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## **CROATIAN STUDENTS AND ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION – IMPLICATIONS FOR SOCIAL MARKETING**

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### ***Abstract***

*Social marketing as a discipline that promotes products, services and ideas for voluntary behaviour change can be implemented in solving alcohol abuse problems. The WHO report (2014) on global alcohol abuse positioned Croatia on a high fourth place with an average of 15.1 litres of annual alcohol consumption per capita. To develop efficient marketing programmes for change of youth alcohol abuse, it is necessary to analyze existing behaviour, motivations and attitudes toward alcohol consumption, which is the aim of this paper. A sample of 379 students of a university from Croatia participated in the research. For the purposes of this study three measurement instruments were used: the AUDIT (Alcohol Use Disorder Identification test), motivation measurement for alcohol consumption and demographic questionnaire. The majority of respondents (54%) belong to the group of moderate alcohol consumers. The most important alcohol consumption motives for Croatian students belong to the group of social motives, i.e. to obtain positive social rewards. In general, the most consumed types of alcoholic drinks at home are wine and beer/cider, but at bars or in clubs where most of alcohol is actually consumed in case of students, there is strong preference for spirits. Majority of respondents consume alcohol during weekend nights. The major target group to aim social marketing efforts at are male students at undergraduate level, aged 23 or less that live either with their parents or with fellow students in private accommodation (out of campus). The major*

*marketing efforts should be directed toward promotion of different, alcohol-free, or responsible drinking lifestyles.*

**Keywords:** *Students, alcohol consumption, social marketing, Croatia*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

According to the WHO report (2014), out of 186 member countries Croatia holds a high 4<sup>th</sup> position in alcohol consumption with an average of 15.1litres of annual alcohol consumption per capita.

There are two aspects of youth alcohol consumption: one is underage alcohol consumption (-18), and the other one is full age (18+) but young population (usually students) alcohol consumption. The first one is usually covered and more or less efficiently managed through legal regulations, but the other one is usually more difficult to control and manage for different reasons. Population 18+ in most of the countries has no legal restrictions in buying and consuming alcohol on one hand, and on the other, student population is usually the one that is for the first time out of parental control and being able to make independent decisions about own behaviour. Alcohol abuse by young adults (18+) often brings increased health risk and violation of family and social relations. There is evidence of increased risk of accidents, injuries, crime and violence, as well as higher exposure to poverty and social exclusion of such individuals (National Strategy for Prevention of Adversely Usage of Alcohol and Alcohol Induced Disorders for the Period 2011 – 2016). The significance of alcohol abuse problems in Croatia can be illustrated by the fact that number and weightiness of diseases related to alcohol abuse are the third public health problem in Croatia, right behind heart attack and stroke (Zoričić, 2015). The costs that can be ascribed to alcohol abuse in Croatia make 2-5% of GDP (National Strategy for Prevention of Adversely Usage of Alcohol and Alcohol Induced Disorders for the Period 2011 - 2016.). Being aware of alcohol abuse problems, in 2010 Croatian Government established the “National Strategy for Prevention of Adversely Usage of Alcohol and Alcohol Induced Disorders for the Period 2011 - 2016”. All these facts speak in favour of researching this issue from various aspects.

Social marketing is a discipline that promotes products, services and ideas for voluntary behaviour change by offering the benefits to target groups, reducing the perceived barriers to behaviour change and by motivating participation in different activities that support the change (Kotler & Roberto, 1989). Social marketing is often applied for social issues where voluntary change is required and where motivation, ability or opportunity (MOA) is low (Rothschild, 1999). Alcohol abuse is one of such cases.

To develop efficient marketing programs for change of youth alcohol abuse, it is necessary to analyze existing behaviour, motivations and attitudes toward alcohol consumption, which is the main aim of this paper. We also aim to emphasize the need for effective interventions, particularly through social marketing activities. By identifying risk factors and correlating warning signs of alcohol abuse among students, it may be possible to provide more effective social marketing strategies in both prevention

and intervention to the situations of socially undesirable and even unacceptable behaviour and its consequences.

The article is structured in a following manner: after first introductory part, the second section gives a literature overview of major concepts included in the research: youth alcohol abuse, alcohol consumption patterns in Croatia and the role of social marketing in prevention of students' alcohol abuse. The third section is the research part and provides methodological explanations, presents research results and discussion of findings and their implications for social marketing. The final section of the paper is conclusion.

## **2. LITERATURE OVERVIEW**

### **2.1. Youth alcohol abuse**

The majority of the studies on youth alcohol abuse are related to medical issues of alcohol consumption and some of them to marketing issues that include social, psychological and motivation issues. In this research we focus on social marketing issues.

The existing contemporary research on youth alcohol abuse has identified a range of socio-economic factors (Dantzer et al. 2006), environmental factors, i.e. laws and regulations (Chaloupka & Wechsler, 1996), and psychological factors (Britton, 2004) that impact students' alcohol abuse.

Some of the recent research has focused on the role of exposure of young people to alcohol promotion and marketing (Anderson et al. 2009; Hurtz et al, 2007; Snyder et al. 2006; Smith and Foxcroft, 2009, de Bruijn et al. 2016, Stouts et al. 2017, Jernigan et al. 2017, and others). All of these studies show the existing interconnection between prior alcohol advertising and marketing exposure and subsequent alcohol drinking behaviour in young people. Alcohol marketing, particularly advertising, seems to have strong influence on young people attitudes and perceptions. These create their expectations and intentions to consume alcohol once they are allowed to (18+) or even earlier (Fleming, Thorson & Atkin, 2004).

