

Alcohol sports sponsorship in Uganda: A case study analysis

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Abstract

Aims: This study aimed to explore the nature and extent of the activities involved in alcohol sports sponsorship in Uganda.

Methods: An exploratory case study methodology was utilised to document examples of alcohol industry activity related to sports sponsorship in Uganda. This study employed desk-based reviews of publicly available examples of sponsorship activities from online news outlets ($n = 9$) and social media sites ($n = 19$) as well as site visits to sporting venues ($n = 4$) to observe examples of alcohol sponsorship practices.

Results: Across the sample of data included in this study, we observed multiple sponsorship deals within a range of professional sports, including football, basketball, and golf. Across these sponsorship arrangements, several activities explicitly promoted alcohol products or subtly blended their branding within other stimulating content. This included: a presence on social media channels; limited edition products; alcohol brand logos on match strips; advertising and promotion at various locations inside and outside the sporting venues; and alcohol industry representatives featuring in news reports.

Conclusion: Alcohol sports sponsorship in Uganda is widespread and multi-faceted. The types of sponsorship activities observed in this study mirror those used around the world. The transnational companies involved use sports sponsorship to position themselves as central to Ugandan economy, culture, heritage and the sustainability of sports across the country. Understanding how sports sponsorship is used to promote alcohol brands across Uganda is important to inform future policy decisions regarding alcohol marketing.

Introduction

Alcohol is the eighth leading preventable risk factor for disease and the largest risk factor for disease burden globally among people aged 25 to 49 (GBD 2019 Risk Factors Collaborators, 2020), causing a range of harms both to individuals (e.g. cardiovascular disease and cancers) and to others (e.g. violence). Alcohol consumption worldwide is on the increase, attributed in part to its promotion and marketing by alcohol industries (Manthey et al., 2019). One region increasingly targeted by the alcohol industry in their promotional campaigns is the continent of Africa (Babor et al., 2015; Ferreira-Borges et al., 2017; Jernigan & Babor, 2015; Lesch et al., 2024). Alcohol companies have the potential to increase alcohol harms in Africa because of their huge amounts of resources, marketing sophistication, and political influence (Carrasco et al., 2016; Hanefeld et al., 2016; Jernigan & Babor, 2015). Researchers have drawn attention to the high levels of alcohol harm across the continent, arguing that current approaches to alcohol harm prevention are ineffective (Morojele et al., 2021; Room et

al., 2022). Despite the increased interest in alcohol prevention and control, most African countries have yet to develop regulations on alcohol marketing and promotion (Morojele et al., 2021).

The World Health Organization (WHO) Global Status Report on Alcohol and Health shows Uganda has the highest per capita alcohol consumption in the African Region (WHO, 2024). In Uganda, The Liquor Act (1960) regulates the manufacture and sale of liquor to licensed premises and prohibits the consumption of alcohol by children. It also prohibits all forms of alcohol advertising, promotion, and sponsorship which are false, misleading, or deceptive or likely to create an erroneous impression about the characteristics, health effects, or hazards of alcohol (Parliament of Uganda, 1960). The Uganda National Alcohol Control Policy was published in 2019 with the aim of protecting society (particularly young and other vulnerable people) against the impacts of the harmful use of alcohol (Republic of Uganda Ministry of Health, 2019). To do this it identifies 11 priority areas, one of which is alcohol

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marketing. Despite the registered problems associated with harmful alcohol use in the country, Uganda has no further statutory controls on alcohol marketing. The Advertising Standards of the Uganda Communication Commission (UCC) feature voluntary guidance to prevent and control harmful and misleading advertising of alcohol to the public and specifically children (UCC, 2023). Previous research suggests that voluntary self-regulation is ineffective at preventing irresponsible alcohol marketing (Babor et al., 2022). One study which examined the content of alcohol billboards in Kampala revealed widespread violations of agreed-upon industry advertising standards by alcohol companies (Swahn et al., 2024). The Uganda Alcohol Control Bill, 2023, aimed to regulate the manufacture, importation, sale, consumption and advertisement of alcoholic drinks. However, in August 2024, the Parliament of Uganda rejected the motion for the second reading of the Alcohol Control Bill after reported lobbying from the alcohol industry and opposition from the Committee of Trade and Health (Parliament of the Republic of Uganda, 2024).

