

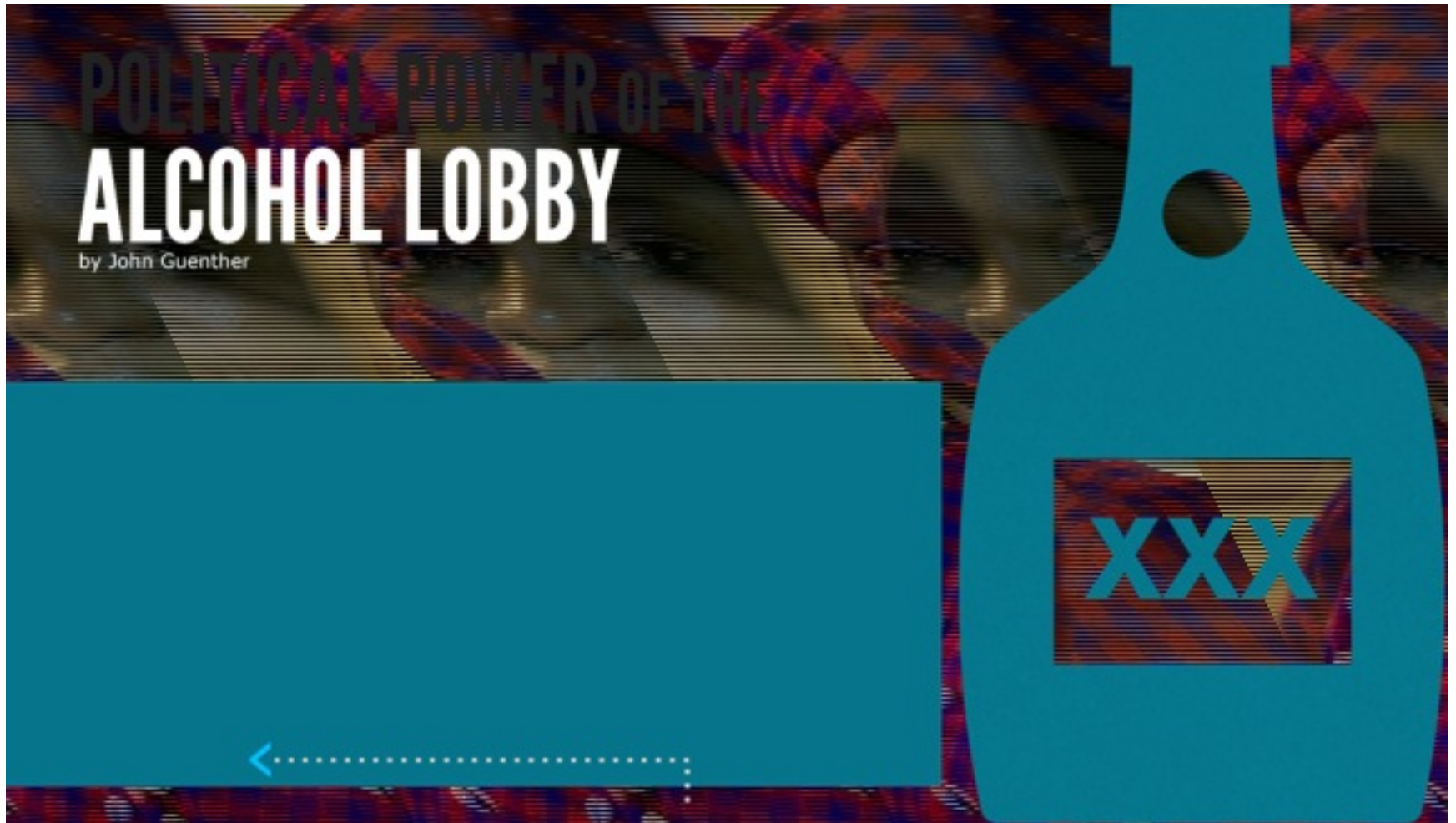
# **Busting the myths**

What Big Alcohol is not telling you

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# Scoop for this presentation

Busting the myths. What Big Alcohol is not telling you.