Gomberg et al. (2001) studied the perceptions of students' drinking norms and students' behaviour related to alcohol consumption. Both studies have tested social marketing campaigns effectiveness patterns in the US, as well as the one of Glassman et al. (2010), which focus was on drinking and driving.

White and Hingson (2014) identify the whole range of factors that influence university students' alcohol consumption: from an individual's genetic susceptibility to the positive and negative effects of alcohol, alcohol use during high school, campus norms related to drinking, expectations regarding the benefits and detrimental effects of drinking, penalties for underage drinking, parental attitudes about drinking while at college, whether one is member of a Greek organization or involved in athletics, to conditions within the larger community that determine how accessible and affordable

alcohol is. Probably the most complex study on motivation for alcohol consumption by Cox and Klinger (1988) has identified the following motives: drinking for social reasons, to cope with negative emotions, to enhance mood, and to avoid social isolation or rejection as the major ones in student population. They are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

## Alcohol consumption motives matrix

	POSITIVE	NEGATIVE
INTERNAL	enhance motives (to enhance positive mood)	coping motives (to reduce negative emotions)
EXTERNAL	social motives (to obtain positive social reward)	conformity motives (to avoid social rejection and isolation)

Source: Adapted from Cox and Klinger (1988)

## 2.2. General alcohol consumption patterns in Croatia

Very similar to elsewhere in Europe, young people in Croatia are brought up in the environment where alcohol consumption is an everyday habit, and alcoholic drinks are perceived as acceptable in almost any occasion – from increasing pleasure to „drowning“ problems. It is neither morally nor legally sanctioned for adults (18+) as long as no problematic behaviours occur. Moderate alcohol consumption is even encouraged by different economic measures and it is an indispensable part of social and public events (Lacković, 2005). Moreover, the media often discusses positive, protective effects of moderate alcohol consumption for heart and coronary diseases.

Although there is a national legal enacted minimum age for on and off premises sales and consumption of alcohol (18+), and rather strict drunk driving law (0.05% for adults, zero tolerance for young people), there are almost no restrictions on alcohol sales promotion. Many bars attract students by offering drink specials and similar promotions that encourage excessive alcohol consumption. There is a national ban on alcohol advertising, as well as on product placement and sponsorship, but it is mostly applied in case of spirits, while restrictions are not seen in case of wine and beer that are intensively advertised in mass media and different events where promotion bans are almost non-existent (Snowdon, 2017).

Social transition and war in Croatia have increased unemployment and rates of substance abuse, while a decrease in prevention programs has placed younger populations at increased risk for alcohol abuse, since their exposure to alcohol in the family and society has increased (Abatamarco et al., 2004). Godinho (2005) has identified above mentioned circumstances as those that create high risk environment for all types of risky behaviours, particularly important with young population.

The hazardous and harmful alcohol use, as well as possible alcohol dependency among Croatian university students is related to personality types as well as influence of parents, primary family, dominant friends and social circumstances (Jakić et al., 2003).

According to ESPAD research (2011) on adolescents in EU (average age 15.8), 66% of Croatian respondents have consumed alcohol during last month. Since the European average is 57%, it can be noted that Croatian young people start consuming alcohol at rather young age, despite all legal restrictions. This can be related to research findings of Varvil-Weld (2013) which indicate that excessive drinking prior to college is predictive of both excessive drinking at college and experiencing alcohol-related consequences, we can say that youth alcohol consumption in an early age can be perceived as a significant health and social issue in Croatia.

Most of the research on alcohol consumption in Croatia is done within medical science; only a few do analyze alcohol consumption as social and economic problem. Young people are at especially high risk of becoming alcohol abusers in an environment where alcohol consumption is wide spread. Within the youth segment, students seem to be at particular risk concerning alcohol abuse: finishing high school and entering university means often separation from parents: moving out of home, financial but also psychological freedom and independence (no direct control). Some of young people have no problem with these changes and challenges but some are not sure how to manage them. One of the common solutions for those ones is alcohol consumption. Miškulin et al. research (2010) on student population showed that almost 40% of students were alcohol abusers, with 6% of all research participants meeting criteria for alcohol dependence. Very similar research by Arambašić et al. (2015) research indicate that almost 43% of the students' sample has consumed alcohol at dangerous level, and 3,6% of them show all characteristics of alcohol addiction.

The most comprehensive research on students' risky behaviour in Croatia was conducted by Bouillet (2014). The research findings indicate that over half of the sample students at least once a month consume spirits (66.5%), wine (63.4%) and beer (63.4%). These results per se do not necessarily indicate risky behaviour, since alcohol consumption can be in form of moderate alcohol consumption, but the further behaviour analysis indicates that respondents get drunk (41.5% sometimes and 13% often), have „drunk sex“ (16% sometimes and 4.7% often) and drive drunk (10.7% sometimes and 4.1% often). Further analysis in the same research has indicated that certain groups of students are more exposed to alcohol abuse: males more than females, less or non-religious more than religious, those with lower educational achievements more than those with higher educational achievements, students from rural more than those from urban areas as well as those that come from families with lower educational level.