There are currently no statutory restrictions on alcohol sports sponsorship in Uganda. Sports sponsorship provides a highly effective, high-profile platform for alcohol companies to promote their products and capitalise on existing emotional connections that consumers have with their favourite teams, players, or events (Hastings et al., 2010; Purves, 2017; Purves & Critchlow, 2020). International evidence demonstrates how sports teams and organisations are used by alcohol companies to promote their brands (Belt et al., 2014; Macniven et al., 2015; Purves et al., 2017); that sports sponsorship influences consumers, including young people (Critchlow et al., 2019; Houghton et al., 2014); and that there is an association between exposure to alcohol sports sponsorship and increased consumption, including among young people and adult sportspersons (Brown, 2016). In Uganda, alcohol producers have partnered with various sporting bodies to sponsor sports teams, tournaments and other activities. Examples include sponsorships of the Ugandan National Football Team (The Uganda Cranes) and the governing body, the Federation of the Uganda Football Association (FUFA; FUFA, 2024), rugby tournaments (Nile Breweries Limited [NBL], 2022) and the Federation of Uganda Basketball Association (FUBA; FUBA, 2024). Despite some high-profile examples of alcohol sponsorship, there is a distinct lack of research exploring the nature and extent of alcohol sponsorship in Uganda, what sports are included, and what activities are involved.

Methods

Study Aim and Research Questions

The aim of this research was to examine the nature and extent of the activities involved in alcohol sports sponsorship in Uganda. We sought to explore what types of sponsorship activities related to professional sports are taking place across Uganda and which alcohol industry actors are involved. This case study is part of a wider project studying alcohol industry corporate political activity across sub-Saharan Africa (Mitchell et al., in press).

Study Design

This study utilised an exploratory case study methodology to document examples of alcohol industry activity related to sports sponsorship in Uganda. The case study approach is particularly useful when there is a need to obtain in-depth appreciation of an issue, event or phenomenon of interest in its real-life context (Priya, 2021). It has been employed in previous research into commercial determinants of health and is particularly helpful where the phenomenon of study is not suitable for an experimental study and relevant data sources are diverse (Purves & Critchlow, 2020). The study design comprised of desk-based reviews and extraction of publicly available examples of sponsorship activities. In addition, sporting venues including two rugby grounds, a golf club and a sports complex that houses tennis, hockey, boxing and cricket facilities, were visited to observe alcohol sponsorship practices (Lawrenz et al., 2003; Lucan et al., 2017; Robertson et al., 2022; Scott et al., 2008). The advice of the General University Ethics Panel (GUEP) of the University of Stirling was sought, and because the study was based on publicly available data, the Panel deemed ethics approval was not required for this study.

Data Collection

Three data sources were used: social media sites, online news outlets, and sporting venues. These sources focused on publicly available data and were included based on previous research on alcohol sports sponsorship by Purves and Critchlow (2020), and research on alcohol marketing by Purves and colleagues (2014). Analysis of publicly available data, including social media data, has the potential to enrich understanding of industry actors and their activities.

To identify which brands and producers were involved in alcohol sponsorship across various sports in Uganda, initial scoping was conducted on social media. This involved manually searching the social media accounts (Facebook, X [formerly Twitter], and TikTok) of the major Ugandan sporting organisations, including FUFA, the Rugby Union and the Uganda Boxing Federation for examples of posts that featured alcohol sponsorship. Our scoping review showed that sports sponsorship in Uganda is dominated by two alcohol companies, Nile Breweries Limited (NBL) and Uganda Breweries Limited (UBL). Based on the findings from the scoping stage, we performed a detailed review of their sponsorship activities for the study period of January 2020 to March 2024. Official social media accounts and websites of these producers were manually examined for examples of sports sponsorship which occurred. During data collection, the X account of Uganda Breweries was publicly available. The account is now a protected account meaning only confirmed followers can gain access. Users are required to tap the 'follow' button to send a follow request. In total, 19 social media posts were captured (See [Appendix 1](#)).

We also searched online newspaper publications for articles which mentioned alcohol sports sponsorship, either by using the website's search function, or if this was not possible, manually searching back through the archived news pages for examples which occurred within the study period of January 2020 to March 2024. The search terms included

'*alcohol and sports in Uganda*', '*alcohol sports sponsorship*', '*Uganda Breweries and sports*', '*Nile Breweries and sports*', '*alcohol consumption in Uganda*', '*alcohol marketing in Uganda*', and '*alcohol and sports advertising*'. Four news publications were searched including *The New Vision*, *Monitor*, *Kawowo Sports*, and *Uganda Sports Bulletin*. *The New Vision* and *Monitor* were included because they are the two leading news publications in Uganda. *Kawowo* and *Uganda Sports Bulletin* are sports-specific news entities. In total, nine news articles were included in this study (See [Appendix 1](#)).