# Structure for this presentation

Busting the myths. What Big Alcohol is not telling you.

## Background

- Alcohol harm in Europe
- Alcohol industry
- Our challenge

## 7 myths and how to bust them

- Alcohol industry myth
- Your reaction
- Busting the myth
- Discussion

## Conclusive remarks

# Background

Busting the myths. What Big Alcohol is not telling you.

## Alcohol harm in Europe

Alcohol use has significant adverse effects on the physical, psychological and social health of individuals, families, communities and societies at large. The direct and indirect effects are very costly and diffuse.

## Evidence

- €125bn yearly in EU social costs of alcohol harm
- < 60% of all violent acts linked to alcohol use
- 9 million CoA

# Background

Busting the myths. What Big Alcohol is not telling you.

## Who is Big Alcohol?

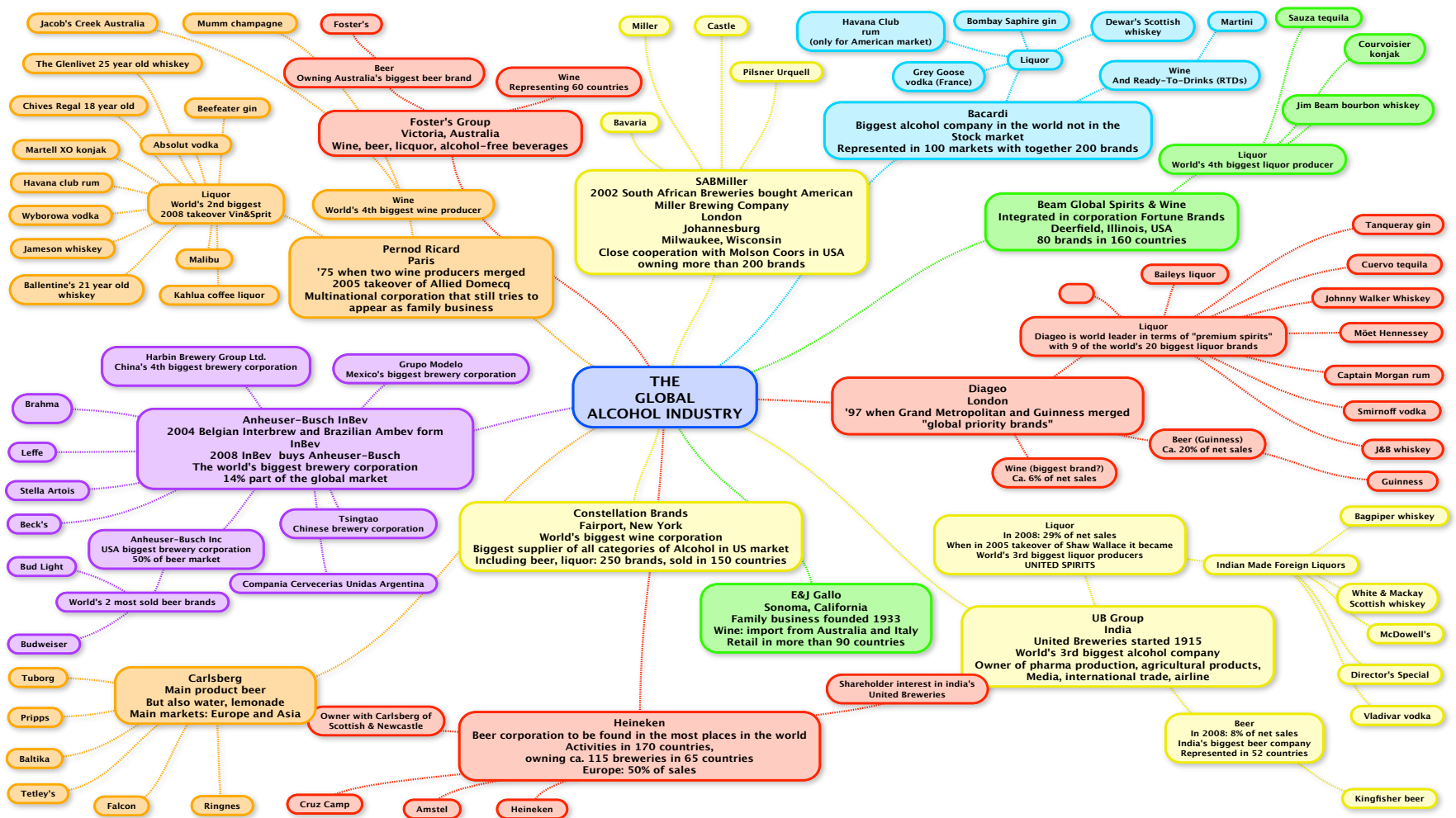
- Alcohol producers
- Alcohol retailers
- Alcohol marketing industry

