



# Alcohol consumption motivations and behaviours in Hong Kong

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## Abstract

**Purpose** – The purpose of this paper is to investigate the way Hong Kong drinkers have internalised the meanings associated with alcoholic beverages and how these meanings influence the motivation to drink. Also of interest was how symbolic meanings and motivations are similar or different to those in Western nations and the implications for the marketing of alcohol products.

**Design/methodology/approach** – An ethnographic approach comprising participant observations and interviews is used to generate data relating to alcohol consumption. Observations are conducted at 11 venues including pubs, clubs, restaurants, and a convention centre. More than 40h of observations yield data pertaining to public drinking while the interview data also provides insight into the nature of private drinking in Hong Kong.

**Findings** – Alcohol consumption in Hong Kong may be primarily a function of the need to convey desired images to specific and generalised others. The finding that product symbolism dominates taste considerations supports previous research relating to beer consumption but varies somewhat from identified motivations for wine consumption in developed markets.

**Practical implications** – Alcohol marketers may benefit from adapting their products to suit the specific taste preferences of Chinese consumers, although care would need to be taken to ensure the symbolic value of the beverage is not diminished in the process. A focus on the situational context and moderate consumption in promotional messages may increase perceived salience.

**Originality/value** – Little previous research on alcohol consumption motivations has been conducted in Hong Kong. The findings provide insight into likely characteristics of the future alcohol market in mainland China.

**Keywords** China, Hong Kong, Alcoholic drinks, Consumer behaviour, Symbolism

**Paper type** Research paper

## 1. Introduction

As the world alcohol market continues to globalise, of growing interest to marketers are the variations in alcohol-related consumer behaviours in different countries. In the Asia Pacific region, the size of the Chinese market and its rapid commercial evolution make it an especially attractive market for producers of alcohol products (Balestrini and Gamble, 2006; Jenster and Cheng, 2008). While the alcohol consumption rate has plateaued in Australia and other western nations, consumption in China is increasing (World Health Organization (WHO), 2004). In the period 1985-2003 alone, the per capita consumption of alcohol in China more than tripled (Commission for Distilled Spirits, 2005). In 2003, the annual per capita consumption for pure alcohol was 5.21, which was just over half the Australian per capita rate of 9.01 (WHO, 2005). However, patterns of consumption in China are different from elsewhere as males account for around 90 per cent of all alcohol intake and spirits are the most popular form of alcohol, followed by beer and then wine (WHO, 2004). In Australia, for example, alcohol consumption is more evenly distributed between men and women and the popularity order is beer, wine, then spirits (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2006; WHO, 2004).



The purpose of the present study was to explore alcohol-related beliefs and behaviours in Hong Kong to provide insight into an alcohol market that is in transition. Other Asian countries that have made this transition have demonstrated significant changes in alcohol consumption patterns in aggregate and among particular population segments (e.g. Lim *et al.*, 2007), and it is therefore of interest to marketers targeting this large emerging market to understand how it will evolve in the future. Hong Kong was selected as the study site within China as the greater exposure of this city to the global alcohol market relative to other Chinese cities provides an indication of likely market conditions in mainland China in the future (Kim *et al.*, 2008).

Much of the previous work on Chinese drink consumption focused on attitudes to alcohol (e.g. Liu and Murphy, 2007) or provided primarily descriptive accounts of the development of the market (e.g. Jenster and Cheng, 2008). The present study adopted a more macro approach that involved analysing *in situ* consumption practices and placing these in the broader context of the motivation for alcohol consumption. The findings have relevance for marketers seeking a deeper understanding of the Chinese market and for current conceptualisations of consumer motivations pertaining to alcohol consumption. The following sections provide a conceptual background to this exploratory study by briefly outlining the varied approaches to alcohol consumption motivations in the anthropology, sociology, psychology, health, and marketing literatures and summarising what is already known about drinking behaviour in Chinese communities.

### 1.1 Why do people drink alcohol?

Within anthropology, Douglas' (1987b) edited work entitled *Constructive Drinking: Perspectives on Drink from Anthropology* remains the most influential analysis of alcohol use. Douglas suggested two primary reasons for alcohol consumption:

- (1) celebration – whereby drinking encourages stronger social ties within a community; and
- (2) personal identification – whereby beverage selection and consumption allow individuals to communicate their place in the social world.

