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Research report

Studying young recipients of alcohol marketing – Two research paradigms and their possible consolidation

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ABSTRACT

AIMS – The article discusses and compares two European studies that investigate young recipients of commercial messages on alcohol. The studies spring out of very different science philosophical paradigms. Their comparison therefore brings certain ontological, epistemological and methodological questions to a head. DATA AND METHODS – A large amount of existing research and theorizing has been reviewed in order to frame the studies concerning the following aspects: their goals (genesis, purposes etc.); their view on the nature of reality (ontology); their view on how knowledge is created and expanded (epistemology) and, their view on the role of values in research and theory building (axiology). RESULTS – It is suggested that although the studies work in separate paradigms and are concerned with different phenomena, they could gain from a consolidation for complementary purposes. CONCLUSIONS – The task of studying alcohol marketing audiences puts the alcohol research field's methodological capacities to the test. The field needs more interactive collaboration between different research traditions in order to produce credible research in this area.

KEY WORDS – alcohol, commercials, reception, youth, research paradigms, methods

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Introduction

The message from media reception research has often been pessimistic, claiming for example that television and video games teach violence, or that fashion magazines affect negatively recipients' body-images. However, some contradictions can arise when one starts to investigate the relationships between stimulus and response. Hartley (1996, 226) has for example pointed out that the message from research can be that "Watching television causes violence and passive behaviour (all at once!)" In particular, the popularity of cultural studies and the emergence of meaning-making perspectives in reception studies have intensified scientific disagreement over how to conceptualize media effects (Baran & Davis 2009, 38).

Restrictions on alcohol marketing have surfaced in recent years as a high-priority question of alcohol policy in various forums.[1] This is partly due to scientific suggestions regarding correlations between exposure to marketing and alcohol consumption among young people. The fact that the question is put on the policy agenda makes it all the more topical for further production of evidence.

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In this article, I discuss and compare two studies that investigate young recipients of commercial messages on alcohol. Even though the studies share the goal of understanding the young audiences of such messages in the same European countries at the same time in history, they spring out of very different science philosophical paradigms and their comparison therefore brings certain ontological, epistemological and methodological questions to a head. One is a quantitative longitudinal survey study, and the other a qualitative focus group study. Both are challenging research tasks.

It has been argued that, when a study's purpose is complex, it is necessary to pose multiple questions, which often necessitates the use of mixed methods (Newman et al. 2003; Clarke & Yaros 1988). This suggestion motivated me to reflect on the benefits of consolidating different paradigms. My view is that both paradigms may be equally relevant for their objectives, but the methods chosen unavoidably produce realities and arrangements with political implications of which we need to be aware (Law 2004). Methods actively participate in the enactment of the realities we are depicting by our research. I will suggest that, although the studies discussed here do not address the same phenomena, they can be combined for complementary purposes.

The procedures of my inquiries involve getting acquainted with a large amount of existing research and theorizing, in view of which I will discuss the studies. My primary objective is to expose some operative logics and assumptions underlying the research tasks. I have myself an inside and partly perhaps biased view on my subject of discussion as I hold the lead in one of the studies analyzed for this article (study 2). The present text originates in my attempts to conceptualize and motivate the two studies in relation to each other during the last couple of years.

Ontology and epistemology are core concepts here. Ontology stands for the conceptualizations of the nature of the reality being studied, i.e., it represents the researcher's views on what it is that is being studied. Epistemology signifies beliefs regarding how the knowledge is to be produced (Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy 2005). The discrepancy between these concepts is artificial; how you regard the study object will naturally affect how you choose to produce knowledge about it and vice versa. Epistemologies can be seen as embodying ontological assumptions. The epistemological and ontological assumptions are translated into distinct methodological strategies.

Drawing on differentiations made between communication theories (Miller 2005, 32), I have chosen to concentrate on some crucial characteristics of the studies: a) their goals (genesis, purposes etc.); b) their view on the nature of reality (ontology), c) their view on how knowledge is created and expanded (epistemology) and d) their view on the role of values in research and theory building – i.e., their axiology.

I will start with a brief overview of previous studies in this area, after which I will describe the two studies discussed here. I will compare their theoretical and methodological repertoires, viewing them in their different ontological and epistemological paradigms. Towards the end I will discuss the potential advantages of a consolidation, after which I will conclude by making some claims.

