

Conflicts of interest in health research: What are the consequences for policy and practice?

Vaping's Economic Impact: How the Industry Fuels South Africa's Growth

by miha | Apr 11, 2024 | News | 0 comments



Sure, the e-cigarette movement is all about a healthier alternative to tobacco products, but have you ever given any thought to how the vapour industry makes a substantial contribution to the South African economy as well?

Budget 2022's announcement of the introduction of a tax on vape products from 1 January 2023 has been anticipated for some time now (more about that next time), but let's unpack just how significant an impact this niche but growing industry has on the country's economic growth.

The stats don't lie



BUSINESSTECH

FINANCE ENERGY MOTORING INDUSTRY NEWS PROPERTY TRENDIN

South Africa's three alcohol bans wiped R52 billion from the economy



The alcohol industry has published a new report detailing how much money the government's ban on the sale of liquor has cost South Africa's economy.

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Terry Bell's Inside Labour
Move on workers' pensions and you'll almost certainly meet with anger - and action

Company culture
A business can institutionalise its own culture in rational and effective ways, says Ian Mann.

Home Companies Markets Economy Tech Personal Finance Entrepreneurs Opinion

All data is delayed

EUR/ZAR -14.41 (-0.62%) GBP/ZAR 15.29 (-0.38%) JPY/ZAR 6.11 (-0.02%) USD/ZAR 11.51 (0.13%)

EXPOSED: Coca-Cola bankrolls IRR research on sugary tax in SA

Dec 01 2019 07:46 Ardel Inzoni

f t s

Cape Town - The Coca-Cola Company has funded research by respectec think tank the South African Institute for Race Relations (IRR) on taxing sugar-sweetened beverages (SSBs). Fin24 can reveal.

The IRR policy paper, entitled **A stealth tax, not a health tax**, has a clear message: **The proposed SSB tax should be abandoned.** Coca-Cola is the only beverage brand mentioned in the 34-page document.

The IRR used the Coke-funded paper to engage with **National Treasury** about the economic impact a sugary tax will have in South Africa should it be introduced.

South Africa is the largest Coca-Cola market in Africa and consistently ranks among the **best performing countries in the world**, according to its website. It adds that consumers in more than 200 countries enjoy Coca-Cola's range of beverages at a staggering rate of 1.9 billion servings a day.