### **2.3. The role of social marketing in prevention of students' alcohol abuse**

Three social approaches can be identified in prevention of youth alcohol abuse:

1. Supply reduction, which is based on laws and legal restrictions of alcohol availability. In terms of youth alcohol consumption prevention, the most often ones are: minimum legal drinking age, opening hours and locations for alcohol consumption, and prices of alcoholic beverages. Also, within universities or schools different alcohol-related policies that entail strict penalties for students who violate them are often implemented (Vicary and Karshin, 2002).
2. Harm reduction, the approach which tries to alter the drinking context by, for example, motivating students to reduce risky behaviours, i.e. to consume less alcohol, or to educate bar staff to sell alcohol in a responsible way (Dimeffet al.1999; Larimer, 2013).
3. Demand reduction, an approach based on increasing awareness and knowledge about risks and possible consequences of alcohol abuse, and changing alcohol-related attitudes and behaviour through education and persuasion. Most university responses to student binge drinking have involved alcohol-demand reduction strategies. These are educational and motivational programs aimed at reducing students' alcohol consumption (Wechsler et al. 2004).

The basic principles of social marketing (French, 2009) are the following:

- Focus on the individual – customer within their social context, meaning that all interventions are based around and directly respond to the needs and wants of the person.
- Behavioural goals – all social marketing programs are driven by a concern to achieve measurable impacts on what people actually do, not just their knowledge, awareness or beliefs about an issue. An assessment of both the desired and the problematic behaviours is undertaken to understand the relationship; patterns and trends over time and what influences these are also explored;
- Developing insight - research of why people behave the way they do in order to be able to provide a practical steer for the selection and development of interventions;
- Exchange - efforts to maximize the potential 'offer' and its value to the audience, while minimizing all the 'costs' of adopting, maintaining or changing a particular behaviour. Incentives for the target behaviour are given and barriers are identified to be minimized or removed;
- Competition – the concept used to examine all the factors that compete for people's ability to adopt a specific behaviour, both external (for example, alcohol promotions by producers or bars) and internal (pleasure, addiction);

- Segmentation - considers alternative ways by which people can be grouped and profiled. It looks at how different people are responding to an issue, what moves and motivates them, what they say will help them and what will not;
- 'Intervention mix' and 'marketing mix'- focus on ensuring a deep understanding of the target audience for identification and selection of appropriate intervention methods and approaches.

All these principles speak in favour of social marketing approach to the problem of students' alcohol abuse: individual focus is required due to the sensibility of a problem and different specific circumstances of each individual; changing behaviour in alcohol consumption is a solution to the problem, identifying motivation for alcohol abuse can help in finding solutions. However, it is difficult to change the behaviour, particularly at higher levels of alcohol abuse, so students need to see the clear benefits of behaviour changing. Other competing circumstances and actors like alcohol producers, bars and similar have to be recognized and included in a partnership for the social marketing campaign to be successful. Identification of key market segments and developing specific social marketing activities and strategies for them is necessary, just like in conventional marketing practice.

However, there are different views on effectiveness of social marketing campaigns in context of youth alcohol abuse: Walters (2000) considers social marketing to be costly and limited by the fact that it is relatively impersonal and assumes that students see and process the obtained information which might not be true, while Janssen et al. (2013) consider such an approach to be a useful method for alcohol education: in-depth insight into target group and its values. Social marketing campaigns and activities that target the specific drinking patterns are often seen in US universities as efficient tools to fight students' alcohol abuse (De Jong et al. 2006, Foxcroft et al. 2015).

It is difficult to evaluate the effectiveness of social marketing campaigns against alcohol abuse among Croatian students, since there is no existing research. The most important social marketing campaign was Project Northland (Abatemarco, et al. 2008), which was implemented and measured in primary schools. Although the findings were positive in general, researchers have noticed decreasing positive effects with older respondents. Therefore it is questionable if the results would be the same when students (18+) participate in the research.

From the existing research and literature overview we have identified research gaps in students' alcohol consumption patterns, their attitudes toward alcohol consumption and identification of the significance of the problem of alcohol abuse of Croatian students. Moreover, no studies related to social marketing as a possible strategy for solving alcohol abuse problem in Croatia were found.

### 3. RESEARCH

The research on students' alcohol consumption was carried out at the J.J. Strossmayer University of Osijek ([www.unios.hr](http://www.unios.hr)). The sample consists of 379 students at all study levels: from undergraduate to doctoral studies. It covered 2.1% of the total university population. The choice criteria for the sample were Croatian citizenship, age range 18-35, and willingness to participate in research, since alcohol abuse is a sensitive topic. Due to the topic sensitivity, the data collection method was personal (face to face in small groups of maximum 20 students), pen and paper, with detailed introduction and explanation on alcohol consumption and alcohol abuse. This approach was used in order to ensure detailed explanations and assistance to respondents on one hand, and give them enough privacy to respond on the other. Out of 379 respondents 14 (3.7%) have declared themselves as abstainers and were excluded from research analysis. The sample structure of 363 respondents is shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Sample structure