Thus, for instance, in many western societies alcohol consumption is used as a marker of the move from work (public) time to private time (Gusfield, 1987). Heath (1999, 2000) also considered the consumption of alcohol in some depth and produced 11 key categories analysing consumption motivation, the most important of which were taste, celebration, relaxation, sociability and hospitality, and mood alteration.

Sociologists tend to take one of two views towards alcohol consumption. The first considers the pastime as abnormal and thus alcohol becomes a social problem to be dealt with (e.g. Cox, 1990; Hanson, 1995). An alternative perspective, reflecting the second anthropological reason outlined above, views alcohol consumption as an aspect of establishing group or communal identity. Bourdieu (1986) provided a detailed account of the use of food and drink as means of classifying consumers and their places in society. In his analysis, what is drunk and when and where it is drunk are used to demonstrate good taste, group membership, and differentiation from other groups. Such membership and differentiation require knowledge of the “correct” drink to use in each situation. A variation on Bourdieu’s approach to alcohol consumption has been recently developed in the contemporary analysis of “lifestyle” as a consumer goal (Demossier, 2004; Tomlinson, 1990).

Examining alcohol from a psychological perspective, Levy (1986) explored consumption motivations across a broad range of beverage categories. He suggested that production

methods, variety of drink, beverage appearance, and impact on the body all combine to imply certain meanings. He described an “ascent” of consumption which reflects status, starting with the bland, nutritious and simple, and rising to the more complex, strong and intoxicating. This progression mirrors other changes. First, at a moral level, there is a move from “virtuous” drinking to more “depraved” drinking. Second, at a more concrete level, there is a move from lighter (perhaps purer) drinks to those that are darker in colour. Such a perspective has been shared by other commentators such as Barthes (1957/2000) who provided a dyadic analysis of the role of wine and milk in French culture.

In the health promotion literature, emphasis has been placed on alcohol-related expectancies and their influence on individuals’ intentions to (over) consume (Shroder and Perrine, 2007). In particular, the use of alcohol for mood alteration and social lubrication has been widely noted, resulting in recommendations to allocate greater attention to individuals’ mental states in studies of alcohol consumption (Buckner *et al.*, 2006).

Reflecting its interdisciplinary nature, the marketing literature shares many of these emphases. Sociocultural and personality variables have been recognised as influential in alcohol consumption decisions at both the brand and category level (Pettigrew, 2001, 2002; Treise *et al.*, 1999). In addition, studies focusing specifically on wine consumption have highlighted the motivational importance of situational contexts and aesthetic appreciation (Charters, 2006; Pettigrew, 2003; Pettigrew and Charters, 2006; Quester and Smart, 1998). To date, however, most studies have focused exclusively on drinkers in western nations and there is little appreciation of alcohol consumption motivations in eastern cultures. The present study begins to address this deficit.

### *1.2 Alcohol consumption in China and Hong Kong*

While alcohol consumption rates in China are growing, they are relatively low compared to those of western nations (Kim *et al.*, 2008). This may be partially attributed to specific characteristics of Chinese consumers, particularly the Chinese notion of “moral drinking” that has its roots in Confucian philosophy and is thus deeply rooted in Chinese values (Smart, 2005). Essentially, moral drinking is moderate consumption “that is thought to emphasize and strengthen all that is good in a person, and to contribute to his or her well-being” (Heath, 2000, p. 167). However, by extension this could become “drinking to forget” and even ultimately lead to temporary oblivion. The line between “good” drinking and “inappropriate” drinking may be blurred; the principle, however, is that limited mood alteration is acceptable, even virtuous, behaviour (Heath, 2000).

Another factor may be the limiting influence of physiological attributes. ALDH2, the main enzyme involved in the catalysation of alcohol, is commonly deficient among Asians (Thomasson *et al.*, 1991). Deficiency can result in excessive flushing while drinking and exacerbated hangovers that can discourage consumption (Nayak *et al.*, 2008).

Despite the factors that limit the expansion of alcohol consumption amongst the Chinese, global forces have the potential to significantly increase intake above current levels. For example, wine consumption has been increasing steadily across the country since the mid 20th century when it became more financially attractive due to increasing government taxes on Baijiu, the traditional grain-based alcoholic beverage (Jenster and Cheng, 2008). Perceived health-giving properties and the high social status associated with wine have also served to stimulate increased consumption despite the tendency for many Chinese drinkers to dislike the taste of the beverage (Jenster and Cheng, 2008). One common story relating to wine consumption is the tendency of wealthy Chinese consumers to buy expensive red wine (in order to maintain “face”) but then to

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mix it with lemonade or other soft drinks in order to make it sweeter and more palatable (Collins *et al.*, 2006).