Physical site visits were conducted at selected sporting venues, bars and restaurants in and around Kampala City during February and March 2024. Sites were selected to cover the most popular sports in Uganda. Four site visits were conducted: a golf club, two rugby grounds and a sports complex. The sports complex houses cricket, tennis, boxing, and hockey sports facilities with a sports bar as its main entertainment and refreshment facility, patronized by sportsmen and women, their families and friends. Examples of sponsorship activity gathered at these venues included signage, posters, billboards, branded merchandise and branded fridges (See Appendices 2 and 3). Two football stadiums, which are the main football grounds in Kampala City, were closed for major renovation works and were therefore not included. All included sporting venues were publicly accessible except for the golf club. Staff granted permission to enter the golf club grounds to gather data. Permission to take pictures was obtained at all grounds. It is a limitation of this study that the site visits were confined to Kampala City, due to the feasibility of visiting various sites during the study period. The data collected in Kampala City may not represent sponsorship activity across all of Uganda and thus provides limited insight on sponsorship practices in other areas of the country. However, by focusing on the capital city, the researchers were able to visit a range of sports venues, providing valuable insight into national trends whilst considering feasibility and logistical practicality.

The data were captured by taking screenshots of the various social media posts and articles on the websites of the online newspaper outlets and photographs taken during site visits using the researcher's mobile phone camera. All screenshots and images were saved as individual Word documents and uploaded to a secure Microsoft Teams folder hosted by the

University of Stirling which was only accessible by the research team. Prior to analysis, each example was given a designated code name and number (e.g. NB6) to allow the research team to identify specific examples.

Analysis

As in previous studies on sports sponsorship using publicly available data (Purves et al., 2014; Purves & Critchlow, 2020), findings were analysed using thematic content analysis (Krippendorff, 2004). Following data collection, examples of sponsorship activity were grouped according to their source (social media, news outlets and site visits). Two researchers then reviewed the data independently, and each created a list of main themes and practices based on previous work by Purves and colleagues (2014). These themes and practices were then reviewed and refined, and a combined list was input into an Excel spreadsheet. To ensure inter-rater reliability, a random selection of data was coded by both researchers who then met to compare coding and resolve any discrepancies. Following this meeting, the final coding frame was developed and employed.

Results

This research consisted of a review of sponsorship activities by alcohol companies in Uganda. Our scoping work suggests the two main sports sponsors in Uganda are Nile Breweries Limited (NBL) and Uganda Breweries Limited (UBL). The data are here presented as two case studies, divided between these two alcohol producers.

Nile Breweries Limited

Nile Breweries Limited is the leading beer and beverage producer in Uganda and is currently owned by Anheuser-Busch InBev SA (AB InBev; NBL, 2024), the largest multi-national beer producer globally (Jernigan & Ross, 2020). Nile Breweries is estimated to be worth 2.5 trillion Ugandan Shillings (UGX) and is reported to have 57% of the Uganda beer market (Jernigan & Ross, 2020). It is the producer of Nile Special, Nile Special Stout, Club Pilsner, Eagle Lager, Eagle Extra, Eagle Dark, and Castle Lite beverages (NBL, 2024). Nile Breweries sponsors a range of sports and events across Uganda (See Table 1).

Table 1

Nile Breweries' Sponsorship Arrangements

Organisation	Sport	Brand	Reported Value	Duration of deal
FUFA	Football	Nile Special	UGX 4bn ^a	4 years
Uganda Rugby	Rugby	Nile Special	UGX 9.8bn ^b	4 years
USPA	Sports Personality of the Year award	Nile Special	Not known	N/A
FUFA Drum	Football	Eagle POA/Nile Special	UBX 750m ^c	3 years
National Pool Open	Pool	Nile Special	UBX 340m ^d	Not known
Save River Rwizi Marathon	Running	Nile Breweries	Not known	Not known

Notes: ^a Value and duration of deal reported in NB13; ^b Value and duration of deal reported in NB11 and NB16; ^c Value and duration of deal reported in NB12; ^d Value of deal reported in NB14

Nile Breweries Limited on Social Media

Fourteen examples of NBL's social media activity were captured. The most common practice observed on social media was the inclusion of the brand names and logos of company products in sports-related posts. Brand names or logos featured in nine posts, and these tended to take the form of small, branded logos embedded in images of sports teams or events, logos on sports kits or logos in the background of images (See [Appendix 1](#): NB1, NB5, NB7, NB15, NB18, NB20, NB21, NB23, and NB31).