	Frequency	Percent
<b>Gender</b>		
-male	152	41.9
-female	211	58.1
<b>Major source of disposable income</b>		
-parents	224	61.7
-part-time job	50	13.8
-scholarship	29	8.0
-other	59	16.3
<b>Disposable income amount</b>		
-US\$ 100 and less	169	46.6
-US\$ 101 - 300	139	38.3
-US\$ 300+	52	14.3
<b>Living environment</b>		
-At home with parents	101	27.8
-Student dormitory	17	4.7
-Alone	69	19.0
-In house/flat with mostly working adults	19	5.2
-In house/flat with mostly students	117	32.2
-Other	36	9.9
<b>Level of study</b>		
-undergraduate	192	52.9
-graduate	111	30.6
-Master	31	8.5
-Doctoral	27	7.4
<b>Field of study</b>		
-social science	136	37.4
-STEM	227	62.5

Source: Authors' research



### 3.1. Methodology

For the purposes of this study (which is a part of a larger intercultural research project) three measurement instruments are used: the AUDIT, the motivation analysis and the general and demographic questionnaire.

The Alcohol Use Disorder Identification Test (AUDIT) is a 10-item scale designed to identify alcohol consumption (3 items), alcohol dependence (3 items) and problems associated with drinking (4 items). Each of the questions has a set of responses to choose from, and each response has a score ranging from 0 to 4 the total score that can range between 0 and 40 indicating hazardous, harmful and binge drinking as well as alcohol dependency (Babor et al., 2001). Hazardous drinking is defined as a pattern of alcohol consumption that increases the risk of harmful consequences for the user or others and is represented by a total AUDIT score of 8 or higher for males and 7 or higher for females. Harmful drinking is identified by a total AUDIT score of 16 or higher for both males and females and is defined as a pattern of alcohol consumption that results in negative consequences to physical and mental health. Alcohol dependent drinking is identified as a total AUDIT score of 20 or higher for both males and females. Persons in this group display high-risk drinking behaviour and an intervention is recommended in an attempt to break their dangerous drinking patterns. The second part of the research measured motivation for alcohol consumption according to Cox and Klinger (1988) and included 5 items for each motive. All the items were measured on 5-point Likert scale. The third part included questions regarding socio-demographics (gender, age, religion, level of study, disposable income, living environment relationship status, area of studying) and behaviour regarding alcohol consumption (where, when, what, with whom). Two types of statistical test were conducted in order to find statistically significant differences between respondents. The ANOVA test was used to find differences between four types of alcohol consumption measured on nominal scale and four motives measured on ratio scale. The Chi-square test was conducted in two cases: in measuring relation between four types of alcohol consumption and gender (measured on nominal scale) and between four types of alcohol consumption and age of respondents divided into two categories (measured on ordinal scale).

### 3.2. Results

First we give the general pattern of alcohol consumption of Croatian students. In the next phase of analysis research results are analysed in relation to the amount of alcohol consumed, i.e. alcohol consumption type. This way of presenting results was chosen since issues related to the alcohol consumption types are different and, we presume, would have different implications for social marketing. Alcohol consumption types were analyzed in relation to socio-demographic data. In relation to type of alcohol consumption significant differences were found between gender, age, study level, living environment, drinking companion, days and times of alcohol consumption. No significant differences in type of alcohol consumption between those that are religious or not, or engaged in a relationship or not, between areas of study or between different levels of disposable income were found.

### 3.2.1. General alcohol consumption pattern

Altogether 196 respondents (54%) belong to the group of moderate alcohol consumers, 140, i.e. 38.6% to the group of hazardous alcohol consumption type, 18 (5%) to the group of harmful alcohol consumption type and 9 (2.5%) to the group of alcohol dependency consumption type.

The most consumed types of alcoholic drinks at home are wine and beer/cider, but at bar or in club where most of alcohol is actually consumed in case of students, there is strong preference for spirits (160, i.e. 44.7%) of the sample. The alcohol consumption in general happens most often with either university of working friends (304 respondents, i.e. 84.9% of the sample). Altogether 92.7% of the sample (318 respondents) consumes alcohol during weekend period, and mostly nights (9 p.m. to 3 a.m.). This is valid for 225 respondents (85.9% of the sample). Daytime alcohol consumption is quite rare (8 respondents, i.e. 2.2% of the sample).

### 3.2.2. Alcohol consumption motives

In general, the most important alcohol consumption motives for Croatian students belong to the group of social motives, i.e. to obtain positive social rewards. Within the group of social motives, the most important ones are „celebration of special occasions with friends“ (3.74), „because it helps enjoy the party“ (3.40) and „because it makes social events more fun“ (3.40). This illustrates the previously mentioned fact that alcohol consumption is deeply imbedded in culture and lifestyle in Croatia and is an inevitable part of social events. The least important motives are conformity motives, i.e. alcohol consumption in order to avoid social isolation and rejection of „important others“. However, there are significant differences between motives of those who engage in moderate alcohol consumption, hazardous, harmful consumption or are alcohol dependent. Motives for alcohol consumption and type of consumption have demonstrated a high degree of internal consistency, yielding a Cronbach's Alpha score of 0.779, with a range of 0.690 to 0.802. The ANOVA results are shown in Table 3.

