

IRELAND, THE 2020 TOKYO OLYMPICS, GUINNESS, AND THE IMAGINE ONE WORLD KIMONO PROJECT

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Abstract

A spin-off event building on the global focus on the 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games was the production of 213 kimonos as part of Imagine One World's Kimono Project. Problematically, the kimono produced for Ireland features both the word Guinness and the associated harp symbol. This serves to reinforce and legitimize links between alcohol, sport, culture, and Irish identity. As an artistic work, rather than paid advertising or sponsorship, the Kimono would probably not be covered by alcohol advertising control legislation in most countries. National alcohol control advocacy groups should develop materials and linkages with national arts and cultural representative groups to ensure their health message is widely heard.

Keywords: alcohol; Ireland; kimono; Guinness; japan; olympics

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Ireland, the 2020 Tokyo Olympics, Guinness, and the Imagine One World Kimono Project

Despite the competitiveness, pressure and potential financial implications for competitors of the Olympic Games, the spirit and philosophy behind them is officially concerned with mutual understanding, fair play, solidarity and friendliness. A statement often quoted to explain the ideal nature of the games is that by Pierre de Coubertin, Founder of the International Olympic Committee: "The important thing is not to win, but to take part". Evidence of this philosophy may be seen in the following statement from the Committee:

The goal of the Olympic Movement is to contribute to building a peaceful and better world by educating youth through sport practiced without discrimination of any kind and in the Olympic spirit, which requires mutual understanding with a spirit of friendship, solidarity and fair play.[1]

The 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games were, of course, delayed, by the Covid-19 pandemic, and have since taken place in the Summer of 2021. Due to the wealth of inter-



national interest in Japan and its culture in the lead up to the Games, several organisations such as the One World organisation, have seized the opportunity to gain global traction. The ethos of One World is in some ways similar to that of the Games themselves [2]. A notable initiative of the organization is their One World Kimono Project [3]. This project, which was launched in 2014, involved the creation of 213 kimonos representing each of the countries and principalities taking part in the Olympic Games, as well as others for displaced groups, such as the IOC Refugee Olympic Team. The aim of the project is to promote unity between people of different nationalities. A short video produced by One World as part of this project starts with the words:

Over the years, we have woven & dyed, longing for a world of peaceful coexistence.

Every KIMONO and every COUNTRY is precious and beautiful because they are all full of 'harmony'.

When the KIMONOS form a large circle,

We can see, we can feel...

The World Can Unite As One [3]

As can be seen from Figure 1, the design of the kimono for Ireland features a range of traditional colours and designs as well as with relevant historical and cultural imagery, including shamrocks and a Celtic high cross.



Fig.1. The One World Kimono Project's Kimono for Ireland



Examination of online images of the 213 kimonos reveals that Ireland's is the only one featuring text. However, far more disconcertingly, the text featured on the Irish kimono includes not only the names of national literary icons such as Oscar Wilde and James Joyce, but also features the brand name Guinness, beside an Irish harp, an emblem traditionally associated with both Ireland and the Guinness brand of stout [3]. Images of the Guinness branded Irish kimono have already circulated extensively on social media, including via platforms such as Facebook and TikTok. Such images increase the prevalence of intoxicogenic online environments [4].

The inclusion of Guinness on the kimono for Ireland is highly problematic as it once again associates alcohol (Guinness) with both sport (the Olympics) and arts and culture (ethnic clothing design). It also serves to normalize and legitimize associations between Irish identity and alcohol, and flagrantly disregards the country's troubled history with alcohol [5-10].

This portrayal is most unfortunate as Ireland has one of the highest levels of binge drinking in the world, a factor undoubtedly pertinent to its alcohol related death toll of

over 1,000 per year. The individual, societal, and economic implications of the burden of alcohol in Ireland are compelling. Alcohol is a significant factor in deaths of young men aged 15-39 in Ireland, as well as in cases of suicide, deliberate self-harm, and road traffic incidents (RTIs). Alcohol is equally significant in issues around child welfare and neglect, as well as in many cases of assault, sexual assaults, and manslaughter [11-16]. As Ireland has experienced an increase in problematic drinking among women in recent years, as well as an increase in women's rates of liver cirrhosis [17], the linkage between the elaborately coloured feminine kimono being modelled by women, and alcohol, is particularly problematic.

The extensive relationship between the alcohol industry and sport is well documented globally, and often involves high levels of advertising and sponsorship (18-27). In Ireland the alcohol industry is heavily involved in the sponsorship of both popular (e.g. soccer & rugby) and elite sports (e.g. horse racing) [21, 26]. The Irish alcohol industry is equally involved in promoting arts and cultural events. A Drinks Industry Group Ireland (DIGI) commissioned report noted that there were almost 800 festivals a year in Ireland, with the alcohol in-

dustry being a major sponsor of many, including these (e.g.: Absolut Fringe Dublin; Beamish Cork Folk Festival; Corona Cork Film Festival Cork; Guinness Jazz Festival Cork; Jameson Dublin International Film Festival) [28].

The forthcoming enactment of Section 15 of Ireland's Public Health (Alcohol) Act, 2018 will make advertising at sports events illegal. Similarly, the previously enacted, Section 17, already prohibits the sale of alcohol branded clothing for children. However, neither section of the legislation would be relevant in this instance, even if the Olympics were held in Ireland. The inclusion of Guinness was not paid advertising and the legislation around clothing only relates to that for sale to children. Exploring parallels with tobacco control, it is worth noting that even the widely respected Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC), does not directly address the issues raised by the kimono for Ireland. Article 13 of the FCTC aims to eliminate advertising promotion and sponsorship of tobacco products. However, this form of non-commercial depiction is outside even the remit of this Convention. Education and relationship building are a vital supplement to rigid legislation. And adopting a parallel, if not harsher, framework than that of the FCTC is necessary for alcohol control in Ireland.

It is clear therefore that alcohol control advocates need to work closely with those in the global arts and culture industries to convey their public health messaging. Public Health advocates need to ensure that such industries understand both the negative impact of alcohol, as well as their capacity to promote its use, intentionally or otherwise. National alcohol control advocacy groups should develop materials and linkages with national arts and cultural representative groups to ensure their health message is widely heard.

Resumo

Instiga evento bazita sur la tutmonda fokuso sur la Tokiaj Olimpikoj en 2020 estis la produktado de 213 kimonoj kiel parto de Kimono Projekto de "Imagine One World". Probleme, la kimono produktita por Irlando surhavis kaj la vorton "Guinness" kaj la rilatan harpsimbolon. Ĉi tio helpas plifortigi kaj legitimi ligojn inter alkoholo, sporto, kulturo kaj irlanda identeco. Kiel arta laboro, prefere ol pagita reklamado aŭ sponsorado, la Kimono verŝajne ne estus kovrita per varbado por alkoholaĵo. Naciaj aktivulo-grupoj pri alkoholkontrolo devus evoluigi materialojn kaj ligojn kun naciaj artoj kaj kulturaj reprezentaj grupoj por certigi, ke ilia sanmesaĝo estas vaste aŭdita.

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