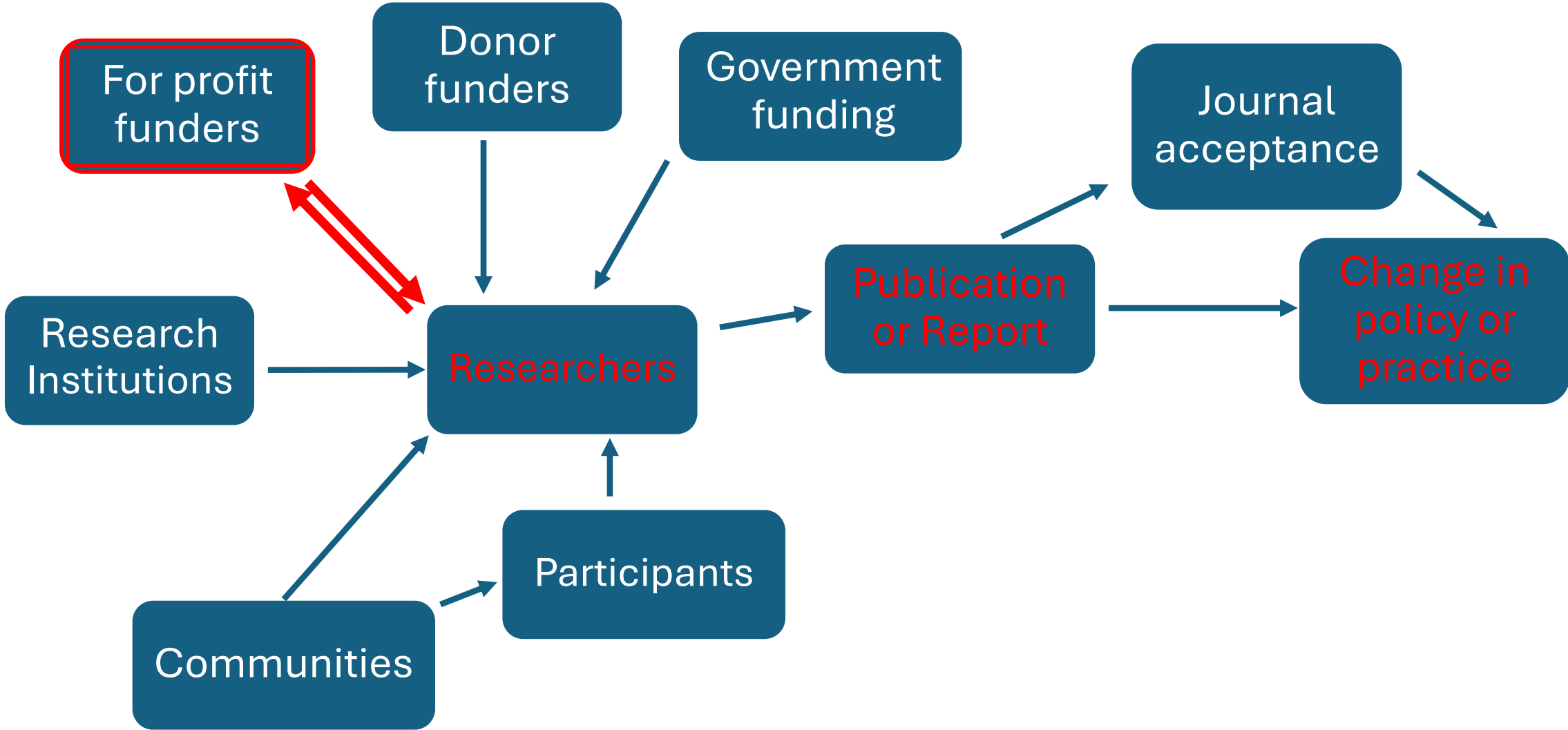
UPDATE: The **IRR responded to the story on Wednesday**, saying Fin24 should deal with the merits of the case it has made and not seek to discredit those findings by casting aspersions. (Click on the above link for the full response).

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COMPAI

To whom does it apply ?

Science Councils overall policy and funding role





Corporate determinants of health

- Corporations are mandated by law to look out for the best interests of investors, shareholders and the company
- Unlike 99% of people, corporations wield enormous power
- Their influence is unmistakable, not same as NGOs or Civil Society lobby groups
- Of the 100 largest economies, 63 are corporations and 37 are countries