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Earlier studies

In order to get an overview of attempts to produce knowledge in this area, I reviewed several studies and literature reviews (n=26), which had been collected by the research teams prior to the designing of the studies. Previous research has largely been concerned with a testing of the match between different hypotheses within the framework of classical deductive reasoning (see Aitken et al. 1988; Anderson et al. 2009; Smith & Foxcroft 2009). They operate mainly within an epistemological paradigm that contains the justificative objective of yielding knowledge that could have impact on advertising regulation restrictions.[2]

A typical research task is taken on by Connolly et al. (1994), in a longitudinal survey study that measures the extent to which adolescents recall different mass media messages on alcohol and the extent to which they drink alcohol. Although the results show two unexpected negative relationships between recall of alcohol in the media at age 13 years and beer consumption among women, the study shows a consistent positive relationship among men. For example, the men that recalled more alcohol advertisements at age 15 drank larger quantities of beer at the age of 18. Another study (Casswell & Zhang 1998) tests a hypothesized model of the effect of televised alcohol advertising and allegiance to specific brands of beer on subsequent beer consumption and self-reports of aggressive behaviour linked with drinking. Positive impact is found, e.g., between liking alcohol advertisements at age 18 and beer consumption at age 21. A third study suggests that young people who find alcohol ads more appealing and hold more positive expectations about drinking, intend to drink higher amounts of alcohol as adults and to drink more often (Martin et al. 2002). A result of a fourth study, is that 10–17 year olds' liking of specific elements in beer advertisements increases the effectiveness of these advertisements indicated by purchase intent of the alcoholic product and the brand (Chen et al. 2005). No doubt, the above initiatives aim to produce knowledge of high political, societal, and commercial value. Nevertheless, the overall impression is that the literature consists of rather scattered initiatives with uneven empirical strengths, held together by the very same main line of reasoning. Without here questioning any empirical evidence per se, I still want to suggest that the literature lacks nuances in ontological and epistemological stances.

Qualitative studies in this area are rare and often situated in a peculiar borderland between quantitative and qualitative paradigms. They are often small complementary and exploratory parts of quantitative studies and are validated merely in relation to the (main) quantitative ones. For example, an article by Wyllie et al. (1997) uses four pages just on validating the use of its qualitative approach (ibid, 104–107), but still manages to present a design that theoretically approaches its subject and expresses its results and conclusions within a quantitative scope. Likewise, the scope of measuring the extent to which students like alcohol advertisements is applied in a focus group study by Waiters et al. (2001). Nash et al. (2009) draw some quantitative conclusions from an interview study with 17 children, which is later on used for developing a methodology to assess implicit knowledge of alcohol advertising in a larger sample (179 children).

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From a communication theoretical point of view what is missing from the literature in this area are studies that do not view communication and reception in a linear and/or positivist manner. I find no coherent conceptualizations of interactivity between message and reader, as well as active agencies of members of the audience. Baran and Davis (2009, 246–247) have explained the lack of theories on active audiences in early communication research with the circumstance that mass society theory has tended to exaggerate the influence of the media. Funding has often favoured the study of positive and negative effects as researchers have typically thought that it was possible to study effects more objectively than the uses of mass media. Most attitude researchers have had strong behaviourist biases that have led them to be suspicious of taking people's thoughts and experiences at face value. (Ibid.)

The lack of more meaning-based perspectives in the alcohol research production in this area might be due to similar circumstances. The traits of previous knowledge production on reception of alcohol marketing can be claimed to correspond to the governing scientific paradigms in the alcohol research field, dominated by epidemiological research and strongly founded in a definition of problems that need to be asserted to (e.g., on defining harm in alcohol research: Room 1996). Useful research has signified the one that can indicate or prove relationships that are believed to be counteracted through public health efforts against the negative consequences of alcohol consumption.

Due to the history of the field there is sort of a positivist monopoly on the determination of research that has pragmatic or "real" value.

