“Drink Beer Regularly—It’s Good For You [And Us]”: Selling Tooth’s Beer In A Depressed Market

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Abstract. This study examines the unique publicity activities devised by the Tooth’s brewery in Sydney during the Great Depression and the 1930s. Unlike many advertisers, the brewery did not turn its back on advertising or marketing. Recognising the importance of publicity, the brewery developed innovative advertising and marketing initiatives in an attempt to arrest its declining sales. Such strategies included the development of co-operative advertising campaigns, the creation of advertisements directly targeting female consumers, and the renovation of pubs owned by the brewery. However, the significance of these initiatives extends beyond the immediate economic concerns. They were also celebration of modernity. By locating Tooth’s advertising, marketing, and public relations activities within the broader social, cultural, and political context, this study provides a revealing insight into the way in which such campaigns simultaneously informed and reflected the Australian experience of modernity during the 1930s.

In 1937 M. McLachlan of Melbourne, Victoria, wrote a letter to Tooth’s brewery in Sydney, New South Wales (NSW), to complain about its advertising. McLachlan’s gripe concerned the use of the terms “half bottles” and “full bottles” in the brewery’s advertisements: “My reference of course is to the fact that your lager is not packed in bottles which are minus the top half. This may be a trade expression but it does not lend itself to being used in print.” Within days, the complainant received a letter from Tom Watson, the Tooth’s general manager. In his response, Watson explained the reasons for the company’s use of the offending term:

There may be logic in your contention as to how the term “half bottle” strikes prospective purchasers, for we realise that descriptions are understood by handlers of a product may not be known to consumers. There are many conventional words in use which cannot be taken literally; for instance – “half-a-crown” would not be expected to be one part of a five shilling piece that has been cut in halves.

While it is unclear whether McLachlan was a frustrated English teacher, a temperance advocate, or a simple rabblerouser, the tone of Watson’s response

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clearly demonstrates that he took the consumer and his concerns seriously (even if it did come from a state that did not stock Tooth’s products!). The general manager’s action also indicates that he had an awareness of public relations and its importance. Appointed general manager of the brewery in 1928 (at only 29 years of age), Watson was an innovative and a forward-looking man who arrived at the company at the right time. His attributes would prove to be an asset for brewery in the difficult years that immediately followed his appointment.

Australia’s brewing industry was one of the first to feel the full brunt of the Great Depression. The Tooth’s archives held by the Noel Butlin Archives Centre provide a candid insight into the way that companies such as Tooth’s responded to the economic crisis. By examining Tooth’s advertising and public relations activities during the decade spanning the 1930s, this paper demonstrates the ways in which this brewery was able to implement an innovative marketing strategy that would safeguard its short-term and, indeed, long-term interests.

The significance of these strategies, however, extends beyond the immediate economic imperative. Tooth’s publicity campaigns also provide a unique insight into the Australian experience of modernity. These initiatives were not simply an attempt to arrest plummeting sales, they also sought to overturn established drinking habits and introduce new patterns of consumption that resonated with the nation’s changing social, cultural, political, and, of course, economic climate. While the brewer had already established mass production facilities and mass distribution networks, these did not automatically guarantee mass consumption. A modern solution was therefore required to solve this modern problem. Tooth’s advertising, marketing, and public relations activities during the 1930s not only utilised modern forms of communication, they were a celebration of modernity that simultaneously informed and reflected local attitudes towards it.

**Industrialization**

Tooth’s innovative marketing strategies in the 1930s were the product of the economic developments that had taken place in Australia during the 1920s. Germany’s wartime blockade of the British Isles had underscored the highly vulnerable state of the Australian economy. Without access to British markets and British wares, Australians reached the grim realization that their economy could no longer ride exclusively on the sheep’s back. Already in 1919, the *Australasian Manufacturer* declared that Australians needed to “make Australia one of the most prosperous, most self-reliant, and therefore, one of the safest countries in the world.” It was suggested that industrialization not only underpinned Australia’s defence, but also its future progress and prosperity.

The relationship between security and self-sufficiency was officially recognised in the 1921 “Greene Tariff,” which greatly increased protection for local industry. Echoes of Australia’s wartime experience resonate strongly in its
stated aims:

(iii) A country should be as independent and as self-contained as possible in order that it may be less vulnerable to the effects of any war which might destroy markets abroad.

(iv) Certain industries are especially desirable directly for armaments, in case essential supplies are cut off, or to promote the population of vulnerable areas, such as tropical Queensland. 

Australians, it noted elsewhere, could no longer be “the hewers of wood… for the people of more favoured countries.” An improved industrial sector thus promised self-sufficiency, which in turn meant national security. Underpinning the tariff and its aims was the single “basic Australian objective” – to establish “the largest white population at the highest standard of living.” In short, industrialization would enable the nation to defend itself and safeguard its much-vaunted “White Australia” policy.

Safe behind this new tariff, Australia’s industrial sector began to develop. The industries that expanded in interwar Australia were those that either replaced UK imports or “new” industries such as car and electrical product manufacturing. The absence of British imports during the war, for example, had facilitated the rapid expansion of Australia’s fledgling steelworks. The new tariff meant that the steel created by these firms was now providing the backbone of countless Australian industries. Financed by overseas investors, the price of building up “White Australia” would eventually cost a lot more than Australia had bargained for.

