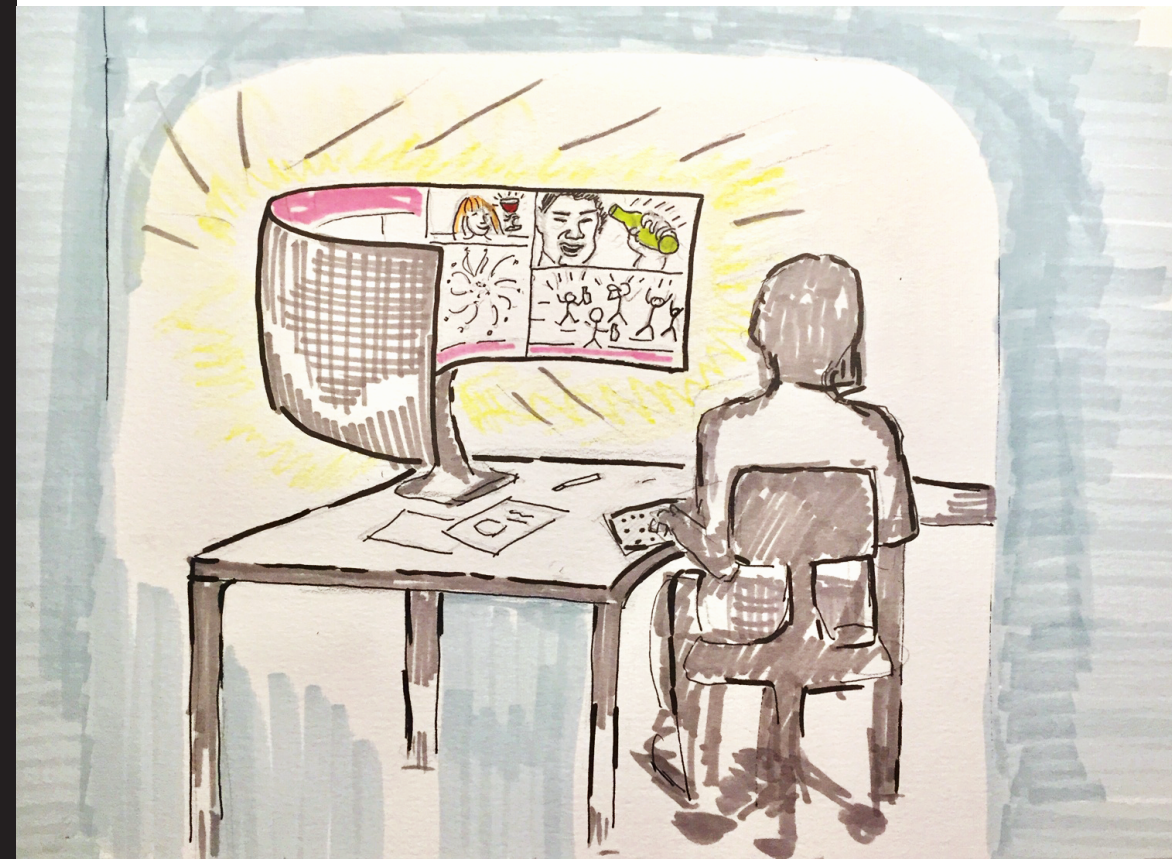




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## ALCOHOL MARKETING ON SOCIAL MEDIA SITES IN FINLAND AND SWEDEN

A comparative audit study of brands' presence and  
content, and the impact of a legislative change



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# Abstract

Social media has become a key marketing platform for alcohol brands. Social media makes it possible for advertisers to spread messages via consumers and to involve them in the production of marketing content. It offers new possibilities for interactive communication between alcoholic beverage companies and their potential consumers. This report presents the first audit of alcoholic beverage brands' activities on social media targeting consumers in Finland and Sweden. Its purpose is to produce new information on how this issue can be viewed as a marketing effort, what kind of content is used, and how well alcohol producers have succeeded in reaching consumers on their social media channels. The report also assesses how the 2015 amendment to the Finnish Alcohol Act has affected alcohol marketing on social media.

The study focuses on the Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and YouTube accounts of 38 alcoholic beverage producers in Finland, and 52 in Sweden. The material consists of content published by these producers on their social media accounts in January 2014, January 2016 and January 2017. It includes a total of 2 740 social media posts: 1 536 from Finland and 1 204 from Sweden. We analysed the material using quantitative content analysis method. We examined the prevalence of user reactions, the marketing content restricted by the 2015 Alcohol Act and the content restricted by the alcohol industry's own self-regulatory codes. We also analysed the ways in which producers aim to interact with consumers and appeal especially to young consumers. These contents were compared in terms of countries and time points.

In both Finland and Sweden, Facebook was the most important platform for alcohol marketing during the studied period. The number of alcohol marketing messages doubled in both countries from January 2014 to January 2016 but declined in January 2017. The study shows that Swedish and Finnish alcohol producers have been relatively unsuccessful in reaching consumers in terms of generating user reactions such as likes, comments and shares. The posts were rarely shared, and only a few producers had managed to create their own brand-based social media communities.

The 2015 law amendment seems to have had some effect on the content of alcohol marketing in Finland. The law restricts the use of consumer-generated content in marketing and prohibits the use of games and lotteries. The use of consumer-generated content increased from January 2014 to January 2016 but declined in January 2017. In Sweden, the use of consumer-generated content increased over the studied period. Posts only made a few violations of the industry's self-regulatory codes or contained content that would be specifically appealing to minors. However, minors could obtain access to alcohol marketing messages, as only about 60% of the producers studied in Finland and Sweden had introduced age limit controls on Facebook. None of the Swedish producers had introduced age limit controls on Instagram, whereas in Finland 13% had. Alcohol producers used a variety of techniques to engage consumers. They posted content intended to be shared by consumers, such as videos and hashtags, and

encouraged consumers to comment on their posts. They also collaborated with known bloggers, restaurants and events.

By comparing the samples from 2014 and 2017, this study shows that alcohol producers in Finland and Sweden have invested in alcohol marketing on social media and have become more successful in engaging consumers. Restrictions on social media in Finland have not affected manufacturers' ability to engage consumers in this arena. The regulation of social media marketing through national legislation is difficult, as social media service providers operate globally, and the platforms they provide are constantly developed to optimize user experience and are difficult to monitor. Alcohol producers are also becoming more skillful in utilizing these platforms for marketing purposes. Future research needs to address the long-term impact of the legislation as well as new forms of social media marketing.

# Tiivistelmä

Sosiaalisesta mediasta on tullut keskeinen alkoholimarkkinoinnin kanava. Sosiaalinen mediassa on mahdollista saada mainonta leviämään kuluttajien itsensä avulla, ottaa kuluttajat itse mukaan mainontasisältöjen tuottamiseen ja lisätä näin vuorovaikutusta kuluttajien ja alkoholibrändien välillä. Raportti on ensimmäinen katsaus alkoholimarkkinoinnin toteuttamisesta sosiaalisessa mediassa Suomessa ja Ruotsissa. Tarkoituksena on tuottaa uutta tietoa siitä, mitä sosiaalisen median alkoholimarkkinointi on, miten markkinointia toteutetaan, minkälaisia sisältöjä käytetään ja miten hyvin alkoholivalmistajat ovat onnistuneet tavoittamaan kuluttajia sosiaalisen median kanavillaan. Lisäksi raportissa arvioidaan, miten vuoden 2015 alkoholilain muutos Suomessa on vaikuttanut sosiaalisen median alkoholimarkkinointiin.

Tutkimuksen kohteena ovat Suomen ja Ruotsin markkinoilla toimivien alkoholivalmistajien sosiaalisen median kanavat Facebookissa, Instagramissa, Twitterissä ja Youtubessa. Suomesta on mukana 38 ja Ruotsista 52 valmistajaa. Aineisto sisältää valmistajien sosiaalisen median kanavilla julkaistut sisällöt tammikuulta 2014, tammikuulta 2016 ja tammikuulta 2017. Aineisto sisältää yhteensä 2 740 julkaisua, 1 536 Suomesta ja 1 204 Ruotsista. Aineisto analysoitiin määrällisen sisällönanalyysin keinoin. Julkaisuista poimittiin käyttäjäreaktioiden määrät, vuoden 2015 alkoholilain rajoittamat markkinointisisällöt ja alkoholiteollisuuden itsesäätelykriteeristöjen rajoittamat sisällöt. Lisäksi tarkasteltiin keinoja, joilla valmistajat pyrkivät vuorovaikutukseen kuluttajien kanssa ja sisältöjä, joiden voidaan katsoa olevan erityisesti nuoriin kuluttajiin vetoavia. Sisältöjä ja kuluttajareaktioita vertailtiin sekä maiden että eri ajankohtien välillä.

Sekä Suomessa että Ruotsissa Facebook on ollut tärkein alkoholimarkkinoinnin alusta. Sosiaalisen median alustoilla julkaistujen alkoholimarkkinointiviestien määrä tuplaantui kummassakin maassa tammikuusta 2014 tammikuuhun 2016 mutta pieneni tammikuussa 2017. Tutkimus osoittaa, että Suomessa ja Ruotsissa toimivat alkoholivalmistajat eivät ole kovin hyvin onnistuneet kuluttajien tavoittamisessa tutkittuina ajankohtina, kun tarkastellaan julkaisujen saamia tykkäyksiä, kommentteja ja jakoja. Kuluttajat ovat jakaneet julkaisuja vähän ja vain harvat valmistajat ovat onnistuneet luomaan oman sosiaalisen median yhteisön tuotteensa ympärille.

Vuoden 2015 lakiuudistuksella näyttäisi olleen jonkin verran vaikutusta alkoholimarkkinoinnin sisältöihin Suomessa. Laki rajoitti kuluttajien tuottamien sisältöjen käyttöä markkinoinnissa ja kielsi pelien ja arpajaisten käytön markkinointijulkaisuissa. Kuluttajien tuottamien sisältöjen osuus markkinointijulkaisuissa nousi kun verrataan tammikuuta 2014 ja 2016, mutta väheni tammikuussa 2017. Ruotsissa kuluttajien omien sisältöjen käyttö lisääntyi tammikuusta 2014 tammikuuhun 2017. Julkaisuissa esiintyi vain vähän alkoholiteollisuuden itsesäätelyn vastaisia tai erityisesti nuoriin ja alaikäisiin kuluttajiin vetoavia sisältöjä. Alaikäisten oli kuitenkin mahdollista päästä lukemaan monia alkoholivalmistajien tuottamia sisältöjä, koska noin 60 prosenttia mukana

olleista valmistajista Suomessa ja Ruotsissa oli ottanut käyttöön ikäraja- ja valvonnan Facebookissa. Instagramissa yksikään ruotsalainen valmistaja ei ollut ottanut käyttöön ikäraja- ja valvontaa. Suomessa osuus oli 13 %.

Sosiaalisen median alkoholimarkkinoinnissa käytettiin monia keinoja kuluttajien tavoittamiseksi ja kiinnostuksen herättämiseksi. Markkinointijulkaisuissa hyödynnettiin jaettavaksi suunnattuja sisältöjä, kuten videoita ja hashtagia sekä kehoitettiin kuluttajia kommentoimaan julkaisuja. Julkaisuja tehtiin yhteistyössä esimerkiksi tunnettujen bloggaajien, ravintoloiden ja tapahtumien kanssa.

Suomessa ja Ruotsissa toimivat alkoholivalmistajat ovat panostaneet alkoholimarkkinointiin sosiaalisessa mediassa ja ovat onnistuneet paremmin kuluttajien tavoittamisessa kun verrataan vuoden 2014 ja 2017 aineistoja. Sosiaalisen median rajoituksilla Suomessa ei näyttäisi olleen vaikutusta valmistajien mahdollisuuksiin jakaa sisältöjä ja sitouttaa kuluttajia sosiaalisessa mediassa. Sosiaalisen median markkinoinnin sääntely kansallisella lainsäädännöllä on vaikeaa, koska sosiaalisen median palveluntarjoajat toimivat globaalisti, niiden tarjoamat alustat kehittyvät samoin kuin valmistajien osaaminen näiden alustojen hyödyntämisessä. Myös sisältöjen valvonta on vaikeaa. Tulevaisuudessa tutkimusta tarvitaan erityisesti sääntelyn pitkän aikavälin vaikutuksista ja sosiaalisen median markkinoinnin uusista muodoista.

# Sammanfattning

Sociala medier har blivit en viktig marknadsföringsplattform för alkoholproducenter. I sociala medier kan annonsörernas budskap spridas med hjälp av konsumenterna, och användarna av medietjänsterna kan även engageras för att skapa innehåll för marknadsföringen. Detta leder till ökad växelverkan och nya rollfördelningar mellan alkoholproducenter och deras potentiella konsumenter. Denna rapport är en första granskning av alkoholbrands aktiviteter i sociala medier i Finland och Sverige och de sätt på vilka denna aktivitet kan betraktas som marknadsföring. Syftet har varit att producera ny kunskap om hur marknadsföring genomförs, vilken typ av innehåll som används och hur väl alkoholproducenter har lyckats nå ut till konsumenterna på sociala medier. Dessutom bedömer rapporten hur den justerade finländska alkohollagen från 2015 påverkat alkoholbrandens aktivitet på sociala medier.

Studien fokuserar på registrerade konton på Facebook, Instagram, Twitter och YouTube tillhörandes alkoholproducenter verksamma i Finland och Sverige. 38 finska varumärken och 52 svenska ingår i studien. Materialet innehåller inlägg publicerade i januari 2014, januari 2016 och januari 2017. Materialet omfattar totalt 2 740 inlägg, 1 536 från Finland och 1 204 från Sverige. Materialet analyserades med hjälp av en kvantitativ innehållsanalys. Antalet användarreaktioner, innehåll som begränsas av den förnyade finska alkohollagstiftningen samt innehåll som begränsas av alkoholindustrins självregleringskriterier studerades närmare. Studien identifierar även de sätt på vilka alkoholmärkena strävar till växelverkan med konsumenterna, samt allt sådant innehåll som kan anses tilltala unga och minderåriga konsumenter. Dessa variabler jämförs mellan Finland och Sverige, samt över tid.

Såväl i Finland som i Sverige var Facebook den viktigaste plattformen för alkoholmarknadsföring. Antalet inlägg på sociala medier fördubblades i båda länderna från januari 2014 till januari 2016 men minskade i januari 2017. Studien visar att varken svenska eller finländska alkoholproducenter lyckas generera avsevärda mängder användarreaktioner, såsom gilla-markeringar, kommentarer eller delningar. Inläggen delades mycket sparsamt av konsumenterna, och endast ett fåtal tillverkare lyckades med att skapa en livskraftig, virtuell gemenskap kring sitt varumärke.

Den förnyade finska alkohollagstiftningen som trädde i kraft 2015 verkar ha haft en effekt på innehållet som publicerades av de finska alkoholtillverkarna. Lagen begränsade bruket av konsument producerat innehåll i marknadsföringssyfte, samt spel, tävlingar och lotterier med samma syften. Användandet av bilder, texter och övrigt material skapat av konsumenter ökade mellan januari 2014 och 2016, men avtog i Finland i januari 2017. I Sverige blev det under samma stickprovsmånader allt vanligare att använda sig av konsument producerat material.

Endast ett fåtal av inläggen bröt mot industrins självreglerings-regelverk, eller konstaterades tilltala en ung publik. Test med minderåriga användarprofiler visade dock att minderåriga har nästan obehindrad tillgång till alkoholtillverkarnas sociala mediekonton. Endast cirka 60 % av de finska och svenska producenterna tillämpade



åldersgränser på sina Facebookkonton. På Instagram hade ingen av de svenska tillverkarna tagit i bruk åldersgränser. I Finland var motsvarande andel 13 %.

Alkoholtillverkarna använde sig av en rad olika knep för att nå konsumenterna och väcka deras intresse. Konsumenterna uppmanades att dela inlägg som innehöll till exempel videosnuttar eller hashtags och de uppmuntrades även att kommentera inlägg. Inlägg kunde vara producerade i samarbete med till exempel kända bloggare, restauranger och evenemang.

Alkoholproducenterna i Sverige och Finland verkar att ha investerat och satsat på marknadsföringen i sociala medier. De lyckades nå och engagera konsumenter i högre utsträckning år 2017 i jämförelse med år 2014. De nya bestämmelserna om marknadsföring på sociala medier i Finland verkar inte ha påverkat producenternas möjligheter till växelverkan med sina kunder.

Att reglera marknadsföring på sociala medier är svårt endast med hjälp av nationell lagstiftning, eftersom de flesta aktörer arbetar globalt och den tekniska utformningen av plattformarna utvecklas och ändras i snabb takt. Det är utmanande att övervaka innehåll på sociala medier, och producenterna blir allt skickligare på att använda tekniken till dess fulla marknadsföringspotential.

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Helsinki, Turku and Stockholm, 11 March 2019

The OMA work group

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# 1. Introduction

The last decade has witnessed a globally increasing trend in the use of social media as a platform for marketing alcohol (Nicholls 2012; Jernigan & Rushman 2014). The new forms of social media alcohol marketing rely on consumer interaction, consumer-generated content and networks in which marketing messages can be distributed efficiently and cost-effectively on a mass scale. Several concerns have been raised regarding the increasing visibility of alcohol brands on social media. Firstly, social media alcohol marketing has been seen as especially worrying because social media platforms are extensively used by young people and minors (Atkinson et al. 2017; Lyons et al. 2014). It has been suggested that alcoholic beverage brands might especially target young people through their social media channels (de Bruijn et al. 2012). In addition, as commercial and user-generated content are not clearly distinct in users' newsfeeds, it has been suggested that alcohol brands' presence in social media interactions further normalizes alcohol consumption among young people (Atkinson et al. 2017, Griffiths & Casswell 2010, Gupta et al. 2016).

Secondly, the way in which social media marketing makes use of private users and their networks has been considered ethically dubious (Fuchs 2010; McCreanor et al. 2013). In social media environments there are no self-evident distinctions between consumers and commercial operators. Moreover, private users' pictures and texts can be easily exploited for marketing purposes and marketers can make consumers into distributors of marketing content in many ways without them being aware of it.

At present, many countries are considering legislative changes along the lines of restricting social media alcohol marketing. Finland was the first country in the world to include a social media specific regulation in its Alcohol Act. The amendment came into effect in January 2015 and restricts alcohol marketing on social networking sites (SNS) and in their services. The amendment was aimed to specifically target the use of user-generated content in alcohol marketing messages and to prohibit commercial alcohol-related social media content that are intended to be shared by consumers. The restrictions were primarily justified by the protection of children and youths. The Finnish Ministry of Social Affairs and Health (STM) explains on its webpage:

*The 2015 law amendment concentrates on means that protect children and youth. Outdoors marketing is forbidden because it is on display for everybody to see. A [post-] 10 pm time slot was given for TV and radio commercials. The use of prize competitions, marketing lotteries and the sharing of advertisement in social media was forbidden due to the increasing popularity of these forms of marketing strategies (STM 2016)*

The control of internet content involves a series of challenges. Even though the aims of the Finnish law amendment are clearly stated, the enforcement of the law has involved various built-in difficulties pertaining to the nature of digital platforms. The internet is versatile, quick and constantly changing. It spans national borders, making it difficult to enforce national restrictions (Lindeman & Hellman 2019).

This research project investigates what the law amendment has involved and what it has meant in practice. This task is of great political value and as the amendment's content is globally unique, its success holds significance for an international audience. In addition to serving its objectives to analyse alcoholic brands' social media activities targeted at Finnish and Swedish consumers, this report unfolds and discusses fundamental challenges related to political initiatives concerned with restricting communication and signification in online formats. For example, one may ask: is it possible to restrict internet-based communication that is built on the premise that people participate and construe perceptions and ideas about matters that are important to them? Where should legislation draw the line between the content that is posted primarily for reasons of marketing and that which is not – in cases in which content comes from a commercial enterprise or when marketing intentions are somehow indicated? From its outset, the study has had to tackle certain basic questions concerning whether it is even possible to restrict social media marketing through the Finnish 2015 amendment.

Sweden is a fellow Nordic country which, compared to Finland, has exercised a stronger consensus policy regarding alcohol regulation as a public health issue in recent decades (Karlsson 2014). Still, it bears many similarities to Finland in terms of alcohol policy corner stones: for example, its state monopoly on alcohol retail sale, and its rather strict control of alcohol marketing and advertising. Sweden has codes for legitimate, good praxis in alcohol marketing on the internet, stating that this should be treated in the same manner as older formats of marketing. As of yet, the country has not dealt with the regulation of commercial alcohol messages in internet milieus as a separate matter in legislation, but the regulation follows the principles of old media (Konsumentverket 2016). The national alcohol industry, comprising mainly national brand representatives, small brewers and importers, works under similar conditions in both countries.

The research presented in this report stems from the need to review the new law in the light of its most internationally unique feature, namely, its aim to control activities targeted at consumers through social media. The social media as a channel for communication among alcoholic beverage brands had never been studied in Finland before, and the most basic features regarding its volume and nature also needed to be examined. At an early stage of the project planning, it became clear that we needed a point of reference in terms of comparative material. We decided that we would conduct simultaneous, identical data collection and analysis in Sweden. This would allow us to compare the social media activities of the alcohol industry in two countries that have regulated alcohol marketing practices differently. This report presents the results of these two auditing exercises and their comparison.

## 2. Aims and scope

This report presents the first audit of how alcoholic beverage companies in Finland and Sweden operate on social media. It explores Finnish and Swedish alcohol beverage brands' activities on social media as part of their marketing activities and investigates the extent to which the content corresponds to current marketing codes and restrictions. Our study aimed to answer the following questions:

1. How active are Finnish and Swedish alcohol brands on social media and which platforms do they employ?
2. How well has the national social media content of alcoholic beverage brands succeeded in engaging consumers and generating reactions?
3. How did the 2015 amendment to the Finnish Alcohol Act affect alcohol marketing practices on social media in Finland?
4. To what extent does social media marketing content correspond to the marketing restrictions imposed by the alcohol industry itself?
5. What means do brands use for interaction and consumer engagement?
6. To what extent have brands activated age-limit controls on social media platforms?