The two studies

The studies discussed here are both conducted within the frame of the EU research project Alcohol Measures for Public Health Research Alliance (AMPHORA)[3], funded by The 7th Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development's Specific Programme 'Cooperation', for the research theme "Health" during the project period of 2009–2011.[4] Initiatives that are prioritized in EU Health research are described as transnational research "whereby basic discoveries can be translated into clinical applications and new therapies for the promotion of health for children, healthy ageing, diagnostics tools and medical technologies, as well as sustainable and efficient healthcare systems" (Cordis.europa.eu 2011a). In line with this, a goal expressed by the AMPHORA project is that research outcomes will be "translated into easily understandable conclusions and recommendations to be used in the design and implementation of alcohol policy measures" (Cordis.europa.eu 2011b). A brief description of the work package, which involves the two studies discussed here, is that it involves the assessment of the impact of alcohol marketing on the onset and volume of alcohol consumption by young people, and qualitative research on young people's views on drinking and alcohol commercials. (Ibid.)

Geneses and purposes

The objective of the first task is measuring the impact of alcohol marketing on adolescents' drinking behaviour. The explicit aim as expressed by the Dutch Non

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Governmental Organisation STAP (Dutch Institute for Alcohol Policy), which holds the task of the Principal Investigator of the workpackage, is producing European evidence that exposure to alcohol marketing practices has an influence on juvenile drinking. A political demand for European longitudinal research in this area was pointed out since similar survey studies had mostly been conducted in Australia, New Zealand and the United States (Anderson et al. 2009). Four countries are participating in the European study: Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and Poland. The study aims at a sample of 2500 respondents in each country, 10 000 in total. The pupils fill in a web-based survey questionnaire in the schools' computer classrooms concerning e.g., background factors (education, family, religion etc.), media habits (degree of TV watching, frequency of sports spectatorships etc); ownership of merchandise products, and, naturally, questions concerning alcohol use. All in all, the same students will answer three surveys. The first one was conducted in November 2010; the second will be in April 2012, and the third one is scheduled for April 2013. The mean age of the participants in Measurement 1 (M1) was 13.5 and will thus be two and a half years more by the time of Measurement 3 (M3).

Sweden and Finland were originally supposed to participate in the longitudinal study, but the social scientific research institutions in these countries withdrew their participation due to practical challenges in performing the study. Another reason for their withdrawal was that the Nordic partners were rather foreign to testing correlations regarding specific influences on individuals' alcohol consumption behaviour in the behaviourist[5] research designs of study 1.[6] Such designs have mostly been applied in the cognitive sciences.

A scepticism with regard to the longitudinal design concerned how the media effects were to be conceptualized, as these always actualize the question of whether it affects mostly individuals, groups, institutions, or societies and cultures more widely (Laughey 2007, 7–29). The social scientific alcohol research in the Nordic countries – at least the one that is strongly sociological to its character – seldom tests hypotheses regarding influences on alcohol behaviour on the level of the individual. Rather, research is often planned and motivated on the basis of social theory, looking for social – political and societal developments or other contextual – explanations to the developments observed. The main perspective applied has been that of investigating correlations in more aggregated manners on different levels and groups of the population.

Youth drinking has continuously been measured in the Nordic countries, but also problematized as a multifaceted social, cultural and individual equation, and research on the topic has investigated the different layers of signification that alcohol use has among youngsters and the many social contexts that permit or encourage drinking among juveniles (e.g. Østergaard 2008; Demant 2007; Tigerstedt 2007).

A similar articulation of the importance of the complex social context of behaviour has been in the core of a general critique of a measuring of influences on behaviour in the communication field. Effect studies have been criticized for reducing complex communication processes and social phe-

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nomena to narrow propositions. In postwar European communication research they were named reductionist and viewed as a distinctly American fetish (Baran & Davis 2009: 34).

In the absence of engagement by Nordic participants in the longitudinal survey design, one of the partner institutions in the study, the Nordic Centre for Welfare and Social Issues (NVC), suggested that each country would perform a small, complementing qualitative focus group study for investigating adolescents' meaning-making of alcohol commercials using the RAGI (Reception Analytical Group Interview) technique.[7] The second study was thus added in a later stage and its existence was partly questioned by the advocates of the quantitative study. I will hereafter refer to the longitudinal survey as study 1 and the qualitative focus group study as study 2.

