

Responsible drinking - programs and the alcohol industry in Brazil: Killing two birds with one stone?

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Published

2012

Publisher

Social Science & Medicine

Type

Journal article

Volume

75

Issue

8

Page(s)

1387-1391

Abstract

Over the last decade, the Brazilian alcohol industry – which for years has ignored alcohol problems – inaugurated responsible drinking programs (RDPs). This paper reports findings from an exploratory study that investigated the RDP-related activities of six leading alcohol companies in Brazil (three national, three transnational) focusing on program goals and components, target populations and evaluation methods. Interviews were conducted from October 2007 to February 2008 with nine key-informants, and 71 corporate documents were collected along with additional web information about the programs. Content analysis of interviews and institutional documents was used to identify the companies' RDP activities. Three types of RDPs were found that focused respectively on institutional action, drinking and driving, and underage drinking. All three transnational firms were involved in RDPs, whereas national firms demonstrated limited involvement. The majority of RDPs were implemented using television. No targeted research appears

to have been undertaken by the companies to assess the efficacy of the strategies in terms of changes in drinking behavior. The evidence for both national and transnational firms means that it is difficult to confirm that the responsible drinking programs produced so far in Brazil have been undertaken to systematically reduce alcohol problems, or mainly as part of a public relations strategy to reduce criticism and potentially forestall government regulations (Babor, 2006, 2009; Jernigan, 2009).

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