



SHORT REPORT

Easter Eggs & 'Easter Eggs': Alcohol Branded Chocolate Eggs & Intoxigenic Environments in Ireland

Frank Houghton¹

¹ HEALR Research Group, Limerick Institute of Technology, Limerick, Ireland.

Corresponding author: Dr. Frank Houghton;
Address: HEALR Research Group, Limerick Institute of Technology;
Telephone: + 353-(0)87-7101346;
E-mail: Frank.Houghton@LIT.ie



Abstract

Alcohol branded Easter Eggs were observed in a mainstream Irish supermarket. The Public Health (Alcohol) Act, 2018 fails to deal with such child-friendly marketing. An amendment to the current legislation to counter this deficit is urgently required. The absence of such legislation is particularly notable given the longstanding inclusion of clauses to this effect in tobacco control legislation in Ireland.

Keywords: *alcohol branding, alcohol control, alcohol marketing, children, Easter eggs, Ireland.*

Conflict of interests: None declared.

The term 'Easter Egg' to define a hidden message, image, or feature in a computer game, film, or other, normally electronic, medium, was coined by Steve Wright of Atari in the late 1970s (1). The irony therefore in spotting traditional chocolate Easter Eggs emblazoned with alcohol industry messaging on the shelves of a mainstream supermarket (Tesco, Nenagh, Co. Tipperary) in Ireland was significant.

Two examples of such alcohol branded Easter Eggs were observed, positioned at a height of less than one metre, and surrounded by a selection of other well-known brands, including Cadbury's Cream Eggs, Rolo, and Lion (see Figure One A-D). The alcohol brands noted were Baileys (cream, cocoa, whiskey liqueur) and Guinness (stout).

Figure 1 (A-D). Guinness and Bailey's Easter Eggs on Display



Of particular concern was the Guinness Easter Egg, which featured not just its iconic dark livery and easily identifiable harp logo, but three 'Guinness Chocolate Pints' sweets as well (see Figure One D). The blatant deficit in the protection of children from alcohol advertising in the Public Health (Alcohol)

Act 2018 that allows such marketing is yet another inadequacy in this legislation that has been identified (2,3). Although Section 17 of the Act prohibits alcohol branding on children's clothing, other goods are not subject to any such controls, even sweets and confectionary (see Table 1).

Table 1. Section 17 of Ireland's Public Health (Alcohol) Act 2018

<p>17. (1) It shall be an offence for a person to—</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">(a) manufacture, for sale in the State,(b) import, for sale in the State, or(c) sell to a person who is in the State, <p>an article of clothing intended to be worn by a child, where the article promotes alcohol consumption or bears the name of an alcohol product or the trade mark, emblem, marketing image or logo, by reference to which an alcohol product is marketed or sold.</p>

An important parallel is the ban on sweets/candy that resemble tobacco products (Section 9 of Public Health [Tobacco] [Amendment] Act, 2004; Section 38 of Public Health [Tobacco] Act, 2002), which was introduced almost 20 years ago. Ireland's laws on such tobacco marketing to children through candy and sweets align with Article 13 of the World Health Organization's (WHO) influential Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC). It is evident that a similar prohibition on alcohol marketing is urgently required. Such marketing is particularly problematic given Ireland's troubled relationship with alcohol (4,5), and in light of the proven impact of marketing, advertising, and sponsorship by the alcohol industry on adults, youths and children (6-8). A plethora of studies have also clearly demonstrated that children and youths in Ireland are in danger themselves of developing similarly problematic habits of alcohol misuse to those of adults here and so continuing the cycle (9). Youth

and child alcohol misuse is of added concern because of research indicating the accentuated impact of alcohol on developing adolescent physiology and personality (10). It must be acknowledged that Easter Eggs featuring alcohol branding and logos are neither innocent, nor inconsequential. Such coded marketing reinforces the ubiquitous nature of our intoxicogenic environments. An amendment to the Public Health (Alcohol) Act, 2018, is urgently required to address this, and the many other deficits in the legislation that have been identified to date. Now is not the time for avoidant and timid political leadership on this issue. In the meantime, retailers should refrain from selling such alcohol branded chocolate eggs, or failing that, restrict such sales to within the newly developed alcohol section of their premises. It is also clear that continual vigilance by Public Health and alcohol control advocates is required to combat the machinations of the alcohol industry.

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