In study 2, the goals are set to shed light on the ways that adolescents articulate and construe views on and position themselves in relation to televised beer commercials. In the interview situation, televised beer commercial clips are shown to the focus groups, who then freely discuss the commercials within certain preformulated topics. Focus group interviews were conducted in six countries: Finland, Denmark[8], Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and Poland. In each country, participants were recruited from two schools: one in an urban area and another in a rural region. The targeted sampling was to include 28 pupils from each school: 7 girls and 7 boys from a 13–14 age group (7th grade in most countries) and, similarly, 7 girls and 7 boys aged 15–16 (9th grade in most countries). The pupils were randomly sampled from each of the two school levels. A total of 48 focus group interviews were performed with a total of 326 participants.

Due to its longitudinal design study 1 is still in the progress of analyzing the material. Study 2 has produced two research reports (Hellman et al. 2010: Hellman et al., in review). To summarize, the geneses, the goals and the purposes of the two studies differ. Study 1 undoubtedly fits better the positivist discourse expressed in the EU health research programme for communicating, or translating, research into praxis (see Pawson 2006). Study 2, on the other hand, has a better fit within younger traditions in mass communication research, sometimes referred to as the New Audience Research, which has come to signify the large increase in qualitative audience studies from the mid 1980s onward (Lewis 1991). Both paradigms involve strengths and weaknesses, which I will address in my discussion.

Views on the realities under study

Quantitative and qualitative research paradigms do not only stand for different technical solutions, but they also reflect separate philosophical stances to the study subject and the proper ways of receiving knowledge about it. They come with different set-ups of worlds-views, beliefs and justifications. Mol (1999) has introduced the term ontological politics for how we choose to look at the reality being studied. She suggests that if truth itself is not a golden standard (rather an interpretation of or view on matters) then there may be additional political reasons for preferring and enacting one kind of reality rather than another. Different practices tend to produce not only different perspectives

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but also different realities and these will inevitably be politics chosen by the researchers conducting the studies.

A basic question to be answered regarding the ontological positioning (and inherent politics) of the two studies concerns their view on communication process. There are particularly three basic ontological questions which determine the researcher's position to the subject of reception of commercial communication: firstly, we need to, on the basis of previous research and theories, take a stand on the merits of effects. Are there effects, and if so, what are they? Adhering to this question we find basic views on the agency of the individual reader/ recipient in contrast with the force of the text. The third basic question we need to take a stand on is how the study of discursive production and discursive consumption differ from study of other production and consumption? All three permeate theorization in the field of communication research.

Views on effect and meaning

Study 1 hypothesizes that alcohol advertising and promotion affect drinking behaviour by influencing expectations towards alcohol and alcoholic brands. It is theorized that these expectancies are shaped by different sources: previous experiences of personal alcohol use; drinking experiences of significant others (e.g., by friends and family); alcohol portrayal in prevention programmes, in mass media; and in alcohol advertising and promotion. The effect of information on alcohol, by either experience or alcohol portrayal, on alcohol expectations is not the same for all adolescents. Personal characteristics, that in the same types of previous studies have been suggested to be influential in moderating the effect of information on alcohol on expectations towards alcohol, and alcohol use, are modelled into the survey questionnaire in order to capture correlations that can be claimed to have relevance for the impact relationships being tested (de Bruijn 2009). The degree of exposure to commercial messages is estimated by asking how much and which mass media channels, genres and products the adolescents have experience of.[9]

If in study 1 the concept apparatus concerning the messages' meaning is left out of the design, study 2 represents a conceptualization of communication that specifically emphasizes the meaning-based and discursive nature of communication. The producers of persuasive messages must yield an encoded message in the form of a meaningful discourse in order for the messages to be communicated to its audience. This view originates to a great extent in Hall's classic encoding/ decoding article (Hall 1980; Alasuutari 2002). It represents a constructivist ontology according to which if a message is to have an 'effect' (however defined), or satisfy a 'need' or be put to a 'use', it must first be perceived as meaningful, and meaningfully decoded, by the recipient (Alasuutari 2002). It is in the discursive form that the circulation of a product takes place, as well as its distribution to different audiences. Once accomplished, the discourse must then be translated – transformed again – into social practices if the circuit is to be both completed and effective. If no 'meaning' is taken, there can be no 'consumption'. If the meaning is not articulated in practice, it has no effect (Hall 1980).