Alcohol consumption levels are increasing particularly rapidly in Hong Kong and are high relative to those in mainland China. For example, Hong Kong Chinese currently consume 1.8l of wine per year per capita (Wine Institute of California, 2008), which is considerably higher than the 0.4l per capita average in mainland China (Bizintel, 2007). This variation has been largely attributed to Hong Kong's greater westernisation and the resulting expansion of its alcoholic beverage industry (Kim *et al.*, 2008). This flags a likely dramatic increase in wine consumption throughout China as the country becomes more globalised. Similarly, cognac has become the celebratory drink of choice in Hong Kong due to its ability to signal prosperity and social status (Smart, 2005), which suggests the likelihood of a high growth market for this product across the country.

Given the particular historical, physiological, and cultural aspects of the Chinese alcohol market, of interest was the way in which Hong Kong drinkers have internalised the meanings associated with alcoholic beverages and their consumption and how these meanings influence the motivation to drink. Also of interest was how symbolic meanings and motivations are similar or different to those that have been previously documented in western nations. These issues are of importance to those seeking to meet the growing demand for alcohol products in the Chinese market as the particular characteristics of Chinese consumers may suggest the need for alternative products or communications strategies to ensure they are appropriate for the local context. Similarly, the issues are relevant to social marketers seeking to encourage responsible alcohol consumption in this market.

## 2. Method

This project explored previously under-researched phenomena with a focus on often unconscious or unarticulated symbolic motivations. A qualitative stance was therefore considered appropriate, specifically an ethnographic approach comprised primarily of participant observations but including *in situ* and traditional interviews. Such an approach is appropriate for exploring consumption behaviours for which culture is expected to play a substantial role and where consumption behaviours are enacted in public environments (Arnould and Wallendorf, 1994). Over a period of nine days, observations were conducted at varied locations selected to provide access to different kinds of drinkers in a wide range of drinking contexts to obtain data exhibiting broad variation. More than 40 h of observations were conducted at 11 venues including pubs, clubs, restaurants, and a convention centre. The observations yielded data pertaining to public drinking and the interview data consolidated these findings while also providing some insight into the nature of private drinking in Hong Kong.

During the data collection period, impromptu conversations were instigated with numerous individuals attending each of the venues. These conversations lasted between 5 and 45 min and were conducted with patrons, wait staff, and a venue manager. Two further interviews were conducted with executives from international alcohol distributors to provide an importer's interpretation of the role of alcohol in Hong Kong. These distributors were selected on the basis of their ability to speak English, their willingness to participate in the study, and their seniority in their organisations that gave them detailed knowledge of the Hong Kong market relative to other markets in which their companies operate.

While the focus of the study was on the role of alcohol consumption among local drinkers, interviews were conducted with both Hong Kong locals and foreigners living in Hong Kong who were patronising the venues attended. This was useful for obtaining an etic perspective (see Wallendorf and Arnould, 1991) as foreign interviewees were able to comment at length on the similarities and differences between the drinking culture in Hong Kong and that of their home countries. In addition, this alternative viewpoint offered a form of triangulation for the study, adding to its credibility (Wallendorf and Belk, 1989). During data collection, interviews were conducted with drinkers from Australia, New Zealand, the Philippines, and the UK, as well as local Chinese.

In some cases, once rapport had been established with interviewees it was possible to request that the conversation be audio recorded. For those interviews that were not recorded, verbal notes were spoken into a dictaphone immediately afterwards to capture the insights obtained. Given the prevalence of mobile telephones and the dim lighting of most of the venues visited, this form of note-taking did not attract undue attention from patrons.

Data collection commenced with some preliminary observations that informed subsequent observation episodes and the topics discussed during interviews (as per Adler and Adler, 1994). As well as identifying relevant issues, this approach provided a means of reconciling what was seen with what was heard. For example, regular comments about Hong Kong Chinese being very moderate drinkers needed to be accounted for in light of their significant representation in the pubs and clubs visited. In this instance, interviewees explained that it was the norm to buy one drink and make it last all evening, allowing them to enjoy the experience of the venue while engaging in low levels of alcohol consumption.