## What is it they communicate?

- Perpetuate myths about effects of alcohol
- Supply policy makers with biased information
- Buy their own research
- Promote stereotypes to market products
- Target children and youth to market products

Big Alcohol presents alcohol exclusively as tasty, healthy, lifestyle product offering social benefits.

# Who is Big Alcohol?



# Background

Busting the myths. What Big Alcohol is not telling you.

## Our challenge

- Find effective ways to bust the myths
- Use independent evidence in policy discussions and advocacy work
- Change the alcohol culture

# 7 myths and how to bust them

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## Busting the myths, one by one

- Big Alcohol claim
- What's your immediate reaction?
- Looking at the independent evidence
- Discussion



# 7 myths and how to bust them

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## Myth #1

”Consuming alcohol is normal, common, healthy and very responsible” says Big Alcohol...

- What do you say?

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## Explanation

- Big Alcohol portrays "regular" user of alcohol as social who enjoys and is the centre of a vibrant social life
- Usage is associated with health, luck, prosperity, tradition, good manners
- Almost always in advertising alcohol is linked to health, sports, physical beauty, romanticism, having friends, leisure activities

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## Independent evidence

- "Regular" user contributes largely to €125bn social costs of alcohol harm
- "Regular" user consumes more than "recommended" units
- Alcohol use is related to unemployment, loss of productivity, violence, suicide, child abuse, NCDs, poverty, other drugs use...

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Any other thoughts on Big Alcohol myth #1?

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## Myth #2

"The damage done by alcohol is caused by a small group of alcoholics who cannot handle alcohol" says Big Alcohol...

- What do you say?

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## Explanation

- The majority of people who use alcohol in high levels (above recommended units) are in fact ordinary, everyday people – no social deviants
- Big Alcohol earns millions of € on those heavy users.
- That's why the total consumption model is highly relevant for preventing alcohol harm

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## Independent evidence

- Data from UK, AUS, USA, CAN shows that 50% of alcohol is used during risky consumption (above guidelines) or during binging
- A large share of Big Alcohol's profits is dependent on the risky users, the "regular" users
- "Regular" user consumes more than "recommended" units
- Retailers promote risky alcohol use through pricing

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Any other thoughts on Big Alcohol myth #2?



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## Myth #3

"Normal adult non-drinkers do not, in fact, exist" says Big Alcohol...

- What do you say?

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## Explanation

- Big Alcohol conveys the message that non-users don't genuinely matter and are not part of the social fabric and contemporary culture and tradition
- Only children under 16 years of age, pregnant women and motorists are accepted and recognised as non-users
- Non-users are less healthy, according to Big Alcohol

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## Independent evidence

- Health of alcohol users and non-users cannot be compared because there's no reliable data. The group of non-users is very diverse and much less consistent than assumed
- Many non-users choose life free from alcohol because of health conditions and are thus less healthy but not because of their alcohol consumption habits
- "Regular" users consume more than "recommended" units and expose themselves to health risks, like cancer
- In almost all countries there are vast parts of the society who live free from alcohol
- On global level 55% of the world's population chooses alcohol free

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Any other thoughts on Big Alcohol myth #3?