Nile Breweries Limited used their social media accounts to promote upcoming fixtures or results of sports matches or tournaments which they sponsored. As mentioned above, these images often contained brand logos of Nile Breweries' products or images of the products themselves. A common practice was to tag other organisations in these posts to further their online reach such as The Uganda Rugby Team (@UgandaRugby; NB20) and Mbarara Corporate Club (NB29). Within NBL's social media activity, many posts appeared to utilise elements of Ugandan culture or history in their social media posts. Posts included slogans such as 'celebrating our ancestry' (NB5) or '#1 fan of Ugandan rugby' (NB20). Ugandan cultural leaders were also tagged into posts (NB29).

Nile Breweries also used social media to promote their role in sustaining sport in Uganda. For example, in a post from Mbarara Corporate Club League (an organisation which promotes sports activities among businesses), NBL is thanked for their continued support of the League and for promoting 'sports health' and 'corporate social responsibility' which the post states, add value to the community (NB24). Additionally, NBL used social media to promote Corporate Social Responsibility activities such as the 'Save River Rwizi Marathon' (NB18). Other practices observed in a small number of posts included sponsoring special events (NB7, NB9, NB24, and NB31), promoting branded merchandise (NB15, NB20, NB21), posts featuring celebrities (NB9 and NB24), sponsor boards (NB31), and competitions (NB15).

Nile Breweries Limited in Online News Outlets

Six news articles featuring NBL's sponsorship of sports in Uganda were captured (NB11, NB12, NB13, NB14, NB16, and NB17). Alcohol sponsorship was framed as a positive source of funding for sports, and all articles captured mentioned specific brands such as Nile Special. All six articles also mentioned the value of the sponsorship deal (Table 1), supporting the positive framing that NBL was sustaining the sport financially. Representatives of the alcohol industry were quoted in five of the six articles (NB11, NB12, NB13, NB16, and NB17). Representatives of sporting organisations were also quoted in five of the six articles (NB11, NB12, NB13, NB16, and NB17). Three articles included images which featured branded logos and images of the products alongside representatives of the alcohol industry and sporting organisations (NB11, NB16, and NB17).

One article focused on NBL's sponsorship of the Uganda National Football Team and described the #CranesKabbo campaign which incentivised consumers to purchase Nile Special beer because UGX 50 from every Nile Special beer purchased would go to the 'Cranes Fund' to help the national team qualify for the next FIFA World Cup (NB17). One article reported that the representative from FUFA in charge of marketing had urged football fans to consume alcohol responsibly and to buy Nile Special beer for friends to help support the campaign (NB17). Another article reporting on Uganda Rugby's sponsorship deal with Nile Special also mentioned that the national rugby team had managed to qualify for the Commonwealth Games in Birmingham and the Rugby World Cup in South Africa with some rugby players thanking Nile Special for their support in the article (NB11). Nile Breweries' role in sustaining certain sports also featured in news articles. For example, one article reporting on the Nile Special National Pool Open tournament described how the tournament had been suspended for five years after Nile Special pulled out, claiming a company strategy change, but that the tournament had now returned after a UGX 340 million sponsorship deal with NBL (NB14).

Nile Breweries Limited at Sporting Venues

Two of the sporting venues visited, a rugby ground and a sports complex, featured sponsorship activities from NBL. During the site visit to the rugby ground, several sponsorship activities were observed including pitch-side advertising, billboards, posters, branded signage and branded merchandise. The majority of the advertisements were for Nile Special, promoting the product throughout the complex. Advertisements included slogans such as 'True Ugandan Reward from the Source' and 'Made of Uganda', indicating that Nile Special is a locally produced product which embraces Ugandan culture and heritage (See [Appendix 2](#)).