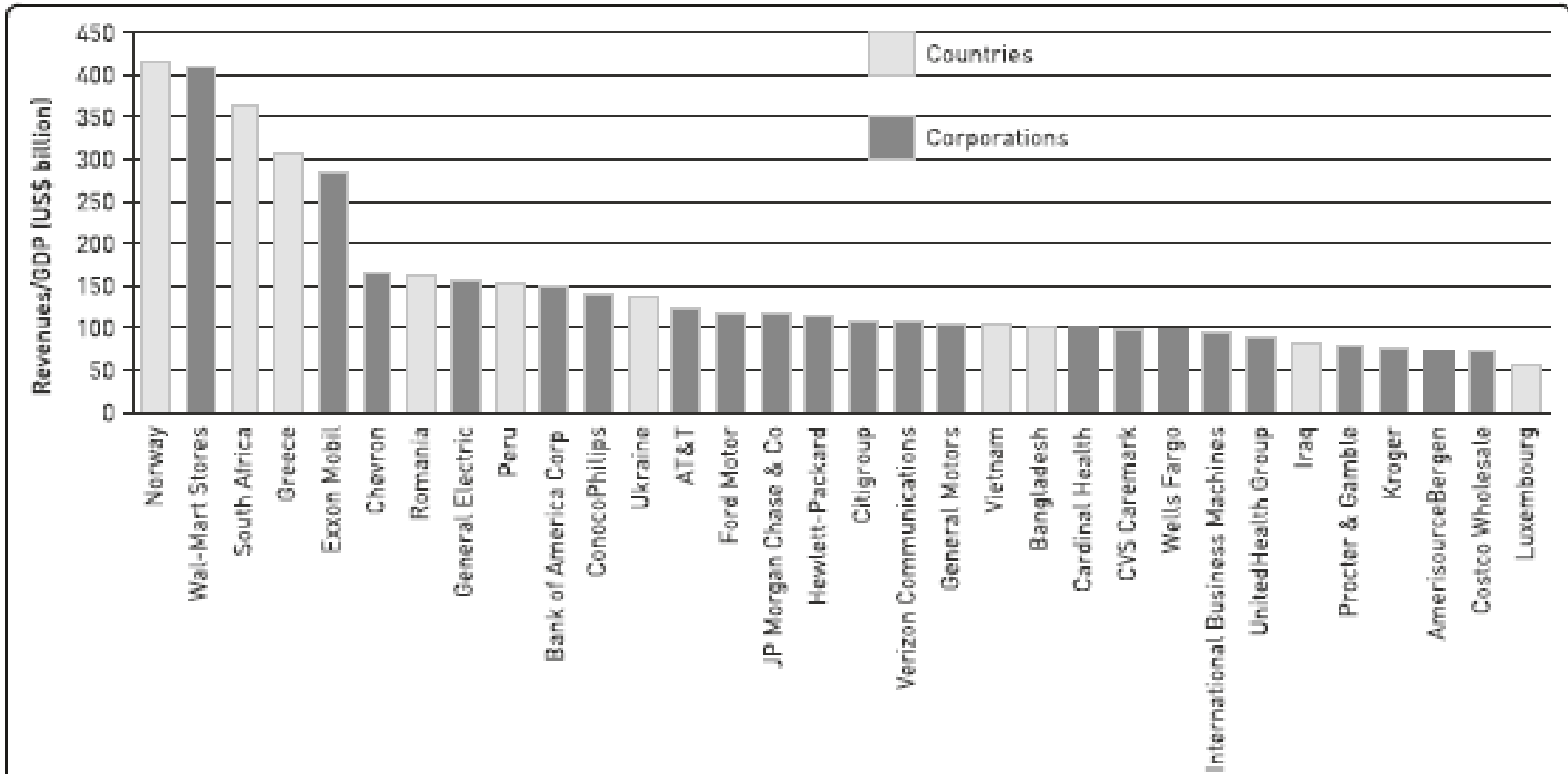


Fig. 1 Comparing the size of the world's largest corporations with selected countries.²

The politics of policy formation

- The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights: “... the right of everyone to enjoy the benefits of scientific progress and its applications” requires states to “... adopt mechanisms aimed at aligning government policies and programmes with the best available, generally accepted scientific evidence...”
→ evidence is critical so what is best evidence?
- John Maynard Keynes: ‘There is nothing a government hates more than to be well-informed; for it makes the process of arriving at decisions much more complicated and difficult...’
(Cited in Smith et al, 2016)

Science and evidence conflicts	Sponsoring studies to show no effects
evidence to protect public health conflicts with the private corporate goal to avoid regulation and maximise sales and profits	Sponsoring studies to support industry claims
	Failing to disclose industry funding
	Attacking credibility of independent researchers
	Undermining competence of public agencies
	Surreptitious monitoring independent scientist
	Refusing to disclose data
	Setting up front organisations to do above
Policy Conflicts	Paying third party groups to advance corporate interest
participation in policy processes to 'make policy more efficient and effective' - masks real goal to advance their own business interests	So-called citizen (astroturf) groups act as proxy
	Meet in secret with policy makers
	Use illegal methods to obtain privileged information
	Promote economic benefits at all cost
Ideological Conflicts	Think-tanks, sponsor 'legitimate' academic centres and activities
promote values that claim social benefit but real goal is to advance corporate interests	Promote self-regulation, de-regulation, lowered taxation
	Opposing measures to limit corporate influences
	Multi-stakeholder platforms

Research producing best evidence requires more than just disclosure (Bero, 2016)

- Agenda bias: choice of research topic aligns industry interest
- Methodological bias favours sponsors: selected samples; under-powered; inadequate follow-up methods/time; contaminated controls.
- Interpretation: Biased/selective interpretation; mechanistic information ignored for inferring effects; Exaggerate differences human vs toxicology studies; , effects seen in animals vshumans; Ignore how molecular structures may predict hazard potential
- Publication bias: only results favourable to sponsor published
- Marketing bias: Supportive “evidence” preferentially disseminated.