The tariff offered little more protection to Australian breweries than the vast distances that separated it from the rest of the world. Up until the 1860s, beer was not an overly popular drink in the Australian colonies that was largely imported from overseas. As Australian brewers learnt to deal with local conditions and began to produce better tasting beer, the beverage’s popularity increased. Moreover, the larger breweries were embracing modern science to improve production. This enabled them to distinguish superiority of their product and brand from the small backyard breweries that dotted the cities and countries. The railways also played a key role in introducing rural drinkers to the mass produced product. Facing competitors that offered cheaper, more accessible, and better quality beers, the independent breweries folded.

By the 1920s, the combined weight of Tooth’s, Tooheys, and Resch’s breweries had effectively crushed the independent breweries in NSW. Since each of these metropolitan giants had introduced modern brewing facilities, they now needed to develop alternative means of expanding their respective markets. Only days before the Wall Street crash in August 1929, Tooth’s opted for the straightforward yet somewhat expensive option of buying out its competitor Resch’s. The *Australian Brewing and Wine Journal* reported that the takeover not only raised Tooth’s capital by £3 million; it also saw Tooheys’ shares fall. However, the onset of the Depression saved Tooheys from a similar fate. A different strategy would be needed if Tooth’s was to secure a monopoly of the
NSW beer market. For Tooth’s and Tooheys alike, marketing would become the key to realising their ambitions.

In contrast to the breweries, Australia’s fledgling advertising industry was only finding its feet in the postwar years. However, the benefits to be gained from the great industrialist drive were not lost on local agencies. In 1923 the Advertising Association of Australia carried the motion “that the Association co-operate with the Federal Government, through the Commercial and Industrial Bureau of the Board of Trade, with the object of educating the people regarding Australia’s industries, resources, possibilities and developments.”

The advertising industry’s support for the government was as pragmatic as it was patriotic. Advertising agencies understood that Australian manufacturers would look towards them to sell their wares. Moreover, industrial expansion further stimulated competition, thereby making manufacturers even more dependent upon advertising to maintain sales, let alone increase them.

During the course of the 1920s, the number of full-service advertising agencies in Australia proliferated. “The modern Service Agent,” noted one adman, “is a highly specialised product. He is in possession of a highly detailed knowledge of the fields of art, copywriting, printing, merchandising, consumers’ habits, media, economics and a hundred other subjects.” Rather than simply selling newspaper columns to clients, the full-service advertising agency offered to plan and prepare full advertising campaigns as well as insert the material in the relevant media outlets. In an increasingly competitive market, advertising ceased to be luxury – it was a necessity. Already in 1921, it was estimated that the advertising industry was earning some £20 million and the figure showed little sign of falling for the next eight years.

The industry did not shy away from drawing attention to its achievements. The quantity and, indeed, quality of advertisements produced over the course of the 1920s had grown exponentially. The industry identified itself as the epitome of the modern age. Adman Arthur O. Richardson thus declared in 1927, “We live in an age of advertising, an age when the science and strategy of selling demand close and careful study.” Advertising’s successes did not go unnoticed by outsiders – especially by Tooth’s and its youthful general manager.

ECONOMIC COLLAPSE

Australia had already been feeling the effects of economic downturn before the Wall Street collapse. Some six months earlier, the British journal Efficiency Magazine urged Australian readers to “Wake Up!” Australia, it claimed, was “now in a mess – political and financial mess. The figures are appalling.” Unable to pay back the loans that British banking creditors were now calling in, Australia was hurtling towards economic turmoil. For Australia’s industrial sector, the outlook was equally disheartening – not even the tariff could protect them. The downturn in consumption went hand in hand with unemployment. By 1931, a quarter of Australian workers were unemployed whilst
gross domestic product had fallen by ten percent. A year later, unemployment would peak at 28 percent.

With household budgets severely restricted, Australians made sacrifices. Alcohol was one product that many were willing to forego. In April 1930, the *Australian Brewing and Wine Journal* reported that the NSW brewing industry was facing a challenge: “Trade in Sydney keeps on the quiet side, and is likely to do so for some little time at least. Unemployment in the industrial areas is a big factor in this respect, the drastic curtailment in public spending power reacting largely on the hotelkeepers.”

The crisis faced by hotelkeepers was soon being felt by the breweries themselves. Noting that the continued downturn in sales was creating “perhaps the most difficult period of the present century,” the journal nevertheless added optimistically that “with the passing of another month, output will commence to show an upward tendency.” By the end of the year, the writing was well and truly on the wall and the *Australian Brewing and Wine Journal* glumly conceded that there were few signs of improvement:

The unprecedented period of financial stress through which the State is passing, makes it impossible for any exceptional turnover to be recorded this December. Whereas extra hands should be required to cope with demand, it is found that staff are still being rationed, and old employees, remembering past achievements… shake their heads reflectively when discussing existing business… Hotelkeepers continue to experience adverse returns in the bar.

The statistics painted a bleak picture. In the 1930/31 financial year, the consumption of beer in NSW plummeted by almost quarter on the previous year. Between the 1929/30 and 1932/33 financial years, Tooth’s profits fell by almost a third. At the end of 1934, the brewery’s figures were displaying only marginal improvement.

