

Binge drinking: A new approach needed

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A new study from the *Journal of Marketing Management* suggests that the UK's alcohol problem will continue to worsen until the availability and cultural presence of alcohol is subject to stricter controls.

The paper, "[Young adults](#) and 'binge' drinking: A Bakhtinian analysis" points to a deep contradiction between young people's lived experience of alcohol, and government policy discourses based on appeals to individual [moral responsibility](#).

Several themes emerged from the study's focus-group and depth interviews with 89 young adults of mixed ethnicity, class, and gender aged 18–25 in three geographical locations in the UK between 2006 and 2007. Without prompting, individuals would relate sometimes quite lengthy narratives to the group around experiences of extreme drinking. The study includes extracts from the transcripts of these stories.

The stories often retold events which were dangerous, reckless, irresponsible, or potentially highly incriminating for the subject's reputation for controlled or responsible behaviour. The stories would be received with rapt attention, affirmative interjections, and excited laughter which, the study felt had an element of Bakhtin's folk and carnival humour which stands in opposition to the official conventions and mores of the day. There appeared to be a temporary subversion and reversal of [social norms](#) and roles in a world turned 'inside out' as a result of the [effects of alcohol](#).

The study suggests that insights into extreme drinking as a cultural

phenomenon should be a necessary part of policy engagement with the issue. This must go beyond simplistic calls to 'change' Britain's drinking culture and must, rather, engage with that culture in order to generate policy which connects with the role alcohol plays in consumers' lived experience.

More information: Hackleya, C. et al., Young adults and 'binge' drinking: A Bakhtinian analysis. *Journal of Marketing Management*: www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/0267257X.2012.729074

Provided by Taylor & Francis

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