The study, which involves all major Finnish and Swedish alcohol brands, assesses the brands' activity in posting marketing messages through their social media accounts and the popularity of the different service providers. We evaluated success in consumer engagement according to how often consumers responded to marketing messages by either liking them, writing comments, or sharing them on their own networks. We assessed the effects of the amendment to the Alcohol Act in Finland by comparing the use of restricted content in Finland and Sweden before and after the social media restrictions came into force. Marketing messages were also analysed from the perspective of the alcohol industry's current self-regulatory codes and their potential appeal to minors. We also examined the means by which brands have sought to increase their visibility and interact with consumers by looking at the strategies used to encourage consumers to react to the marketing. For each brand, we checked age-limit controls for underaged users' accessibility.

The study focus was limited to social media platforms. Other digital media advertising, such as advertisements on regular webpages and blog advertising and influencer marketing, were excluded from the study. We also excluded alcohol brands' and producers' own websites, as their significance and potential as marketing channels in Finland and Sweden seemed very limited.



### 3. Previous research and theoretical anchorage

Alcoholic beverage companies' marketing and advertising practices have been the subject of research and scientific debate ever since the mass marketing of products rose as separate foci in communication studies (see e.g. Lee 1956 and Ford 1952). Public health research on alcohol advertising typically operates from the perspective of reviewing the harmfulness of advertising content and promotion techniques. A great deal of effort has been made in trialling the effects on attitudes and use in view of potential regulation. Yet another issue that has received attention is the citizen groups that are considered especially vulnerable audiences due to impaired resilience, in particular adolescents and people with substance use problems. (Hellman 2011; 2017.)

#### 3.1 Monitoring alcohol marketing

Alcohol marketing rose as an issue in the European public health context in the early 2000s when youth-targeted alcopop products surfaced as an EU policy-level matter (see [www.dw.com](http://www.dw.com)). At the same time, the EU commission was preparing the EU's first alcohol strategy and it became clear that the public health framing of companies' marketing techniques would present a particular dilemma when combining the union's market liberalist dogma with its new aspiring public health awareness.

Between 2005 and 2007, the EU Commission co-funded the ELSA (Enforcement of national Laws and Self-regulation on advertising and marketing of Alcohol) project, which gathered information and discussed regulating alcohol marketing in 23 European countries. Other European investments made into researching and monitoring alcohol marketing were the AMPHORA project (2008–2012, [www.amphoraproject.net](http://www.amphoraproject.net)), and the founding of the European alcohol marketing monitoring centre, STAP, in the Netherlands, which now operates under the name of the EUCAM monitoring centre ([www.eucam.info](http://www.eucam.info)). EUCAM and the Brussels-based European Alcohol Policy Alliance, Eurocare, have been important actors in monitoring alcohol companies' marketing practices during the rise of social media. Another alcohol industry watchdog worth mentioning, which extensively monitors marketing practices, is the American Marin Institute, founded in 1987, and now known as Alcohol Justice (<https://alcoholjustice.org/about/who-we-are>).

Some Nordic countries played especially active roles in the alcopop issue at the European level, and in the preparation of the alcohol strategy. This is why the Council of Ministers decided to set up and support a Nordic alcohol marketing monitoring platform called Nosam in 2005. The platform was run by the Nordic Council of Alcohol and Drug Research (Now the Nordic Welfare Centre, NVC) until 2011. Since then, observation of alcohol marketing in the Nordic countries has mostly been carried out by national NGOs and in discussions in Nordic co-operation organs, such as the Nordic Alcohol and Drug Policy Network (NordAN) and the annual substance conference of Nordic NGOs and civil servants (Nordisk rusmedelskonferens).

## 3.2 What is social media marketing?

A central problem that has been raised concerning current alcohol marketing regulation is that it pays too little attention to the broader cultural context in which alcohol brands act. As Brodmerkel and Nicholas (2013, 274) have stated, '*A necessary first step to reforming alcohol marketing regulation is to gain a clear understanding of the communication processes and communicative acts that are to be regulated.*' Previous studies of online alcohol marketing and alcohol on social media sites have mostly looked at risks and challenges in view of public health. The questions raised have concerned accessibility to social media advertisements (e.g. Barry et al. 2014; Nicholls 2012), their exposure and risks (Winpenny et al. 2013), and some potential protection techniques such as filters for minors (Jones et al. 2014). Most endeavours have concentrated on the risks and harm to minors (e.g. Griffiths & Casswell 2010), and on rare occasions this has also been tested on an aggregated level in terms of exposure and level of alcohol use (de Bruijn et al. 2016)

The internet, especially social media, has changed the rules of advertising, enabling companies to develop relationships directly with consumers. The use of social media platforms and websites to promote commodities is an important component in the marketing strategies of alcohol beverage brands. Spread and engagement are core dimensions in planning and realizing brand strategies in these platforms. Leonardi and colleagues (2013) point out that most organizations that use social media to communicate with external parties have a multipronged strategy that covers various platforms: '*they maintain pages on popular public social networking sites like Facebook and MySpace, and they broadcast messages on microblogging sites such as Twitter. Their employees also sometimes write blog posts on news websites and, occasionally, they host social tagging sties. Communication on these sites is faced externally*' (Ibid., 2).

Marketers have several options for branding within the social media landscape. This palette of possibilities constitutes their creative strategies on social media (Ashley & Tuten 2015). Their repertoire of strategies includes paid display advertising, participating in social networks as a brand persona, developing branded engagement opportunities for customer participation within social networks, and publishing branded content (known as content marketing or social publishing) on social channels (Ashley & Tuten 2015, referring to Tuten & Solomon, 2013). According to Ashley and Tuten (2015), brands employ social media as an integrated component in marketing campaigns, as ongoing corporate communication channels, and as channels for micro-campaigns specifically designed for digital exposure.

In this study we investigate the corporate communication channels of Finnish and Swedish alcohol brands and their own produced content. This content reveals the ways in which they address social media users as the brands that they are and want to be profiled as. This material is part of the brand voice and creates a persona for using social media.

In unfolding the phenomenon of social media marketing, Alhabash, Mundel and Hussain (2017) have used the expression of 'unraveling the mystery box', due to the

many entangled layers of signification involved in the spread of messages on social media. They define social media advertising as *‘any piece of online content designed with a persuasive intent and/or distributed via a social media platform that enables internet users to access, share, engage with, add to, and co-create’* (Ibid, pp. 286). Services such as Facebook and Twitter offer advertisers numerous ways in which to pay for reaching and targeting consumers through advertisements and for monitoring their success. Promoted content and plug-ins that direct the dissemination of content to followers are just some of the forms that commercial communication can take on social media. An important way of drawing attention, with special relevance for the 2015 Finnish law amendment, is user-generated content, which is encouraged and valuable especially if it materializes as genuine loyalty and appreciation of the brand and its products. It is well established that authentic customer connections yield excellent – if not the best – results in social media marketing (cf. Garfield and Levy 2013).

This study’s audit of social media content was concerned with alcohol producers’ and sellers’ direct content in Finland and Sweden. However, we have no information at our disposal on whether the posts that we audited were also spread through payments to the social media services under study. The focus was thus limited to the national brands’ strategies in their own national channels and as such, their brand voice on social media platforms. Furthermore, as alcohol brands and their adherent communication operate to only a small degree in national contexts (Jernigan 2009), our study sheds light on only a small part of the total alcohol-related content on social media. Still, the lack of research on the Swedish and Finnish alcohol industry’s activities and the potential benefits of the restriction of their whereabouts on social media render the study great relevance.

To summarize, companies’ social media marketing strategies follow different combinations of the instruments and formats available. It is difficult to evaluate the impact that the content examined in this study has had on spreading brand awareness and information about products, as self-produced national brand pages might not be the most efficient channels for establishing brands and affecting consumer behaviour. Even if we cannot determine the extent to which the material under study has had the intended impact of its senders, it is clear that it still plays a crucial part in a larger picture. Maintaining a social presence across social channels with content that is fresh and frequent, and which includes incentives for consumer participation has shown to be crucial for brands’ marketing strategies (Erdoğan & Cicek 2012; Parent et al. 2011).

### 3.3 Alcohol marketing: a moving target

The challenges involved in the regulation of alcohol-related content on social media has been addressed in an Australian study by Brodmerkel and Carah (2013). The study aims to take into consideration the participatory, culturally embedded surveillance capacities of social media marketing in relation to some Australian regulatory decisions. The authors argue that a fundamental reason for why existing regulatory approaches are not likely to be effective in the case of social media is that they are

based on the conceptualization of advertising and marketing communication as solely the production of content by brands, instead of a *‘culturally embedded process where brands and consumers co-create content’* (Brodmerkel and Carah 2013, 274).

A certain one-dimensional, simplified impact-thinking approach to the marketing techniques on social media is problematic, as it is unable to account for the many entangled functions of social media marketing. The regulators’ perspective of the nature of advertising tends to neglect the extent to which advertising is a social form of communication, negotiated, modified and used by an active audience, thereby becoming part of everyday cultural practices (Brodmerkel and Carah 2013). The study monitored the use of Facebook by several Australian alcohol brands since late 2010, to identify how these brands use social media as experiential social spaces to engage consumers in the co-creation of content. The authors conclude that *‘Alcohol brands’ activities on Facebook need to be conceptualized as a form of marketing where the ‘messages’ are predominantly co-created and only become meaningful when members of the public interact in the creation and circulation of this content’* (Ibid., 277).

As a study object, websites incorporate several dimensions of interactivity in comparison to old media formats such as television or print advertising. While still resembling ‘old’ media classic content analyses in their pursuit to examine frequency and characteristics, the content analysis of online material that started to appear in the 2000s came to inevitably involve the recognition or evaluation of ‘strategies’ and multimodal techniques (Hellman 2017). Researchers have expressed concern regarding the ways in which especially young people’s alcohol-based social identity is to an increasing extent being construed as part of SNS. Alcohol marketing practices, in their many forms, are an important part of this endeavour. The online dissemination of experiences of alcohol use has been seen as reinforcing the use of alcohol in ways that can be dangerous and harmful, strengthening *‘pro-drinking attitudes, affecting peer norms and normalizing drinking cultures’* (Moewaka Barnes et al. 2016, 64–65).

Young people’s alcohol use and their social media behaviour change and develop over time, and as research subjects, they are inevitably moving targets. One can ask, for example, whether the result of Ridout, Campbell & Ellis in 2012 regarding the socially desired component of portraying oneself as a drinker in SNS environments may perhaps already be outdated by 2019. Since 2012, young people’s alcohol consumption patterns have changed in many developed countries and research shows that the forum of the study – Facebook – has been replaced by Snapchat and Instagram among the age groups that were under study (Pew Research Center, 2018).

In examining general logics and principles, a more durable part of research may be that on the cultural signification and use of social media in youth drinking cultures. This research approaches social media platforms as pro-alcohol environments that support and normalize alcohol-related attitudes and use (McCreanor et al. 2013; Pegg et al. 2017), and young users have been the object of inquiries into the ways in which they use and become informed of or stimulated by alcohol-related SNS content (Hoffman et al. 2014; Lennox et al. 2018; Erevik et al. 2018). Nevertheless, the genres and formats of social media as research foci will always contain some challenges.

### 3.4 Challenges in auditing social media content

Content analysis is the systematic study of the prevalence of certain signification in communication, typically focusing on patterns and trends in content (cf. Hansen et al. 1998). Our systematic study of alcohol-related content by brands' accounts/profiles on social media involved some challenges pertaining to the research instrument as such, as well as its use in accounting for significations in online milieus, specifically those of the social media. The previous subchapter already described the new challenges of social media: the versatile and dynamic nature of the forms of branding activities.

A classic challenge of content analysis as a method has been the question of how far the method can be used to make claims about the characteristics and significations of messages. This was also a reoccurring question in the present study. Were the actual connotations and functions of the content in social media posts really concerned with the categorizations and coding that we had developed? Did the logic of the social media platforms involve significations that could not be acknowledged using the methodology we had applied? Or would the consumers who saw the messages even reflect on or note the elements that we discerned? We will account for the strengths and weaknesses of our approaches throughout this report, but we begin by accounting for three circumstances that make the auditing of the content of the study material an especially difficult, yet worthwhile approach.

First, when empirical inquiries take on the task of auditing the prevalence and character of the connotations, notions, ideas, and fantasies that are involved in the meaning-making of marketed products, the means and formats of communication need to be taken into consideration (Hellman 2017, 21). The content analytical approach, which rates multi-dimensional and rich material under certain categories, can only grasp a small part of the contextual meaning-making functions of the social media postings under study. We were aware of this limitation when developing the methodology and held internal research team discussions on how to interpret the material, its format-related characteristics and various modality functions (for example, the functions of liking, sharing and commenting on social media). We also reinforced our coding using the Delphi technique, asking outsiders about their interpretations of the material (the Delphi review is further discussed in Chapter 13)

Second, the socially and culturally established role division between seller and buyer, including citizens' awareness of the commercial operators' message intentions, makes it difficult for researchers to draw direct conclusions regarding dishonesty, stretching the truth, and deceit as moral wrongdoings. It is well established that consumers are aware of the skewed framing that serves the commercial interests of the senders' messages (Spence & Van Heekeren 2005). Nevertheless, by systemically auditing the choice of 'voice' or profile of the brand, we were able to make judgements regarding the type of image or profile that the brands in the two countries were creating when addressing potential consumers.

Furthermore, content analyses tend to involve some sort of normative or referential view regarding what is good or appropriate. The study of content is bound to involve

some sort of comparative framework of how things are supposed to be (Hellman 2017). In this study, we reasoned that as our task was to evaluate the content in view of the advertising codes and legislation in the two countries, we needed to include dual meta task perception in such a straightforward evaluation. To begin with, as the first part of such a task, we needed to see our interpretations as part of the additional endeavour to test the applicability of such laws and codes. This concerns the question ‘Is it even possible or meaningful to restrict advertising in this way and in these kinds of milieus?’, which we embedded into our research task.

Third, and as the second part of the dual meta task perception, as a direct consequence of this being the first attempt to study this area of the online marketing of alcohol, we needed to discuss the possibilities and meaningfulness of the instruments that we were applying and to use our experience to suggest ways ahead for future research in this field. We will address all three issues: the formats and functions of genre, the applicability of regulation and the applicability of research instruments, throughout this report and return to them in the final discussion.

## 4. Legislation and policy in Finland and Sweden

Both Finland and Sweden have long traditions of strict alcohol policy compared to most other countries in Europe. To this date, the ideas of the Nordic Alcohol Policy rest heavily on restricting private profit interest in the alcohol business, restricting the physical availability of alcohol and restricting the economic availability of alcohol through taxation and pricing policies (Karlsson 2014). For a long time, both Finland and Sweden banned the advertising of alcoholic beverages, but the bans were lifted in 1995 and 2003. In this chapter we take a closer look at the legislation concerning alcohol advertising in Finland and Sweden, as well as at the regulation of the social media sites involved in the study.

### 4.1 Finland

The advertising of alcoholic beverages was prohibited in Finland from 1977 until 1995. The pressure to deregulate advertising was raised during the preparations for European Union membership in the early 1990s, and in 1995, the marketing of beverages containing up to 22% alcohol was permitted under certain restrictions, concerning the elements not to be used in alcohol advertising: advertising was not to be targeted at minors and consuming alcoholic products was not to be linked to enhancement of social or sexual success, for instance. After the liberalization, discussion on the need for more restrictions on alcohol marketing, especially in the face of growing evidence of the impact of alcohol advertising on minors, has been ongoing. When the 2004 alcohol tax cut significantly increased alcohol-related harm in the following years, new preventive tools were also sought through marketing restrictions. Under the leadership of Minister Liisa Hyssälä, a working group was set up in 2006 to consider the renewal of the law. However, the group's suggestions ended up being modest and resulted in no further changes (Montonen 2008), although in 2008, the advertising of alcoholic beverages was further limited on television and in cinemas.

The government resurrected the discussion on alcohol marketing again in 2009, when Minister Paula Risikko assigned a working group to highlight the need to revise the legislation. As in 2006, however, the working group concluded that no new restrictions should be introduced. The 2006 and 2009 working groups represented a new approach to alcohol regulation in Finland, as they both included representatives of the alcohol industry and other stakeholder groups (Montonen 2008, Hellman 2012). It has been suggested that the political process behind the formation of the working groups played a major role in why no further limitations were suggested: the stakeholders invited to the groups were known to be critical of marketing restrictions and as such, the outcome of the groups' work was more or less anticipated (Hellman 2012).

The efforts to tighten the restrictions continued during the next government term of 2011–2015. Initially, the aim was to ban suggestive advertising of alcohol which would have meant a substantial change in the formulation of alcohol marketing legislation in Finland. In suggestive advertising, the product is associated with values, ideas and aesthetics that are likely to have a positive effect on consumers and build a positive image of the product or brand. The Finnish Alcohol Act, like the alcohol industry's self-regulatory codes or the EU directive that regulates alcohol advertising, is formulated in negative terms, prohibiting certain elements and claims in advertising, such as depicting abstinence in a negative light (Montonen & Tuominen 2017). In view of applicability and impact, these kinds of content restrictions are susceptible to various interpretations and are very difficult to monitor (Soikkeli 2010). Many critics of current marketing restrictions have used the French *Loi Evin* as the model for a more efficient and less ambiguous way of controlling alcohol marketing, as it limits permitted advertising contents to product information. Although the line between suggestive and information-based advertising is not clear cut, positive regulation of advertising contents, as exemplified in *Loi Evin*, has been considered a more powerful tool for preventing minors' exposure to potentially harmful alcohol advertising content (Montonen & Tuominen 2017).

In the preparation of the 2015 law amendment, the parliament largely supported the ban of suggestive advertising. However, the ban was strongly opposed by the alcohol industry and, eventually, the National Coalition Party, leading to a new outlining of the government bill. The final government bill abandoned the ban of suggestive advertising and introduced alternative forms of regulation instead. At that time, international research literature had started to recognize the growing importance of social media as a marketing channel for alcohol. Social media marketing was seen as a threat, especially to young people, as new means of viral marketing, along with games, lotteries and competitions, had been introduced as marketing strategies. In the new government bill, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health formulated and proposed a way of regulating marketing in this particular environment. In addition to social media regulation, the bill included the prohibition of outdoor advertising of alcohol and the ban of using competitions and games as part of alcohol advertising. In addition, the cut-off time for TV and radio advertising was moved from 9pm to 10pm.

Interestingly, the regulation of social media was not on the agenda of any political party and had not been discussed in the parliamentary process during the drafting of the new law. As similar regulation did not exist in any other country, there were no previous experiences on how this kind of regulation should be implemented and what the possible consequences would be. In the circulation of the proposal, stakeholders' opposition was directed at the ban on outdoor advertising and not the section that concerned social media.

The Parliament approved the proposal in 2014 and it entered into force on 1 January 2015. According to the social media amendment, the marketing of mild alcoholic beverages is prohibited if



the advertising commercial operator in an information network service administered by itself uses any textual or visual content produced by consumers or places into the service textual or visual content, produced by itself or by consumers, which is intended to be shared by consumers. (translation from Montonen & Tuominen 2017, 203)

Although it is the first attempt to regulate alcohol marketing on social media, the social media section of the Finnish Alcohol Act is in many ways ambiguous. What is relatively clear is that the law forbids the use of consumer-generated content in alcohol marketing. This means that alcohol marketers shall not use content that has been originally uploaded by a consumer via their own private profile. The law also restricts any content that is *intended to be shared by consumers*. The difficulty in this formulation is that social media platforms operate on the basis of sharing. Therefore, any public content placed on social media platforms can be shared by users. The wording of the law thus enables a total ban of alcohol marketing on social media. However, the government proposal stated that the purpose of the law was not a total ban. Instead, the aim was to merely limit the use of social media as an alcohol marketing tool, not to prevent adults obtaining information on alcoholic products.

In Finland, the National Supervisory Authority for Welfare and Health (Valvira) is responsible for the implementation and enforcement of marketing regulations. Valvira's guidelines for alcohol marketers interpret the social media section as follows:

- It is forbidden to use contents generated by consumers, such as consumers' comments or pictures and videos that contain alcoholic products, in advertising. Any material produced by consumers may not be distributed through the alcohol advertiser's website or social media platform.
- When advertising alcoholic beverages, the advertiser using social media services must disable the sharing function in its contents if possible.
- Consumers should not be encouraged to share content that is produced for the purpose of advertising alcohol.
- The advertiser is obliged to remove any consumer-generated material that can be considered alcohol advertising from their social media pages. For example, comments that praise the product and consumers' images of alcoholic beverages are considered user-generated content. 'Liking' the contents is not considered consumer-generated content.
- Material produced in collaboration with a producer, seller or importer, such as a blog post, is not considered user-generated content.
- Sponsored advertisements in social media services are generally permitted, but the advertiser must ensure that the advertising is targeted at people of legal drinking age. The sharing function should be removed from sponsored ads.
- Linking a sharing button to social media services is prohibited on alcoholic products' regular internet sites. (Valvira 2018.)

The 2015 amendment to the Finnish Alcohol Act is internationally unique as it seeks to limit the means of advertising specifically on social media platforms. Yet, as it aims to regulate the spread of alcohol advertising in environments in which the operational logic is based on content sharing, difficulties have arisen. In addition, monitoring the

current social media restrictions is difficult and would require resources from Valvira. The global operating environment also means that consumers can easily access marketing contents that are not regulated under the national law. However, Valvira considers that the Finnish marketing restrictions also apply in situations in which the advertiser is located outside Finland, but it can be demonstrated that the advertising is aimed at domestic audiences, for example, when the language used in the advertisements is Finnish, and the product is available in Finland.

## 4.2 Sweden

To some extent, the Swedish history of alcohol advertising started in 1965 when a new type of beer was introduced. This beer had an alcohol content of about 4.5% and was sold in ordinary grocery stores. This was a novelty, as beer with an alcohol content of more than 2.2% could only be sold in Swedish alcohol monopoly stores (Systembolaget). With the introduction of the new beer, several Swedish brewers ran advertising campaigns targeted at youth and women. This beer, 'middle beer', was portrayed as the modern and emancipated choice (Johansson 2008).

The beverage was an immediate sales success. However, the increase in consumption was followed by an increase in youth intoxication. The increase in youth consumption and intoxication led to an agreement between the Swedish brewer's association and Systembolaget on a total ban on beer advertising. The advertising campaigns, which some saw as intrusive, and the following increase in consumption, set off a debate on a total ban of alcohol advertising. After several years of investigation and an agreement between the alcohol industry and the Swedish consumer agency (the agency that safeguards consumer interests), the Swedish parliament decided in 1978 to ban all advertising of strong beer (above 2.2%), wine and spirits in print media. Some years later the ban was also extended to movies, TV and radio, public spaces, and sports arenas.