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Views on agency

Study 1 applies a realist ontological perspective on the communication process and on the behaviour of the recipient/reader. The influence by the messages on the adolescents' behaviour can be proven and measured by certain statistical correlations. Facts can be generated by testing beliefs or theories against external reality. Study 1 follows the Theory of Planned Behaviour, in accordance with which adolescents' motivation to drink is shaped by experiences of alcohol and alcohol brands, which is a main predictor of subsequent behaviour. Three factors are hypothesized to determine these expectancies: attitudes towards outcomes of alcohol use; subjective norms of significant others towards alcohol use; and perceived control of personal alcohol use. Factors that determine actual behavioural control are the affordability of alcohol to the individual, and access to alcohol, which in turn is expected to affect alcohol use (de Bruijn 2009). Study 1 thus works from the assumption that there is an objective reality to be measured. The reader of the ads will follow certain behaviour patterns (drink) if exposed to positive images of alcohol in combination with certain criteria variables. What the reader will understand by the message will be put there by the researcher in the sense that he assumes that, for successful effect, what is encoded is equivalent with what is decoded (and how it is decoded).

In study 2, on its part, the meaning is negotiated and generated by the readers who use media content to create meaningful experiences according to contextual circumstances, actions and situations. What becomes an important dimension under study is a certain media literacy, i.e., the ability of the audiences to access, analyze, evaluate and communicate media messages. The messages sent and received are not necessarily identical, and different audiences decode texts differently. Audience groups make their own sense out of commercial messages and may neglect them altogether. In this view, arguments about effects are made dependent upon people's interpretations or thought processes.

One can clarify the differences between the positions on recipients' agency of the two studies by paraphrasing Katz' (1959) classic words, that study 1 concentrates on what media do to people whereas study 2 concentrates on what people do with media.

Different approaches and their axiology

The theoretical frameworks of the two studies discussed here can be traced both to epistemological and disciplinary paradigms. Study 1 is situated both in the field of psychology and a post-positivistic branch of communication science, in which the goal is to interpret behaviour and influences. The paradigm of study 1 lends itself to statistical testing of hypotheses, and will thus permit outputs in mental conceptualizations of measurements and relationships. The measurement and operationalization of important constructs is an essential part of the research design. The proposition is that stimulus (S) produces feelings or attitudes (Rf) that produces an action response (Ra). Different factors can contribute to or interface with the S/R relation. As longitudinal studies track the same people, the differences observed in those people are typically viewed as less likely to be the result of cultural differenc-

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es. A strength of study 1 is that it is conducted in schools, in which it is relatively easy to capture the same respondents on the different measuring occasions.

A point of departure when developing study 1 was that the model of inquiries was to be based upon previous empirical findings. The underlying belief is that one can verify an objective truth regarding commercials' influences on adolescents by piecing together all aspects that have previously been proven relevant and piece it together in a theoretical model. The aspects are believed to be covered inherently in the questions asked in the questionnaire. The theory applied is the aggregated evidence base assuming that the most authentic knowledge is that which is established in previous empirical enquiries.

In the case of study 2, theories of interactionism and consumer semiotics form the theoretical base. The epistemological foundation, disciplinary-wise, lies in sociology but also in semiotic communication research, that acknowledges that the technical process cannot be separated from the fact that the recipient must decode the data. Drinking is viewed as a social activity, encouraged in different ways through culture and its inherent ideas about drinking. Action contains meaning for the individual and this meaning is construed in social contexts.

The semiotic and interactionist theory base of study 2 is in comparison with study 1 less pragmatically oriented in its justification and is more justified by the value of knowledge per se. If the epistemology of study 1 has been described as reductionist, the paradigm of research into audiences' construction of meanings has its own Achilles' heel. It may be interesting and important to investigate the micro-processes of reception, but that reception takes place within the macro-structures of media and society. It would be unacceptable that concern with the minutiae of reception analysis displaced concern with the power relationships that pertain at the macro level (Cultsock 2011).