Table 3

## Motives for alcohol consumption and type of consumption

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	ANOVA test
Social	moderate consumption	196	3.0240	.93386	F = 29,116 df = 3 p = 0,000*
	hazardous drinking	140	3.8000	.74987	
	harmful drinking	18	4.1222	.68647	
	alcohol dependent	9	4.0889	.85505	
	Total	363	3.4041	.94875	
Coping	moderate consumption	196	1.5724	.69014	F = 29,128 df = 3 p = 0,000*
	hazardous drinking	140	2.2746	1.02716	
	harmful drinking	18	2.7222	.91301	
	alcohol dependent	9	3.0167	.97340	
	Total	363	1.9361	.94734	
Enhance	moderate consumption	196	2.0867	.85912	F = 27,842 df = 3 p = 0,000*
	hazardous drinking	140	2.8407	.93846	
	harmful drinking	18	3.2444	.98113	
	alcohol dependent	9	3.4444	.92616	
	Total	363	2.4686	.99299	
Conformity	moderate consumption	196	1.2031	.41780	F = 8,262 df = 3 p = 0,000*
	hazardous drinking	140	1.4150	.70424	
	harmful drinking	18	1.7556	1.07497	
	alcohol dependent	9	1.7333	.87178	
	Total	363	1.3253	.61650	

Source: Authors' research

The results of ANOVA test have shown statistically significant differences between type of alcohol consumption and motives for alcohol consumption. For all four groups of types of consumption, social motives have major impact, while conformity motives have the lowest impact. It can be seen that moderate consumption type of respondents have marked all motives with lower grades, while other three types of respondents marked same motives with higher grades.

### 3.2.3. Alcohol consumption types and socio-demographic characteristics

In Table 4 we give an overview of alcohol consumption type by gender.

Table 4

## Alcohol consumption type by gender

		Alcohol consumption type				Total	$\chi^2$
		moderate consumption	hazardous drinking	harmful drinking	alcohol dependency		
Gender Male	Count	63	67	13	9	152	$\chi^2 = 28,989$ df = 3 p = 0,000*
	% within Gender	41.4%	44.1%	8.6%	5.9%	100.0%	
Female	Count	133	73	5	0	211	
	% within Gender	63.0%	34.6%	2.4%	0.0%	100.0%	
Total	Count	196	140	18	9	363	
	% within Gender	54.0%	38.6%	5.0%	2.5%	100.0%	

Source: Authors' research

Moderate type of alcohol consumption consists of twice as many female than male students. In the second largest group (hazardous drinking type), there is somewhat more female than male respondents, but the difference is not significant. In the harmful type of alcohol consumption there is considerably more male than female respondents. Alcohol dependency type of consumption consists of only male respondents. Results of Chi-square test show significant difference between gender and their alcohol consumption type ( $p = 0,000$ ).

In table 5 alcohol consumption type is analyzed with respect to respondents' age. Respondents were classified in two groups: 23 years and younger and 24 years and older. The reason was that in most cases students in Croatia leave full time studying at the age of 23 and their lifestyle significantly changes.

Table 5

## Alcohol consumption type by age

		Alcohol consumption type				Total	$\chi^2$
		moderate consumption	hazardous drinking	harmful drinking	alcohol dependency		
Age <= 23	Count	116	111	16	6	249	$\chi^2 = 19,767$ df = 3 p = 0,000*
	% within Age	46.6%	44.6%	6.4%	2.4%	100.0%	
24+	Count	75	25	2	3	105	
	% within Age	71.4%	23.8%	1.9%	2.9%	100.0%	
Total	Count	191	136	18	9	354	
	% within Age	54.0%	38.4%	5.1%	2.5%	100.0%	

Source: Authors' research

Altogether 53.4% of students aged 23 or less engage in risky types of alcohol consumption, while in the group of students aged 24 and more there are only 28.6% of respondents engaged in risky types of alcohol consumption. Chi square tests have confirmed the significant difference ( $\chi^2 = 19,767$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ) between the two age groups with respect to type of alcohol consumption. This corresponds to the differences in study level shown in Table 6.

Table 6

## Alcohol consumption by study level

			Alcohol consumption type				Total
			moderate consumption	hazardous drinking	harmful drinking	alcohol dependency	
Academic year of study	Undergraduate	Count	93	83	12	4	192
		% within year of study	48.4%	43.2%	6.3%	2.1%	100.0%
	Graduate/4th year	Count	58	45	5	3	111
		% within year of study	52.3%	40.5%	4.5%	2.7%	100.0%
	Masters	Count	20	9	1	1	31
		% within year of study	64.5%	29.0%	3.2%	3.2%	100.0%
	PhD	Count	24	2	0	1	27
		% within year of study	88.9%	7.4%	0.0%	3.7%	100.0%
Total		Count	195	139	18	9	361
		% within year of study	54.0%	38.5%	5.0%	2.5%	100.0%

Source: Authors' research

More than a half of the respondents at the undergraduate level (51.6% of all undergraduate respondents and 27.7% of the total sample) tend to consume alcohol in a risky manner. The results presented in Table 6 indicate that the higher level of study, the less irresponsible, i.e. risky drinking occurs.

Level of disposable income and alcohol consumption type are analyzed in table 7.