The main purpose of expanding the ban was to limit beer advertising. However, it was still possible to advertise beer below 2.2%, which led to new advertising strategies by the industry. Up until this point, various beers had different logos and packaging depending on the alcohol content. With the advertising ban, beer logos and packaging became identical, with the exception of the classification of the alcohol content. In some cases, this led to advertising of beer that was not even available for consumers to buy. The advertisements depicted products with an alcohol content below the legal limit, even though these products did not exist. What did exist was a higher alcohol content beer from the same company. (Johansson 2008.)

As in Finland, Sweden's entry to the EU meant that the debate on a total ban on alcohol advertising resurfaced and was questioned. An important judicial case was the Gourmet magazine, which had published wine advertisements that, according to the Swedish consumer agency, were an apparent violation of the law. What was relevant in the matter was that the magazine was a technical food magazine. After several years of processing in various Swedish courts and the EC court, Gourmet was acquitted. Still, the case had exposed a gap in the law and yet another governmental investigation

into advertising and alcohol was initiated. In 2004, a new amendment was made to the alcohol act.

Since 2004, Swedish alcohol producers have been able to advertise their product on the Swedish market as long as the advertisements are in line with the alcohol act. The act stipulates that alcohol advertising must apply special moderation. Alcohol advertising and other marketing measures must not be insistent, intrusive or encourage the use of alcohol. Moreover, alcohol advertising in print media must not concern products with over 15% alcohol content and it is prohibited to target or depict children or young adults under the age of 25. Printed alcohol advertisements in Sweden are only allowed to show the product; must not relate to specific individuals, attributes or a certain lifestyle; and must not promote consumption. Health messages or warning texts must cover 20% of the advertisement.

On the internet, the same law applies as for print media, with the exception that marketing of beverages with over 15% alcohol content is allowed. According to the Swedish Consumer Agency (Konsumentverket 2016), alcohol marketing should follow the same principles as those of the marketing act for marketing other products. The Consumer Agency provides general principles, according to which the use of symbolic and audio-visual elements such as attractive environments, music, games, and characters that can be associated with or appeal to children should be avoided. Furthermore, websites that mainly distribute or market alcohol beverages should use the best solutions available for age control. Advertisements that are designed to attract immediate attention, such as pop-up ads, are forbidden.

In 2016, a new governmental investigation was initiated. The aim of the investigation was to suggest improvements to the protection of the underaged and of children from alcohol advertising in digital media. The final investigation (*Alkoholreklam i sociala medier med mera*, SOU 2017:113) suggested a total ban on commercial advertising of alcohol on social media. However, these remain suggestions, and have not been implemented in the Swedish alcohol act, or in any other law.

#### 4.3 Rules regarding content on studied social media sites

In addition to national legislation, alcohol marketers must comply with the rules imposed by social media service providers. General community guidelines on all the four platforms included in this study – Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and Twitter – concern authenticity, privacy and the use of intellectual property. The guidelines prohibit the distribution of hacked materials; pornographic content; and harmful, unlawful, misleading or fraudulent content. Spamming, abusive behaviour and promoting crime are not permitted. If users come across content that violates the community guidelines, they can file a report.

The same advertising policies apply to commercial content on Facebook and Instagram, as Instagram is a platform provided by Facebook. According to Facebook's policies, alcohol advertisements must comply with all local laws, industry codes and guidelines. Pages that promote the sale of regulated goods, such as alcohol, must restrict access to a minimum age of 18. Where required, advertisers should limit

access using geo-filtering or age-gating. For example, alcohol advertisements for Swedish audiences must be targeted at users aged 25 or older. (Facebook 2019.)

According to the Twitter ad policy, knowingly advertising alcoholic beverages and related accessories to minors is prohibited. More specific restrictions apply to Twitter's paid advertising, for example, Tweets, trends and accounts. In paid advertisements, the following rules apply to branding or promoting the sale of any kind of alcoholic beverage, and to competitions offering alcohol as a prize. Alcohol advertisements must follow country-specific instructions and not

- target minors or encourage underage drinking
- include characters that are appealing to underage youth
- include underage persons or pregnant women
- suggest that excessive drinking has stimulating, relaxing or therapeutic properties
- suggest that alcohol improves performance
- give the impression that alcoholic products are soft drinks or candy
- connect alcohol use with dangerous or illegal activities
- include characters that are under the influence of alcohol
- emphasize product's high alcoholic content.

This policy does not apply to alcohol accessories, brewery/winery/distillery branding or on-site activities such as tastings, recipes that include alcohol, news or information on alcohol products or events that are sponsored by alcohol company but do not focus on alcohol products. (Twitter 2019.)

Branding and promoting the sale of alcohol is allowed on YouTube. In addition to local restrictions, advertisers must comply with the following rules. According to YouTube guidelines, alcohol advertisements must:

- act in compliance with all applicable laws and industry standards for each location that is targeted
- not target individuals below the legal drinking age
- not imply that drinking alcohol can improve social, sexual, professional, intellectual, or athletic standing
- not imply that drinking alcohol provides health or therapeutic benefits
- not portray excessive drinking in a positive light or feature binge or competition drinking
- not show alcohol being consumed in conjunction with the operation of a vehicle of any kind, or the operation of machinery, or the performance of any task requiring alertness or dexterity
- not depict violent or degrading behaviour.

These restrictions also apply to promoting products that resemble alcoholic beverages, such as non-alcoholic beer, wine or cocktails. (YouTube 2019.)

## 5. Methods and Proceedings

In order to audit social media presence and activities and to study the outcomes of the amended Finnish Alcohol Act, we gathered social media content from both Finnish and Swedish alcohol brands, and coded and analysed it during 2017, applying a before-after study design to the 2015 law amendment in Finland. Jernigan (2009) defines the alcoholic beverage industry as consisting of producers, wholesalers and distributors, point-of-sale operators (whether licensed or not), and hospitality providers such as hotels or cafés that serve alcohol. This study was limited to brands that available in Finland and Sweden and have national social media sites in the countries. We developed a battery of codes in accordance with the Finnish Alcohol Act amendment, the alcohol industry's own European Advertising Standards Alliance self-regulation codes and those of the International Alliance for Responsible Drinking. In order to identify content that is likely to appeal to young people, we applied grid criteria that was originally developed for a European Commission study on the exposure of minors to alcohol advertising in the EU countries (European Commission 2015). Next, we describe our data gathering and coding proceedings. All the codes are listed and explained in Appendix I.

### 5.1 Data collection

The social media service providers that were selected for the study were Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube. These are all widely used in Finland and Sweden and are also important platforms in terms of marketing. A report by the Internet Foundation in Sweden (Davidsson & Findahl 2016) found that in 2016, 71% of Swedes used Facebook, 44% used Instagram and 18% used Twitter. Werlin & Kokholm (2017) reported similar results in their study: in 2017, 78% of Swedes used Facebook, 57% used YouTube, 52% used Instagram, and 16% used Twitter. Correspondingly, 75% of Finns used Facebook, 66% used YouTube, 35% used Instagram, and 19% used Twitter (Werlin & Kokholm 2017).

The investigation set out to determine the brands that had social media accounts with material that specifically targeted Swedish and Finnish consumers and thus operated within the jurisdictions of the two countries. The study included only brands and products that were available in Finland and Sweden. We went through the top-twenty sales lists of beer, cider, wine and intermediate products of the state retail monopolies Systembolaget and Alko. The second technique we employed for brand inclusion was to use the member lists of the brewers associations in both countries. From these brand lists we checked the brands' presence on social media services. We included brands with a social media account in the above-mentioned social media services from 2014 in our study.

Brands can use their social media sites in two ways. They can use their sites for 'organic' posting when communicating with consumers, or they can 'boost' visibility and reach by paying the service provider. In organic communication, the posts are

mainly distributed to site followers' newsfeeds. In terms of visibility, organic posts are rarely efficient as marketing tools. For example, Facebook limits the visibility of communities and commercial operators in favour of private users' posts. To boost visibility and reach, commercial operators can pay service providers to increase their posts' impact. In this case, the posts are marked as 'sponsored' and are typically targeted at potentially interested social media users. Targeting is based on users' gender, age, location and interests, and is calculated and estimated by social media algorithms. However, when viewing posts on brands' sites, it is not possible to determine the extent to which the posts have been boosted. The material of this study thus consists of both organic and boosted posts, but we were unable to differentiate between these two types. In addition, some of the brands in the study were versatile producers who had, for example, beer, cider and soda in their portfolios, meaning that they could use their social media platforms to market both alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages.

All the content published on alcohol brands' social media sites are public. As some of the content is only available for logged-in users, we used the researchers' personal social media accounts for material collection. Posts are archived on sites in a chronological order, which enabled us to collect old posts and compare them with newer ones. We collected three samples from both countries: all the brands' posts and all the visitor's posts dated between 1 and 31 January 2014, January 2016 and January 2017. We took screenshots of the posts and saved and stored them as image files. We eventually removed job announcements from the raw material collected from the social media sites (N=29). While job announcements are indeed a natural part of the public image and 'addressing voice' of the brands in their national social media accounts, their exclusion was justified as they were such a small part of the material, and closer examination revealed that they did not include the significations that the coding scheme searched for.

In total, the Finnish sample consisted of 1536 and the Swedish sample of 1204 posts. We collected all the basic information regarding the posts onto an Excel spreadsheet. The information included type of platform, year, beverage type and number of user reactions (likes, shares and comments).

### 5.1.1 Finnish sample

We identified the brands included in the Finnish sample through the alcohol monopoly's (Alko) list of national brands and popular brands with national representatives. Brand names were also collected through member lists of the the Federation of the Brewing and Soft Drinks Industry (Panimoliitto) and the Finnish Microbreweries' Association (Pienpanimoliitto). The Federation has six members in total. Four of these produce alcoholic beverages and were therefore included. The other two members were not included, as one of them produces only energy drinks and the other is not a beverage brand but a conglomerate that focuses on importation, restaurant activity and export development. One brewery is a member of both the Federation and the Microbreweries' association, but based on production volume, it is classified as a microbrewery.

Three of the Federation members are the biggest breweries in Finland and dominate the market as a whole (Jylhä 2016). In addition to the brewery pages, these members have 11 product-specific social media accounts that we retrieved with the help of Alko sales statistics and product descriptions on the brewery webpages. The Finnish material included 21 microbreweries, but it is worth noting that the microbrewing industry is rapidly growing in Finland. Several current microbreweries were not yet in operation in 2014, and were thus not included in the material. While global brands such as Carlsberg do target Finnish audiences in their global reach, our research strategy did not allow us to determine how many of their 2.9 million global followers are Finnish, or how many Finns see Carlsberg's posts in their own newsfeeds.

Of the 38 brands, 37 had a Facebook page, 23 an Instagram account and 18 a Twitter account. Fifteen brands had a YouTube channel and six of them published something on YouTube at observed time points. In total, the Finnish data came to consist of 1 536 posts of which 7% were visitors' posts. The Finnish brand list in Table 1 is comprehensive in terms of representing national social media brand site repertoires, and the brands represent the most popular drinks among Finnish alcohol consumers.

Table 1. Brands (38) with national social media sites included in Finnish material.

<p><b>The Federation of the Brewing and Soft Drinks Industry:</b> Hartwall, Olvi, Sinebrychoff, (Saimaan Juomatehdas)</p> <p><b>The Finnish Microbreweries' Association:</b> Bryggeri Helsinki, Hiisi, Hollolan Hirvi, Hopping Brewster Beer Company, Iso-Kallan Panimo, Koskipanimo, Kuninkaankartanon Panimo, Laitilan, Maku Brewing, Mallaskosken panimo, Malmgårdin Panimo/Malmgård's Bryggeri, Nokian Panimo, Pyyntikin Käsityöläispanimo, Rekolan Panimo, Ruosniemen Panimo, Saimaan Juomatehdas, Stadin Panimo, Stallhagen, Suomenlinnan Panimo, Teerenpeli Panimo &amp; Tislaamo, Vakka-Suomen Panimo</p> <p><b>Brewery webpage:</b> Garage, Golden Cap, Happy Joe, Kurko, Upcider</p> <p><b>Alko:</b> Gato Negro, Baileys, Fresita, Karhu, Karjala, Koff, Lapin Kulta, Original Long Drink, Sandels</p>
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We collected the number of followers from the brand accounts at the time of data collection. We have no insight into how the number of followers has changed over the years but it is likely that it has grown due to the general increase in brands' activity on social media. Table 2 provides an overall picture of the popularity of the brand sites in Finland in 2017.

Table 2. Brand site followers in Finland, February 2017.

Brand	Page likes on Facebook	Followers on Twitter	Followers on Instagram	Subscribers on YouTube
Baileys	27 642	N/A	N/A	N/A
Bryggeri Helsinki	4 518	1 379	1 077	N/A
Fresita	106 382	N/A	669	N/A
Garage	7 119	N/A	133	N/A

Gato Negro	12 054	N/A	N/A	N/A
Golden Cap	19 854	N/A	118	N/A
Happy Joe	10 437	N/A	1 432	N/A
Hartwall	2 849	2 984	1 367	39
Hollolan Hirvi	1 358	N/A	N/A	N/A
Hopping Brewster Beer Company	2 757	576	402	11
Iso-Kallan Panimo	1 445	9	N/A	N/A
Karhu	52 747	N/A	N/A	N/A
Karjala	17 227	N/A	N/A	42
Koff	27 522	N/A	N/A	N/A
Koskipanimo	4 611	N/A	598	N/A
Kuninkaankartanon Panimo	1 608	349	406	N/A
Kurko	5 106	N/A	N/A	N/A
Laitilan	10 995	N/A	110	20
Lapin Kulta	11 296	N/A	445	N/A
Maku Brewing	5 828	1 153	2 362	N/A
Mallaskosken Panimo	2 236	N/A	440	4
Malmgårdin Panimo	4 156	1 644	N/A	17
Nokian Panimo	3 979	846	1 260	2
Olvi Oyj	18 418	1 110	1 813	659
Original Long Drink	71 743	123	3 157	44
Panimo Hiisi	4 165	1 651	N/A	N/A
Pyynikin Käsityöläispanimo	12 515	2 421	1 797	20
Rekolan Panimo (Fiskarsin Panimo)	3 552	1 673	875	N/A
Ruosniemen Panimo	3 929	1 622	1 511	6
Saimaan Juomatehdas	8 085	N/A	1 066	N/A
Sandels	9 141	N/A	N/A	N/A
Sinebrychoff	10 989	2243	1 083	123
Stadin Panimo	5 275	1 374	1 220	2
Stallhagen	7 854	7	N/A	29



Suomenlinnan Panimo	1 804	267	695	N/A
Teerenpeli Panimo & Tislaamo	1 760	721	1 714	8
Upcider	39 806	N/A	452	N/A
Vakka-Suomen Panimo	3 986	472	N/A	N/A

### 5.1.2 Swedish sample

The proceedings for including brands and products in the Swedish material were similar to those in the Finnish data collection strategy. The included brands were generated from the Systembolaget's top-twenty sales list (a total of 25 brands) and from the Swedish Brewers Association's member list (27 brands). A total of 52 brands were enlisted (see Table 3).

The repertoire of brands is also extensive in the Swedish material and covers most popular brands. We included the contents of, for example, Facebook page *Carlsberg Sweden*, as this particular page targets a Swedish audience. We excluded Facebook page *Carlsberg* as this directs its posts at a non-specific global group of consumers and customers.

Of the 52 brands, 49 had a Facebook account, 21 a registered Twitter account, 36 had a registered Instagram account. The least popular social media platform was YouTube with 18 channels among the 52 brands. Some of the accounts were empty or carried only very old, outdated posts going back many years. Table 4 shows the numbers of followers of these brand sites in 2017. In total, the Swedish sample eventually consisted of 1 204 posts, of which ~10% were by visitors.

Table 3. Brands (52) with national social media sites included in Swedish material.

**Swedish brewers association:** Barlingbo Bryggeri, Beer Studio, Cap Brewery, Carlsberg Sverige, Carlskrona Bryggeri, Centralbryggeriet, Coppersmiths, Dugges, Electric Nurse, Eskilstuna ölkultur, Galatea, Gotlands Bryggeri, Grebbestad, Halmstads brygghus, Herrljunga Cider, Jämtlands Bryggeri, Krönleins Bryggeri, Monks Cafe, Nya Carneige bryggeriet, Poppels, Sahlins Brygghus, Sigtuna Brygghus, Slottskällan, Spendrups, Södra Maltfabriken, Åbro, Österlensbryggarna  
**Systembolaget:** Falcon, Mariestads, Norrlands Guld, Prippts Blå, Sofiero, Ginger Joe Sverige, Halmstad Cider, Rekordelig, Somersby, Kopparbergs bryggeri, Xide, Blossa Glögg, Dufvenkrooks glögg, Tegnér & Son, Varm & Kall Äppelvin, Chill Out, Tommasi, Gato Negro, Freixnet, Aussie, Chapel Hill, Drosdy Hof, Göteborgs nya bryggeri, Lindemans, tr3 apor

Table 4. Brand site followers in Sweden, February 2017.

<b>Brand</b>	<b>Page likes on Facebook</b>	<b>Followers on Twitter</b>	<b>Followers on Instagram</b>	<b>Subscribers on YouTube</b>
Aussie	1 970	N/A	N/A	N/A
Barlingbo Bryggeri	2 812	N/A	522	N/A
Beer Studio	2 708	310	1 064	N/A
Blossa Glögg	27 514	300	2 023	21
Cap Brewery	1 578	744	1 111	N/A
Carlsberg Sverige	2 508 403	1 175	2 743	142
Carlskrona Bryggeri	1 348	N/A	N/A	N/A
Centralbryggeriet	4 843	N/A	1 140	N/A
Chapel Hill	63	N/A	N/A	3
Chill Out	11 483	N/A	171	N/A
Coppersmiths	2 385	9	729	N/A
Drosdy Hof	128 550	N/A	N/A	N/A
Dufvenkrooks glögg	4 684	N/A	203	N/A
Dugges	12 047	1 079	10 700	N/A
Electric Nurse	3 738	24	1 302	N/A
Eskilstuna ölkultur	6 672	N/A	1 394	12
Falcon	47 999	70	N/A	136
Freixnet	51	N/A	N/A	N/A
Galatea	3 105	N/A	N/A	26
Gato Negro	917	N/A	N/A	N/A
Ginger Joe Sverige	5 662	N/A	772	N/A
Gotlands Bryggeri	3 909	64	3 539	2
Grebbestad	1 369	119	N/A	N/A
Göteborgs nya bryggeri	13 472	N/A	1 265	4
Halmstad Cider	1 250	N/A	94	N/A
Halmstads bryggghus	2 638	N/A	724	N/A

Herrljunga Cider	9 859	N/A	607	N/A
Jämtlands Bryggeri	1 967	N/A	908	N/A
Kopparbergs bryggeri	396 040	N/A	N/A	10
Krönleins Bryggeri	1 111	33	95	N/A
Lindemans	67 335	N/A	N/A	N/A
Mariestads	N/A	N/A	N/A	288
Monks Cafe	19 296	164	282	N/A
Norrlands Guld	59 768	N/A	2 111	2 592
Nya Carneige bryggeriet	17 606	308	6 117	16
Poppels	36 750	32	12 100	48
Pripps Blå	1 722	85	2 314	288
Rekordelig	794 702	N/A	N/A	N/A
Sahlins Brygghus	726	N/A	557	N/A
Sigtuna Brygghus	3 417	50	865	N/A
Slottskällan	2 633	1	52	N/A
Sofiero	5 077	245	232	6
Somersby	N/A	N/A	688	N/A
Spendrups	N/A	572	858	9
Södra Maltfabriken	5 913	496	1 181	N/A
Tegnér & Son	973	N/A	N/A	6
Tommasi	26 131	N/A	N/A	N/A
tr3 apor	7 312	N/A	169	N/A
Varm & Kall Äppelvin	976	N/A	N/A	N/A
Xide	6 031	N/A	883	N/A
Åbro	8 197	1 239	1 239	46
Österlensbryggarna	1 156	N/A	52	N/A

## 5.2 Coding scheme

The material was coded according to a content analytical scheme developed on the basis of existing legislation and self-regulation codes for alcohol marketing. We documented the basic information, such as date of publication, platform, number of likes, number of shares/retweets, and number of comments, link to the original post, producer, and type of beverage. Whether or not the posts conformed to the standards of the amended Finnish Alcohol Act was audited in terms of prevalence of games, lotteries and consumer-generated material. In order to document possible violations of existing self-regulatory codes, we compared all the posts to the European Advertising Standards Alliance battery of criteria as well as to The International Alliance for Responsible Drinking's guidelines for sensible marketing (see Appendix I).

For identifying content that is likely to appeal to young people, we applied a criteria grid that was originally developed by two of this study's researchers in a European study on the exposure of minors to alcohol advertising in nine EU countries (European Commission 2015). The aim of developing this grid had been to create an instrument for assessing whether minors are specifically targeted by alcohol advertising through identifying elements that would, in accordance with the existing literature, appeal overall to young recipients.

The development of the youth-appealing criteria was based on a review of the scholarly literature concerning significations in youth drinking cultures, as well as young people's responses to and interpretations of alcohol advertising. The criteria for rating the youth-appeal of the content of the advertising thus consisted of elements that previous research had identified as likely to resonate with young people. These included the prevalence of humour, animal characters, young people's partying context and associations between the advertised product and social success, for instance. Some aspects considered in these criteria overlapped with existing regulatory alcohol advertising codes, such as the Audiovisual Media Services Directive (AVMSD) of the European Union or the alcohol industry's self-regulation codes.

For the purpose of this study, we did not involve the extended criteria grid of the European study but focused on aspects that we saw as relevant in terms of young people's drinking cultures and the functions that young people have shown to associate with drinking. We also inductively identified elements and characteristics that were of special cultural significance. These were marked into an additional coding scheme that we referred to as the 'open coding' battery. Chapter 12 briefly accounts for these. All the codes are listed in the full coding scheme in Appendix I.