# 7 myths and how to bust them

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## Myth #4

"Ignore the fact that alcohol is a harmful and addictive chemical substance (ethanol) for the body" says Big Alcohol...

- What do you say?

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## Explanation

"Alcohol is a tasty drink, prepared with craftsmanship."

"The natural origin of beer counts."

"Wine is particularly beneficial for body and spirit."

"With liquor the age-long tradition guarantees the quality."

- Those are the claims Big Alcohol has many people believe, in order to back up myth #4
- Myth #4 is essentially about making sure people (consumers) view the gains from using alcohol (the + Side) much bigger than the losses that come from alcohol's negative impact on health and society (the – Side)

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## Independent evidence

- Ethanol (alcohol) is a detrimental, carcinogenic, toxic, addictive substance that is foreign to the body.
- Chemically alcohol is a hard drug causing physical and mental dependence
- There is no safe limit for alcohol use
- No matter whether beer, wine, liquor there are no health benefits (like for the heart, for instance). It's a myth that the type of alcohol matters because the substance ethanol is always the same.

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Any other thoughts on Big Alcohol myth #4?



# 7 myths and how to bust them

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## Myth #5

"Alcohol problems can only be solved when all parties ("stakeholders") work together" says Big Alcohol...

- What do you say?

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## Explanation

"We, the alcohol industry, feel greatly responsible for what can go wrong with our product and would gladly help to prevent adverse effects. Therefore we need to cooperate at all levels."

- Big Alcohol is profit-driven and thinks only in terms of increased sales
- Increased sales mean more money for Big Alcohol, and more harm and costs for society
- Big Alcohol's message is: It's not necessary to use less alcohol, just use it a little differently
- The message of "responsible" use is a myth and health hazard in itself
- Big Alcohol has a track record of opposing evidence-based, high-impact, cost-effective policy measures

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## Independent evidence

- Effective European, national, local-level alcohol policy measures require a marked reduction in the total alcohol consumption
- Cost-effective and high-impact measures to reduce and prevent alcohol harm require an integrated approach of combining higher taxes, a marketing ban, higher legal age
- Europe is the heaviest alcohol using region in the world
- In Europe alcohol is the socially most harmful drug
- Alcohol policies must be formulated by genuine public health interests

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Any other thoughts on Big Alcohol myth #5?

# 7 myths and how to bust them

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## Myth #6

"Alcohol marketing is not harmful" says Big Alcohol...

- What do you say?

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## Explanation

"It's simply intended to assist the consumer in selecting a certain product or brand. Marketing does not make people use more and in order to prevent a small group of producers or retailers from marketing indecent ads, we (Big Alcohol) have established effective rules ourselves. This system of self-regulation works globally and has excellent results."

- Big Alcohol claims that marketing is largely ethical and that it does not affect overall consumption numbers, it only affects which brands/ products consumers choose

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## Independent evidence

- All evidence shows self-regulation does not work
- Health Committee of the UK Parliament examined advertising practices of Big Alcohol: "The industries own codes of conduct are systematically violated."
- Self-regulation is anti-democratic: Europeans understand that alcohol is no ordinary commodity and "widely support public policies aimed at reducing alcohol-related harm" (European Commission study, 2010)
- Alcohol marketing targets youth and stimulates their alcohol use: young people exposed start using earlier and use more alcohol on occasions of consumption
- Big Alcohol abuses social media to create "personal" relations with children and youth

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Any other thoughts on Big Alcohol myth #6?



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## Myth #7

"Education about responsible use is the best method to protect society from alcohol" says Big Alcohol...

- What do you say?