The observation notes and interview transcripts were imported into NVivo qualitative data analysis software for coding and interpretation. Themes related to beliefs and behaviours associated with alcohol consumption in Hong Kong were generated by constant reiteration between content nodes and the interview and field note transcripts as per the constant comparative method (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). This included identifying areas of similarity and difference between

- informants' verbalisations and their behaviours;
- drinkers' accounts and those of bar staff and industry representatives; and
- the study findings and the results of previous research.

### **3. Findings**

While those interviewed tended to consider their choice of beverage to be largely the result of personal taste and habit, there were numerous indicators that beverage selection in Hong Kong is heavily culturally and socially influenced. The findings of this study suggest that the decision to consume alcohol and the selection of particular types and brands of alcohol in Hong Kong may be primarily a function of the need to convey desired images to specific and generalised others. As indicated earlier, the symbolic and communicative role of alcohol consumption has been readily acknowledged in the anthropology, sociology, and psychology literatures (Dichter, 1964; Douglas, 1987a; Murcott, 1992), and the findings of the present study indicate that the Hong Kong context provides support for the primacy of this. Two symbiotic aspects of the symbolic element of alcohol-related decisions were especially apparent: the desire to convey an image of sophistication and cosmopolitanism, and the almost complete irrelevance of personal perceptions of beverage flavour in consumption choices. These themes are discussed below.

### 3.1 Alcohol consumption as signifier

Much alcohol consumption evident in the public drinking venues visited appeared to have a strong display component. This process of display included the choice of which drinking environment to patronise and the selection of specific beverages. In terms of the venues, most bars and clubs visited incorporated eastern and western influences but a European style dominated. For example, wood panelling with deep green paintwork and furnishings were frequently observed in bars. In these venues, the Asian influence was typically limited to the artwork hanging on walls and the language of some of the signage. Even those bars patronised almost exclusively by locals were typically very western in design. The interiors of the nightclubs were also almost indistinguishable from those located in other parts of the world, with an exception being the large numbers of cognac bottles displayed behind the bar. According to the nightclub manager interviewed, the dominance of non-Asian design and décor in these venues reflects a desire among the locals to experience an environment that allows them simulated entry into the international arena:

I would just say people here don't want to be closed off, just stuck in Hong Kong. They want to let the rest of the world in. That's what we are trying to do here, trying to be a bit more cosmopolitan.

Much of the music played in the various venues was western. Music appeared to be very much part of the drinking experience, especially in venues featuring a karaoke bar. Even in the non-karaoke bars, patrons enjoyed singing along to American and English songs, especially classic pop songs. Their obvious knowledge of the lyrics to these songs indicates regular exposure to and an ongoing enjoyment of aspects of other cultures. This involvement in the musical aspect of the environment also suggests that consuming alcohol was not the prime motivation for attending these venues, an interpretation that was supported by the observation that many local drinkers sat over the same drink for hours. By comparison, non-Asian patrons in the same venues were observed to consume numerous drinks over the same period. Instead of representing the primary purpose for attending drinking venues, alcohol consumption, or in some cases feigned alcohol consumption, may be merely an entry requirement that gives legitimacy to their presence in these locations. Participating in the social interactions occurring in drinking venues and soaking up the cosmopolitan atmosphere of western-themed bars and clubs appeared to be of greater importance than engaging in the act of alcohol consumption.

The use of alcohol consumption rituals as a means of accessing symbolism that is representative of the international community was also evident in the popularity of imported alcohol products. XO and Heineken were frequently discussed as favourite brands among local drinkers. Heineken in particular was highly visible in the venues visited – both in terms of the number of patrons drinking it and the amount of signage on display. Local brands, by comparison, were described as more appropriate for home consumption because of their lower cost and less prestigious reputations. Imported wines were considered to be reflective of high status and were saved mainly for drinking during special meals. A barmaid working in one of the bars also worked in a liquor store which allowed her to provide insight into both public and private drinking behaviours. She told a story of a man who came into the store to buy wine to practice drinking at home:

He came in and said, "I've got wine at home, I'm tasting wine. I want to get just a wine so that when I go out, I can hold a wine glass."

