade venues requires further research. Consumer hybrid consumption patterns also warrant investigation (Nicholls, 2022).

Our special issue features two papers specifically on NoLo products. Hannah Ford, Rebecca Dolan, Steve Goodman, Susan Bastian, Wes Pearson and Armando Corsi's 'Exploring consumers' drinking behaviour regarding no, low and mid alcohol wines: A systematic scoping review and guiding framework' examines NoLo wines, an under-researched area, especially compared to NoLo beer. Emily Nicholls' 'A sporty, healthy twist?': The deployment of health and wellness discourses in NoLo marketing and consumer practice' explores the use of health and wellness messaging in NoLo marketing, and emerging marketing strategy for NoLo brewers.

Diversity and Inclusion

Finally, an area of current interest affecting all elements of drinking from spaces to brewing is diversity and inclusion. Pubs have traditionally positioned themselves as welcoming spaces for all (Sandiford & Divers, 2011; Lane, 2018), including many offering themselves as warm spaces in recent cold winters (Maurice-Jones, 2022) but recent behaviours have led to accusations of sexism at beer festivals (Harrison-West, 2022) and chauvinistic marketing of beer has also been highlighted as well as gender inequity in the brewing industry (Land, 2019). For pubs, events and brewing to survive they must be spaces that provide active support for diversity and inclusion.

The final empirical paper in the special issue examines the role of gender within craft beer production and consumption. The paper entitled 'Craft Beer has no Space for Women' by Inka Kosonen, Sarah Barnard and Daniel Sage examines women's experiences in production and consumption venues of beer and the need for greater inclusiveness in the beer scene, especially as beer professionals.

Geography and Methodology

Although through some of the above discussion we have focused on the UK nation's drinking behaviour and alcohol production it is clear that drinking spaces and manufacture is a global phenomenon. Drinking levels, types, etc. may differ across countries and there are some issues which remain similar. Work which allows comparisons across countries is rare but one paper in our special issue did do this, with Trinh et al.'s paper examining both the US and UK. Whilst not providing comparisons across countries the papers do provide a view of international drinking with work presented or samples from the UK, USA, New Zealand and Australia. Sadly, we are not able to showcase work from non-English speaking nations. This special issue, mirroring much work in drinking behaviours, spaces and manufacture has focused on the Global North, due to the papers submitted, and it is clear that further variety is needed geographically to understand these issues in a global context (Waehning and Wells, 2024). Given that alcohol consumption is high in Russia, Eastern Europe, and some countries in Africa, is it clear that more geographically dispersed research is needed. Additionally, with the rise of NoLo, countries that would previously have not been of interest to alcohol researchers, such as Saudi Arabia and Egypt, could now provide valuable information about whether NoLo is penetrating into markets that have previously only seen small amounts of alcohol production and consumption.

Methodologically our special issue showcases a number of methods and approaches. One paper (Ford, Dolan, Goodman, Bastian, Pearson and Corsi) used a systematic literature review approach and another (Trinh, Dawes and Sharp) used a quantitative data method. All of the other papers in the special issue used qualitative methods including interviews (with both consumers and businesses), asynchronous focus groups, analysis of marketing materials, ethnography and participatory observation.

A pint-sized conversation

As well as the empirical and review academic papers above our special issue also contains a 'conversation'. Highlighting the importance of both impactful and interdisciplinary research we invited a number of practitioners and non-marketing academics to provide their perspectives on beer, brewing and pubs. The conversation, which asked questions by e-mail and brought together the answers, was included to hear diverse voices in this special issue. There are so many key issues that are highlighted in the conversation from reinforcing the role of the pub as the hub of the community, a discussion of an extremely multifaceted sector, corporate versus independent values, the restriction of the beer tie and the role of planning amongst many other issues. We hope you will take time to read the conversations (perhaps over a pint in your local pub) and that it will spark ideas for new research in our area and particularly research that will support and celebrate brewing, pubs and drinking in all their many forms.

Final Comments

It has been a pleasure to edit this special issue and to hear more about research going on in these areas. The special issue was kicked off with a special session at the Academy of Marketing Conference in 2025 at Cardiff Business School. We would like to thank Cardiff Business School and the Academy of Marketing for supporting our session and it was fabulous to see so many people there interested in drinking, drinking spaces and manufacture. We received more submissions to the special issue than we were able to publish and so had to make difficult decisions about what to take forward to the review process. We would like to thank all of the authors who submitted to the special issue and would especially like to thank those authors who responded so carefully and comprehensively to the reviewers' comments. We would also like to thank all of the reviewers who provided time to read papers, made careful comments and examined resubmissions. Finally, we would like to thank the members of our conversation. Unlike the other authors many of these interlocutors were from industry and gave up time, especially valuable given the pressures they are under, to share their wide-ranging experiences and views.

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