## 5.3 Coding

A sample of posts was first coded together by the research team in order to reach consensus in interpreting the codes. After this pilot coding the code list and the descriptions of codes were modified. The final coding was performed by three

researchers. One native Finnish speaking researcher was responsible of coding of the Finnish sample and the Swedish sample was divided in two parts, which were then coded separately by two native Swedish speaking researchers. After the coding was completed, the whole research group went through together all posts that had been difficult to rate and agreed upon suitable codes.

## 5.4 Representability of audit samples

In order to assess the validity of the study's samples, we calculated some basic sample representability. The first question regarding reliable representation concerned the number of the samples' posts in terms of the total number of postings during the entire four-year period that the study claims to represent (48 months).

The Finnish brands had a monthly average posting frequency of 512 posts, which, in theory corresponds to 24 576 posts during the whole four-year period. Stipulating that the number of monthly posts would remain at the same level during the year, this corresponds to a 6% representation of the total data assumed to be available through the platforms if all was to be gathered ( $1\,536/24\,576 = 6\%$ ). When the material is seen as representing the 37 months between the first sample in January 2014 to the last one in January 2017 – a period that is more correct considering that the time period focuses on activities before and after the 2015 amendment – the corresponding percentage hypothetically covered by the study rises to 8% ( $512 \times 37 = 18\,944 \rightarrow$  Sample size (1 536) divided by potential total = 8%).

The Swedish brands had the same percentages of hypothetical representation. They had a monthly average posting frequency of 401 posts, which, in theory, corresponds to 19 264 postings during the four years under study. Stipulating that the number of monthly posts would remain at the same level throughout the year, this corresponds to a 6% representation of the total data assumed to be available through the platforms under study ( $1\,536/24\,576 = 6\%$ ).

When the Swedish material is seen as representing the 37 months between the first sample in January 2014 to the last one in January 2017, the corresponding percentage hypothetically covered in the study is 8% (January 2014 – January 2017 (37 months):  $401 \times 37 = 14\,849$  ( $1\,204/14\,849 = 8\%$ )).

The risk of the samples being non-representative decreases as sample size (total N) increases. The larger the percentage of the total hypothetical number, the lower the risk of a non-representative sample. The smaller the sample, the higher the risk.

Although it appears diminutive, the representation percentage of 8% of all potential material is actually made up of the mainstreamed connotations that the material involves. The variations in the content of the company's postings are not great, but the same kind of content is reproduced all year round, with the same kinds of connotations. The strength of the material is that the samples are large enough to cover all the elements that the companies under study typically cover in these genres of communication. Another strength is that the national samples are so alike in size. A third strength is that the materials were manually retrieved, which means that they

were assessed on several occasions during data collection, and the representability in the connotations was assured by the researchers' involvement and evaluations at all phases of the data collection.

## 5.5 Delphi assessment

The validity and reliability of the coding was trialled by asking experts to code the part of the material to which the coding scheme had been especially tricky to apply. The proceedings of this part of the study draw on the Delphi method, originally developed to enhance decision-making in groups (Helmer 1967). The method is based on the idea that the most reliable assessment can be obtained by consulting a number of experts in several assessment rounds. The experts make their first assessments individually, after which they take part of each other's assessments and strive towards a within-group consensus. The Delphi method has previously been applied to assess how well alcohol advertising complies with the alcohol industry's self-regulatory codes (Babor et al. 2013a).

The Delphi review of this study was carried out in two phases during the autumn of 2017. Four experts from each country, Sweden and Finland, were invited to the Delphi coding assessment. In Sweden, three males and one female participated, all aged between 40 and 70 and with extensive experience as civil servants, researchers and policy-makers in the public health field. The Swedish expert panel consisted of:

- a researcher whose particular focus was on alcohol consumption among young people;
- a retired politician with extensive experience in alcohol policies;
- a retired civil servant with extensive experience as a practitioner in prevention work, mainly in the field of alcohol; and,
- a civil servant with experience of working for WHO on alcohol and drug policies, now working as the head of a public health institution.

In Finland, the panel similarly consisted of three males and a female, aged between 40 and 60 – all with experience and expertise in the fields of public health and alcohol policy. The Finnish expert panel consisted of:

- a researcher of young adults' drinking cultures;
- a civil servant in the field of alcohol legislation;
- an expert in a non-governmental rehabilitation service organization ; and,
- an expert in a non-governmental organization specialized in substance abuse prevention.

Each panel member received a 1 500 SEK/ 150 EUR reward after completing the review. After accepting the invitation to be part of the Delphi panel, the experts received an email containing a document with a short background description of the project, as well as instructions regarding proceedings and protocol. For the purpose of this study, we chose 20 posts that originated from Facebook, Instagram and Twitter,

10 from each country, for assessment. The posts were selected on the basis of contents that the research group had found controversial or most difficult to rate. The posts also represented, according to the coding logic, a variety of ways in which the content may violate the 2015 amendment of the Finnish Alcohol Act. In the Delphi assessment, the focus was on the 17 codes concerning the amendment and product-consumer interaction in the posts. We also selected one code, social success, to indicate contents that may violate the alcohol industry's self-regulatory codes. All the posts were translated: Finnish posts were translated into Swedish and Swedish posts into Finnish.

The Delphi review consisted of two rounds of assessments. In the first round, the experts' assignment was to code the selected posts and evaluate whether or not they contained any of the criteria. The experts could justify and comment on their coding in a specific column on their form. They had two weeks to fulfil this task. After the first round, all the ratings and comments were gathered into one file to determine the extent to which the expert ratings deviated from each other and from the research group's original coding. The summary of the first round's ratings, including the experts' original ratings, was then added to the new assessment forms. The second round's assessment form was sent two weeks after the first-round form. The experts' task in the second round was to recode the same posts, but this time they could see their own rating from the first round, and also, anonymously, how the other experts had rated the posts, and their justifications, if they had any. Accordingly, the experts were able to modify their ratings in the second round, thus forming a more consensual view of the posts and their contents.

After reviewing all the ratings and comments from the first round, the experts changed 761 (28% of all ratings) evaluations in the second round, but left almost three quarters of the ratings (72%) unchanged (see Table 5). The most common re-evaluated codes were share suggestion, comment suggestion and consumer recommendation. Games, competitions and lotteries proved to be the most unambiguous, as none of the experts changed the ratings for these codes.

The Delphi review affected the coding in two ways. First, the coding of the selected posts was modified according to the expert comments: in three of the twenty evaluated posts the coding was changed according to the expert ratings. Second, the meaning of the codes and the coding guidelines were discussed. For the most part, the expert evaluations were similar to the research group's assessments. Of all the expert ratings, 69% (N=1 864) matched the research group's coding. In 336 (12%) ratings, one of the eight experts disagreed with the research group's coding and in 152 (6%) ratings, two experts disagreed. However, these ratings were not re-evaluated, as the agreement with the research group's coding was over 75%. Table 5 displays the level of agreement in detail.

In 368 (13%) ratings, three or more experts disagreed with the research group's coding. All of these ratings were discussed. The five codes with the most dissenting ratings were consumer recommendation, comment suggestion, share suggestion and social success. These codes were also the most frequently commented on by the experts, and it was often pointed out that posts including such material are open to various interpretations. Figure 1 provides an example of such a case. The brand had

shared a picture on Instagram of a consumer's Original Long Drink cake, and in the comment section, other consumers complimented the cake. Originally, we had not rated these as consumer recommendations, as we interpreted that the recommendations referred to the cake rather than the beverage. All the experts disagreed, and claimed that the comments also applied to the beverage. We discussed the rating and reread the comments but decided not to change the coding. Similarly, six experts rated the picture as a serving suggestion. We did not change our coding, as the goal was to monitor posts that explicitly share recipes or tell consumers to pair certain drinks with certain foods.

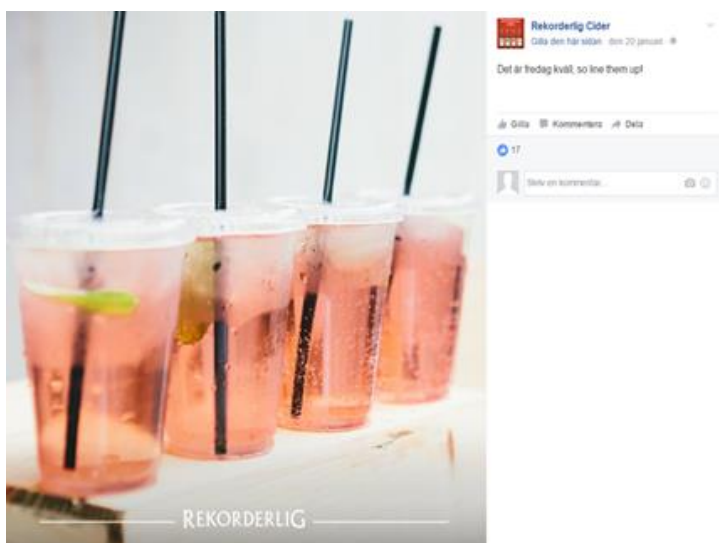
Figure 1. Original Long drink cake Instagram post, January 2017.



Another example of difficulties in interpreting posts was a Facebook post by Rekorderlig (Figure 2). The post depicted four drinks with the text '*Det är fredag kväll [It's Friday night], so line them up!*' Half of the experts rated the post as portraying social success. Although these ratings were well grounded, we did not change the coding, as there was no explicit reference to sociality – there was no indication that the drinks were not for one only person, for example. The experts also rated the post as a serving suggestion. Although there was a piece of fruit in each drink, we did not change the coding, as the post made no further mentions of serving suggestions.



Figure 2. Rekorderlig Facebook post, January 2017.



Although we discussed all the incongruous ratings, it was not always possible to agree with the expert views. This was the case when several experts discussed whether or not the brands were doing everything they could to limit commenting and sharing, and claimed that the share and comment features might encourage sharing. As the aim of this study was to monitor explicit sharing suggestions, we did not conform to the expert comments on social media platform architecture: the option to share Facebook posts, for example, is a feature of any public post, and for this reason we did not consider it an explicit suggestion by the brands to share the post. We also disagreed with the expert comments on interpreting likes as recommendations, hashtags and tags as comment suggestions, and links as sharing suggestions, as our aim was to monitor explicit suggestions. Another example was references to competitions. Some of the experts discussed the semantic meaning of competitions and lotteries in detail, pointing out that lotteries are also competitions. As the goal of the study was to monitor the number of individual games, competitions and lotteries in the material, we did not change the coding according to these specific expert comments and ratings.

In total, the majority of the differences between our coding and the expert ratings concerned consumer recommendations, comment suggestions and share suggestions. The experts pointed out that often the message was implied rather than explicit. Consumer recommendations, comment suggestions and share suggestions stood out in the first and second rounds of the expert ratings, and the experts changed their ratings of these codes more often than they did others.

Table 5. Rating agreement between expert ratings (second round) and original coding, and between first and second expert rating rounds.

<b>Level of agreement</b>	<b>Number of ratings</b>	<b>% of all ratings</b>
Complete agreement: all the experts agreed with the original coding	1 864	69
Strong agreement: one expert disagreed with other experts and original coding	336	12
Moderate agreement: two experts disagreed with other experts and original coding	152	6
Weak agreement: 3 experts disagreed with other experts and original coding	128	5
Weak agreement: 4 experts disagreed with other experts and original coding	48	2
Weak agreement: 5 experts disagreed with other experts and original coding	64	2
Weak agreement :6 experts disagreed with other experts and original coding	64	2
Very weak agreement: 7 experts disagreed with one expert and original coding	40	1
No agreement: all the experts disagreed with original coding	32	1

## 5.6 Age limit compliance

As part of the task of identifying the prevalence of alcohol brands in national social media sites and investigating their accessibility to underaged audiences, we conducted an age-limit compliance trial as a separate investigative task. We created fake minor profiles on Facebook and Instagram and used them to determine whether the selected brands' content was accessible to minors under the age of 18. The fake profile was that of a female born in 2001, making her 16 years old when the accounts were checked in 2017. The results of the age limit trial are presented in Chapter 13.

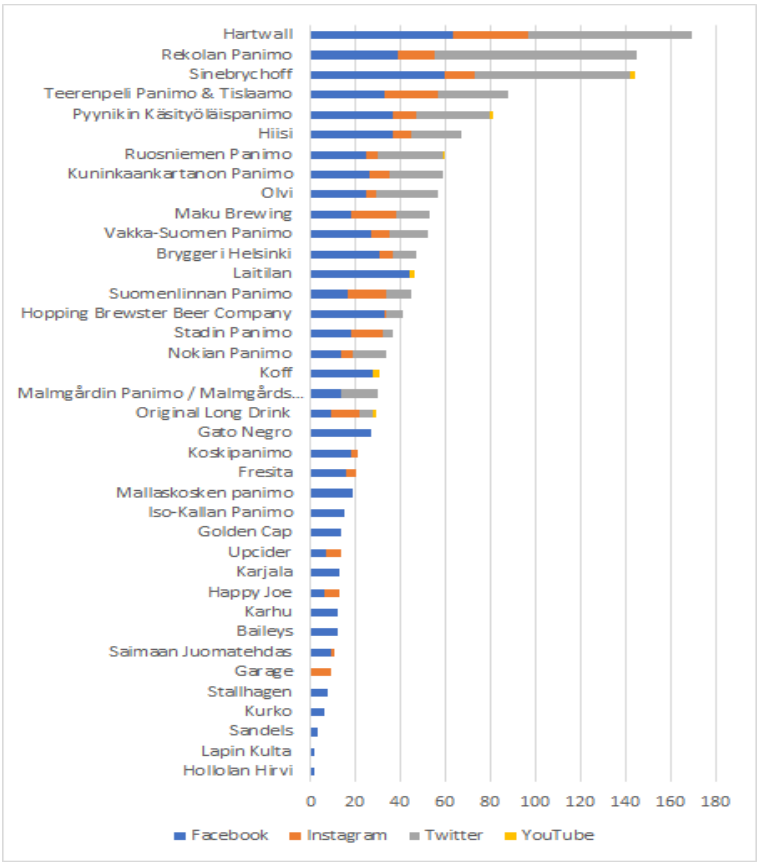
## 6. Prevalence of posting

In this chapter, we examine which social media platforms have most widely been used for alcohol marketing and how active the Finnish and Swedish alcohol brands have been in terms of generating content in the sampled months. Posting prevalence has been identified as an important element in brands' social media strategies (Kim et al. 2014). Previous studies indicate that the frequency of posting influences user engagement (Kim et al. 2014) and customer loyalty (Lehmann et al. 2012). The frequency with which content is published varies between platforms and brands.

### 6.1 Finnish sample

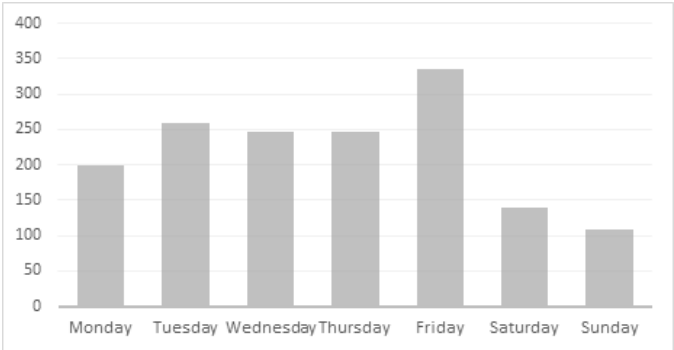
Of the 38 Finnish brands, 97% had a Facebook account, 61% had an Instagram account, 47% had a Twitter account, and 39% had a YouTube channel. Only 15% of the brands produced content on all the studied social media services at the observed time points. On average, the brands posted something three times a week. Six brands posted less than 10 times on all the observed time points. The three most active brands, Hartwall, Rekola's Brewery and Sinebrychoff, posted over 100 times in total during the three sampled months. There were no major differences between big breweries and microbreweries: Hartwall, a major producer, was the most active publisher with 169 posts, followed by a microbrewery Rekolan panimo with 145 posts and Sinebrychoff with 144, also one of the major producers in Finland. Figure 3 displays the total amount of posts according to platform and brand in the sampled months.

Figure 3. Posting prevalence in Finnish brand accounts on social media platforms.



The most popular weekday for Finnish brands to post content was Friday (Figure 4). Posting prevalence varied little on the remaining weekdays. Posting was less frequent at weekends.

Figure 4. Finnish posts per weekday.



In 2014, Facebook was the most frequently used platform among the Finnish brands. Over 60% of all posts in the 2014 sample were Facebook posts. The relative share of Facebook posts decreased between 2014 and 2016 samples, but Facebook continued to be the main advertising platform for the studied Finnish brands in 2016 and 2017. Over the studied time period, Instagram's share of alcohol marketing steadily increased. From the 2014 to 2017 sample, the share of Instagram posts increased from 2% to 25%. The share of Twitter posts remained at the same level over time, constituting one third of the posts in the Finnish sample. YouTube was not actively used by the brands at any of the time points observed.

In the Finnish material, the level of activity in terms of posting frequency had increased between the January 2014 and January 2016 samples: the number of posts nearly doubled. However, the level of activity showed a slight decrease in the number of posts between the January 2016 and January 2017 samples. Table 6 displays the total activity of the Finnish brands' social media sites during the sampled months.

Table 6. Finnish brand activity on social media, January 2014, 2016 and 2017.

	<b>2014</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>Total</b>
	374	626	536	1 536
Facebook	67%	46%	47%	51%
Instagram	3%	15%	25%	16%
Twitter	30%	39%	28%	33%
YouTube	1%	1%	0%	1%

## 6.2 Swedish sample

In the Swedish material, not all the producers proved to be active during the study period. This may be due to the fact that there were more brands in the Swedish material and the likelihood of them not including social media sites as a vital communication platform thus increased with the mere number of brands. 94% of the 52 Swedish brands had a Facebook account, 69% had an Instagram account, 40% had a Twitter account, and 35% had a registered YouTube channel.

Measured in number of posts, the Swedish brand accounts were less active than their Finnish counterparts. The Swedish brands' level of activity was more uneven. Nine of the Swedish brands did not post anything on their social media platforms, and 15 brands published less than 10 posts during the sampled months. On average, the Swedish brands posted something on their accounts every fourth day. The most active brands were the Landvetter-based microbrewery Dugges, with 220 posts, which equals 2.4 posts every day during the study period; followed by Eskilstuna Ölkultur, with a total of 109 posts; and Carlsberg Sverige, with 99 posts. Certain beer brands seemed to rely more than others on this type of direct communication with consumers

for building a brand profile that involved certain significations of brewing and a personalized image. Figure 5 shows the prevalence of posts in the Swedish accounts.

Figure 5. Posting prevalence in Swedish brand accounts on social media platforms.

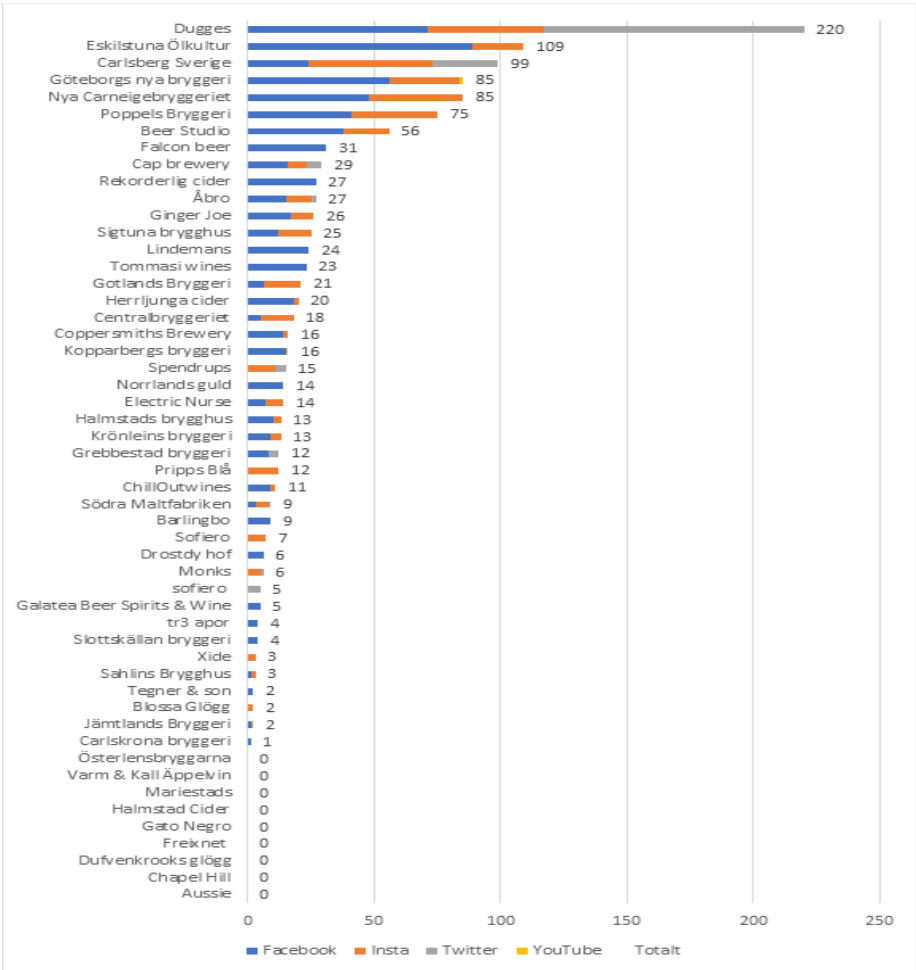
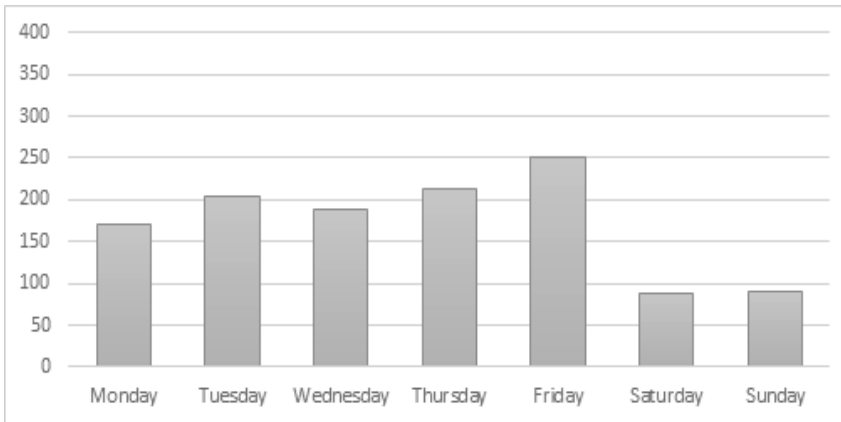


Figure 6 shows the division of Swedish posts per weekday, Friday being the busiest day for brands in terms of using their social media accounts. On Saturdays and Sundays posts were published less frequently.