Another weakness of the RAGI, in comparison to the longitudinal design, concerns its exclusion of the aspect of the repetition of the messages – a dimension of great interest for the persuasive effect of the genre, although significantly less plain than what has been previously suggested (see Campbell & Keller 2003). What can be seen as a challenge as well as a strength in view of earlier research in this area is study 2's 'theoretical baggage'. The method aims to develop coherent concepts and systems for analyzing prevailing images of different behaviours and phenomena (e.g. drinking, gambling, addiction) (Sulkunen & Egerer 2009). The theoretical base, if rigorously applied, consists of a rather compact landscape of thought; the units discerned from the material are conceptualized in terms of specific – and for the non-conversant rather arduous – modalities (see e.g. Sulkunen & Törrönen 1997). Even if it may be quite easy to carry out the study in terms of gathering data and adapting the focus to different themes and countries, the researcher may confront difficulties with converting the results into relevant, elegant and well-disposed conclusions. The researcher must in a disciplined manner stick to his or her empirical observations and their pragmatic framings and advantages in order to avoid sliding into a less rewarding fundamental and universal philosophical discussion.

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Added value of consolidating the paradigms

Up until now I have displayed the quantitative-qualitative distinction as philosophical, rather than methodological to its nature (see Krauss 2005, 759). Each initiative to mix methods will thus inevitably imply a mix of research philosophical paradigms.

For the scopes of the studies discussed in this article it is important to acknowledge attempts by both "critical" and "empirical" researchers to arrive at a new definition of impact and to devise methodologies for its study. There is an ongoing reassessment of impact taking place in both traditions which might open up new opportunities to integrate different approaches (see e.g. Jensen 1987). For investigations of media use and reception an integrated planning of qualitative as well as quantitative research – exploratory, theory-developing, hypothesis-testing and evaluation research – has been emphasised as crucial (Renckstorf & Wester 2004, 60). Nevertheless, as pointed out by Sale et al. (2002), when two paradigms do not study the same phenomena, quantitative and qualitative methods cannot be combined for cross-validation or triangulation, but rather for complementary purposes. No doubt, added values can be gained from utilizing different paradigms in grasping the question of young people as readers and recipients of commercial messages on alcohol. Due to lack of resources and conflicting research philosophical views, an integration of the two studies of this article has thus far been ruled out. An integration from the beginning could even have weakened both initiatives and diminished the value of the two methods.

As shown in this paper, there are some fundamental differences among social and psychological theories on how to understand the processes under study. For example, a basic division reigns between viewing communication as a process or viewing it as generation of meaning (Fiske 1990, 39). The differences become obvious in comparison between the methodological approaches and their philosophical stances. Study 1 takes on the challenge of modelling an instrument to measure possible influences, whereas study 2 on its part chooses to partly leave out the influence relationship and to recognize the complexity of meaning-making and competence among adolescents. Although they represent independent philosophical stances these can be complementary for understanding the phenomena under study.

An added value of a future joint analysis by the two research initiatives lies primarily in broadening the scope on perceptions and influences. Perceptions and influences are intuitive, knowledge-based and patterned at the same time. An integrated view on the young recipients as both – in some way – possibly affected by the messages in terms of a confirmation of a positive image of drinking, but also capable of a sceptical stance or an ignoring of the messages altogether – may be beneficial for the comprehension of the processes under study.

In recent interviews with different alcohol policy stakeholders on the usefulness and credibility of research findings regarding the impact of alcohol marketing (Hellman & Karlsson, in progress) it was expressed that the most simple disposition of processes and correlations between

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stimulus and behaviour were not always perceived as the most valid and credible ones. Especially, the persons sceptical of the findings of influence relationships questioned the simplicity of the positivist impact relations in the existing literature. This strengthens me further in the view that there is an added value of broadening the scientific understanding and knowledge scope on the complex influence relationships under study; it may create a more nuanced and credible picture to be referred to by the expertise in the area. When the justifications of research are not only driven by its political use, but are also an expression of intellectual curiosity, this may improve estimates of its validity.

Johnson & Onwuegbuzie (2004, referring to Howe 1988) have suggested that researchers should forge ahead with whatever method that works for finding out the state of arts under study. They present the thought that if truth is a normative concept, like good; truth is what works (Sale et al. 2002, 47). One might add that the version of the truth that is perceived as most reliable and credible is the one that tend to be the most convincing.