The crisis facing the breweries and countless other industries also threatened the advertising industry. For those struggling to make ends meet, the advertising industry was an easy scapegoat. In 1930 the *Advertiser’s Monthly* remonstrated against its critics:

It was of course a foregone conclusion that as soon as a slump hit Australia some unthinking critics would immediately attack the costs of distribution and inveigh against advertising as being an excessively expensive factor in connection with the prices of commodities.

The advertising journal urged the industry to adopt innovative strategies to combat the economic crisis and to improve advertising’s reputation. Others in the industry focused on their clients. Advertising agent Chris Stretton-Morgan thus asked advertisers to be more sympathetic to advertising and the advertising agencies: “advertisers have got to recognise that to-day advertising will not produce the same returns as it produced eighteen months ago, or even twelve months ago.”

The advertising industry’s calls for sympathy and understanding were not unfounded. Unable to identify any explicit relationship between advertising
outlay and income, many companies questioned their advertising expenditure and duly moved to slash it in an attempt to balance the books. In 1930 it was estimated that £7 million was being spent annually on advertising in Australia – less than half the amount being spent in 1921. The dramatic reduction in advertising revenue also had an effect on other related industries. In September 1931 the publisher of Smith’s Weekly, Frank Packer, complained about the way that Tooth’s and its agency had reduced its advertising space in his paper by 66 percent. “We realise… that at this time reduction and curtailment of expenditure is universal throughout Australia,” noted Packer, “but I do think this is a little drastic.” He was no less impressed by the fact that Tooth’s had also cut back its advertising in one of his other papers. Packer took aim at the brewery’s agency, A.N. White, which he felt possessed “a certain amount of prejudice against Smith’s Weekly.” In response to Packer’s claims, Watson stated that

we have made general cut owing to the state of the trade, and no paper has been treated differently from any other. Our advertising agent does not figure in this matter at all, as we have our own advertising office, and the question of allocation of space is directed from that office.

Watson’s comments indicate that Tooth’s decision was not a knee-jerk reaction to the economic crisis but rather a part of an evolving marketing strategy.

**Agency Relations**

In December 1930 Watson wrote to the Griffin Shave agency to inform them that Tooth’s would no longer require their services. “Our change in our advertising arrangements,” he wrote, “has been brought about by a desire on our part to have the work in the future controlled by our own staff.” The move was clearly a cost-cutting initiative, reducing any unnecessary advertising expenditure whilst providing the brewery greater control over its publicity operations. For the Griffin Shave agency, the loss of such a large account would have been a serious body blow. The recipient of the Tooth’s account was the A.N. White agency. In these tough times, it mattered little that the new account had diminished in size. Having secured a key advertiser, A.N. White was willing to go to great lengths to satisfy its new client.

During the late 1920s, Australian advertising agents had read American articles discussing the concept of market research. However, it was the arrival of the US giant J. Walter Thompson in 1929 that marked the beginnings of market research in Australia. The agency identified its methods as “scientific” and presented market research as an integral aspect of modern advertising. However, one observer in Newspaper News wryly noted that “While many Australian advertising firms claim to include market research… very few, if any, are equipped to render it successfully.” Such criticism can be directed at Tooth’s new agency. Anxious to please its new client, the A.N. White agency took the liberty of conducting some market research for the brewer of its own
In August 1930, L.V. Bartlett, the account manager, spent a day working behind the counter at the Ship Inn in Sydney’s Circular Quay. Bartlett felt that contact with the actual consumers would enable him “to find some means to increase the present day consumption of bottled beer.”

In particular, his “market research” report focused on the actions of middle class men buying bottles of beer:

The outstanding feature which impressed me… was the extreme lengths to which 98% of the customers go to camouflage their purchases. Apart from the numerous heavy suitcases… the purchaser of ones and twos went to elaborate measures to either conceal his purchase or to make it look like a rolled up newspaper or a pair of shoes in a brown paper parcel. Here, in my opinion, is a feeling of self-conscious shame which, if handled rightly, can be profitably used.

Bartlett advocated home delivery in “plain vans” to conceal the product being purchased. This, he argued, would not only enable middle class Sydneysiders to conceal their shame; it would also encourage greater consumption as bottles in the house would be “a definite incentive for them to be consumed.”

Drinking could thus continue long after the hotels shut their doors at six o’clock.

While Bartlett’s “market research” provides a fascinating insight into the habits of Sydney’s drinkers, it did little for A.N. White. The agency failed to see out the year with the Tooth’s account, being sacked only nine months after its appointment. The brewer’s new agency, Goldberg Advertising, was renowned for its “buccaneering reputation” and it had doubtlessly lured the account by underselling its services.

Bartlett’s recommendations, however, had not fallen on deaf ears. Headed “THE BOTTLE IN THE BAG” an advertisement appearing at the end of 1931 now urged readers to “Put a bottle in your bag tonight!”

Tooth’s had clearly informed its new agency to act on the previous agency’s market research. A second advertisement inserted by the brewery similarly bore the hallmarks of Bartlett’s research, drawing attention to the home delivery service offered by the hotels:

In summer time, the thoughtful hostess keeps at least a dozen bottles of Resch’s Pilsner in the house to refresh her guests. Home delivery is a convenient service – just “phone the nearest hotel to execute your order… If you telephone the Brewery… they [sic] will arrange for delivery from the hotel nearest you.”

While agencies were expendable, it seems that Tooth’s recognised that good marketing advice was priceless.