The sports complex housed four main sports grounds and facilities. These included a tennis complex, the cricket oval, a hockey stadium, and a boxing facility. Within this complex were sports bars and restaurants. Throughout the complex there were advertisements for two NBL brands, Nile Special and Castle Lite. The sports bars and restaurants within the complex featured branded refrigerators and there were billboards promoting these premises featuring Nile Special and Castle Lite (See [Appendix 2](#)).

Uganda Breweries Limited

Uganda Breweries Limited (UBL) is a subsidiary of East African Breweries Limited, in which Diageo, the largest multinational distilled spirits producer globally (Jernigan & Ross 2020), is a majority shareholder (UBL, 2024). It is the second largest alcohol producer in Uganda and is reported to be worth UGX 2.31 trillion (Chimpreports, 2019). Brands distributed by UBL include Guinness, Johnnie Walker whisky, Tusker and Tusker Lite beer, Pilsner Lager, Ngule beer, Smirnoff and Ciroc vodka, Bailey's liqueur, and Alvaro non-alcoholic drink. Uganda Breweries sponsors football (soccer), golf and basketball in Uganda (UBL, 2024; see Table 2).

Table 2***Uganda Breweries' Sponsorship Arrangements***

Organisation	Sport	Brand	Reported Value	Duration of deal
Uganda Premier League	Football	Pilsner Lager	UGX 1bn ^a	3 years
Uganda Golf Union	Golf	Johnnie Walker	Not known	Not known
Federation of Uganda Basketball Associations	Basketball	Tusker Lite	UBX 300m ^b	Not known

Notes: ^a Value and duration of deal reported in UB8; ^b Value and duration of deal reported in UB4

Uganda Breweries Limited on Social Media

Five social media posts featured UBL's sports sponsorship activity (UB1, UB6, UB7, UB9, and UB12). Like NBL, the most common practice observed was featuring brand names or logos in images. All five of the social media posts featuring UBL had the brand name of one of their products (either Johnnie Walker whisky or Pilsner Lager).

One of UBL's brands, Pilsner Lager, was among the main sponsors of the Uganda Premier League (football/soccer; UB9). Another UBL brand, Johnnie Walker whisky, was a sponsor of the Uganda Golf Union (UB1, UB6, UB7, and UB12). Supporting or sustaining the sport appeared to be a common theme throughout UBL's social media posts. One post showed the Attorney General of Uganda presenting UBL with a certificate of appreciation for supporting golf in Uganda; the post included the Chairman of UBL stating that the brewery will help to grow the game of golf and 'inspire young people to join the sport' (UB6).

These posts also demonstrated another common practice, tagging others in the posts. This was evident in four out of the five social media posts (UB1, UB6, UB7, and UB12). Uganda Breweries tagged individuals such as the Attorney General described above (UB6) but also tagged brands such as @JohnnieWalkerUG in their posts (UB7 and UB12).

Other practices observed included sponsoring special events (UB1 and UB6), reporting results or fixtures (UB7) and featuring politicians in posts (UB1).

Uganda Breweries Limited in Online News Outlets

Three news articles reported on UBL's sponsorship activities (UB3, UB4, and UB8). As with NBL, all three articles were positively framed and mentioned the value of the sponsorship deal. All three articles mentioned specific UBL brands such as Pilsner Lager (UB3 and UB8) and Tusker Lite beer (UB4). All three articles featured direct quotes from the sporting bodies involved, and two articles featured quotes from UBL (UB4 and UB8). Images featured in these articles were heavily branded with logos for Pilsner Lager (UB3 and UB8) and Tusker Lite beer (UB4). For example, one article reported on Tusker Lite's sponsorship of the Uganda National Basketball League. Images from the press conference announcing this sponsorship deal featured Tusker Lite branding throughout and included bottles of beer on the table and a giant branded cheque featuring the product and the value of the sponsorship deal (UB4).

Two articles focused on UBL brand Pilsner Lager sponsoring the Uganda Premier League. One article included the images of the beer brand sponsoring the player of the month, coach of the month and fan of the month (UB3). Another article included quotes from the Uganda Premier League Board Vice Chairman who described the sponsorship deal as 'rewarding fans and believe that this will help to make the local league even more exciting and attract even more fans to follow local football' (UB8).

Uganda Breweries Limited at Sporting Venues

Two venues, a golf club and a rugby ground, were visited which featured sponsorship activities from UBL products. The golf club was an exclusive members-only facility. During the visit, large billboards advertising Johnnie Walker whisky were observed at the entrance to the golf club. Immediately inside the gates there were more large advertisements for Johnnie Walker. Inside the club house the bar area was heavily branded with Tusker Malt signage above the bar and on various fridges throughout the club house. There was also branded signage for Johnnie Walker inside the club house (See [Appendix 3](#)).