The wine industry representatives noted that the number of wine appreciation courses available in Hong Kong has increased many-fold in recent years and that such courses

are popular amongst those wanting to make an impression on others with their knowledge and consumption of the product. The desire to portray the image of being a sophisticated drinker was also apparent in the tendency for young women in particular to drink water all night but to drink it from wine glasses to give the impression of wine consumption. Although wine has not been traditionally popular in China, its increasing availability in Hong Kong and its strong association with the western world have resulted in it becoming a highly regarded product. According to those interviewed, wine conveys a range of desirable symbolic meanings including intellect, success, and affluence. French wine is considered particularly effective at signifying such positive attributes as it is perceived as being of higher quality than wines from other regions of the world and this is reflected in its relative price. Some also perceived wine, although primarily red wine, to possess health-giving properties.

### *3.2 Relative irrelevance of taste preferences*

The social and cultural significance of alcohol consumption was also apparent in the common tendency for young drinkers in public drinking venues to combine alcohol consumption with dice games. There were various versions of these games, some of which involved a higher degree of chance while others required the constant calculation of probability. In some cases, losing required the rapid consumption of a shot glass of beer. Participating in these games generally required players to forsake any individual taste preferences and instead consume the type of alcoholic beverage that was socially prescribed for drinking during games. As noted by one of the players, "All people, when they play this game, drink Heineken". The use of shot glasses during drinking games served to reduce total alcohol intake compared to other cultures, such as Australia, where full glasses are typically consumed by those individuals who lose rounds during drinking games (e.g. Polizzotto *et al.* 2007).

The use of promotion girls was common in some of the venues visited. Attractive young women were hired to wear uniforms branded with the name of a particular alcoholic beverage, usually an imported beer, and mingle with drinkers. The girls distributed give-aways (e.g. cigarette lighters) that featured the product's brand name and encouraged the placement of orders for the promoted beverage. Under this kind of sales pressure, beverage selection is likely to be more a function of conforming to expectation than abiding by individual taste preferences.

Price was another element that influenced beverage selection. One drinker who described himself as belonging to the "lowest class" discussed how he chooses local beer brands because of their relative cost advantage:

Knight is pretty good. It's almost as good as San Mig [San Miguel] but much cheaper, it's only \$2.70 [. . .] To me it doesn't really matter, beer is beer. It's either light or it's strong [. . .] I can have two cans of that [Knight], but for maybe San Mig, perhaps only one can.

Among the wealthier drinkers, selecting beverages that they perceive to be associated with sophistication and cosmopolitanism can require them to overcome taste aversion. Alcoholic beverages, particularly beer, often require a degree of "acquired liking" (Clark, 1998, p. 639), which results from the acclimatisation of the palate to an unusual or previously disliked flavour. The relatively recent introduction of European alcoholic beverages into mainstream Chinese society means that many drinkers are not accustomed to their flavours and can find it difficult to enjoy them when served on their own.

A further indicator that alcohol was consumed for reasons other than enjoyment of taste was the reported desire among some drinkers to experience the physical effects

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of inebriation, albeit not to a debilitating extent. Dizziness was described as both a positive and negative outcome of drinking alcohol. The following field notes taken during the observation of a business function held at a convention centre illustrate the apparent desirability of light-headedness among younger Hong Kong Chinese women. The interesting point is that they feigned inebriation even though they were not actually consuming alcoholic beverages:

Five women who looked to be in their early 20s sat together at the end of the table. Although they were obviously part of the larger group, they kept to themselves and did not interact with the males at the other end of the table. All the couples were in the middle, separating the male and female singles from each other. All the single women were drinking water and fruit juice. They joked with one of their number, pretending that she was giggling because she had been drinking alcohol, and one said, "What if your parents found out?" The tone of the question suggested this would be a terrible fate. The "drunk" one pretended to be dizzy and giggled even more.

In a similar vein, a male interviewee discussed how when he drank at home alone he liked to feel dizzy but that this would be inappropriate for public drinking:

When I go out I don't drink [alcohol] because I get red on my face and might get a little dizzy. Of course I won't get into trouble, but the thing is you'd be like a crazy person, and might get into trouble [...] I drink at home because I can drink as many cans as I like. And if I get dizzy, my head is starting to turn around and around, I just lie on my bed. It is nice, very nice.