United We Stand
Addressing the Blennerhassett’s Commercial Educational Society of Australia in 1931, advertising agent “Billy” Richards explored one of his pet topics – cooperative advertising. Cooperative advertising, he explained, meant “the grouping of the advertising efforts of manufacturers of a certain product, in order that sales of that product may be increased, and all the members of the
While Richards had raised the topic during the twenties, the current economic crisis ensured that his listeners would be more receptive of his claims. “Ultimately whole industries must put shoulder to shoulder to make the huge job effective, having faith that bigger consumption will mean opportunity for all,” he argued. Cooperative advertising would also help to improve advertising’s public perception by offsetting the damage caused “deceptive products, misleading advertising, exaggerated [or] concealed costs.” For the struggling advertising agencies, cooperative advertising campaigns could also provide some sorely needed revenue.

The dramatic downturn in beer consumption caused by the Depression was doing more damage to the beer industry than its protracted struggle with the temperance movement. In this desperate climate, Richards’ call for cooperative advertising found a more receptive audience in NSW’s two largest breweries. As the Depression reached its lowest point in 1932, Tooth’s and Tooheys joined forces to launch the so-called “Drink More Beer” advertising campaign. The breweries’ cooperative campaign would see advertisements placed in the daily press, on billboards, and hotel frontages. The aim of the “Drink More Beer” campaign was straightforward: to stimulate sales by stressing the merits of beer as a healthy beverage. The Australian Brewing and Wine Journal cheerfully pointed that the campaign also enabled the alcohol industry to turn the tables on its most trenchant critics:

Brewers have for so many years been made a target for criticism by temperance workers that they are amply justified in hitting back at the reformers... One prohibitionist, a leading cleric, has declared, since the “Drink More Beer” propaganda was initiated, that the only result will be to fill the local penitentiaries. Such bitter opponents of alcohol seemingly refuse to admit that beer and lager are, when taken in moderation, health-giving drinks... The trade campaign is proving most unpalatable to the prohibition followers.

As if the launch of the “Drink More Beer” campaign were not enough for the temperance lobby, the Australian Brewing and Wine Journal also noted that the wine industry had coincidentally launched its “Wine Week” promotion that same week. The liquor industry may have been down, but it was certainly not out.

A key appeal of the “Drink More Beer” campaign was to identify beer as a natural and healthy drink. One advertisement in the series depicted a man visiting his local doctor. Underneath, the copy read:

The medical profession has never hesitated to endorse the health-giving properties of good pure beer. For many years leading physicians have recommended beer, in whatever form their patients most enjoy, as a tonic, a health food and as a refreshing beverage which will restore energy lost through work and worry.

This final comment is typical of Depression-era advertising, where references to the economic crisis only appeared in euphemistic codes. To underscore its claims, the advertisement also featured endorsements from various medical practitioners, including Lord Dawson – physician to the King. Other adver-
Advertisements highlighted beer’s revitalising attributes. Figure 1, for example, displays a more positive image of beer and beer drinkers. The advertisement features the statement: “Brewed under perfect hygienic conditions in your own state.” By underscoring the breweries’ modernity, this statement also fires an aside at any shoddy backyard brews that cash-strapped consumers may have been tempted to drink in an effort to save a penny.

Appeals to patriotic sentiment were also used to reinforce the campaign’s health-giving claims. Beneath the image of a burly yeoman, one advertisement declared:

Good beef… pure beer… and the virile British Empire – the three have gone hand in hand ever since England has been a Power. The yeomen of England… healthy, lusty and happy… knew the value of good brown ale. Their descendants, carrying on the traditions of Empire in all parts of the World, still derive energy and vigour from beer which is even better than the ale the yeomen knew. Beer is malt in its best and most inexpensive form… every drop means health and nourishment for you.46

Not content with describing ale as “the drink of the Anglo-Saxon race,” another advertisement went on to claim that beer was “the inspiration of a thousand songs and the benefactor of humanity.”47 In Figure 2 the local element of Australian national identity is emphasised. Significantly, the appeals used in the copy also echo both the sentiments underpinning the 1921 tariff. The breweries and the industries they support, it notes, kept Australian workers busy and employed. It goes on to state that “By drinking Beer, you not only
benefit your health... you help to make our country what it ought to be… prosperous and self-supporting."

In its review of the previous month’s trading figures, the November edition of the *Australasian Brewing and Wine Journal* deemed the campaign a success:

> It is impossible to say whether the improved trading figures are attributable to the publicity, rather than to better weather. Nevertheless, the telling messages conveyed to the public must, based on the immutable law of averages, direct more people to the benefits to be derived from the moderate consumption of the product of the hop. Beer and stout undoubtedly possess greater nutritive properties than many of the insipid, gaseous beverages purchased by teetotallers.

The campaign continued through until the middle of 1933, just as the sales figures revealed a glimmer of hope.

As the NSW campaign drew to an end, breweries in the United Kingdom mounted a cooperative advertising campaign of their own. Launched in December 1933, the “Beer is Best” campaign similarly claimed that “beer was best for healthy living, sporting activity, conviviality and just about everything else.” Watson had contacted his British counterparts for further information on the campaign. However, it appears that his interest in the British series was motivated by curiosity. Thanking his contacts for the information he received from them in February 1934, Watson noted that he did not foresee Tooth’s undertaking any further “collective advertising” in the immediate future. Unlike “Drink more Beer,” the British campaign continued on into the decade.