Study 1 offers essential insights into the media use of adolescents with different levels of alcohol consumption and their thoughts and knowledge regarding commercial messages. The study assumes that the messages are partly put into use, disregarding a focus on the meaningful discourse it needs for doing so. The qualitative study could work as a valuable "missing chip" for filling in knowledge concerning this dimension.

The compound characteristics of many individuals into a profiling of the ad watching and alcohol drinking teenager in study 1 can be supplemented by the perspective of the teenagers themselves in study 2.

What further could accommodate the studies is that, even if neither of them was successful in showing whether the ad producers messages are interpreted "rightly" by the young audiences, they can both support the circumstance that advertisers may have the power to tell readers what to think about (McCombs & Shaw 1972). Study 1 accomplishes this by showing that the adolescents are familiar with alcohol commercials, study 2 by showing how they discuss them together in social negotiation that strengthen them in their different views, whether these are neutral, positive or negative ones.

To recognize and appreciate the different research cultures of the studies will enable a possibility to enhance and reject aspects of both at the same time. It allows the researcher to mix components that offer the best chance of answering the many questions surrounding the complex researched subject.

In table 1 I have suggested some – at this stage only hypothetical – values of consolidating the paradigms discussed in this article.

Conclusions

The study setups discussed in this article produce certain realities and arrangements. There is a great importance of upholding certain myths about rational knowledge and progress of society in order to bring about change. One of the guiding principles in the global strategy to reduce the harmful use of alcohol (WHO 2010) is that children, teenagers and adults who choose not to drink alcohol beverages have the right to be supported in their non-

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Table 1: Compatibility and added value from mixing the paradigms: different dimensions.

GENESES	*cross-disciplinary and cross-paradigmatic: different disciplines and traditions will reveal different slants on and aspects of the same question. *justifications in terms of policy impact: the greatest impact not from the "simplest" models, but from the most credible ones.
ONTOLOGICAL PARADIGMS	*effects of different types (not only in terms of alcohol consumption) depend both on frequent exposure and meaningful content/functions for the viewers. *the young audience = a group of people following their own logics which can be mapped and displayed at the aggregated level. But the readers are also persons with their own values and knowledge that might contradict the trends in the statistics.
EPISTEMOLOGICAL PARADIGMS	*approach the same question by looking at different phenomena will give a nuanced and more credible picture of reality. *strengthening the initiative by challenging both the paradigms of quanti and of quali designs.

drinking behaviour and protected from pressures to drink. The social scientific alcohol researcher who wants to contribute to knowledge of such contextual reaffirming in the upbringing milieus of children confront many challenges along the way. Theories of children's cognitive and emotional changes deviate today widely from Piaget's prestructured automatic response model. Contemporary media literacy research has shown that young individuals make sense of messages through a process in which their individual and social identities are defined and negotiated (Buckingham & Sefton-Green 1994), and that they possess advanced knowledge of the nature and logic of media industries, the production process of advertising, and the potential influence these have on themselves as a target group (Fisherkeller 2000; Hobbs 2007). In view of the above and the growing research on ad-avoidance strategies and consumer resistance (Rumbo 2002; Cho & Cheon 2004; Johnson 2009), this paper argues that there is a need to elaborate the theoretical framework and broaden the empirical designs of research on alcohol marketing and youth. It may be relevant to ask the following question: does credible evidence of actual contact between the cause and the individual exist? Can the researcher discredit other possible causes?

There are, no doubt, vivid emotions and strong statements against alcohol commercials among people who work with alcohol issues in a public health perspective. As a driving force for research production, it can be both a spurring quality and a weakness. In study 1, a clear driving force is proving a point, whereas study 2's attention is turned to the understanding of the nature of a decoding process according to the youngsters' thoughts, knowledge and beliefs.

A way of conceptualizing the basic research philosophical positions of the present studies is to see them in the light of their genesis: who are the responsible scientists (STAP, NVC) and what sorts of visions regarding research production underlie their attempts? I have discussed some aspects on how the two studies differ from each other regarding their goals, ontology, epistemology and inherent axiology.