Figure 6. Swedish posts per weekday.



As in the Finnish sample, the share of Facebook posts decreased between the 2014 and the 2017 samples, even if Facebook remained the most popular platform (Table 7). In line with social media site trend reports, the importance of Facebook as a channel for addressing potential consumers seemed to decrease for the companies in both countries. This is interesting, especially in view of the lesser importance of this platform for reaching younger consumers (Pew Research Center, 2018). A comparison of the shares of Instagram posts in the two countries clearly shows that Instagram was a more popular platform for the Swedish brands in all the sampled months. One fourth of the activity in the Swedish 2014 sample was on Instagram; in Finland the corresponding figure was only 2.7%.

In Sweden, the total amount of posts increased with each sampled month. The largest leap was seen, as in the Finnish sample, between 2014 and 2016. In this period, the number of posts more than doubled, as Table 7 shows. However, there was only a slight increase in the number of posts in 2017 compared to that in 2016.

Table 7. Swedish brand activity on Social Media, January 2014, 2016 and 2017.

	2014	2016	2017	Total
	233	480	491	1 204
Facebook	72%	55%	52%	57%
Instagram	25%	33%	31%	31%
Twitter	3%	12%	18%	13%
YouTube	0%	0%	0 %	0%

### 6.3 Summary

The prevalence of posts had increased in both countries between the 2014 sample and the 2016 sample. In the Finnish sample, the number of posts decreased in the 2017 sample, whereas there was a slight increase in the Swedish 2017 sample. Overall, in both countries, Facebook was the most important marketing platform for the studied brands. However, Instagram became increasingly popular, and especially in Finland the brands' presence on Instagram grew substantially over the studied months. A comparison of the prevalence of posts on Swedish and Finnish brand accounts summarizes that the brands were almost twice as active on the social media in Finland. On average, each Finnish brand posted 40 times during the sampled months (1 536 posts divided by 38 brands). The corresponding activity level of the Swedish accounts was 23 posts (1 204 posts divided by 52 brands).



## 7. Consumer engagement

The success of social media marketing rests heavily on how well marketers engage consumers. Consumer engagement in social media refers to both active and passive engagement (see Hutton & Fosdick 2011). Engagement can be passive in the sense that a consumer simply notices and reads content on social media. Engagement may be active, in turn, in cases when consumers do something with the content. On social media, the consumer may like the content using the dedicated like function, they may comment on it textually or visually, or share it with others. With commercial hashtags, consumers may also participate in brand marketing by creating their own content under certain themes. In a psychological sense, engagement presupposes that the content somehow corresponds with the consumer's intentions and motives (Ashely & Tuten 2015). For a discussion on the relationship between likes, logins and their psychology see, for example, Glazer (2012), or Alhabash et al. (2018). Moreover, as all activities on social media can be understood in relation to identity construction, the content with which the consumer engages needs to be somehow relevant in terms of constructing a positive self-image (Ashley & Tuten 2015; Boyd 2007; Kaplan & Haenlein 2010). In this study, we examined the posts in relation to the active engagement of the consumers and measured engagement by user reactions: how many times the posts had been liked, commented on or shared.

### 7.1 Finnish sample

Table 8 below displays the average numbers of consumer reactions per social media post in the Finnish material when all the platforms are calculated together. It shows that social media users' engagement was relatively low at all the studied times in Finland, considering the huge consumer reach potential in social media marketing, and the numbers of followers of the accounts under study. The numbers of followers are displayed in Tables 2 and 4 in Chapter 5. Nevertheless, the likelihood of receiving likes for each post grew from the first to the last sampled month. In 2014, each post received 41 likes on average, whereas in 2017, the corresponding number was 130. The average numbers of shares and comments remained low in all the studied samples, implying a low level of personal engagement among the brands' followers.

Table 8. Average number of likes, shares and comments per post in the Finnish material.

	2014	2016	2017
Likes	41	76	130
Shares	6	12	7
Comments	3	6	7

A closer look at how often consumers actually engaged with the posts reveals a low level of consumer interest. A total of 84% of the posts in 2014 received less than 50

likes and 20% had no likes at all (Table 9). In 2015, the proportion of posts with under 50 likes was 76% and in 2017, 69%. The proportion of posts that had received more than 500 likes was only 1% in 2017 and 4% in 2017. On the basis of the number of likes, the average engagement per post in the 2014 sample had increased from that in the 2017 sample.

Table 9. Number of likes of Finnish posts on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and YouTube.

	No likes	1–24 likes	25–49 likes	50–99 likes	100–499 likes	>500 likes
2014	20%	54%	10%	9%	6%	1%
2016	9%	54%	13%	10%	11%	3%
2017	7%	44%	18%	15%	12%	4%

The social media users only rarely shared or retweeted the posts. The vast majority of the Facebook and Twitter posts, approximately 90%, were shared less than ten times (see Table 10). As Instagram and YouTube do not provide information on how many times posts or videos have been shared, the corresponding numbers in these social media sites are unknown.

Over time, the proportion of posts shared more than fifty times increased slightly: in the 2014 sample, 2% of Facebook and Twitter posts were shared over 50 times, and in the 2016 and 2017 samples, the proportion increased to 3% (see Table 10). In 2016, shares peaked. Average shares per Facebook and Twitter post was 6 in 2014, 12 in 2016 and 7 in 2017 (see Table 8).

Table 10. Numbers of shares of Finnish Facebook and Twitter posts.

	No shares	1–10 shares	11–49 shares	>50 shares
2014	58%	35%	5%	2%
2016	44%	44%	9%	3%
2017	60%	32%	5%	3%

The majority of the posts were commented on less than ten times (see Table 11). The proportion of posts that had no comments had increased from 55% to 68% between the 2014 and 2016 samples. Between the 2016 and 2017 samples the proportion had decreased to 64%. The proportion of posts commented on over 25 times had remained at a stable 2%.

Table 11. Numbers of comments on Finnish posts on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and YouTube.

	No comments	1–10 comments	11–24 comments	>25 comments
2014	55%	41%	3%	2%
2016	68%	27%	3%	2%
2017	64%	32%	2%	2%

Although the user engagement observed in the studied posts was relatively minimal, there was some variation between the brands. Table 12 displays the level of reactions per different brands' posts in the Finnish material, and clearly shows that the brands Karhu and Karjala were the most successful in generating engagement through their marketing messages, both in terms of acquiring followers and generating interaction with social media users.

Table 52. Average number of reactions per different brands' posts, Finnish sample.

Brand	Likes	Shares	Comments	In total	Brand's % of all reactions
Karhu	3 094	283	90	3 467	42
Karjala	730	33	47	810	10
Sandels	372	24	13	409	5
Saimaan Juomatehdas	348	23	11	382	5
Original Long Drink	348	18	8	374	5
Fresita	323	22	6	351	4
Baileys	281	6	3	290	4
Gato Negro	74	123	38	235	3
Golden Cap	204	6	7	217	3
Happy Joe	197	1	3	201	2
Lapin Kulta	164	3	4	171	2
Koff	134	13	3	150	2
Stallhagen	135	5	4	144	2
Pyynikin Käsityöläispanimo	106	4	2	112	1
Hollolan Hirvi	86	16	2	104	1
Olvi	83	8	6	97	1

Laitilan	66	6	6	78	1
Maku Brewing	58	1	2	61	1
Vakka-Suomen Panimo	57	3	1	61	1
Iso-Kallan Panimo	55	1	1	57	1
Upcider	43	1	1	45	1
Hopping Brewster Beer Company	37	1	2	40	1
Ruosniemen Panimo	36	2	1	39	1
Stadin Panimo	36	1	1	38	1
Mallaskosken panimo	28	2	4	34	0
Nokian Panimo	28	3	2	33	0
Malmgårdin Panimo / Malmgård's Bryggeri	25	2	1	28	0
Suomenlinnan Panimo	25	1	1	27	0
Sinebrychoff	23	3	1	27	0
Teerenpeli Panimo & Tislaamo	24	1	1	26	0
Hiisi	24	1	1	26	0
Bryggeri Helsinki	24	1	1	26	0
Hartwall	20	3	0	23	0
Koskipanimo	18	0	1	19	0
Kurko	15	0	1	16	0
Rekolan Panimo	14	1	1	16	0
Kuninkaankartanon Panimo	6	0	0	6	0
Garage	3	N/A	0	3	0

Figure 7 is an example of a popular social media post by Karhu from January 2017. January is a low alcohol consumption month in Finland and many people abstain from drinking during this time for the national ‘Dry January’ challenge (Tipaton tammikuu). In this example, Karhu plugs into this timely phenomenon and reminds consumers in its humorous post that there should also be moderation in abstinence. The post received over 12 000 likes, over 670 comments and over 900 social media users shared it. This is an example of a readily provided humorous slant to a well-

known alcohol-related Finnish phenomenon for users to employ for entertaining in their own networks.

Another example of successful social engagement in the Finnish material is that of wine brand Gato Negro (see Figure 8) from January 2017. The post introduces a funny word puzzle in which the first words you recognize allegedly predict what will happen to you in the coming year. Over 3 000 users shared the post, almost 1 000 commented on it and 900 liked it. Again, the brand had provided ready-to-apply entertainment for users to share with their own networks.

The brands' ability to generate consumer engagement varies greatly in the Finnish sample. The most successful brand is Karhu, with substantially more followers and reactions than any other brand in the sample. Despite Karhu's low overall number of posts, on average, its posts were highly popular. Most Finnish brands, it seems, had not invested in social media marketing to the same extent during the studied time. It seems that Karhu had successfully built a community around its brand, and its humorous posts clearly resonated with its target audience. In addition, the brand's posts often referred to timely events and topics, making them 'shareable', i.e. they made a contribution to topical issues from the users' point of view.

Figure 7. Example of highly engaging social media post by Karhu, January 2017.



Figure 8. Example of highly engaging social media post by Gato Negro, January 2016.



## 7.2 Swedish sample

Compared to the Finnish sample, the Swedish brands were slightly more successful in generating user reactions, especially in terms of likes. The average number of likes in 2014 sample was 100, and in the 2017 sample, 196. As in Finland, the average numbers of shares and comments were low at all the studied times (Table 13).

Table 13. Average number of likes, shares and comments per post in Swedish material.

	2014	2016	2017
Likes	100	172	196
Shares	9	18	12
Comments	5	9	12

Very few posts in the Swedish sample attracted significant numbers of likes. Still, when compared with the Finnish samples, the posts were more popular on average.

60% of the posts in the 2014 sample received less than 50 likes, and only 4% had no likes at all (see Table 14). In the 2015 sample, 56% and in the 2017 sample, 50% of the posts had below 50 likes. The proportion of posts with more than 500 likes was 4% in the 2014 sample, 6% in the 2016 sample, and 8% in the 2017 sample. As with the Finnish samples, the popularity of the posts in terms of likes had grown between the 2014 and the 2017 samples.

Table 14. Number of likes of Swedish posts on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and YouTube.

	No likes	1–24 likes	25–49 likes	50–99 likes	100–499 likes	>500 likes
2014	4%	32%	24%	17%	19%	4%
2016	7%	33%	16%	17%	22%	6%
2017	8%	30%	12%	18%	25%	8%

As in the Finnish sample, users' shares of Facebook and Twitter posts were rare during all the studied months (see Table 15). In the 2014 sample, 64% of the Swedish posts were never shared or retweeted. Only 3% of the posts were shared more than 50 times. In 2017, the percentages were 58% and 5%, respectively. The most popular post was shared 1 248 times and contained a link to an article that claimed that having a beer every day makes you younger and more fresh looking. The numbers of shares of the Swedish monthly samples differed little. All in all, the posts in the Swedish sample were more popular in terms of sharing than those in the Finnish sample.

Table 15. Amount of shares of Swedish Facebook and Twitter posts.

	No shares	1–10 shares	11–49 Shares	> 50 shares
2014	64%	26%	7%	3%
2016	54%	31%	9%	6%
2017	58%	28%	10%	5%

The same thriftiness applied to comments, as is shown in Table 16. In 2014, 45% of the posts were never commented on. In the sampled months, 42%–44% of the posts gathered less than ten comments, and 5%–7% of the posts carried more than 25 comments. The three posts most commented on were all competitions, in which you could win a trip to Copenhagen or a flower bouquet.

Table 16. Amount of comments on Swedish Facebook and Twitter posts.

	<b>No comments</b>	<b>1–10 comments</b>	<b>11–24 comments</b>	<b>&gt; 25 comments</b>
2014	45%	43%	8%	5%
2016	46%	42%	6%	6%
2017	44%	44%	5%	7%

Table 17 displays the average numbers of likes, shares and comments for all the Swedish brands. Two large beer producers, Falcon and Norrlands guld, accounted for 40.5% of all the likes, shares and comments in the Swedish material. Both of these communicated with humorous content, wordplay and straightforward traditional jokes. Falcon and Norrlands Guld had large follower bases on Facebook, with 48 000 and 60 000 followers respectively, making them the 6th and 7th most popular Facebook brand pages in the Swedish material. Poppels Bryggeri, which had 7% of all likes, shares and comments, is a different kind of brewery to Norrlands and Falcon and focuses on locally produced craft beer. Poppels, founded in 2012, has the largest follower base of all the microbreweries included in the material, with close to 37 000 followers.

Table 17. Average number of reactions per different brands' posts, Swedish sample.

<b>Brand</b>	<b>Likes</b>	<b>Shares</b>	<b>Comments</b>	<b>In total</b>	<b>Brand's % of all reactions</b>
Falcon beer	1 408	125	62	1 596	22
Norrlands guld	1 036	194	68	1 298	18
Poppels Bryggeri	451	39	17	507	7
ChillOut wines	390	19	10	419	6
Kopparbergs bryggeri	328	4	2	334	5
Göteborgs nya bryggeri	223	16	6	245	3
Herrljunga cider	113	19	48	180	3
Electric Nurse	155	3	9	168	2
Nya Carnegebryggeriet	156	3	4	164	2
Carlsberg Sverige	114	17	30	161	2
Gotlands Bryggeri	139	8	4	152	2
Södra Maltfabriken	131	5	7	142	2
Lindemans	124	5	6	135	2



Åbro	121	2	2	126	2
Barlingbo	112	7	5	124	2
Tommasi wines	116	2	3	122	2
Blossa Glögg	98	0	10	108	2
Centralbryggeriet	94	0	3	97	1
Carlskrona bryggeri	92	1	2	95	1
Dugges	88	1	4	93	1
Rekorderlig cider	85	1	7	92	1
Halmstads brygghus	80	2	5	87	1
Coppersmiths Brewery	74	1	4	79	1
Ginger Joe	52	0	3	54	1
Sigtuna brygghus	50	1	1	53	1
Drostdy hof	40	1	7	48	1
Jämtlands Bryggeri	46	0	2	47	1
Krönleins bryggeri	33	6	4	42	1
Eskilstuna Ölkultur	38	1	2	41	1
Grebbestad bryggeri	36	2	2	40	1
Beer Studio	37	0	2	39	1
Sahlins Brygghus	36	0	1	36	1
Spendrups	33	1	1	35	1
Xide	30	N/A	3	33	1
Slottskällan bryggeri	30	1	1	32	0
Cap brewery	23	0	1	24	0
tr3 apor	19	0	3	22	0
Sofiero	14	2	4	18	0
Monks	16	0	1	16	0
Tegner & son	11	5	0	15	0
Pripps Blå	12	N/A	1	13	0
Galatea Beer Spirits & Wine	7	1	0	8	0

Sofiero	3	2	0	5	0
<b>Total</b>	6 298	495	352	71 452	100

Below are two examples of posts with high consumer engagement. Figure 9 shows a Facebook post by craft beer producer Poppels from January 2016, which includes a link to an article on *viralking.se*, a platform for sharing witty, entertaining short texts that are popular online. This particular article claims that new research evidence has shown that beer consumed every day makes you both younger and better looking. The post was liked over 5 000 times and shared by more than 1 200 people. Figure 10 shows by far the most popular post with 7 700 likes on Facebook, which depicts a beer bottle next to a glass shaped like a female body. The picture itself seems to have been taken by a consumer and reposted by Gothenburg-based brewery Göteborgs Nya Bryggeri in January 2017. The beer carries the label 'Winter', and the picture is taken in a frosty landscape. As was the case with the Finnish popular posts, the content in the most popular posts of the Swedish material was easy for the consumer base to embrace, thanks to its humorous elements.

Figure 9. Example of popular post in Swedish material, posted by Poppels Bryggeri on Facebook, January 2016.



Figure 10. Example of popular post in Swedish material posted on Facebook by Göteborgs Nya Bryggeri, January 2017.



## 7.3 Summary

The level of consumer engagement with alcohol brands' social media posts was low in both countries. A comparison of the 2014 and 2017 samples revealed that Finnish brands were more successful in generating user reactions in 2017. In both countries, a few brands had a somewhat high engagement rate with their posts. The most popular posts in both countries were humorous and commented on timely topics in a manner that seemed to resonate among the brands' follower base. They also provided ready-to-apply punchlines that represented the kind of content that is typically posted on the platforms in question.

## 8. The 2015 amendment: use of restricted content in alcohol marketing

Both the Finnish and Swedish samples were rated according to the Finnish Alcohol Act restrictions on social media alcohol marketing. The law was operationalized into three thematic categories, and we used these to indicate whether the posts contained 1) games, lotteries or competitions, 2) suggestions that social media users share the post or 3) content generated by consumers.

There are two ways in which brands can make use of consumer-generated content for marketing purposes. First, they can share content originally produced by a consumer and in this way generate interest in and interaction with the brand through involving consumers. In the rating of the material, we differentiated between content produced by ‘regular’ consumers and that produced by bloggers. When the brands shared bloggers’ content with no indication of commercial collaboration, we rated this as consumer-generated content, thus indicating a violation of the marketing restrictions. Second, consumers are able to share their own content and recommend or praise the product in social media posts’ comment sections and in this way increase the visibility, reach and impact of the post. According to Valvira, this kind of consumer content should be removed from posts. The content we interpreted as violating the Finnish marketing restrictions are summarized in Table 18.

Table 18. Content violating Finnish Alcohol Act’s social media marketing restrictions.

<b>1. Games, lotteries or competitions</b>	<b>2. Share suggestions</b>	<b>3. Consumer-generated content</b>
1.1. Post contains a game or link to a game	2.1. Post suggests the consumer to share the post	3.1. Post shares ‘regular’ consumers’ content
1.2. Post contains a lottery or link to a lottery		3.2. Post shares bloggers’ content without commercial collaboration
1.1. Post contains a competition or link to a competition		3.3. Post contains consumer recommendations or praise in its comments
		3.4. Post contains pictures by consumers in its comments

Although the Finnish restrictions only apply to the Finnish samples after 2015, we have rated all the material according to the restricted content. The purpose was to detect changes in alcohol marketing in Finland after the law amendment and to examine the overall level of the use of these kinds of marketing elements by Finnish and Swedish alcohol brands.

### 8.1 Finnish sample

Table 19 shows the proportion of posts that contain at least one element of content restricted by the Finnish Alcohol Act in the Finnish sample. In the 2014 sample, 24%

of the posts contained games, lotteries, competitions, share suggestions and/or content generated by consumers. In the 2016 sample, the corresponding proportion of this kind of posts was 26%, and in the 2017 sample 16%.

Table 19. Use of restricted content in Finnish material.

<b>Year</b>	<b>Posts violating the Finnish Alcohol Act</b>	<b>% of all posts</b>
2014	91	24
2016	165	26
2017	87	16

### 8.1.1 Games, lotteries and competitions

The Finnish material included five games, four lotteries and five competitions. Although not very high, the prevalence of games, competitions and lotteries was the highest in the 2014 sample, with nine posts. The 2016 sample had three posts with this content and the 2017 sample only two. Almost all the game-related posts included links to games arranged by a third party, often in collaboration with the brand. They did not receive many comments, shares or likes by social media users as they did not utilize the platform itself. An exception was one of the games, which could be played on Facebook. The consumer was invited to discover words from a picture and by doing so find newyear predictions (see Figure 8 in Chapter 7). With over 900 comments, 900 likes and 3 200 shares, this game proved to be highly engaging.

Correspondingly, almost all the competitions were arranged by a third party and did not enable any consumer action on the platform. One of the competitions was arranged solely on Facebook and required consumers to comment on the post. The post was commented on 117 times and received 119 likes at the time of the data collection. The lotteries, for their part, were arranged by the brands and no third parties were involved in their realization. Three lotteries were arranged on Facebook and one on Instagram. To participate in the draw, consumers were asked to share pictures, to like the post or to comment on the post. Table 20 lists the games, competitions and lotteries in the three Finnish samples.

Table 20. Games, competitions and lotteries posted in Finnish material.

<p><b>Games</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. There's still time to take part in the FC Lahti football competition. (Teerenpeli Panimo &amp; Tislaamo, 24 January 2017, posted on Facebook)</li> <li>2. Play our Beer Ambassador game, set a record and challenge your friends! (Sinebrychoff, 26 January 2017, on Facebook)</li> <li>3. Play our game and win tickets for a television show. (Olvi Oyj, 25 January 2014, on Facebook)</li> <li>4. Test your knowledge on ice hockey and win 5 000 €. (Karjala, 7 January 2014, on Facebook)</li> <li>5. Predictions for 2016! The three first words you find will come true this year. (Gato Negro, 5 January 2016, on Facebook)</li> <li>6. Download our mobile game, scan the can and play! Top 10 players get weekly prizes. (Sinebrychoff, 8 January 2016, on Facebook)</li> </ol> <p><b>Competitions</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Play our ice hockey quiz! (Koff, 31 January 2014, on Facebook)</li> <li>2. Play our rock'n'roll quiz. We're waiting for your answers! (Koff, 29 January 2014, on Facebook)</li> <li>3. Play our rock'n'roll quiz. We're looking for a certain singer – can you guess who? (Koff, 13 January 2014, on Facebook)</li> <li>4. Tell us your favourite song and take part in our competition! (Laitilan Wirvoitusjuomatehdas, 22 January 2016, on Facebook)</li> </ol> <p><b>Lotteries</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Share a picture and win 365 bottles of water. (Teerenpeli Panimo &amp; Tislaamo, 19 January 2017, on Instagram)</li> <li>2. Like this post and win movie tickets! (Mallaskosken Panimo, 21 January 2014, on Facebook)</li> <li>3. Tell us your favourite Jaffa memory and win a soft toy. (Hartwall, 2 January 2014, on Facebook)</li> <li>4. Tell us what food you like to eat with our beer and win a restaurant dinner. (Laitilan Wirvoitusjuomatehdas, 27 January 2014, on Facebook)</li> </ol>
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Eleven posts included references to a competition. The posts mainly announced the winners of the lotteries arranged by the brands. Exceptions were a post that referred to a beer-brewing competition and two posts concerning competitions arranged by local entrepreneurs.