Table 7

## Alcohol consumption by disposable income

			Alcohol consumption type				Total
			moderate consumption	hazardous drinking	harmful drinking	alcohol dependency	
Disp. income amount	\$100/less	Count	88	73	4	4	169
		% within Disposable income amount	52.1%	43.2%	2.4%	2.4%	100.0%
	\$101-300	Count	75	50	11	3	139
		% within Disposable income amount	54.0%	36.0%	7.9%	2.2%	100.0%
	\$300+	Count	33	15	2	2	52
		% within Disposable income amount	63.5%	28.8%	3.8%	3.8%	100.0%
Total		Count	196	138	17	9	360
		% within Disposable income amount	54.4%	38.3%	4.7%	2.5%	100.0%

Source: Authors' research

The results indicate that the smaller amount of disposable income is not a barrier to alcohol consumption. The lowest disposable income group is heavily involved in risky types of alcohol consumption (hazardous, harmful and alcohol dependency) - altogether 81 respondents (48% of the lowest income group and 22.5% of the total sample). In the mid-income group there are 64 respondents (46% of the income group and 38.6% of the total sample) involved in risky alcohol consumption types, while in the highest income group, there are 19 (36.5%, of the group and 14.4% of the total sample) respondents who practice risky types of alcohol consumption.

In table 8 alcohol consumption type is analyzed with respect to living environment.

Table 8

## Alcohol consumption type by living environment

			Alcohol consumption type				Total
			moderate consumption	hazardous drinking	harmful drinking	alcohol dependency	
Living environment	At home with parents	Count	49	48	3	1	101
		% within Living environment	48.5%	47.5%	3.0%	1.0%	100.0%
	Student residence	Count	10	3	4	0	17
		% within Living environment	58.8%	17.6%	23.5%	0.0%	100.0%
	Alone	Count	40	25	2	2	69
		% within Living environment	58.0%	36.2%	2.9%	2.9%	100.0%
	In house/flat with mostly working adults	Count	10	7	2	0	19
% within Living environment		52.6%	36.8%	10.5%	0.0%	100.0%	
In house/flat with mostly students	Count	65	42	5	5	117	
	% within Living environment	55.6%	35.9%	4.3%	4.3%	100.0%	
Other	Count	21	13	2	0	36	
	% within Living environment	58.3%	36.1%	5.6%	0.0%	100.0%	
Total	Count	195	138	18	8	359	
	% within Living environment	54.3%	38.4%	5.0%	2.2%	100.0%	

*Source: Authors' research*

Most of the students that consume alcohol in a dangerous manner live in house or apartment together with fellow students and with parents at home. Altogether 51.5% of respondents that live with their parents belong to the group of risky alcohol consumption types, mostly hazardous. In the same group there are 44.4% of respondents that live with fellow students in private houses or apartments.

Table 9 provides insight into drinking companion for different types of alcohol consumption.

Table 9

## Alcohol consumption type by drinking companion

			Alcohol consumption type				Total
			moderate consumption	hazardous drinking	harmful drinking	alcohol dependency	
Who Alone	Count	3	4	1	0	8	
	% within Who	37.5%	50.0%	12.5%	0.0%	100.0%	
With friends	Count	157	122	17	8	304	
	% within Who	51.6%	40.1%	5.6%	2.6%	100.0%	
Parents	Count	1	0	0	0	1	
	% within Who	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	
Other	Count	31	13	0	1	45	
	% within Who	68.9%	28.9%	0.0%	2.2%	100.0%	
Total	Count	192	139	18	9	358	
	% within Who	53.6%	38.8%	5.0%	2.5%	100.0%	

Source: Authors' research

The actual alcohol consumption in general happens most often with friends (304 respondents, i.e. 84.9% of the sample). It is valid for all types of alcohol consumption and can be related to prevailing social motives for alcohol consumption and prevailing days of alcohol consumption for all consumption types, which are shown in Table 10 as well as to prevailing times of consumption (Table 11).

Table 10

## Alcohol consumption type by days of consumption

			Alcohol consumption type				Total
			moderate consumption	hazardous drinking	harmful drinking	alcohol dependency	
Day of most consumption	Mon- Wed	Count	2	1	1	0	4
	% within Day	50.0%	25.0%	25.0%	0.0%	100.0%	
	Thu	Count	10	10	0	1	21
	% within Day	47.6%	47.6%	0.0%	4.8%	100.0%	
	Fri- Sun	Count	177	119	16	6	318
	% within Day	55.7%	37.4%	5.0%	1.9%	100.0%	
Total	Count	189	130	17	7	343	
	% within Day	55.1%	37.9%	5.0%	2.0%	100.0%	

Source: Authors' research

Altogether 92.7% of the sample (318 respondents) consumes alcohol during weekend period, both in case of moderate and risky types of consumption. According to the alcohol consumption type, 55.7% of consumers during the weekend are moderate type consumers and 44.3% of weekend consumers belong to risky types of alcohol consumption (hazardous, harmful and alcohol dependency).



In table 11 the overview of time of alcohol consumption is given.

Table 11

## Alcohol consumption type by time of consumption

		Alcohol consumption type				Total
		moderate consumption	hazardous drinking	harmful drinking	alcohol dependency	
Time 12:00 – 15:00	Count	2	1	0	1	4
	% within Time	50.0%	25.0%	0.0%	25.0%	100.0%
15:00-18:00	Count	3	0	1	0	4
	% within Time	75.0%	0.0%	25.0%	0.0%	100.0%
18:00-21:00	Count	19	11	1	1	32
	% within Time	59.4%	34.4%	3.1%	3.1%	100.0%
21:00-24:00	Count	132	82	7	4	225
	% within Time	58.7%	36.4%	3.1%	1.8%	100.0%
24:00-03:00	Count	36	39	8	3	86
	% within Time	41.9%	45.3%	9.3%	3.5%	100.0%
03:00+	Count	0	4	0	0	4
	% within Time	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Total	Count	192	137	17	9	355
	% within Time	54.1%	38.6%	4.8%	2.5%	100.0%

Source: Authors' research

The most usual time of alcohol consumption are nights (9 p.m. to 0a.m.), while daytime alcohol consumption is quite rare (8 respondents, i.e. 2.2% of the sample).