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Obviously, both studies discussed in this article are demanding, both theoretically and methodologically. Debating their comparative worth and by that emphasizing a quantitative and qualitative dichotomy is pointless as multiple research perspectives enable social science researchers to approach questions of interest within a wide variety of ways of knowing. Both are relevant and valid in their own designs and genres. Both are adequate for functioning in their own paradigms of research production. Nevertheless, I claim that it is a myth that only testable and measurable knowledge is useful in policy contexts. On the contrary, I assert that contemporary societies need contemporary approaches which recognize the force of discourse and ideologically based arrangements in society. Neither of the two designs are able to address both aspects. The studies discussed in this paper could therefore both gain by interacting with each other and strive for some joint conclusions in the future.

The marketing of alcohol beverages has received increased significance in European discussion on youth drinking in recent years. When a question receives more priority and attention within a research field its intellectual resources are put to the test. We know very little about the effects of marketing: a lot of resources have been put into advertising campaigns and research, but no one has been able to prove the relationship, excluding other equally possible factors. I suggest that a life environment drenched with commercial images on alcohol beverage products is more likely to occur in a cultural climate that is "allowing" in the question of alcohol drinking. Such a society is more likely to countenance in a way that allows alcohol marketing etc. This is a circuit that corroborates itself time and time again. In order to know more about this circuit processes, the alcohol research field needs more interactive collaboration between different research traditions.

The European research project Amphora saw a chance to perform European tests of relationships between exposure to commercial alcohol messages and youth drinking, and, also, to produce additional evidence on the meaning-making resources among youth, which can make all the difference for their identities as potential alcohol consumers. I have suggested that it would be fruitful to mix the perspectives of the studies; exploring evidence from different angles and in different materials might strengthen the initiative as a whole.

Declaration of interest None.

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NOTES

1 See, for example: BMA Board of Science (2009): Under the influence. The damaging effect of alcohol marketing on young people. UK: British medical Association, or; Council Recommendation of 5 June 2001 on the drinking of alcohol by young people, in particular children and adolescents (2001/458/EC): see, link:http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/ LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX: 32001H0458:EN:HTML.

2 As a typical example of a clear line drawn between results and policy implications: Kelly, K.J. & Edwards, R.W. (1998): Image Advertisements for Alcohol Products: Is Their Appeal Associated with Adolescents' Intention to Consume Alcohol? Adolescence 33 (129): 47–59

3 In a brief summary of the project, the aim of AMPHORA is to focus on "analyzing socio-cultural determinants of the historic evolution of alcohol consumption; effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of policy measures; legislation on trade and consumption of alcohol; impact of alcohol marketing on youth; impact of the availability of alcohol; early identification and management of alcohol use disorders; chemical features of untaxed alcohol; impact of public perceptions of harmful alcohol use on policy measures; factors associated with alcohol-related harm in drinking environments"(Cordis.europa.eu 2011b).

4 FP7/2007–2013: Grant agreement nº 223059 – Alcohol Measures for Public Health Research Alliance (AMPHORA).

5 Here I refer to behaviourism both in the definition of the philosophy of psychology according to which behaviours can be described scientifically on the basis of observation (in this specific case as e.g. developed by Albert Bandura), but also in the definition of media theories concerned with how media messages affect people (see Laughey 2007, 8).

6 Rosenqvist, P. (2010): Alcohol and drug research as a joint Nordic (ad)venture. Presentation held at Norwegian institute for alcohol and drug research (SIRUS) 4th of November 2010. Development and Prospects. Accessed at: http://www.sirus.no/filestore/Automatisk_opprettede_filer/PiaRosenqvist.pdf (20.10.2011)

7 The qualitative study is smaller both in labour force and consequently also budget-wise. It is estimated that the qualitative study has a budget that is less than an eighth of the quantitative one, estimated by the author on the basis of a budget distribution for the work package, dated 29.1.2009.

8 Denmark was added to the study with support by a project coordinated by the Nordic Centre for Welfare and Social Issues (NVC)

9 The knowledge regarding amount of alcohol advertise content in the mass media in the different countries is commissioned by the internationally operating media content and audience statistics firm Nielsen Media Research (NMR), see http://nielsen.com/us/en.html.

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