### 8.1.2 Share suggestions

The number of share suggestions was very small in the Finnish material: only three posts suggested that the consumer share the brand's post or other content. The suggestions were not completely explicit. One example included the brand using the hashtag #saajakaa [please share] and a post containing a picture of a piece of paper with the text 'Saa jakaa' written on it. The brand posted the same content on Facebook and Instagram, using the same hashtags. The third example included the hashtag #pleaseshare.

### 8.1.3 Consumer-generated content

The Finnish samples included 326 posts that contained at least one consumer-generated element. The 2014 samples contained 82; the 2016 sample, 159; and the 2017 sample, 85 of those posts (see Table 21). From those posts, we further differentiated those in which the primary content was produced by a regular consumer or a blogger. These posts shared positive comments about the product and humorous remarks and comments on alcohol policy originally produced by private social media users or bloggers in their own accounts or on blog platforms. Altogether 109 posts shared private consumers' content: 27 in the 2014 sample, 66 in the 2016 sample, and 16 in the 2017 sample.

Most of the consumer content was published on Twitter and it was not always clear whether the Twitter accounts were consumers' private accounts or whether they were linked to their profession or position. One example of such a case was a local politician who wrote a positive review of a local brewery (Kuninkaankartanon Panimo, 29 January 2016). It is not clear from the post whether the review was posted in the role of a political figure endorsing a local entrepreneurship or a private person complimenting his favourite brewery. This exemplifies the fuzzy boundaries between professional, commercial and private operators in social media publishing, which makes it difficult to assess whose interests the posts serve. It is worth noting that 15 (41%) brands had disabled visitor posts and that 22 (59%) brands still allowed them after the 2015 amendment came into force.

The material contained 66 posts that shared bloggers' content with no indication of marketing collaboration: 27 in the 2014 sample, 17 in the 2016 sample, and 22 in the 2017 sample. These posts included photos of brand products and links to product reviews.

According to the Finnish restrictions, the post comments must not contain consumers' praise or commendations of the product or pictures by consumers. Alcohol marketers are supposed to limit the commenting on posts and remove all comments that contain positive reviews of the product. Fifteen (1%) of the Finnish brands' Facebook posts had consumers' pictures of the brand's products in their comment section. Often, consumers posted positive comments on the products alongside the product pictures. The Finnish material contained 136 (8%) consumer praise or recommendations: 25 in the 2014 sample, 67 in the 2016 sample, and 44 in the 2017 sample. Most of the

recommendations included very positive comments, such as ‘*the best beer in the world*’, ‘*you make great beer*’ and ‘*it’s delicious*’. The way in which the brands reacted to the recommendations varied greatly. While some did not react at all, others responded to comments and thanked the consumers for their positive feedback.

Table 21. Content restricted by Finnish Alcohol Act in Finnish material.

	2014		2016		2017			
	N	%	N	%	N	%	In total	% in all Finnish data
Games, lotteries, competitions	9	2	3	1	2	0	14	1
Share suggestion	0	0	3	1	0	0	3	0
Blogger consumer content	27	7	17	3	22	4	66	5
Consumer picture	3	1	9	1	3	1	15	1
Consumer recommendation	25	7	67	11	44	8	136	9
Consumer content	27	7	66	11	16	3	109	7

## 8.2 Swedish sample

Table 22 shows the proportion of posts that contained at least one element of content restricted by the Finnish Alcohol Act in the Swedish sample. In the 2014 sample, 20% of the posts contained either games, lotteries or competitions, share suggestions, or consumer-generated content. In the 2016 sample, the proportion was nearly 28% and in the 2017 sample, 32%.

Table 22. Use of restricted content in Swedish sample.

Year	Posts violating the Finnish Alcohol Act	% of all posts
2014	47	20
2016	132	28
2017	159	32

### 8.2.2 Games, lotteries and competitions

The Swedish sample posts had no content that could be considered games. However, we detected 20 competition-related posts: one in the 2014 sample, nine in the 2016 sample and 10 in the 2017 sample. There were altogether 12 competitions in the



Swedish material. In some cases, the brands published the competition/and or the rules of the competition several times, resulting in the above-mentioned number of 20 posts. The competitions and the prizes varied greatly, as did the nature of participation expected of the users. The twelve games are listed in Table 23. One post, which suggested free soda samples would be delivered to consumers' homes, was classed as a lottery.

Table 23. Competitions and lottery posted in Swedish material.

<p><b>Competitions</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Answer a question about a popular media character and win a bar kit. (Falcon Beer, 21 January 2014, on Facebook)</li> <li>2. Tag the person you would like to give flowers to and win a gift card to a flower shop. (Herrljunga Cider, 14 January 2016, on Facebook)</li> <li>3. Post pictures describing everything you miss about the summer and win a 'summer experience'. (Kopparberg 14 January 2016, on Facebook)</li> <li>4. Post your best picture of Krönleins soft drinks and win a bike. (Krönleins Bryggeri 15 January 2016, on Facebook)</li> <li>5. Post a winter-themed picture and win a snow rake. (Herrljunga Cider 21 January 2016, on Facebook)</li> <li>6. Take part in our 'picture of the week' competition and win a T-shirt. (Poppels Bryggeri, 25 January 2016, on Instagram)</li> <li>7. Describe your dream beer in pictures and words, and get it brewed! (Dugges, 25 January and 26 January 2016, on Instagram and Facebook)</li> <li>8. Post your best summer picture and win tickets to a boat fair. (Drosdy Hof, 28 January 2016, on Facebook)</li> <li>9. Tag a friend and explain why you deserve to go on holiday and win a weekend in Copenhagen. (Carlsberg Sverige, 4, 10, 13 and 26 January 2017, on Facebook)</li> <li>10. Suggest new sparkling water flavours and win gym membership cards. (Krönleins Bryggeri, 10 January 2017, on Facebook)</li> <li>11. Tag a friend and win a month's worth of e-magazines. (Herrljunga Cider 11 January 2017, on Facebook)</li> <li>12. Post your best picture with a particular beer and win cups and glasses. (Göteborgs Nya Bryggeri 14 and 20 January 2017, on Facebook and Instagram)</li> </ol> <p><b>Lottery</b></p> <p>Comment and participate in our lottery for free soda samples. (Herrljunga Cider 21 January 2016, on Facebook)</p>
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Several competitions required those wanting to participate to like the brand page, share the competition in their own circles of friends, tag someone, or use particular hashtags. This resulted in the competition posts being generally more popular than other posts, with significantly higher numbers of likes, comments and shares. In addition, 56 published posts contained competition references to, for example, winners, prizes or competitions organized by parties other than the brands themselves. In 2014, there were five such mentions; in 2016, 35; and in 2017, 16.

### 8.2.3 Share suggestions

Just like the Finnish sample, the Swedish material contained very few explicit share suggestions. We detected only four explicit suggestions to share posts, which asked followers to share posts on the stores in which the brand's products were available.

### 8.2.4 Consumer-generated content

The Swedish sample included 313 posts that contained at least one of the restricted consumer-generated elements: posts sharing regular users' content, blogger content or product recommendations, or pictures by consumers. The 2014 samples had 41; the 2016 sample, 120; and the 2017 sample had 147 of these posts (see Table 24). The Swedish material contained 110 posts, nearly 9% of all Swedish posts, that shared content that was originally uploaded or produced by a social media user. The 2014 sample had 17 (7% of that sample's posts); the 2016 sample, 39 (8%); and the 2017 sample had 54 of these posts (11%). In some cases, it was difficult to determine if the post content was actually generated by a consumer; for example, photos of products that social media users had first sent to the brand site, after which the brands had used the picture for their own purposes without clear indication of its source. Consumer-generated content is especially difficult to detect on Twitter in cases in which the brands re-tweet something: it is often difficult to determine if the original tweet is by a consumer or someone with ties to the company. The Swedish sample only had two posts that shared content originating from a blog without indication of commercial collaboration.

Table 24. Content restricted by Finnish Alcohol Act in Swedish material.

	2014		2016		2017			
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N (TOTAL)	Average % of violations in all three samples
Games, lotteries, competitions	1	0	10	2	10	2	21	2
Share suggestion	0	0	2	0	2	0	4	0

Blogger consumer content	0	0	2	0	0	0	2	0
Consumer picture	0	0	8	2	8	2	16	1
Consumer recommendation	29	12	71	15	85	17	185	15
Consumer content	17	7	39	8	54	11	110	9

Only 16 pictures were uploaded to the posts' comments by consumers in the Swedish sample, but 185 consumer recommendations or praises were posted, accounting for nearly 15% of all the posts in the Swedish material. In the 2014 sample, 29 comments in the posts were classed as recommendations (12% of the posts in 2014); in the 2016 sample, 71 (15%); and in the 2017 sample, 85 (17%).

### 8.3 Summary

In the 2014 samples of both countries, 20%–24% of the posts contained elements that the Finnish Alcohol Act currently restricts. The material only contained a few indications of games and competitions. Most commonly, the alcohol marketing messages that were classed as containing restricted elements made use of consumers' comments, pictures and updates. The use of consumer-generated content increased to some degree in both countries from the 2014 sample to 2016 sample. In the 2017 samples, the increase continued in Sweden, whereas in Finland the use of consumer-generated content decreased.

## 9. Compliance with self-regulation codes of conduct

The alcohol industry has introduced several codes of conduct for alcohol marketing. Their aim has been, from the industry's point of view, to agree upon appropriate and responsible ways of marketing alcoholic products. From a critical perspective, the self-regulatory codes are the industry's way of opposing legislative restrictions on alcohol marketing, as they may claim responsibility by appealing for self-regulation. Previous research has shown that the alcohol industry repeatedly violates its own codes of conduct by targeting alcohol advertising at adolescents and by portraying drinking in risky settings, for instance (Babor et al. 2013b; Lloyd et al. 2018; Rhoades & Jernigan 2013; Zwarun & Farrar 2005). In this chapter, we examine social media alcohol marketing in relation to the alcohol industry's own codes of appropriate marketing. We use two sets of codes, the European Advertising Standards Alliance (ALLIANCE) battery of criteria, and the International Alliance for Responsible Drinking's guidelines for sensible marketing (IARD). The detailed description of these codes and criteria can be found in Appendix I.

### 9.1 Finnish sample

The posts in the Finnish sample did not contain any of the following elements: excessive drinking, dangerous activities, drugs, depictions of at-risk groups, misleading information about alcoholic drinks, or suggestions that alcohol improves physical performance. Nevertheless, eight of the posts could be interpreted as depicting mood-altering effects of alcohol, or as presenting alcoholic drinks as stimulants or sedatives. These posts implied that alcohol improves mood or helps alleviate boredom. In addition, 29 posts were interpreted as appealing to minors. All of these posts were published by the same alcohol producer, (*Laitilan Wirvoitusjuomatehdas*) and were related to the same event. The brewery had arranged an outdoor festival with no age limit in order to celebrate the success of local athletes. Among the performers at the festival were artists who specifically appeal to minors.

Table 25 shows the numbers of interpreted violations of the self-regulation codes found in the Finnish material.

Table 25. Number of violations of industry self-regulation found in the Finnish material.

	2014		2016		2017			
	N	%	N	%	N	%	TOTAL amount in all three samples	% of violations in all data
Immoderate drinking	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Dangerous activities	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Alcohol content	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Medical aspects	4	1	3	1	1	0	8	1
Performance	0	0		0	0	0	0	0
Minors	0	0	29	5	0	0	29	2
Social success	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Sexual aspects	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Age	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Minor appeal	0	0	29	5	0	0	29	2
Drugs	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Immoderate drinking	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Alcohol as solution	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mood-altering effects	3	1	2	0	2	0	7	1
Risk group	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Skill-requiring activities	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Alcohol effects	1	0	0	0	1	0	2	0
Social or sexual success	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

## 9.2 Swedish sample

With a few exceptions, the Swedish material did not involve any notable violations of the industry's own self-regulation codes of conduct. No posts connected alcohol to any dangerous activities, claimed that alcohol had beneficial medical aspects, made

connections between alcohol and enhanced performance, showed minors drinking, claimed that alcohol contributed to social or sexual success, connected drinking to sexual aspects, or displayed drugs. A handful of posts did describe the product's alcohol content as being, for example, 'whopping', which could be considered a violation of the self-regulative criteria of not emphasizing the strength of the product in itself as a positive quality. Two posts in the Swedish data suggested that alcohol was required to lighten up a situation. These were interpreted as violating the idea of portraying alcohol as having mood-altering effects. Table 26 summarizes the Swedish results.

Table 26. Number of violations of industry self-regulation found in the Swedish material.

	2014		2016		2017			
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N (TOTAL)	% of violations in all data
Immoderate drinking	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0
Dangerous activities	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Alcohol content	2	1	1	0	1	0	4	0
Medical aspects	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Performance	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Minors	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Social success	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Sexual aspects	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Age	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Minor appeal	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Drugs	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Immoderate drinking	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Alcohol as solution	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mood-altering effects	0	0	1	0	1	0	2	0
Risk group	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Skill-requiring activities	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Alcohol effects	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Social or sexual success	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
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### 9.3 Summary

The results regarding how well the social media posts in this study comply with the self-regulation codes show that, apart from a few exceptions, they do so relatively well. Although we found notably few breaches of the codes, we found a larger number of violations in the Finnish sample than in the Swedish one. The higher proportion of posts appealing to minors in the Finnish sample all stemmed from one single event, a festival with no age limit. As both Finland and Sweden have strict policies regarding alcohol advertising, most elements banned by the industry overlap with national legislation. However, the results may imply that the marketing regulations that aim to limit certain content do not apply very well to social media marketing, as these marketing strategies are not solely based on imageries and appealing storylines.

## 10. Youth-appealing content

Alcohol advertising has shown to be utilizing imagery that targets young consumers and even minors (Austin & Hust 2005; Gordon 2011; Jones & Donovan 2001). The analysis in this section is based on an analytical grid that was developed for identifying the aspects of alcohol advertising that are likely to attract young people (European Commission 2015). This grid was originally created for analysing television commercials, but it has also been used for online advertising, although it does not account for the specific features of social media marketing, such as the ways of enhancing interaction between brand and consumer. The analysis in this section thus involves the content of alcohol marketing posts, seen through the analytical grid, and aims to address the ways in which the advertising generates and represents the youth-relevant social and cultural meanings of alcohol use.

### 10.1 Finnish sample

Of the Finnish posts, 25%, a total of 395 posts, contained elements that can be to some extent be categorized as youth-appealing. The two largest subcategories were 'humour' (124) and 'sport activities' (110), followed by 'celebrities' (47), 'social interaction' (41), 'relaxation' (35) and 'animals' (22). Smaller subcategories included 'gender competence' (8), 'alcohol as a reward' (4), 'sexualized body' (3) and 'athletic bodies' (1). These figures are displayed in Table 26. The codes and meanings are all listed in Appendix I.

Humour is commonly used in alcohol advertising and not only youth-specifically (Seppänen et al. 2017). It is typically very difficult to differentiate age-specific humorous aspects in advertisements, as they are often likely to amuse wider audiences and not only specific age groups. In this study, however, we highlighted all the humorous tones in the posts to provide an overall view of how often social media posts in the data used humour to disseminate their message. In the Finnish sample, 8% of the posts could be considered humorous. Humour often appeared in the form of puns and wordplay. For example, a product called 'Hyvä Esimies' [The Good Boss] was introduced in a post with a description of how 'a good boss brings out the best in you'. In addition to wordplay, seasonal topics such as winter weather were a common source of humour for many brands. Occasionally, the humour was expressed in or related to memes, but this was not very common.

Sport activities were depicted in 7% of all the posts in the Finnish material, in 110 posts. Altogether. Common themes were celebrating victories and displaying sponsorship of teams, athletes or events. In addition, some posts connected sports to charity activities such as famous sportsmen visiting children at hospital. Neither the Finnish nor the Swedish samples depicted people practising sports under the influence of alcohol. Posts referring to sport activities included motorsports, football, basketball, rugby, floorball, skiing, and ringette. Ice hockey was by far the most popular sport. However, it is worth noting that the material was gathered in 2016



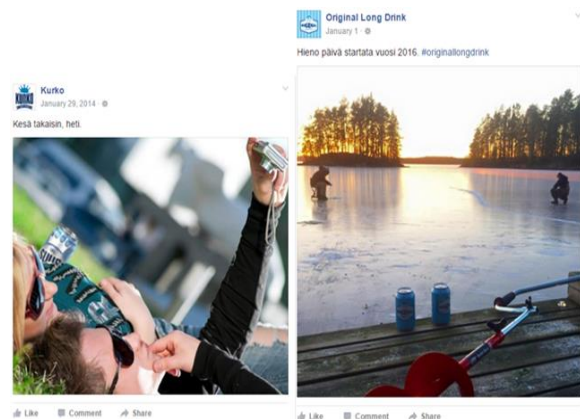
during a period when the World Junior Ice Hockey Championship was taking place, and when Finland won, this was widely celebrated on social media, also in alcohol marketing posts.

A majority of the sport activity posts encouraged people to support the Finnish team or celebrate its victory. These posts also encouraged people to guess the outcome of the game, and to like the post in order to show support for the Finnish team. On average, these posts attracted more likes and comments than Finnish posts did in general. Another common theme in the sport activity posts was sponsorships. Both alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverage brands were widely depicted as sponsors of athletes, teams or sports events. Some of the brands described collaboration with world-famous sports celebrities as conquering the world, while others emphasized supporting Finnish athletes.

The Finnish sample had 47 celebrity posts, which was 3% of all Finnish posts. Half of these referred to one single event. A brewery, *Laitilan Wirvoitusjuomatehdas*, had arranged an outdoor festival to celebrate the success of locally famous ice hockey and ringette players. Some of the festival performers were national celebrities, including rap artists and television personalities. The other celebrity posts included a local comedian endorsing brewery products and a comedy sketch about two well-known actors buying beer. The posts occasionally mentioned some famous athletes and actors, but there was only one example of extensive collaboration with a celebrity: that of *Original Long Drink* sponsoring the Formula1 driver, *Kimi Räikkönen*.

Social interactions were depicted in 41 posts, which accounts for less than 3% of the posts in the Finnish sample. None of the posts described alcohol as an essential prerequisite for social success. Instead, the brands featured subtle associations with social success. One example of this was when the brands suggested drinking occasions. *Baileys*, for example, mentioned in several posts that ‘*today is a good day to have a drink with friends*’. Another way in which the social interaction was related to the brand was in terms of recommendations. Several brands emphasized that their products were meant to be enjoyed in good company. The brands also associated their products with social interaction in the pictures they posted. Figure 11 shows two examples of a brand depicting its product as a connection between people.

Figure 11. Content that involved social interactions in Finnish posts, January 2014 and January 2016.



Social interaction was a prominent element in the videos posted by the brands. *Pyynikin Käsityöläispanimo* shared a video on the brewing process multiple times. At the end of the video, a group of friends enters a restaurant and they eat, drink beer, play board games and laugh. Mellow music plays in the background, the place is lit by candles, and everyone is drinking beer and having a good time. Another video, which was shared several times by *Koff* and *Sinebrychoff*, depicted a young man hiking in the woods. It is cold and wet and as he is frying a sausage over the campfire, the sausage falls into the fire. The hiker is visibly upset. Suddenly, a ‘restaurant tram’ appears in the middle of a swamp. A young man steps out and calls the hiker by name: ‘*Mikko, is it cold and wet out there? We have something cold and wet in here, too!*’ he says and hands two cans of beer to the hiker, who is deeply touched. In the final frame, the hiker is drinking beer in the restaurant tram, surrounded by friends, laughing and enjoying himself. ‘*Now this is fresh*’, he says.

Several brands, in 35 posts (2% of the Finnish posts), associated their products with relaxation, portraying alcohol in a relaxing setting, indicating leisure time. Most of these posts were invitations to celebrate a weekend or public holiday with alcoholic beverages. Alcohol was also associated with dreaming of holiday trips and summer. Some of the brands associated relaxing with drinking on Sunday. Other relaxing settings depicted in the posts included drinking in the sauna and in nature.

Animal characters were shown in only 22 posts (2% of the Finnish posts). The majority of these depicted animated or cartoon animals. Most of the animal posts were published by the wine brand *Gato Negro*. The cat theme was portrayed on many levels in the *Gato Negro* posts: for example, the posts portrayed the adventures of a cartoon cat, referring to the saying that cats have nine lives, and sometimes consumer were called cats.

Gendered competences were portrayed in only eight posts in the Finnish sample. These posts associated the product with beer production and drinking as an emancipatory action, breaking down traditional gender roles. These posts included references to *Brewcats*, a microbrewery run by women. We found the theme of a

sexualized body in three posts. These posts portrayed beers called *Twilight Tiffany* and *Spicy Sveta* with pin-up girls on their labels. A few posts portrayed alcohol as a reward after physical activity, like skiing or chopping wood. Table 27 shows how we coded the youth-appeal of the content in the Finnish material.

Table 27. Youth-appealing content in Finnish material.