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Source: *Bulletin* (March 8, 1933), 36.
In 1939, Claude McKay of Smith’s Weekly contacted Watson about the possibility of “all in the [brewing] industry to chip in and boost their product.”

With sales growing, Watson was altogether uninterested in the proposal: “Our general attitude is that we will always be subjected to criticism from certain quarters… but our methods of doing business measure up to the highest traditions, and we have nothing to be afraid of.”

The healthy figures could clearly speak for themselves.

**Pleasing another Palate**

While the cooperative advertising campaign was a short-term measure, other strategies devised during the Depression proved too effective to be discarded once the economic situation improved. One of the key strategic decisions taken by Tooth’s during these years concerned the consumer market. As the copy of a 1931 advertisement for Resch’s Pilsener illustrates, there was little doubt about the beer’s key market: “What’s He Drinking? A brew to match his lusty strength… vim and vigor in every drop… a man’s drink if ever there was one.”

Beer was a man’s drink and was duly marketed as thus. However, the dramatic downturn in consumption forced the breweries to re-examine their traditional market base. The recent abstainer was the key problem. Enticing these men back was difficult, as they had primarily abstained for financial reasons. Although most would return when the economy improved, a stopgap measure needed to be found for the interim.

Prior to the 1930s, Australian breweries paid scant attention to the female consumer. Popular mores held that any woman “who valued her reputation” did not imbibe. Although hotels provided “Ladies Lounges,” they and their female clientele were regarded with equal contempt by moralistic middle-class commentators. Women who imbibed in the privacy of their own home were viewed with equal scorn. Advertising beer directly to women could therefore be an expensive way to elicit a negative response from female and, indeed, male audiences. Women, however, were beginning to appear in beer advertisements of the 1920s. Developments in both printing technology and advertising techniques were resulting in the prioritization of imagery over copy. Women assumed a central position in these advertisements. These “spectacular” women, contends Liz Conor, both symbolised and embodied modernity: “The modern appearing woman did not step into modernity’s symbolic systems, but was textually inscribed in its panorama.”

The small number of women featured in beer advertisements from the 1920s certainly reinforce Conor’s claims. Rather than consumers they appeared as adornments. Figure 3, for example, appears to break the mould, depicting the female with a glass in front of her. Yet, it does not deviate too far from the established norms. Not only is her back to the reader; her glass is also full. The consumer is meant identify with the active male happily drinking his glass of beer. As an adornment, the female figure signifies style, sophistication and, perhaps, the male’s virility. The handful of Tooth’s advertisements featuring
women which appeared in the opening years of the Depression did not deviate from this stereotype. A 1930 advertisement thus depicts three glamorously dressed women attending a polo match. Its copy reconfirms the image of beer consumption as an acceptable and sophisticated activity: “all the associations of the game must measure up to the same fine standard… the people, the frocks, even their very food… and the beverages, of course.” While the woman occupying the central position has a full glass next to her, it is the male company that is actively drinking.

By the time the ad shown in Figure 4 appeared in 1932, a fundamental shift had occurred within Tooth’s marketing strategy. No longer “spectacular” objects, women here are clearly identified as consumers – both in the marketing and, indeed, in the gastronomic sense. While the beer itself was deemed “sufficiently mild to suit the feminine taste,” the svelte bottle signified tasteful sophistication (not unlike the bottles used for contemporary Australian premium beers). It was the erosion of the breweries’ traditional market that forced Tooth’s to reconsider its clientele. If popular attitudes towards female drinking could be overturned or at least mollified, they reasoned, then sales figures would benefit. Moreover, housewives who enjoyed a glass may also adopt a more liberal approach to their spouses’ imbibing. Economically, the female consumer was worth courting.

As the female market assumed a greater importance, Tooth’s realised that the image of glamour may not necessarily appeal to every woman. Expanding on the “Drink More Beer” campaign, stout was identified as the healthiest

Figure 3.

Source: Bulletin (September 9, 1926), front cover.
of all beers and therefore an appropriate beverage for all women. The campaign for stout sought to capitalise on the image that surrounded Guinness. Although the Irish brewery had only launched its famed “Guinness is Good for You” campaign a few years earlier in 1929, the product’s image had been well established in the minds of the British consumer. Advertisements for stout across Australia indicate that local breweries were well aware of both the product’s image and the overseas campaign’s popularity. Tooth’s Sheaf Stout was thus marketed to the female consumer as a tonic rather than a beer. Advertisements for stout thus featured radiant and beaming women of all ages. Claiming “doctors advise them both ‘to drink SHEAF STOUT for Good Health,’” a 1934 ad featured an elderly woman beside a young woman (presumably her daughter). Another advertisement from the same year targeted young mothers, suggesting that stout could help them be better mothers whilst retaining their good looks: “Every night, after the kiddies are safely tucked in bed, drink a glass of nourishing ‘Sheaf’ Stout to keep you ‘fit’ and ensure sound, restful sleep. This is the safest, surest and most pleasant way to keep young.”