The rugby ground included a sports bar situated within the sports ground. It is usually patronised by rugby players and fans and is open to the public for social activities and events beyond rugby games. There were large advertisements for Guinness at multiple locations, including large billboard advertisements, posters attached to the fencing, and pitch-side advertising hoardings. Guinness advertisements appeared to promote the product as something to consume whilst watching rugby, positioning it as the brand of choice for rugby fans. Inside the sports bar were further posters which featured Guinness logos, advertising rugby tournaments and fixtures. There were also posters featuring other UBL products such as Hennessy brandy, Ciroc vodka and Johnnie Walker as well as branded signage for Johnnie Walker (See [Appendix 3](#)).

Discussion

Our findings indicate that alcohol sports sponsorship is widespread in Uganda, particularly at the national level. We found evidence of multiple sponsorship deals within a range of professional sports. These included Nile Special's sponsorship of FUFA and the Ugandan National Football Team, Johnnie Walker's sponsorship of the Uganda Golf Club, Nile Special's sponsorship of the Uganda Rugby Team, Tusker Lite's sponsorship of the Uganda National Basketball League, and Pilsner Lager's sponsorship of the Uganda Premier League (football/soccer). Across these

sponsorship arrangements, several different activities were observed which explicitly promoted products or subtly blended them amongst other stimulating content (Purves & Critchlow, 2020). These included a presence on social media channels (e.g. X and TikTok), limited edition products featuring specific sponsorship campaigns, alcohol brand logos on match strips, advertising at various locations inside and outside the sporting venues, and alcohol industry representatives featuring in news reports.

The two main alcohol producers identified during our scoping were NBL and UBL. This is consistent with previous research on the alcohol industry's use of social media in Uganda (Lesch et al., 2024). These two producers are the largest in Uganda, with the former owned by AB InBev, and the latter a subsidiary of East African Breweries Limited, in which Diageo is a majority shareholder (NBL, 2024; UBL, 2024). Diageo and AB InBev are two of the largest multi-national alcohol corporations in the world; AB InBev produces a quarter of the world's beer, and Diageo's share of the distilled spirits market is reported as double that of its nearest competitor (Jernigan & Ross, 2020). Both companies have extensive experience of sponsoring individual teams, national sporting organisations, and international sporting mega events such as the FIFA World Cup (Collin & MacKenzie, 2006; Purves, Morgan & Critchlow, 2022). Research looking at the type, placement and content of alcohol marketing in urban areas of Kampala found that most of the advertising represented products owned by AB InBev and Diageo, reinforcing the international influence held by global alcohol producers (Madden et al., 2024).

Much of the sponsorship activity observed in this study positioned the brands as part of Ugandan culture, appealing to consumers and utilising the existing cultural capital and national pride people feel for their country, a tactic found in other sponsorship activities elsewhere in the African region (Dumbili, 2024). In exchange for financial resources, the sponsor gains intangible social and cultural benefits from their partnership with the sporting organisation which enhances their brand image and improves goodwill towards the brand (Yang & Goldfarb, 2015). The findings here demonstrate that alcohol sports sponsorship is multifaceted and draws upon a variety of activities to explicitly promote products or subtly blend them among existing attractive and stimulating content. By associating their products and brands with sports teams, players, and achievements, alcohol producers and distributors can capitalise on the emotional connections that consumers already have with these individuals or teams, thereby increasing their own visibility, appeal, and influence among their target market (Farrelly et al., 2006; Hastings et al., 2010; Purves et al., 2017). Purchasing certain brands becomes an aspiration for the consumer to emulate, or be similar to, their sporting heroes (Siahaya & Smits, 2020). Many social media posts and much of the advertising at the sporting venues featured images of messages related to personal or team glorification. For example, NBL's Cranes campaign specifically incentivised consumers to support their team and share in the team's achievements whilst also encouraging consumers to purchase their products.