The concern about being unable to control one's behaviour when under the influence of alcohol was articulated numerous times by various interviewees and seemed to be a significant constraint on individuals' consumption of alcohol. In particular, the single women at the convention centre function described above completely abstained from alcohol while the men and the married women did not. The need for the single women to be able to maintain self-control may have been perceived to be greater than for men, who could be in less moral and physical danger if inebriated, and married women who have men to look after them.

Cultural norms that favour self-control are less conducive to the heavy consumption of alcohol, which can reduce inhibitions and thus prevent the drinker from demonstrating the culturally-appropriate level of restraint (Caetano *et al.*, 1998). At some venues there were groups of westerners who were apparently inebriated and behaving in a raucous manner. The Asian patrons completely ignored their presence and did not even look in their direction during the loud outbursts that occurred periodically. The apparent aversion to loss of control suggests that even a strong taste preference for alcoholic products would be unlikely to result in high levels of individual consumption. This is not to say that drunkenness (either real or feigned) does not occur among local drinkers, but this was observed much less frequently than among the western drinkers present in the same venues.

#### 4. Discussion

This exploration raises a number of insights relevant to the use of cultural products and the transfer of these products and their symbolic meanings into a different cultural context. It also has a number of possible implications for those exporting alcohol products into China, as well as those concerned about the wider social and health contexts of the consumption of alcohol.

First, this study reinforces the importance of product symbolism over and above taste considerations. This accords with western research that has focused on beer



(Pettigrew, 2001, 2002), but varies from the results of wine studies that suggest more complex symbolic and hedonic motivating factors for drinking (Charters and Pettigrew, 2008; Ritchie, 2007). The explanation for this appears to be the purpose for which alcohol is consumed in China. Rather than representing an inherently enjoyable pastime with aesthetic benefits, alcohol consumption may instead have one of two primary roles: a functional role in achieving an altered physical state (reminiscent of youth drinking in Western cultures (Peake, 1994)) or a symbolic role in providing a means of communicating status to others. The ability of consumption to assist in the formation of self-identity has been appreciated for some time (Belk, 1988; Noth, 1988), although there is less understanding of the conditions under which this occurs. The findings of the present study suggest that individual taste preferences will be willingly forsaken where the symbolic information contained in the product is readily apparent and appreciated at a cultural level and where consumption rituals are in a state of flux due to economic transition processes.

A practical implication of this finding is that a reliance on famous brands for their status information indicates that French wine producers, for instance, may have greater potential in this region than New World wine producers who have yet to achieve the same level of reputation. High status alcohol brands may be able to capitalise on their reputations by introducing product variations in markets such as China where taste preferences are not accommodated by current product offerings. For example, the tendency for some drinkers to mix their cognac and wine with soft drinks suggests there may be a place for products that are less intense in flavour or are adapted to a taste for sweeter drinks.

Another important consideration is the role of the drinking environment. The study findings indicate that attendance at a particular type of venue may be of much greater importance to consumers than the consumption of alcohol, to the extent that alcohol consumption will be feigned to justify their presence. In recent years, analysis of place has been raised as a missing component in consumption studies (Kleine and Baker, 2004). The present study highlights the critical importance of the concept of place to the understanding of alcohol consumption and suggests the need for future research in this area.

A final issue worth noting is the apparent general acceptability of consuming alcohol and the tolerance of its effect on the body, at least to the point of mild mood-alteration. This reflects the idea of "moral drinking" noted by Heath (2000), which is combined with the need to maintain face by retaining personal control (Smart, 2005). Thus one final interpretation that can be drawn from this study is the significance of the dichotomous desire of many drinkers to retain self-control while exhibiting alcohol consumption behaviours that indicate their worldliness. This suggests that in the Chinese context, communications are likely to be more effective if a restrained approach to alcohol consumption is depicted wherein alcohol serves to lubricate communication and interaction, not impede it. In addition, as the country becomes more integrated into the global alcohol market with the associated concerns for consumer health, social marketing efforts to encourage responsible drinking will be assisted by a cultural tendency towards moderation.

To conclude, this study explored alcohol consumption in Hong Kong to provide insight into the nature of the emerging Chinese market and the implications for the marketing of alcohol products. The dominance of symbolic consumption over taste preferences differentiates this market from more mature alcohol markets and suggests that varying approaches to marketing communications and new product development

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may be required to effectively address Chinese consumers' needs for palatable alcohol products that effectively convey desired symbolic information.

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### Further reading

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