# 7 myths and how to bust them

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## Explanation

- For Big Alcohol, as for Western alcohol culture, the question is not whether or not a young person starts using, but when
- Promoting education as measure to reduce alcohol harm means for Big Alcohol platforms and ways to market itself as socially responsible and to market its brands to youth
- Big Alcohol wants to avoid regulatory laws and claims the better way to reduce and prevent harm is by raising awareness
- Big Alcohol claims that it is unfair that "the large majority of 'regular' users must suffer from regulatory, restrictive laws that are only intended to impact a minority of abusers"

# 7 myths and how to bust them

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## Independent evidence

- Most alcohol users consume alcohol in higher amounts than recommended limits and most alcohol costs come from the use of these "ordinary", "regular" people
- Education campaigns and awareness raising programs are the most cost-expensive and the least effective measures to reduce alcohol harm
- Increasing the information about an issue is not the same as changing the behaviour. Europe needs behaviour change
- Awareness raising campaigns are a marketing tool for Big Alcohol and are counterproductive

## **7 myths and how to bust them**

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Any other thoughts on Big Alcohol myth #7?

# **Conclusive remarks for further discussion**

Busting the myths. What Big Alcohol is not telling you.

What is "Change the alcohol culture" all about?

- Human Rights
- Intoxicating culture
- Strategies for change

The + Side Versus the – Side

- Making the + smaller, not the – bigger
- Life Set Free

# **Conclusive remarks for further discussion**

Busting the myths. What Big Alcohol is not telling you.

What is "change the alcohol culture" all about?

## **Human Rights**

- 67% of young people (in Swe) use alcohol because there is nothing else to do. Children and youth have a right to grow up free from alcohol
- The WHO Global Alcohol Strategy protects that right (see Guiding Principle G)
- More investment into youth is needed, on local and community level to create safe, enabling, free environments

# Human Rights



# **Conclusive remarks for further discussion**

Busting the myths. What Big Alcohol is not telling you.

What is "change the alcohol culture" all about?

## **Intoxicating Culture**

- Currently the vast majority of cultural, sports and other social events are alcoholised. Alcohol culture is an intoxicating culture, because of the dangers of social harm. There is no free choice about whether to use alcohol or not
- The hospitality industry (hotels, bars, pubs, clubs) must learn to provide fun and attractive alcohol free environments, alcohol free drinks. Party does not equal alcohol. Real party is about real freedom. Opening hours should not be linked to the license for alcohol retail
- Alcohol advertisement and sponsorship must be banned



# Transforming alcohol culture into freedom culture



# **Conclusive remarks for further discussion**

Busting the myths. What Big Alcohol is not telling you.

What is "Change the alcohol culture" all about?

## **Strategies for change**

- Challenge and refute untested assumptions:  
'alcohol is chemically rewarding' or 'inhibits some mental operations'
- Challenge illogical advantages and privileges for use and user:

Stop excusing flagrant behavior when perpetrator is under alcohol influence

# **Conclusive remarks for further discussion**

Busting the myths. What Big Alcohol is not telling you.

What is "Change the alcohol culture" all about?

## **Strategies for change**

- Deglamorize alcohol, the 'magical' drink:  
'alcohol is for romantic moments' and also 'alcohol is for crazy, wild party'
- Identify and portray alcohol as big placebo:  
See blind tests and Marlatt method that show which effects are due to expectations and which come from ethanol

# Expectation inebration



# **Conclusive remarks for further discussion**

Busting the myths. What Big Alcohol is not telling you.

## **The + Side Versus the – Side**

- Expectation-intoxication: alcohol is not a magical potion that can make people relax, make out, have fun
- There is no medical proof that alcohol creates those emotions and behaviours
- The expectations of feeling exhilarated, limitless, sad, relaxed, more social decide if the feeling of intoxication occurs
- Feeling high is a social construction, we have learned, comes from the placebo alcohol



# What is what?



**Thanks for your attention and participation...**  
Busting the myths. What Big Alcohol is not telling you.

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