	2014		2016		2017			
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N (TOTAL)	% in all data
Primary group or reference group	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Young people's partying	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Humour	42	11	47	8	35	7	124	8
Celebrities	5	1	35	6	7	1	47	3
Animals	7	2	8	1	7	1	22	2
Athletic bodies	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0
Sport activities	31	8	62	10	17	3	110	7
Alcohol as reward	2	1	1	0	1	0	4	0
Adventurous or risky setting	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Tokens of wealth	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Social interaction	7	2	31	5	3	1	41	3
Sexual interaction	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Sexualized body	0	0	2	0	1	0	3	0
Relaxation	7	2	16	3	12	2	35	2
Competence	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Gender competence	0	0	8	1	0	0	8	0

## 10.2 Swedish sample

A total of 186 of the 1204 Swedish posts, or 15%, carried elements that were coded youth-appealing in accordance with the criteria of this study. The largest of these subcategories was 'humour' (76 posts), followed by 'sport activities' (24), 'social interaction' (23) and 'animals' (23). The numbers and proportions of posts containing

youth-appealing elements are displayed in Table 28. The coding logic and definitions are listed in Appendix I.

As with the Finnish sample, it was not possible to determine the age-specific aspects of humour. Seventy-six posts, 7% of the Swedish sample, were coded as containing humorous elements, typically wordplay and puns in which the brand played with the Swedish language in relation to the beverage product, as in the Finnish material. One example of wordplay was a post on Facebook by beer producer *Falcon* in January 2016, which said that one had to survive on canned food for the last days of the month, while waiting for one's salary. The canned food is portrayed as beer cans. Twenty-four posts were categorized as 'sport activities'. These were not portrayals of people practising sports while drinking alcohol, but to a large extent, the brands proudly presenting sponsorships of sports games or events. Two examples are *Nya Carnegiebryggeriet*, which hosted after-ski sessions in connection to the World Cup Stockholm in January 2017; and *Åbro*, which posted an article about becoming arena partners on Ullevi Multistadion in Gothenburg, in January 2014.

A total of 23 posts in the Swedish sample, 2% of all the Swedish posts, portrayed animals. Most of these were connected to the brand logos, such as the *Carlsberg* elephants, but a few posts in the sample also depicted cute koala bears and dogs, for example. All in all, we did not find many posts displaying social interaction (23 posts, 2% of all posts) or young people's partying (four posts). The most common was groups of friends in bar settings, or hands holding glasses or bottles, toasting. A lack of glamour was also notable in the 'celebrity' category, as only 15 posts mentioned famous people. These posts commented and reflected on contemporary events and news, for example the death of *David Bowie*. They were seldom celebrity brand collaborations. Swedish social media sites involved many influencer figures, who collaborated with alcohol brands but did not appear explicitly on brand sites; instead they integrated their brand collaboration into their own social media profiles. Here, we saw a need to analyse these Swedish influencers in a parallel project, and initiated such a project at the beginning of 2018.

Alcohol was presented as a reward in three posts in total. One of these suggested '*Treat yourself to a cider since its "Little Saturday"*', referring to the Nordic concept of viewing Wednesday as a day when it is socially acceptable to consume alcohol. The two other 'reward' posts claimed that one needs a cider after a long workweek, and that one should treat oneself to a beer after reaching the goal of 1000 followers on Twitter.

Table 28. Youth-appealing content in Swedish material.

	2014		2016		2017			
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N (TOTAL)	% in all data
Primary group or reference group	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Young people's partying	4	2	0	0	0	0	4	1
Humour	23	10	35	7	18	4	76	7
Celebrities	2	1	9	2	4	1	15	1
Animals	6	3	8	2	9	2	23	2
Athletic bodies	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Sport activities	15	6	4	1	5	1	24	3
Alcohol as reward	1	0	0	0	2	0	3	0
Adventurous or risky setting	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Tokens of wealth	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Social interaction	5	2	7	2	11	2	23	2
Sexual interaction	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Sexualized body	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Relaxation	4	2	14	3	10	2	28	2
Competence	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Gender competence	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

### 10.3 Summary

A small share of the posts in both countries made use of elements which, according to previous literature on youth drinking cultures and youth-targeted alcohol advertising, could be considered as appealing to young people. Even though we found aspects that are typically considered to interest young people in the alcohol advertising literature, such as humour, animal characters and celebrities, there were very few indications that the posts that we identified as involving these elements had been published with the intention of specifically targeting young or even underaged audiences.

## 11. How do alcohol brands communicate with consumers on social media?

Social media provides marketers with special features for reaching customers. It is essentially interactive, and the aim of marketers is to engage social media users. By means of engagement, the brands attempt to increase their presence in social media interaction and thus increase overall visibility of their products and key messages. In this section, we analyse the ways in which the Finnish and Swedish alcohol brands try to enhance such features and their overall communication level with social media users, as well as their networking with other relevant services and products. The Finnish and Swedish brands' social media posts in this study involved features that aimed to become shared widely. Sharable videos are one example of such intentions. The posts also included suggestions to comment, to use the product in a certain way, and to follow links to other sites and media sources. The brands presented collaborative work with bloggers, events and other instances and partners. Table 29 shows the categories of communicative techniques in the alcohol marketing posts.

Table 29. Communicative content in alcohol marketing posts.

Shareable content	Suggestions	Collaborations
Videos	Comment suggestion	Bloggers
	Serving suggestion for product	Events
	Links to other sites and media	Competitions
		Other collaborations

### 11.1 Finnish sample

The brands used a variety of means to elicit interaction with consumers and other brands (see Table 30). The Finnish brands' posts often included links and references to collaboration. Over three quarters (77%, N=1193) of the Finnish posts included links to webpages or other social media sites, as well as tags or hashtags that further linked the post to a wider communicative context on social media. Collaboration with other companies was relatively common: one fifth of all the Finnish posts made references to corporate collaborations. The collaboration partners were other alcohol producers, the alcohol monopoly Alko, retailers, restaurants, and bakeries.

A less frequent form of collaboration was co-operating with events; in most cases sponsoring music or sport events. The brands also co-operated with stand-up clubs, rock bands and outdoor festivals, and promoted events at brewery restaurants and brewery/distillery tours. Some of the brands provided serving suggestions and recipes, often including their own products. To elicit interaction with consumers, a few brands included comment suggestions in their posts, which contained questions about brand products, brand-sponsored events and topical issues. Only a few posts included video content. These video posts covered various topics, from product reviews to comments on alcohol policy, and from local landscapes to sponsored events. On average, the

videos were viewed approximately seven thousand times. A small number of the posts included content produced in collaboration with bloggers, such as product reviews.

Table 30. Content-consumer interaction in Finnish material.

	2014		2016		2017			
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N (TOTAL)	% in all data
Video content	12	3	29	5	26	5	67	4
Comment suggestion	22	6	26	4	16	3	64	4
Blogger content	10	3	17	3	25	5	52	3
Event	12	3	94	15	74	14	180	11
Serving suggestion	29	8	11	2	29	5	69	5
Collaboration	111	30	125	20	103	19	339	23
Competition reference	6	2	3	1	2	0	11	1
Link	250	67	493	79	450	84	1193	77

## 11.2 Swedish sample

The content-consumer interactions in the Swedish sample are displayed in Table 31. To a large extent, the Swedish brands interacted with both consumers and other companies in their posts. Links and collaboration were also common in the Swedish sample. Almost two thirds of all the posts (61%, N=786) contained a link or a hashtag, placing the post in a broader context. As many as 292 (24%) posts were collaborations, either with other breweries or other actors in the alcohol market. A mere 190 (15%) posts were connected to events such as concerts and other events and social gatherings. Figure 12 represents an example of a serving suggestion for a salad with salmon and horseradish, created with a collaborating partner, completed by a link for further information.

Table 31. Content-consumer interaction in Swedish material.

	2014		2016		2017			
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N (TOTAL)	% in all data
Video	6	3	36	8	45	9	87	6
Comment suggestion	33	14	73	15	49	10	155	13
Blogger content	2	1	0	0	1	0	3	0

Event	25	11	87	18	78	16	190	15
Serving suggestion	7	3	6	1	12	2	25	2
Collaboration	47	20	109	23	136	28	292	24
Competition reference	5	2	35	7	16	3	56	4
Link	90	39	324	68	372	76	786	61

Figure 12. Example of serving suggestion posted by Drostdy Hof on Facebook, January 2014.



## 11.3 Summary

Both the Finnish and Swedish brands used their social media channels for content-consumer interactions to a very high degree. We found links and hashtags in 61% of the Swedish posts, and 77% of the Finnish ones, which helps place the posts in a much broader context in the online landscape. Collaboration, for example with other producers and events, were also very common in both samples, in many cases the posts were linked to distribution channels ('our beer can be found in this bar, or in this shop', for example), creating a win-win situation for both partners with (supposedly) more clicks and customers. Events such as sport events or concerts made up 10% of the Finnish posts, and 14% of the Swedish posts.



## 12. Other brand activities and contents

The social media posts of the alcoholic beverage brands involved more than just the traditional advertising imagery shown in the previous chapter. In this chapter, we examine the alcohol brands' other reasons for using their social media channels besides strictly advertising their product. We formed the codes for the content analysis in this section inductively, during the analysis of the material. The areas that this section covers are how the brands use social media to build their company image (PR), how they refer to national identities, how they make their posts topical, how they use their channels for advertising non-alcoholic products and for political communication, and how they share reviews, facts and statistics. We also examine the brands' communication of health issues and gender. In this chapter, we present the Finnish and Swedish samples together.

### 12.1 PR

'PR' serves as a collective term for posts that enhance a brand's credibility. Under the PR category, we identified four ways of building company image: the 'making of', 'local identity', 'adapting to new trends', and 'going global'. Posting prevalence and contents were similar in the Finnish and Swedish samples: 30% (N=469) of the Finnish posts and 35% (N=412) of the Swedish posts included elements coded PR. The lion's share of the PR posts was 'making of' posts, which described the brewing process, how ingredients are selected, or how much labour is involved in finishing the product, for example. These posts described entrepreneurship and the everyday life of beer brewing. Some of the Finnish brands promoted guided tours of production facilities. All the 'making of' posts were published by microbreweries.

Much emphasis was also placed on 'local identity', especially by the microbreweries represented in the material. Local community ties were represented in multiple ways. The brands introduced limited edition products available in only certain regions and posted pictures of local landscapes, often depicting nature and agriculture. The brands also featured local notable people on their products and posts. Some of them used hashtags related to their own regions and towns.

The 'Adapting to new trends' subcategory was formed from posts that shared information on current trends in the brewing industry. The brands described how they reacted to current changes in consumption, such as the growing demand of craft beer and low-alcoholic beverages. They frequently shared information on their success in global markets and on the reception of their new products. Some of the brands reported taking part in international events such as *The World Beer Idol*. These posts were categorized as 'Going global'. Posts related to launching new products were also included in this category. Both microbreweries and larger breweries shared information on export market developments and other international affairs.

Other posts related to the brand image included topics such as contributing to economic growth and providing jobs in the region. Environmental awareness and the

effects of the brewing industry were also discussed. The large breweries highlighted corporate philanthropic activities such as donating money to a children's hospital and sponsoring junior sports clubs.

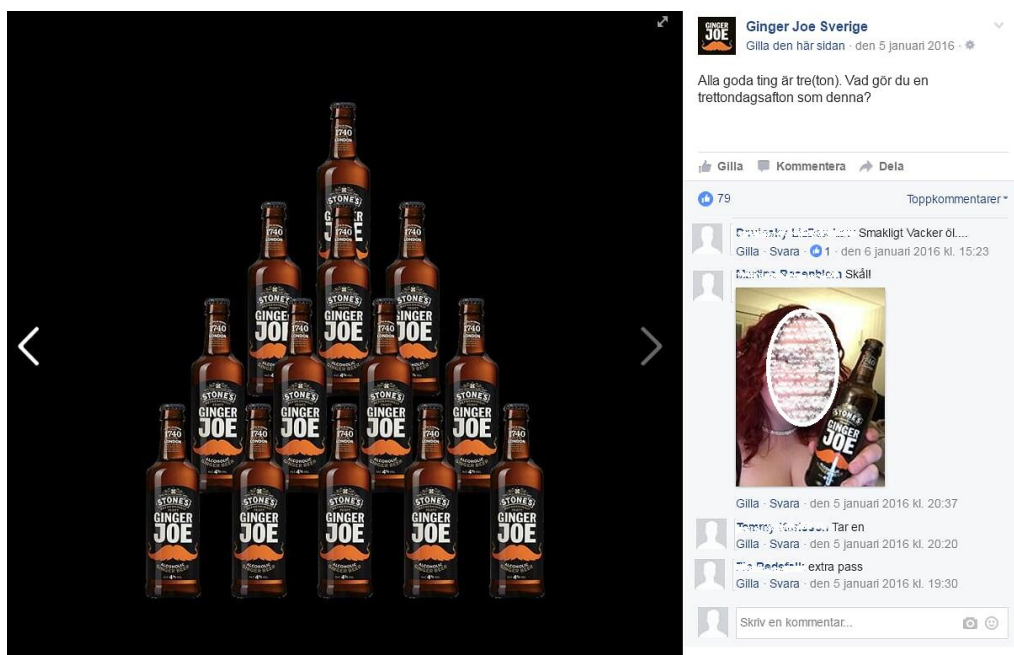
## 12.2 Seasonal content

Posts related to seasonal events, festivities and the winter season were coded 'Seasonal content'. As our data collection targeted posts published in January, most of the brands' posts were wished their followers a happy new year. Epiphany Day was another public holiday that the brands highlighted in both countries.

Nine per cent (N=144) of the posts in the Finnish sample included seasonal content. In addition to public holidays, the brands' pages widely discussed 'Dry January', abstaining from drinking for one month, which many Finns do, and dieting. While some of the brands shared salad recipes and information on non-alcoholic products, others encouraged consumers to indulge themselves. Another common topic was the cold winter weather and how alcohol makes you feel warmer. Some of the brands also introduced seasonal products.

According to the Consumer Agency in Sweden, alcohol advertisements cannot portray the consumption of alcoholic beverages as being especially important during particular seasons or holidays. Forty-one posts in the Swedish sample (3.4%) were coded 'seasonal', meaning that they were directly connected to festive events such as New Year's Eve or Christmas. For example, a Facebook post by Ginger Joe saying 'Alla Goda ting är tre(tton) shows 13 bottles on Epiphany Day and asks what their followers will do that evening (Figure 13). Similarly, a wine brand, Tr3 Apor, published a post on Epiphany Day which showed the silhouettes of the three monkeys on the brand logotype riding towards a star, paraphrasing the biblical story of the three wise men.

Figure 13. Facebook post by Ginger Joe, January 2016.



## 12.3 Non-alcoholic drinks

We coded posts that featured non-alcoholic beers or ciders, soft drinks, energy drinks or other non-alcoholic beverages as ‘non-alco’. Some breweries and companies have sodas in their product range, and use their social media platforms to advertise all their products. In the Finnish the sample, 8% (N=120) of the posts depicted non-alcoholic beverages. These posts contained serving suggestions and recommendations for Dry January. It is also worth noting that in the Finnish sample, posts featuring non-alcoholic beverages or no beverages at all exclusively promoted charity campaigns.

In the Swedish sample, 7% (N=83) portrayed non-alcoholic beverages. Some of the Swedish brands dedicated social media platforms to non-alcoholic drinks. One example of this was *Norrlands Guld*, which only displayed pictures and posts about their non-alcoholic beer on their official Facebook page. Another example was Ginger Joe, which had a ‘*Ginger Joe Noll*’ Instagram profile for posts depicting only non-alcoholic products and a ‘*Ginger Joe Sverige*’ Facebook profile for posts about the alcoholic drink. These types of non-alcoholic product posts may be more difficult to interpret from a legislative point of view, as the Swedish Alcohol Act states that adverts for light beverages (defined as alcohol free, or with a maximum alcohol volume of 2.25%) must not be designed in a way that may cause it to be confused with an advert for an alcoholic beverage. Even though the strength of the beverage should always be stated in the advertisement, the number itself is not considered enough to avoid confusion as to whether the advertisement is for a light drink, or an alcoholic

drink. An advertisement for a light drink needs to be different in terms of content and design and must not be associated with a stronger product in the eyes of the consumer. This is not the case on social media, where the posts for beverages containing alcohol and those portraying alcohol-free beverages are very similar.

### 12.3 National identity

Ten per cent (N=145) of the Finnish posts included content with references to nationalistic symbols and imagery, such as the Finnish flag, presidents, and pictures of Finnish nature and sauna. We also included representing Finland in international competitions, fairs and other events in this category. National identity was also expressed in hashtags: the brands used 16 different hashtags related to Finland, such as #ThisisFinland, #visitfinland, #ourfinland and #nationaldrink. In 2016 and 2017, the centenary of independent Finland was strongly present in the posts, and many brands introduced special products related to the centenary celebrations.

The theme of national identity was very sparse in the Swedish sample. Only six posts alluded to national characteristics. Ironically, only three of these posts were connected to Sweden – one post pointed out that the finest of English raw materials had been used in a Pale Ale and was accompanied by the Union Jack, and two posts touched upon Finnish national identity with saunas and Finnish flags. The last three talked about Swedish winters, Swedish birdlife (a humorous post by Falcon) and success in the Sochi Olympic Games.

### 12.4 Alcohol policy

We coded posts that expressed alcohol producers' political interests as 'Alcohol policy'. These posts comments on current trends in alcohol policy, arguments for lesser regulation, and views on topical issues such as border trading. Seven per cent of Finnish posts (N=102) were coded under this category. Several Finnish brands shared links to alcohol policy-related Tweets or articles by the *Brewers Association*. These articles often included arguments for lesser regulation or alcohol tax reductions. Almost all the 'Alcohol policy' contents were posted by Finnish brands; only one Swedish post commented on alcohol policies, a tweet by *Carlsberg*, which was a link to *Göteborgsposten*, commenting upon border trading and how it affects Swedish alcohol policy in general.

### 12.5 Fairs and conferences

We placed posts portraying the brands participating in fairs, conferences and other events under the 'Fairs and conferences' category. The brands participated in beer, whiskey and microbrewery fairs, where they can reach customers. Several brands also took part in events that were not specifically targeted at alcohol producers, for example, wedding fairs and travel fairs. Some of the Swedish brands published posts

from internal events and in-service staff training. Four per cent of the posts in both samples were coded under this category.

## 12.6 Other categories

Other inductively developed categories were ‘Reviews’, ‘Facts and statistics’, ‘Health’, and ‘Women’ (see Table 32). The posts under the reviews category included links to reviews on and praise of the brands’ own products, published both in newspapers and online by beer-enthusiasts, for example. Health-related posts included healthy recipes and serving suggestions. Posts containing facts and statistics included various themes: sales statistics, alcohol consumption statistics, shopping behaviour, and facts about raw materials in the products and calorie comparisons. The posts classed under the ‘Women’ category were specifically targeted at women and related to products or events for women, for example introducing a special beer for International Women’s Day and a brewing course for girls. Only nine posts in the whole material could be interpreted as targeting solely women.

Table 32. Open coding in Finnish and Swedish material.

	FIN		SWE	
	N	% of all posts	N	% of all posts
PR	469	31	412	34
Non-alco	120	8	83	7
Seasonal content	144	9	41	3
National identity	148	10	6	1
Fairs and conferences	67	4	50	4
Alcohol policy	102	7	1	0
Review	55	4	19	2
Facts and statistics	20	1	27	2
Health	10	1	9	1
Women	6	0	3	0

## 12.7 Summary

Finnish and Swedish alcohol brands use their social media accounts for multiple purposes and make use of a variety of themes when promoting their brands and products. It is notable that company image-building formed a significant part of the content posted by the brands. This was especially apparent in the case of Finnish microbreweries. For Finnish brands, social media channels also served as a way of commenting on alcohol policy developments.

## 13. Age check trials

It is technically easy for brands to set an age limit on their Facebook pages. Age-gating can also be enabled on Instagram brand pages, which means that the brands themselves can choose who can access their posts. Since 2013, age-screening has also been available on Twitter. The Swedish policy recommendation is that marketing should only take place on sites whose target audience or at least 70% of its actual visitors are aged 25 or over, and that sites selling or advertising alcoholic beverages must control for their visitors' age. In this section, we present the results of age-check trials in order to see how well the brands included in the study control for the age of their followers. These trials were conducted in spring 2017.

### 13.1 Finnish sample

Overall, 33% of the Finnish sites were limited to consumers whose self-reported age was over 18. Age monitoring was most common on Facebook, where 62% of the sites were not accessible to minors (see Table 33). On Instagram, only 13% of the sites were limited to adults. As for the traditional www-based homepages, 11 brands (29%) had no webpage of their own. Of the 27 brand webpages, 16 had an age limit of 18 years and 11 webpages were accessible to all users. One year later, in the spring of 2018, some minor changes were made to the use of age monitoring, as two more brands had applied an age limit on Facebook and one on Instagram.

Table 33. Age-checks, Finnish sample (spring 2017).

	<b>Facebook accounts</b> (n=37)	<b>Instagram accounts</b> (n=23)
Brands with age checks activated	23 62%	3 13%

### 13.2 Swedish sample

57 % of all Swedish Facebook posts were equipped with age limits, meaning that the fake minor Facebook profile created for the purpose of this study did not access the post. 31 out of the 49 brands (63%) with registered Facebook accounts had activated age monitoring on their pages. Not a single post on Instagram was restricted, as none of the Swedish brands had activated the age limit function for this platform (see Table 34). 34 out of the 52 brands had age limit controls on their webpages, which equals 65%. The required minimum age varied from 18 to 25. When re-evaluating the situation one year later in the spring of 2018, two brands had applied an age limit to their Instagram accounts, which equals 5% of the brands. Figure 14 displays the restricted content notification.

Table 34. Age-checks, Swedish sample (spring 2017).

	Facebook accounts (n=49)	Instagram accounts (n=36)
Brands with age checks activated	31 (63%)	0 (0%)

Figure 14. Age check activated on Instagram.





## 14. Conclusions

This report presents the first analysis of Finnish and Swedish alcohol brands' activities on social media platforms. The aim was to obtain an overview of the activity's intensity and nature, and to test conformity with both different codes of conduct and the 2015 amendment to the Finnish Alcohol Act, which restricts certain marketing techniques on social media. In this concluding chapter we summarize the main results of this study and discuss the implications of the results for the regulation of social media alcohol marketing.

### 14.1 Social media alcohol marketing in Finland and Sweden

Social media currently covers a variety of networking sites with slightly different uses when it comes to marketing. As Facebook is the major operator in the field, it was not surprising that it was the most popular platform for the alcohol brands in both Finland and Sweden. However, the share of Instagram, also owned by Facebook, increased over the studied months. There was no significant activity on YouTube, and Twitter was more actively used in Finland. While many researchers have raised concern over alcohol brands' presence in everyday social media communications, our results indicate that only a few alcohol brands in Finland and Sweden have really succeeded in their marketing communications and actually invested in efficient commercial activities on social media in the studied time period.