The focus on stout in Tooth’s publicity was also the result of moves made by the competition. In August 1933 the Australian Brewing and Wine Journal reported that there was currently a “keen demand for stout.” While it noted
that the cold weather had helped stimulate demand, it also attributed this upturn to “the production some months ago of a new type of stout by a local brewery [Tooheys], and the... intensive campaign by the breweries, advocating the consumption of stout for health reasons.” Not surprisingly, Tooth’s realised that it could ill afford to neglect its traditional market. Appearing in conjunction with female stout consumers, advertisements featuring Rugby League players served to reiterate the manliness of the beverage as well as its health-giving attributes.

Unlike the cooperative advertisements, the campaign to convince female consumers to pour a glass of stout did not cease with economic recovery. Advertisements targeting female consumers continued to appear throughout the 1930s. By the end of the decade, the campaign was no longer restricted to keeping the body healthy during the chilly winter months. Asking whether women wished to “keep Summer lassitude away,” a 1937 advertisement told them that “a daily glass is a healthful habit... it keeps you fit and well, and gives you that staying power to enjoy every moment of the long Summer days.” With men and women pouring themselves a healthy glass of stout 365 days a year, Tooth’s gamble appeared to be paying off.

ADVERTISING IN ANOTHER DIMENSION
The decision to place the stout and “Drink More Beer” campaigns in the press had been a deliberate one. An internal memo received by Tooth’s advertising manager, Tom McLelland, in 1935 outlines the rationale behind this strategy. The press, it noted, “is the outstanding medium for the introduction of a new line and for pointing the features of a commodity with regard to beer, this would be refreshment, good health, entertainment and so on.” However, during the course of the 1930s, Tooth’s expenditure on newspaper advertising fell from a high of £15,494 in 1931 to some £8,703 in 1937. This decline in press expenditure does not correlate with the economic downturn, indicating that Tooth’s was deliberately diversifying its marketing activities rather than placing all of its advertising expenditure into a single medium.

During the Depression, advertising over the radio was not a real option for most Australian advertisers. While a desperate and cash-strapped government had increased the number of commercial radio stations, few Australians could afford a radio set. Only towards the end of the decade did advertisers (including Tooth’s) pay serious consideration to sponsoring radio programmes. The modern status of Tooth’s Depression-era advertising therefore did not come from its use of radio, but rather its willingness to explore alternative means of promoting Tooth’s to the consumer.

As the Australian Brewing and Wine Journal had noted in the early days of the Depression, publicans and hotel owners were the first to feel the economic squeeze. Unlike the British pub and its ubiquitous 10 o’clock closing time, hotels in NSW, South Australia, and Victoria closed at 6 o’clock. Across the Tasman, New Zealanders were also subject to 6 o’clock closing. The
tradition of “shouting” (buying a round of drinks for each drinker in the group and receiving one from each in return) meant that a trip to the hotel seldom involved a single glass of beer. The ensuing situation gave rise to the so-called “six o’clock swill.” In the hour between the end of the workday and the hotel’s closing time, men literally fought their way to the bar to buy their round and, indeed, finish their return shouts. As Clare Wright notes, the “swill” reinforced the idea that Australian public drinking was “an overtly masculine style of social engagement: hard, fast, loud, competitive and gender-exclusive.”

While unemployment meant that many men had more time on their hands, a “shout” had become an expensive luxury. Men who reneged on a shout ran the risk of being a social outcast, whilst those who opted out of a shout were lampooned as a “Jimmy Woodser.” Such drinking practices inevitably affected pub owners. As in New Zealand, the “swill” meant that NSW “consumers tended to flock to the nearest outlet rather than search for good beer served in pleasant surroundings.”

For Tooth’s, the downward trend in the hotels was double blow. Aside from the obvious impact on its sales, Tooth’s was also concerned as a hotel owner. Having invested a significant amount of money and time tying up hotels or buying them altogether, Tooth’s worried that its investments might prove very costly. Such concerns were exacerbated by the Licences Reduction Board. Although its relationship with the hotel industry had improved since its inception in 1920, the Board nevertheless threatened to revoke the licence of any hotel that failed to measure up to its stringent requirements. Moreover, the Tooth’s hotels were also under pressure from rival Tooheys pubs as well as those that were being picked up by the Richmond breweries, a bold upstart from Victoria that was attempting to break into the NSW market. Under pressure from all sides, Tooth’s realised that the doors of its hotels would not stay open if it did not take active steps to protect its interests.

Although direct advertising had worked well for bottled beers, a 1935 memo indicated that such advertising was less effective for hotels:

So far as our hotel trade is concerned, I do not think extensive newspaper work is going to make much difference to that class of trade, and we have our past experience to guide us. Before the depression we were spending more on newspaper work than we are now. Notwithstanding this experience, our ratio of the State’s trade year in year out did not vary.

A different approach would be needed. Declining profits did not necessarily mean that the hotel had ceased to be an important place. Although “shouting” had converted Australian and New Zealand pubs into somewhat utilitarian places, Janet McCalman nevertheless notes they remained at the heart of men’s social networks. For a significantly smaller number of women, the pub also served an important social function. Although women frequently poured the drinks in the public bar, very few were to be found on the other side of the counter. Female drinkers congregated in the Ladies Lounge, where, as Wright demonstrates, they took some “time out” from home and socialised
In order to reemphasise the pub’s social function, Tooth’s embarked on a program to renovate their hotels. By making the hotel a place where drinkers wanted to be, the brewery hoped that drinkers would return and, indeed, be tempted to have a drink or two extra. Renovating the hotel not only kept the drinkers in; it would also keep the Licences Reduction Board and, indeed, the competition at bay. Tooth’s proactive strategy was unique. In Victoria the growing number of licences voluntarily surrendered saw the Licensing Court relax its policy of improvement.