### 3.3. Discussion

Over half (54%) of respondents belong to the moderate alcohol consumption type. The moderate type of alcohol consumption can be regarded as lifestyle and doesn't include significant health or behaviour risks. It consists of mostly females, who consume alcohol at different social gatherings. They are mostly in the 24+ age group, at higher levels of studying and with higher disposable income. To our opinion this segment doesn't need to be addressed by any social marketing activity, since their alcohol consumption behaviour is accordant with typical Croatian lifestyle and is hard to expect it to change, at least not by mostly short-term, time constrained social marketing activities. Altogether 140 respondents (38.6%) belongs to the group of hazardous alcohol consumption type, which is associated with individuals who abuse alcohol without becoming physically addicted, but their behaviour might harm them or others (driving, increased aggressiveness, etc.). Davoren et al. (2015) research in Ireland also indicates the extremely high prevalence of hazardous alcohol consumption (66.4%) among university students. Medical research has found that this group

can find it easy to quit with the right motivation (<http://alcoholrehab.com/>). Because of this, to our opinion, this is the segment where the social marketing activities can be most effective. Harmful alcohol consumption refers to people who regularly overindulge in alcohol and usually find that it begins to negatively impact their life (worse performance at work, decreased inhibitions, sexual promiscuity, etc.) (<http://alcoholrehab.com/>). Altogether 18 (5%) of respondents in this research belong to this alcohol consumption type. Alcohol dependency, or alcoholism, is the most dangerous type of alcohol consumption. It means that the person is physically or mentally addicted to alcohol. Such a person has a strong need, or craving, to drink. There were 9 (2.5%) of respondents in this group. People in this group can't quit or control their drinking, they have physical reactions (feeling sick) when try to stop drinking and they give up other activities to consume alcohol. Social marketing activities, to our opinion, will not be effective for this group – it is probably only the medical treatment that might be useful in this case.

Research results regarding significantly higher proportion of male students involved in risky types of alcohol consumption correspond with other research (for example, White and Hingson, 2014; Milošević et al. 2015) on university students. Previous research on high school adolescents in Croatia (Kalebić Maglica, Martinac Dorčić, 2015) and students (Bouillet, 2014) also found that more male respondents consume alcohol in dangerous types of consumption (hazardous, harmful and alcohol dependency) than female. Results concerning age and level of study are comparable – the higher the age and the level of study, the less involvement in risky types of alcohol consumption. It shows that leaving full time studies brings new responsibilities and that possibly affects the alcohol consumption behaviour. Considering the disposable income amount our results indicate that there is room for price policies concerning alcoholic drinks and that price increase can positively impact the risky types of alcohol consumption decrease. The results regarding the living circumstances illustrate the strength of family lifestyle in Croatia that includes alcohol consumption on regular basis, children inclusive. These findings correspond with those of Milošević et al. (2015) that the majority of students in Kosovo have consumed alcohol for the first time at home, together with their parents. Although there are no significant differences between different living environments and type of alcohol consumption, our results illustrate the fact that alcohol consumption is an issue of culture and lifestyle in Croatia and is accepted in both families and in friends' circle. Results on typical company and timing of alcohol consumption illustrate the typical student life in Croatia – weekend night out with friends with inevitable alcohol consumption. However, this seems to be not typical for Croatia only but universal, since the results are comparable to those of research in South Africa (Du Preez, et al. 2016). Our research results indicate no significant differences between students of different fields of study with respect to type of alcohol consumption. This is contradictory to research in Ireland (Davoren et al. 2015) which indicated that students studying social sciences (in their case, Law and Business) were over twice as likely to report hazardous

alcohol consumption as their peers studying STEM (in their case, Science and Engineering). Also Milošević et al. (2015) research on Kosovo students shows significant differences in alcohol consumption between students in the area of social studies (economics) in STEM area (medicine).

As obtained research results indicate, the critical and major target group to aim social marketing efforts are male students at undergraduate level, aged 23 or less that live either with their parents or with fellow students in private accommodation (out of campus). Since the major motivation for the risky alcohol consumption types are social ones, we suggest that the major marketing efforts should be directed toward promotion of different, alcohol-free, or responsible drinking lifestyles. Such an approach can be directed toward the identified target group, but also toward other social stakeholders that can impact students' alcohol abuse behaviour change: parents, friends and "significant others" of the target group. However, social marketing activities should be combined with other types of measures that involve all three approaches: supply reduction, harm reduction and demand reduction as Babor et al. (2003) research confirms the synergic effectiveness of the combined activities. Equally important is that all alcohol consumption policies should not be created only in the health sector, but expanded to areas of education, social welfare, business sector, especially to those involved with production and distribution of alcohol, as well as to civic organizations.