There is little information reported in the public domain regarding the total financial value of sponsorship deals for alcohol producers or distributors. The newspaper reports included in this research stress that these sponsorship deals are worth a great deal of money to the sporting organisations, demonstrating how the alcohol industry supports and sustains various sports in Uganda. This implies that if this contribution were to be taken away, the sports would be unable to continue. This framing of transnational alcohol companies as part of the 'social fabric' and 'key economic actors' are part of the wider playbook used by alcohol and other industries internationally to avoid evidence-based policies that would reduce profits (Ulucanlar et al., 2023). The financial contribution made by the alcohol industry has historically been a major argument against implementing restrictions on alcohol sports sponsorship (Mongan, 2010; Purves, Gadsby, et al., 2022). In arguing against the Uganda Alcohol Control Bill, 2023, MPs stated that the Bill would negatively impact the economy, harm businesses, and reduce tax revenues (The Standard Uganda, 2024). It was also argued that guidance is already in place to regulate alcohol marketing practices. However, research has shown that this voluntary guidance is not being followed or enforced (Swahn et al., 2024). Without proper alcohol control policies in place, increased consumption and the harms that follow can diminish the benefits of economic development and bring increased costs to society (Rehm et al., 2024).

There is an established international evidence base which demonstrates that sports teams and organisations are used by alcohol producers to market their products and brands. The findings of this study are consistent with previous research which has explored sponsorship relations in other countries in Europe (Purves & Critchlow, 2020; Purves, Morgan & Critchlow, 2022). Sponsoring sports teams and organisations affords alcohol brands a high level of visibility, either through televised broadcasts of sporting events, those attending matches and events at sporting venues, or via social media. Extensive cue-exposure literature demonstrates alcohol-related imagery triggers heightened alcohol craving, intentions to drink, alcohol attentional biases and actual drinking behaviour (Di Lemma et al., 2015; Hollett et al., 2017). Previous research has shown that exposure to sports sponsorship influences alcohol-related attitudes, beliefs, and consumption amongst consumers, including young people (Brown, 2016; Critchlow et al., 2019; Houghton et al., 2014). A study from Australia also found that risky drinkers were at a greater risk of elevated craving and drinking intentions when exposed to alcohol marketing during sporting events (Hollett et al., 2024). Controls on alcohol marketing, including alcohol sponsorship, are recommended by the World Health Organization (WHO) as one of their three 'best buy' policies to reduce the harmful use of alcohol (WHO, 2013). There are currently no statutory restrictions on alcohol sports sponsorship in Uganda. Research has shown that implementing statutory restrictions on alcohol marketing, including sponsorship, can result in comparatively fewer alcohol sponsors compared to countries with no statutory restrictions, leading to decreased levels of exposure (Purves, Morgan & Critchlow, 2022). Therefore, it is important that

alcohol sponsorship is included in legislation which aims to restrict exposure to alcohol marketing.

Conclusion

These findings show that alcohol sports sponsorship in Uganda is widespread and multi-faceted. The types of sponsorship activities observed in this study mirror those used in other countries around the world. The main industry actors in Uganda were Nile Breweries and Uganda Breweries, subsidiaries of large, multinational alcohol companies. These industry actors use sports sponsorship to position themselves as central to Ugandan culture, heritage and the sustainability of sports across the country. Understanding how sports sponsorship is used to promote alcohol brands across Uganda is important to inform future policy decisions regarding alcohol marketing.

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Declaration of Interests

Richard Purves has previously received research funding for alcohol-related research from the Scottish Football Association (SFA) and Scottish Professional Football League (SPFL). Both organisations have commercial partnerships with unhealthy commodity industry companies, including alcohol producers, which make up less than 10% of their income. The other authors have no interests to declare.

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Reflexivity Statement

This study addresses local research and policy priorities by providing evidence on how alcohol sports sponsorship is carried out in Uganda. Local researchers were involved in all stages of study design, data collection, analysis and write-up. Local researchers were fully costed on the project, and this was covered by the project funding. Research staff involved in data collection are also co-authors on this paper. The study data were stored on a password-protected server which is accessible to all members of the research team, including partners at Makerere University. Data analysis was carried out by researchers at Stirling and Makerere Universities. Researchers at Stirling with more experience of using a case study approach supervised and trained researchers at Makerere throughout the project to develop their skills in data collection, analysis and dissemination.

FORUT provided extra funds to share the research in ways that best suit local needs, the design and conduct of which will be led by partners based in those communities/settings. The lead researcher from Makerere is included as second author on this paper. Safeguarding procedures were used to protect local research staff during data gathering and their work was directly supervised by a senior colleague at Makerere also named as an author.

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