Throughout the Depression, Tooth’s undertook work to improve the appearance of their hotels. In his annual report for 1933, Waston claimed that Tooth’s hotels were “our best medium for advertising and prestige.” In November that same year, Watson informed the Advertising Department that it would be “painting and writing [a] sign on [the] side wall” of the Annandale Hotel on Parramatta Road whilst the Kentish Hotel in Glebe would require the same improvements plus “repainting and writing [of] the whole of the awning facias.” The renovations were not limited to Sydney. Hotel Newcastle would thus receive “two new exterior glass advertisements.” Other hotels were not simply renovated – they were completely rebuilt. Tooth’s employed architects to design entirely new hotels. These hotels were built in the contemporary art deco design. With its emphasis on “speed, progress and reliability,” the art deco style neatly reflected the very image that Tooth’s had been establishing throughout its other forms of advertising. As Figure 5 illustrates, the ubiquitous corner entry provided an opportunity for architects to adorn their buildings with clean, rounded curves. Such improvements were not necessarily motivated by aesthetics. Councils had been outlawing veranda posts on the footpath whilst Australia’s steelworks were producing cheaper metals for local consumption. J. M. Freeland thus notes that “using light steel framework
hung on steel tension rods anchored back to the brickwork, flat veranda canopies... were added as weather protection on one pub after another.”

The interior of the hotel was no less important than its exterior. Six o’clock closing had brought about the first change. In an attempt to increase the size of the all-important public bar, countless bars had knocked down the internal walls that had separated it from the saloon bar or the parlour. For many, the next step was to bring the internal appearance in line with the pub’s remodelled exterior. Figure 6 exemplifies the impact of art deco on interior design – from the shape of the bar to tiles on the floor. Bar room mirrors are also visible on the walls. For many years, decorated mirrors had been used in pubs to provide some light and colour in otherwise dark watering holes. Building on this tradition yet adding a modern twist, Tooth’s embarked on a unique campaign to liven up these bar room mirrors with artist’s paintings. As Charles Pickett notes, these images were intended to complement the pub’s stylish exterior: “Tooth’s wanted each painting to stand out from mass-produced advertising graphics. The company believed that the every act of putting original oil paintings on hotel walls would give it a cultured “fine art” image.” Although each painting was produced individually, the commercial artist was working within defined parameters. The brewery thus specified which subjects and scenes were to be featured whilst the artist included his own individual touches.

Mirrors produced during the early thirties commonly featured a smiling man enjoying his glass of beer. Although it was relatively unimaginative, this image appeared to be very much a product of its time. The smile downplayed the Depression whilst attesting to the quality of Tooth’s. At a second level, this image emphasised the pub’s social function by celebrating the act of drinking. However, as the economy improved, Tooth’s adopted a more creative
approach to appealing to drinkers.

A new strategy devised by the brewery was to foster patronage by identifying itself with the hotel as well as its surrounding community. Sport was a common theme in these paintings. As Tony Collins and Wray Vamplew demonstrate, a strong relationship between alcohol and sport had already existed in the United Kingdom since the nineteenth century. A similar pattern also occurred in Australia. While Tooth’s sporting paintings emerged from this tradition, they also reinforced the sporting and health-related images that had been featured in brewery’s print advertisements. A significant difference between the print advertisements and the bar room artwork was the latter’s attempts to localise the brand. The bar paintings thus featured sportsmen (usually rugby players or lifesavers) in the colours of the local team or club. By identifying itself directly with the consumer, Tooth’s sought to instil a sense of loyalty that went beyond beer. Tooth’s advertisements on entrances to local sporting grounds similarly underscored this relationship.

In Figure 5 Tooth’s sporting images can also be seen on the Union Hotel’s exterior walls. Later in the decade, various hotels incorporated different themes into their artwork suggesting that they were targeting a different clientele. Elaborate Gatsby-like images of stylish women and men in tuxedos enjoying dinner at a restaurant were a common image. While such mirrors were usually found on the walls of the city’s classiest hotels, a similar version of this painting can just be seen on the wall in Figure 6. Unlike the sportsmen, this glamorous image was not one that drinkers themselves would have readily identified with – few drinkers in this bar would have enjoyed a drink in such salubrious surroundings. However, this Hollywood scene and, indeed, the attractive women in it were not only aesthetically pleasing; they also functioned as a virtual cinema providing drinkers a temporary escape from the mundane.

Tooth’s investment in its hotels over the course of the 1930s would ultimately prove to be a profitable exercise. As the Depression lifted, the men who had abstained from alcohol returned to hotels that had undergone a radical make-over in their absence. The improvements may have even enticed some drinkers to return a little earlier than they expected. Internally and externally, Tooth’s hotels sought to exude a sense of style and modernity. The heroic sportsmen and smooth sophisticates adorning the walls similarly sought to evoke an image that was a world away from the grisly ritual of the “six o’clock swill.” Those drinkers that remained on their barstools throughout the difficult years could also take vicarious pleasure in these dreamscapes, identifying with the subject’s team colours, virility, or simply the happiness derived from a cold schooner of lager. The renovations may have disrupted their home away from home, but if the Depression had failed to dislodge them from their stools, it was unlikely that a new façade or interior would do it.
CONCLUSION

The economic crisis caused by the Great Depression effectively demanded every company to rethink its marketing strategies. Many advertisers hoped to solve this problem by cutting advertising budgets or simply abandoning advertising altogether. Rather than shunning modern forms of publicity, Tooth’s strategy was to seize them and push them in new directions. Mass consumption, it reasoned, would not occur if it could not communicate with the mass market. Tooth’s publicity initiatives thus embraced modernity and the paradoxes contained therein. On the one hand, they built on established ideas and conventions, yet, on the other, they turned them on their heads.