In terms of supply reduction, the major role should be played by government but also by local authorities as well as university alcohol policies. Legal regulations on national and local level may include limitations on time and place for alcohol availability, and implementation and control of already existing regulation on age limitations. For example, in Osijek local regulations forbid alcohol consumption in public places like parks, streets etc. which has minimized the opportunity to buy cheaper alcohol in store and consume it at less cost and control. Supply reduction can be achieved through education and control of bars' employees on recognition of drunken behaviour indices and symptoms.

In terms of harm reduction the major role should be played by health sector in terms of enabling counselling, prevention programs, timely treatment and rehabilitation. In addition, education system should provide information about the potential risks and ways of reducing them, which may impact on risky behaviours. Resnicow et al. (1999) research has identified the inverse relation between perceived risk of harm and level of substance use. An important role can be played by civic organizations through specific local interventions. For example, in Osijek local Red Cross organizes weekend night's transportation service for young people in order to prevent drunk driving. The project runs for several years now and is advertised and known as "sober driver".

In terms of demand reduction, limitations on alcohol time and place consumption, as well as pricing regulations might be effective since lower disposable income does not limit the alcohol consumption. Although the research shows no significant pattern of alcohol abuse on campus or university premises, zero tolerance policies should be implemented. Due to the prevailing social motives for hazardous and harmful alcohol consumption types it might be effective to work on modifying or

correcting the misperceptions about alcohol consumption among students through public relations campaigns of the state-of-the-art: the fact that over 50% of students consume alcohol moderately and do not involve in risky types of behaviour. Furthermore, organization and promotion of different university/campus projects and activities that include no alcohol consumption may be implemented.

#### 4. CONCLUSIONS

Youth alcohol abuse is a significant problem not only from health, but also from social perspective. By identifying risk factors and correlating warning signs of alcohol abuse among students it may be possible to provide more effective social marketing strategies in both prevention and intervention. This research has identified basic motivations and behaviour patterns of university students toward alcohol consumption and significant differences between those who practice responsible alcohol consumption and those whose alcohol consumption can be identified as socially undesirable and risky. Upon these results possible social marketing programs and activities for prevention and intervention were suggested. Although no significant “bad” results in terms of alcohol abuse were found, findings indicate that alcohol consumption is a lifestyle pattern very common among university students in Croatia. Therefore we might argue that only alcohol consumption which causes risky behaviour in terms of drinking and driving, irresponsible sexual behaviour, violence and similar needs to be treated through social marketing activities. These activities should be combined by different social actors and institutions to provide synergy effects. To our opinion, the major challenge in this context would be promotion of different alcohol-free, or at least moderate alcohol consumption lifestyles as socially acceptable behaviour on campus but also in society as a whole.

The major limitation of this study is that it was performed at one university only. Therefore, respondents in this research are not representative for the whole country. Had other universities been involved, different results might have been obtained. Thus, the results of this study can only be taken as indicative. The second limitation might be ascribed to the topic sensitivity. Although research provides anonymity, we expect that not all answers are completely sincere, particularly in case of students involved in more risky types of behaviour. Taking into account the limitations of this study, we suggest further research to be aimed at national and international level on the topic and comparisons and usage of other research techniques (focus group interviews) to assure openness and sincerity of respondents. Another area of research also came across as possible upgrade of this study – a research of students’ perceptions and attitudes towards existing social marketing campaigns as well as towards social marketing as a general response in solving alcohol abuse problem.

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## **HRVATSKI STUDENTI I KONZUMACIJA ALKOHOLA – IMPLIKACIJE ZA DRUŠTVENI MARKETING**

***Sažetak***

*Društveni marketing kao disciplina koja promovira proizvode, usluge i ideje usmjerene na dragovoljnu promjenu ponašanja može se implementirati i pri rješavanju problema zlouporabe alkohola. Izvješće Svjetske zdravstvene organizacije (WHO, 2014.) vezano uz zlouporabu alkohola svrstava Hrvatsku na visoko četvrto mjesto s godišnjom konzumacijom alkohola od 15.1 litre per capita. S ciljem razvoja marketinških programa vezanih uz smanjenje zlouporabe alkohola u mladim ljudima, nužno je analizirati postojeće ponašanje, motivaciju i stavove o konzumaciji alkohola, a što je glavni cilj ovom istraživanju. Uzorak od ukupno 379 studenata jednog hrvatskog sveučilišta sudjelovao je u istraživanju. Korištena su tri mjerna instrumenta: AUDIT skala, mjerenje motivacije i demografski upitnik. Većina sudionika u istraživanju (54 %) pripada skupini koja odgovorno konzumira alkohol. Najznačajniji motivi za konzumaciju alkohola su socijalni, odnosno vezani su uz ostvarivanje društvene potvrde i prihvaćenosti. Najčešće konzumirana vrsta alkohola kod kuće je vino i pivo, a vani žestoka pića. Većina ispitanika konzumira alkohol vani tijekom noćnih izlazaka vikendom. Kritični segment na koji bi trebalo usmjeriti napore društvenog marketinga su muški studenti preddiplomske razine, starosti 23 godine ili manje koji žive s roditeljima ili u privatnom smještaju. Glavni marketinški naponi trebali bi biti usmjereni na promoviranje životnog stila koji ne uključuje alkohol ili promovira odgovornu konzumaciju alkohola.*

***Ključne riječi: studenti, zlouporaba alkohola, društveni marketing, Hrvatska.***

***JEL klasifikacija: D12, I12, I23, M31.***

