



Diageo

Responsible Drinking – Analysing the Public Discourse

SUMMARY OF ACHIEVEMENTS

- Now leading the drinks industry in understanding the public debate on alcohol and society, Diageo shares our report findings with industry partners and rival drinks companies, increasing the industry's appreciation of communications measurement.
- Outcomes and conclusions are reported to Diageo's plc board, raising the credibility of communications measurement at the c-suite level. They are also an integral element of Diageo's media mix planning for new communications campaigns.
- We are now a trusted partner to Diageo in the decision-making process. Our client uses media measurement outcomes to look forward, not back.

Category: Best Use of Communication Management:

Business-to-Business

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OBJECTIVE/BRIEF

In 2010 Diageo commissioned Kantar Media to repeat our annual analysis of media responses to the public debate on alcohol and society. They wanted us to:

- deliver an accurate 'state of the nation' audit of the alcohol debate in UK media for 2010
- measure the impact of the drinks industry's new communications taskforce, identifying changes in the media environment and their implications for industry communications
- identify future risks and opportunities for Diageo and the wider drinks industry.

The resulting report would form the basis of Diageo's strategic thinking on communications with industry stakeholders, policymakers and the health lobby in 2011.

“The annual reports provide Diageo with useful insights into how the media agenda is developing, and how alcohol is portrayed within a range of complex issues. Over the past four years, Kantar's data has established good credibility with us and other key players in our industry. This year we have made more proactive use of the data, which has increased the value of Kantar's evaluation work to Diageo. Vicki Nobles, Diageo.

STRATEGY

We held a planning meeting with a Diageo panel drawn from public affairs, CSR and brand communications. We worked with the client to establish the areas of investigation most likely to deliver actionable insights:

a) What is the overall position of the industry? Is it getting better or worse?

Having studied the media landscape in detail for three years, we were well-positioned to deliver some long-term conclusions on the media's balance in a very volatile policy area.

b) What issues drive coverage? Is the agenda changing?

Diageo tasked us to ensure the industry's communications were aligned with media priorities, and responsive to any likely changes in the agenda.

c) Who are the influencers?

What were the policies and motivations of the organisations and personalities leading the debate? 2010 was a significant year for key personnel changes in government and the health lobby, and Diageo needed to understand the impact and implications of these developments.

d) What is the relevance of the media and the interplay between media channels?

To understand the media's relevance to the alcohol debate, we would examine a wide range of print, broadcast and online sources, and the relationship between media channels in shaping the debate.

EXECUTION/IMPLEMENTATION

We conducted an unsolicited search for all voices within the debate. By creating three distinct groups – advocates, policymakers and detractors – we were able to measure the media impact of all organisations and spokespeople in isolation, and as part of a wider constituency either for, or against alcohol.

To avoid influencing outcomes or distorting conclusions, we looked at all alcohol-related news coverage and contexts and allowed key issues to emerge naturally. The point of the analysis was to discover what the media and key opinion formers considered to be relevant to the debate, so we gave them a free hand.

Much alcohol coverage is reactive and sensationalised. To deliver practical benefits to Diageo's strategic thinking, we detailed changes in Diageo's media environment since we began evaluating in 2007, as well as for 2010. With data from 36 months of analysis, Diageo received a very clear view of the long-term trends in issues management.

The media range was weighted towards mainstream news and current affairs channels in print, broadcast and online. For 2010 we analysed over 10,000 pieces of media coverage from print, television, radio and online sources.

Because of age restrictions, the drinks industry is very limited in its ability to communicate through social media channels. Therefore, analysis of social was focused on specific professional groups and issues. This approach was very insightful when used to determine underlying sentiment towards key Diageo CSR initiatives, much of which did not receive a voice in mainstream media.

CONCLUSIONS

Diageo convened an industry round-table to review our report findings, which was attended by the leading drinks companies and industry bodies. The detailed briefing from our insight team offered independent and actionable recommendations, based on evidence-based conclusions. Diageo's main return on investment is the ability to act decisively, with a clear understanding of where and how the company should communicate, and the issues most likely to produce a positive outcome.

The report concluded that the overall position of the debate has become less negative in explicit terms, with less engagement by traditional opposition leaders, the Royal College of Physicians and Alcohol Concern. The character of opposition has changed

too, with less sensationalist reporting and a more reasoned approach from the health lobby. We identified the British Medical Association as the rising power in the alcohol debate and outlined the issues, media channels and spokespeople contributing to BMA's increasing influence.

There was a measurable shift towards discussing policy options for alcohol control in 2010, posing a challenge beyond the traditional mud-slinging between drinks companies and the health lobby. The main drivers influencing this trend were analysed extensively.

Within the key policy area of pricing controls, we concluded that the industry did not have a united voice, with the licensed trade at odds with brand owners in favouring minimum pricing. Off-licence sales through supermarkets were a key driver of negative comment, but supermarkets themselves were very under-represented in the debate, leaving brand owners unsupported on the central question of pricing and availability.

The industry taskforce had succeeded in gaining parity for brand owners with opponents in the pricing debate. However, the industry's focus on pricing had left it exposed in other important areas – most notably health, with more opposition messaging on health issues passing unchallenged by the industry and its supporters.

ACTING ON RECOMMENDATIONS

The outcomes of the long-term analysis programme convinced Diageo of the need to be more pro-active. In June 2011 they announced a new funding agreement with the National Organisation for Foetal Alcohol Syndrome (NOFAS) to train 10,000 midwives in supporting families affected by the syndrome.

Our data was used to plan the media strategy for the launch and to identify the media channels most likely to deliver a successful campaign. Given the sensitive subject matter, we offered Diageo a map of the media sources most likely to criticise its involvement in neo-natal care. This was a significant development in the relationship between Kantar Media and Diageo, placing our data and conclusions far closer to our client's decision-making.

The value of our contribution became evident within 48 hrs of launch, when fierce criticism from the health lobby caused concern within Diageo. We produced a detailed situation analysis for internal briefings. A key conclusion was that opposition in the media was following expected patterns of behaviour and had not strengthened as a result of the NOFAS initiative. Diageo's communications team emphasised this conclusion in briefings to the board.