The dramatic downturn in individual consumption meant that the Depression threatened to do more damage to Tooth’s business than Tooheys, Richmond, and the temperance movement combined. Stemming this economic abstinence had been the brewer’s first aim. The “Drink More Beer” campaign thus saw NSW largest breweries join forces, selling beer as an honest, healthy and, indeed, patriotic beverage. While such claims were not dissimilar to those in British advertisements, the innovativeness of the cooperative campaign is underscored by the fact that it preceded the “Beer is Better” campaign in the United Kingdom. Tooth’s own advertising campaigns likewise continued to espouse these themes, particularly in relation to different sections of the market. The “Drink More Beer” campaign and the attendant Tooth’s advertisements also worked to normalise beer consumption and to dispel the notion that it was a luxury that the unemployed could not afford.

The innovative strategies devised by Tooth’s were not driven by economic pressures alone. Broader social, cultural, and, to a lesser degree, political shifts also encouraged Tooth’s to reconsider its consumer market. Although the cooperative approach had assisted beer’s image, the simple fact was that it would be difficult to reach pre-Depression levels of consumption by targeting the same consumer. The traditional market could only be squeezed so far. Tooth’s decision to expand its appeal to female consumers was in many ways a bold and daring strategy. Respectable women simply did not drink and targeting them would have initially seemed an expensively futile exercise. Tooth’s representations female consumers, of course, did not stray too far from conventional ideas of femininity. Tooth’s thus sold itself as means of enhancing a woman’s health, beauty, and motherliness. By reinforcing these traditional gender roles yet advocating the radical notion of advertising beer to women, Tooth’s advertisements give illustration to Conor’s claim that “Modernity’s visions of women became part of women’s self-perception as modern: gendered representations became embodied.”

As Tooth’s sought to expand its consumer base, it did not neglect its traditional male market. Rather than advertising its pubs in print, the brewery sought to convert its pubs into three-dimensional advertisements. Here again, the brewery’s actions both informed and reflected ideas of modernity. An integrated part of its overall marketing strategy, the newly constructed art-deco
facades not only identified Tooth’s as a modern and successful company; they also suggested that drinking was no longer a practice undertaken in dingy old pubs. Internally, the brewery cultivated a similar image. Bar room mirrors implied that Tooth’s shared the same interests as its clientele – whether it was seeing the local team win or sharing a drink with an attractive woman. By identifying itself and modernity with the consumer’s hopes and values, Tooth’s hoped to establish a loyal and long-term relationship with its patrons.

For Tooth’s, innovative marketing had proven to be a double edged sword. It had enabled them to survive the Depression and to emerge from it in a better state than before. However, the firm’s success had also bred contentment. After his baptism of fire, Watson’s enterprising streak appears to have waned and the firm’s marketing remained solid yet unremarkable during the three decades that followed. Having been a leading proponent of modernity, the brewery and its publicity initiatives gradually became dated and tired. Failure to keep up with societal changes meant that Tooth’s would have little chance of bearing any influence over them. The culture of drinking was changing; hotels were losing their significance and although women were drinking in greater numbers, they were more likely to be drinking wine rather than stout. Into this breach stepped Tooheys, which had employed two young creative advertising agents to reinvigorate their brand. Emulating Tooth’s former innovation, Tooheys’ new campaigns were a spectacular success that recognised the social and cultural changes that were taking place in society. By the 1980s, Tooth’s decline was terminal and it was taken over by another Victorian competitor, Carlton & United Breweries (CUB). The subsequent attempts by Tooheys and CUB to evoke patriotic sentiments in their advertising appeals, to target women, and to refurbish hotels bear more than a passing semblance to Tooth’s Depression-era activities. Although Tooth’s has disappeared, its legacy is still visible in the contemporary beer industry’s operations and advertising appeals, and, indeed, on the street corners across Sydney.

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ENDNOTES
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22. Ibid., (December 1930), 149.
23. Ibid., (September 1934), 698.
24. Ibid., (December 1931), 160; Ibid., (December 1933), 181.
25. Ibid., (December 1934), 28.
30. Ibid.
36. Ibid.
37. Ibid.
40. Ibid., (December 30, 1931), front cover.
42. Ibid., 8.
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46. Ibid., (October 12, 1932), 4.
47. Ibid., (November 9, 1932), 23.
48. Ibid., *March 8, 1933*, 36.
57. *Bulletin* (July 2, 1930), 37.
60. Ibid., (June 23, 1934), 33.
63. *Australian Women’s Weekly* (December 17, 1938), 28.
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83. Wright, *Beyond the Ladies Lounge*, 114-16.


86. Ibid., 31.

87. Collins & Vamplew, *Mud, Sweat and Beers*.