Over the sampled months, most brands used their social media accounts as platforms for relatively traditional advertising campaigns based on commercial product images and slogans, rather than on the interactive or user-generated elements typical of social media marketing. On average, the brands posted something on their accounts once a week. The most active brand produced several posts per day, while others only posted occasionally. Over the studied time period, the posting activity doubled in both countries from January 2014 to January 2016, but then settled in 2017. The number of posts does not reflect how much the brands actually invest in social media marketing: on the contrary, a decrease in the number of posts is likely to indicate higher financial investments and more strategic use of the platforms (Carah et al. 2018). For example, the most popular Finnish brand in terms of user engagement, Karhu, posted on average 4 times per month.

During the studied months, the Finnish and Swedish brands were not very successful in generating reactions and engagement. Contrary to the findings of several studies on user engagement with alcohol brands' posts (Atkinson et al. 2017; Lyons et al. 2014; Niland et al. 2017) our sample included only few examples of highly engaging posts. Social media users rarely shared alcohol marketing posts in both countries. In addition, considering the huge potential for reaching consumers on social media, the number of likes and comments was low. There were, however, a few notable exceptions. The most successful brands had adapted their communications to social media environments, thus enabling highly engaging content.

To increase user engagement, marketers have a variety of methods at their disposal. Previous content analytical studies on social media alcohol advertising have reported a range of strategies brands use to elicit engagement. These include online events, encouragement to drink (Nicholls 2012), posing questions to consumers, posting at common drinking times (Carah 2014) and asking users to provide recipe suggestions and user feedback (Atkinson et al. 2017). Social media also make it easy to collaborate with events, business operators and products, as well as with bloggers and other influencers. These kinds of marketing elements were frequently used in both countries' samples. Sport sponsorship has been identified as a powerful mechanism in engaging consumers (Kelly et al. 2015; Westberg et al. 2018). Tie-ins to athletes, teams and sporting events were present in both samples. Competitions, interactive game and quizzes have been identified as engaging and common content by previous research (Atkinson et al. 2017; Carah 2014; Nicholls 2012) but the presence of such content was almost non-existent in our study. Social media posts can disseminate links to other content as well as hashtags that associate the content with a wider communicative sphere. The majority of the posts analysed in this study contained links and hashtags, implying that the level of connectedness between marketing messages and other social media content was high.

The best success in terms of shares was achieved with material that plugged into the 'right now' – this is the season, this has just happened – which everybody are aware of in the collective conscious. This is in line with what social media postings seek in general. Previous research confirms that in order to reach high levels of consumer engagement, advertisers need to realize social media specific advertising strategies and several studies indicate that entertaining and timely content is likely to stimulate consumer engagement (Godey et al. 2016; Erdoğan & Cicek 2012; Tsai & Men 2012). Entertaining and current content seemed to be central component of the most successful Finnish and Swedish alcohol producers' sampled posts as well. These findings are in accordance with findings reported in other similar studies (Atkinson et al. 2014; Lim et al. 2016).

While the Finnish and Swedish brands were active in linking their branded content to other social media communications, they were less active in limiting the access of minors to their brand sites. The brands rarely limited the visibility of their Instagram profiles. Only Facebook sites were more secured: over 60% of the sites were not accessible by underaged users. This can be seen as a serious defect in the brands' marketing activities, as protecting minors is at the core of all regulatory measures in alcohol advertising, not only national legislation. This is consistent with what has been found in previous studies that have voiced concern over the lack of efficient age-gating on social media (Barry et al. 2014; Gupta et al. 2018).

Previous studies on alcohol advertisements on social media have reported non-compliance with alcohol industry's self-regulatory codes (Noel & Babor 2017; Noel et al. 2018). In this study, we found very few incidences of violations. Restricting certain content, such as portraying alcohol consumption as a way of becoming socially and sexually successful, has often claimed to yield insufficient results, as it is difficult to determine whether alcohol adverts merely portray drinking in social settings or whether they suggest that drinking is the *reason for* such social encounters (de Bruijin

et al. 2012; Winpenny et al. 2012). Applying these content-based restrictions to social media advertising is even more difficult, as the whole logic of consumer engagement differs from traditional forms of televised or print advertising. While the content-based restrictions concern the claims presented in adverts, social media marketing seeks attention by timely, apt and most typically humorous remarks and communications that resonate with what is happening on social media at that particular moment.

## 14.2 Changes after the amendment and implications for social media marketing

The 2015 amendment of the Finnish Alcohol Act restricted the use of user-generated content in social media marketing. An important indication of how successful the new regulation has been is how it has affected the marketers' abilities to create the kind of engaging content that users are likely to share and discuss in their own network.

The results of this study indicate that the 2015 amendment did not affect the level of user engagement. In fact, the Finnish brands were slightly more successful in engaging consumers in 2017 than 2014. Moreover, we observed no immediate impact by the new regulation. The proportion of marketing posts with user-generated content declined in the 2017 sample but was still higher than in the 2014 sample. The use of games, lotteries and competitions was already rare to begin with.

The new law aimed to prevent the exposure of young people to alcohol marketing, but according to the analysis of this study, only 28% of the Finnish social media accounts had enabled age-control on their platforms. In addition, the new law aimed to limit the exploitation of consumers as the producers and distributors of marketing messages. Although the study provides evidence of a declining trend in the user-generated content in the three samples, it also shows that the new law has not stopped alcohol brands in Finland creating engaging marketing content with significant reach and visibility.

Based on the study results, the Finnish law seems to have three primary functions. First, in view of both the Swedish brands' social media activity and material posted in pre-amendment times, the law seems to make alcohol marketers more aware of the need to monitor what happens on their social media sites and to take responsibility for how they communicate and allow people to integrate with these platforms. This function can be described as an awareness and a more thorough control over messages.

Second, the law seems to prevent and work against the trend of the increasing use of user-generated content, which was more noticeable in the Swedish sample. Although our results show only modest changes in the ways in which Finnish brands used social media for alcohol marketing two years after the law amendment, the role of the amendment in preventing pervasive, user-generated marketing strategies may be significant in the future. On the other hand, the perceived effects have taken place without monitoring, as Valvira's resources to enforce the restrictions are limited.

Third, in view of the two previous points and as a general assessment of the potential of the law: on the level of consumer and citizen protection principles the law serves citizens by protecting them from exploitation by free marketers of alcoholic beverage products on social media. The protection of citizens from becoming free marketers of unhealthy products has become a critical task for current jurisdictions.

Despite some apparent strengths, the 2015 amendment also has significant limitations that are likely to affect its potential impact. Most importantly, the fundamental inherent difficulty is its aims to regulate the sharing of alcohol marketing messages by users themselves in some online environments which function on the basis of content sharing. The wording of the law indicates that marketers should not produce any content for consumers to share, while in principle all public content on social media is intended to be shared. Valvira's interpretation is that marketers should disable sharing options on their social media posts if the service provider has enabled such a function. Currently, all public posts are sharable on Facebook, for instance.

Valvira's guidelines also involve some difficulties, as they state that alcohol producers' accounts and posts should not contain consumers' praise of the product or recommendations. In this study, interpreting whether or not consumer reactions can be considered recommendations turned out to be a puzzling task. The interpretation of what is to be defined as 'consumer recommendations' was also the subject upon which the Delphi review experts disagreed the most. A simple solution would be to just inhibit the commenting of alcohol advertising posts. This would require the account managers to disable users from commenting, or to remove all consumer comments. Moreover, all user comments can be considered user-generated content as they become part of commercial communication and increase post reach, despite the original intentions of their authors.

Several scholars have suggested a total ban on alcohol marketing on social network sites (Sheehan 2013, Moraes et al. 2014). However, there have been doubts as to whether this kind of total ban would succeed, since the monitoring of current restrictions is already complicated enough (Nicholls 2012). Social media cannot be compared to traditional advertising platforms, as marketing contents mix with users' own contents, brands and consumer products, and are part of everyday communication among users. Even if the content generated by alcohol marketers were to be banned, there are plenty of other possibilities to promote alcohol brands effectively by other means, such as influencer marketing and other advanced product placement techniques.

Difficulties arise when national legislation tries to regulate environments in which service providers and users operate globally. The global operational environment allows consumers to follow contents to which national law does not apply. However, the Finnish social media restrictions has been formulated to apply also in such situations where Finnish alcohol producers distribute advertising through another country, if it can be demonstrated that advertising is still targeted at domestic audiences. For example, if the Finnish language is used and the advertised product is available in Finland this is considered content that is within the scope of the country's jurisdiction.

To a great extent, social media algorithms determine what kind of content and posts are shown in users' newsfeeds. Service operators develop the platforms to enable better customized user experiences. Services are also developed in order to optimize targeting in commercial communication. This means that marketing messages can be more easily targeted at users who are potentially interested in the advertised product or service. This optimization, which is likely to result in a higher level of user engagement, is as good as impossible to regulate without international efforts as the techniques and data are owned by companies that operate globally.

### 14.3 Limitations of the study

This study has several limitations. First of all, it concerned marketing posts from three sampled months, and in the analyses, we expected them to be somewhat representative in terms of the content generated by the brands involved over the studied years. However, we cannot be absolutely certain whether the prevalence of the posts or the elements used in them remained the same during studied years. Both in Finland and Sweden, people consume less alcohol in January than during other months, and this may somehow be reflected in the alcohol brands' social media activities. Moreover, the brands involved in the study do not represent all the alcoholic beverage brands available in Finland and Sweden. We only included brands that had active social media accounts from 2014 to 2017. New brands might have become active during that time period, and new brands and products might also have appeared. However, we did consider the most popular brands in the two countries, and the study thus covers all major producers and brands in the market.

Some difficulties emerged when operationalizing the 2015 amendment to the Finnish Alcohol Act into analytical codes. The wording of the law leaves ground for interpretation: although it can be interpreted as a total ban of all alcohol-related commercial communication on social media, the government's proposal – which is an important document in terms of applying the law – explicitly states that this is not its purpose. We used the Valvira guidelines as a basis for interpreting the law. Still, in the actual coding it was not always clear what kind of content could be considered consumers' praise of products or recommendations, for instance. To improve the reliability of our coding, the research team thoroughly discussed the ratings and an expert panel evaluated our interpretations.

Despite most commercial content on social media being publicly accessible, and being able to use the numbers of user-reactions to assess engagement, several features of social media marketing cannot be considered in this kind of study. It was not possible to account for the marketing budgets of the brands or to determine whether or not the posts had been boosted. It is therefore impossible to examine the effect of boosting on the level of engagement, for instance. We were also unable to observe the development in the number of site followers, as all samples were collected retrospectively, at one time.

## 14.4 The future of social media alcohol marketing and regulation

The Swedish inquiry on alcohol marketing on Social media, SOU 2017:113, proposed that commercial advertising on social media must not be used to market alcohol products. The inquiry further suggested that the proposal should come into effect in September 2019. As the proceedings are in Sweden, the Inquiry has been on a referral round, but the responses to the Inquiry have not been summarized nor have they been made public. Still, most responses to the inquiry were in favour of the suggestion. Exactly when the law would come into effect is uncertain (Personal communication with Mikael Landman, at the Ministry for health and social affairs, on 12 December, 2018).

In rapidly changing digital environments, further research is needed on many complex areas of social media marketing. Further research is required to disentangle complexities in paid and customized advertising on social media, as social media platforms enable brands to mass customise marketing messages and use marketing strategies as multi-faceted as their customer-base (Carah et al. 2014; Gupta et al. 2018). Also, consumers are constantly discovering new applications and networks that may affect their consumption (Rodriguez-Vidal et al. 2019). Future inquiries are needed to explore alcohol content on currently popular platforms, such as widely adapted Snapchat or TikTok. While this study demonstrates advertising strategies on official social media brand pages, future research may seek to explore how other forms of marketing on social media, such as collaboration with influencers and micro-influencers are utilized by alcohol producers. Influencers on social media are considered to have great power to improve or undermine reputation of products (Rodriguez-Vidal et al. 2019). Furthermore, engaging video content such as stories and live streaming are deemed highly relevant and considered to be a central rising form of brand-to-consumer communications (Gilbert 2019).

Further studies should also investigate the long-term impact of legislation and inquire more deeply into advertising on social media with larger data sets. Proper enforcement requires persistent monitoring and as digital advertising spans over national borders, researchers have recommended regional collaboration for enforcing policies on social media advertising (Lindeman & Hellman 2019).

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## APPENDIX I: Coding scheme

### **Basic information**

<b>File name</b>	SWE/FIN, number, year
<b>Ad number</b>	
<b>Country</b>	1=Finland, 2=Sweden
<b>Year</b>	Year of publication
<b>Date</b>	Date of publication
<b>Acquiring date</b>	Date when post was acquired
<b>Producer</b>	Name of producer
<b>Beverage in the post</b>	0=No beverage 1=Beer, 2=Cider, 3=Wine, 4=Other beverage 5= several beverages
<b>Brand origin</b>	1=Domestic brand, 2=International brand
<b>Platform</b>	1=FB, 2=IG, 3=Twitter, 4=YT
<b>Shares</b>	Number of shares
<b>Likes</b>	Number of likes
<b>Views</b>	Number of video views
<b>Comments</b>	Number of comments
<b>Age affirmation</b>	1=Yes, 2=No

### **Finnish Alcohol Act restrictions on social media advertising**

(Adapted from the Finnish Alcohol Act on social media restrictions and the VALVIRA guidelines)

<b>Game</b>	Post contains a link to a game.
<b>Competition</b>	Post suggests recipient takes part in a competition.
<b>Lottery</b>	Post suggests recipient takes part in a lottery.
<b>Consumer contents</b>	Post shares content produced by a consumer
<b>Consumer picture</b>	Post contains video or picture related to the product in the comments, produced and posted by a consumer

<b>Consumer recommendation</b>	Consumers' positive feedback or positive comment related to the product in the comments. This code only concerns comments on post, not the actual post!
<b>Share suggestion</b>	Post suggests recipients to share the post
<b>Blogger consumer content</b>	Post shares content produced by a blogger, but with no indication of collaboration in the blog posting

### **Product-consumer interaction**

<b>Video content</b>	Post contains a video (This might violate the Alcohol Act, will be confirmed later)
<b>Comment suggestion</b>	Post suggests recipient comments on the post, poses a question or suggestion to the recipient, or suggests tagging a friend
<b>Blogger content</b>	Post shares content produced by a blogger in collaboration with the manufacturer/advertiser
<b>Event</b>	Collaboration with an event, festival, artist and/or band (including sports events and teams)
<b>Serving suggestion</b>	Post contains food recipes or serving suggestions
<b>Collaboration</b>	Collaboration with another company
<b>Competition reference</b>	Post refers to a competition, competition winner, or consumer engagement through a competition
<b>Link</b>	Post contains a link

### **European advertising standards (Alliance)**

<b>Immoderate drinking</b>	Advertisements of alcoholic drinks should not encourage, condone or portray excessive or irresponsible consumption; present abstinence or moderation in a negative way; or suggest any link with violent, aggressive, dangerous or anti-social behaviour. If a group of people is shown consuming the product, any person who is not consuming should not be ridiculed. Likewise, advertisements should not suggest that drinking is an essential part of life or a necessary routine.
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**Dangerous activities**

Advertisements should not associate drinking with dangerous or daring activities (e.g., driving a motor vehicle of any kind or operating potentially dangerous machinery). Any type of motor-operated vehicle falls under this rule (e.g., motorbikes, cars, trucks, boats, planes). Advertisements should not portray, for example, people operating a forming press in a factory or handling melting metals.

**Alcohol content**

Advertisements should avoid any confusion about the nature and strength of alcoholic drinks. They may present consumer information on alcoholic strength but should not emphasize high alcoholic strength in itself as a positive quality. Reversely, messages may not imply that consuming beverages of low alcohol content will avoid any misuse of alcohol. High alcohol content in a given drink should not be presented in itself as a positive characteristic in order to avoid misuse or encourage abuse.

**Medical aspects**

Advertisements must not suggest that alcoholic drinks can prevent, treat or cure a human disease, or refer to such properties. Alcohol should not be presented as a treatment or cure for any physical or psychological disorders. Suggestions that drinking can bring about a change in mood (e.g., ‘make you feel better’) or help overcome boredom, loneliness or other problems should be avoided.

**Performance**

Advertisements should not create the impression that the consumption of alcoholic drinks enhances mental ability or physical performance when, e.g. engaging in sports. Advertisements should not imply that people who drink alcohol are brave, tough or daring, or that drinking has made them stronger or more capable.

**Minors**

Advertisements should not specifically aim at minors or show minors consuming alcoholic beverages. Advertisers should avoid media or events in which the majority of the audience is known to be underage. Advertisements encouraging minors to drink alcohol, whether by emulating attractiveness or by placing



alcohol advertisements in media aimed at young persons, must be avoided (for instance offers to download free MP3 files after having bought a certain quantity of the product on offer may be of particular appeal to minors and incite consumption abuse).

### **Social success**

Advertisements should not create the impression that the consumption of alcohol is a requirement for social success and should not imply that the successful outcome of a social occasion is dependent on the consumption of alcohol. Alcohol should not be presented as necessary for having fun, or as enhancing the success of a given social occasion (e.g., ‘The party was great because there was “X” to drink’ would not be acceptable).

### **Sexual aspects**

Advertisements should not create the impression that the consumption of alcohol is a requirement for sexual success and should not imply that the successful outcome of a social occasion is dependent on the consumption of alcohol. Alcohol should not be presented as a means to seduce the opposite sex or as enhancing someone’s seductive power or attractiveness.

## **IARD**

(Adapted from the IARD guiding principles)

<b>Age</b>	Post portrays minors (or people likely to be perceived as minors) drinking alcohol beverages
<b>Minor appeal</b>	Post uses themes, icons, music, games, or characters that appeal primarily to minors
<b>Drugs</b>	Post contains references to or associations with drugs or drug culture
<b>Immoderate drinking</b>	Post portrays or encourages immoderate drinking, trivializes excessive or irresponsible consumption, or portrays moderate consumption in a negative way
<b>Alcohol as solution</b>	Post suggests that the product can prevent, treat or cure illness or resolve personal problems.

<b>Mood-altering effects</b>	Post presents the product as a stimulant, sedative or tranquilizer
<b>Risk group</b>	Post depicts or addresses at-risk groups, e.g. pregnant women
<b>Skill-requiring activities</b>	Post portrays or encourages drinking prior to or during activities requiring sobriety or a high degree of skill or precision, such as controlling a motor vehicle or operating machinery
<b>Alcohol effects</b>	Post misleads consumers about the nature and strength of the product, presents high alcohol content as a principal basis of appeal, or suggests that the product can enhance physical, athletic or mental ability.
<b>Social or sexual success</b>	Post presents alcohol beverages as necessary for social success or acceptance, and/or as a means to remove social or sexual inhibitions, achieve sexual success or make an individual more sexually attractive.

### **Youth-appealing contents**

(Adapted from analysis grid of European Commission study)

<b>Primary group or reference group</b>	Protagonist(s) represent(s) a group with which young recipients can associate themselves, for example a youth sub-cultural group or youth-related lifestyles
<b>Young people's partying</b>	Context of advertisement is a young people's partying scene (including celebrations, bars, discos, clubs, home parties)
<b>Humour</b>	Advertisement uses humorous mannerisms, satire, sarcasm, physical humour (e.g., slapstick), jokes, irony, spoofs, parodies, or illogical or improbable situations
<b>Celebrities</b>	Advertisement portrays celebrities
<b>Animals</b>	Advertisement uses animal characters, real or animated
<b>Athletic bodies</b>	Advertisement contains athletic bodies
<b>Sport activities</b>	Advertisement associates brand and product with watching or participating in sports liked by

	teens (e.g. football, basketball, basketball, hockey, racing, snowboarding, skateboarding, cycling)
<b>Alcohol as reward</b>	Advertisement uses alcohol as a means to reward oneself after physical activities
<b>Adventurous or risky setting</b>	Advertisement associates alcohol with challenging and/or competitive activities such as mountain climbing or rafting, or other risky settings aimed at impressing others
<b>Tokens of wealth</b>	Advertisement uses high-end products or known indicators of wealth and success: electronics, boats, jewellery, cars, luxury clothing and accessories etc.
<b>Social interaction</b>	Advertisement suggests that alcohol helps in bonding with other people and contributes to the emergence of a positive, pleasant atmosphere in social situations. Advertisement associates the good atmosphere with drinking, implying that alcohol caused the good mood
<b>Sexual interaction</b>	Advertisement associates product with sexual attractiveness, flirtation or finding or attracting a sexual partner
<b>Sexualized body</b>	Advertisement portrays male or female body as a sexualized object
<b>Relaxation</b>	Advertisement portrays alcohol in a relaxing setting, indicating holiday or leisure time
<b>Competence</b>	Advertisement portrays a protagonist who is able to master all sorts of situations as an independent agent. The protagonist's identity position differs from the norm and (s)he does not need to conform to conventional norms or authorities
<b>Gender competence</b>	Advertisement associates drinking with fulfilling and mastering masculine or feminine gender roles, or with emancipatory aims to oppose traditional gender roles

## **Open coding**

Other codes may be added to this section if interesting contents appear in the material and other codes do not cover it. Remember to communicate the new, relevant codes and contents to other coders in order to cover the themes in both countries.

<b>Men</b>	Post and its content is targeted at male audience
<b>Women</b>	Post and its content is targeted at female audience
<b>PR</b>	Content of post promotes company image, social responsibility or credibility of brand
<b>National identity</b>	Content of post refers to or utilizes nationalist ideas or imagery
<b>Seasonal content</b>	Post relates to seasonal events, festivities or times of year
<b>Review</b>	Post uses someone else's review, or contains a link to a review
<b>Alcohol policy</b>	Post or link in post is related to alcohol policy or takes a stand on a policy issue
<b>Facts and statistics</b>	Post presents facts or statistics on brand products, alcohol consumption or consumer behaviour
<b>Non-alco</b>	Post promotes non-alcoholic beverages
<b>Fairs and conferences</b>	Post contains information on brands' participation in fairs and conferences
<b>Health</b>	Post or link in post refers to health-related topics or includes information on healthy ingredients in the products