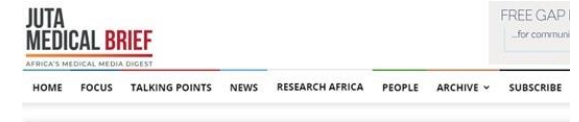
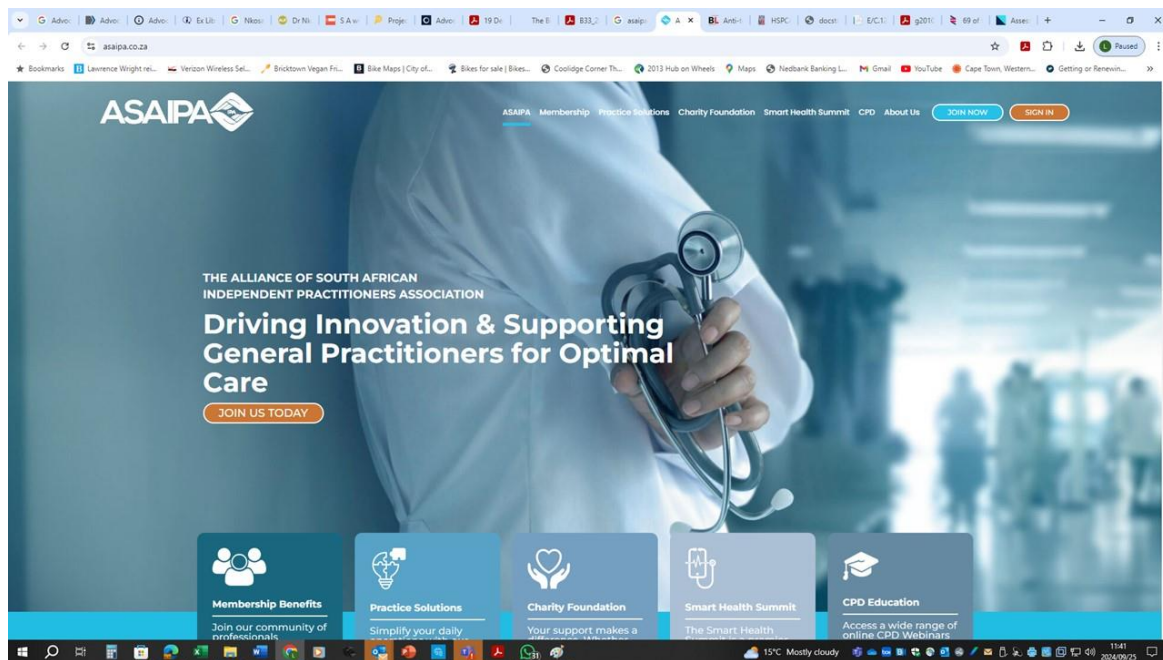
Tobacco Control in South Africa



- 1993 Tobacco Control Act
- 1994 Tobacco Control Advisory Committee
- 1999 Tobacco Products Control Amendment Act – banned smoking in public places, tobacco advertising and sponsorships
- 2000 11th World Conference on Tobacco OR Health honoured the South African health minister with an award for leadership in tobacco control.
- 2007 amendments banned smoking in selected outdoor areas, removed misleading terms (i.e. “light” and “mild”) from packaging
- 2008 amendments increased minimum age of sale from 16 to 18, banned one-to-one advertising, tobacco-like toys, sales at health and educational establishments, tighter standards on packaging and warnings
- ...
- 2022 Minister of Health introduces Tobacco Products and Electronic Delivery Systems Control Bill
- 2023 public consultations → into 2024 with current GNU

Concerted industry positioning

- Continuing Education for General Practitioners
- ‘Following the science ...’
- CPD sessions by a PMI consultant



Home > Ethics > HSPCA petitioned over big tobacco sponsorship of medical education

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HSPCA petitioned over big tobacco sponsorship of medical education

May 15, 2024



The **National Council Against Smoking (NCAS)** has lodged an objection, with more than 50 signatories, with the **Health Professions Council of SA (HPCSA)** over tobacco giant **Phillip Morris International's (PMI)** sponsorship of medical education for doctors.



The 'battle for evidence' regarding Vaping

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The stats don't lie



1. Twisting the Science
2. Skewed public opinion surveys
3. Manufacture confusion about illicit trade

Three tricks Big Tobacco is using to stop SA's anti-smoking Bill from becoming law

Christine Pitt



Comments

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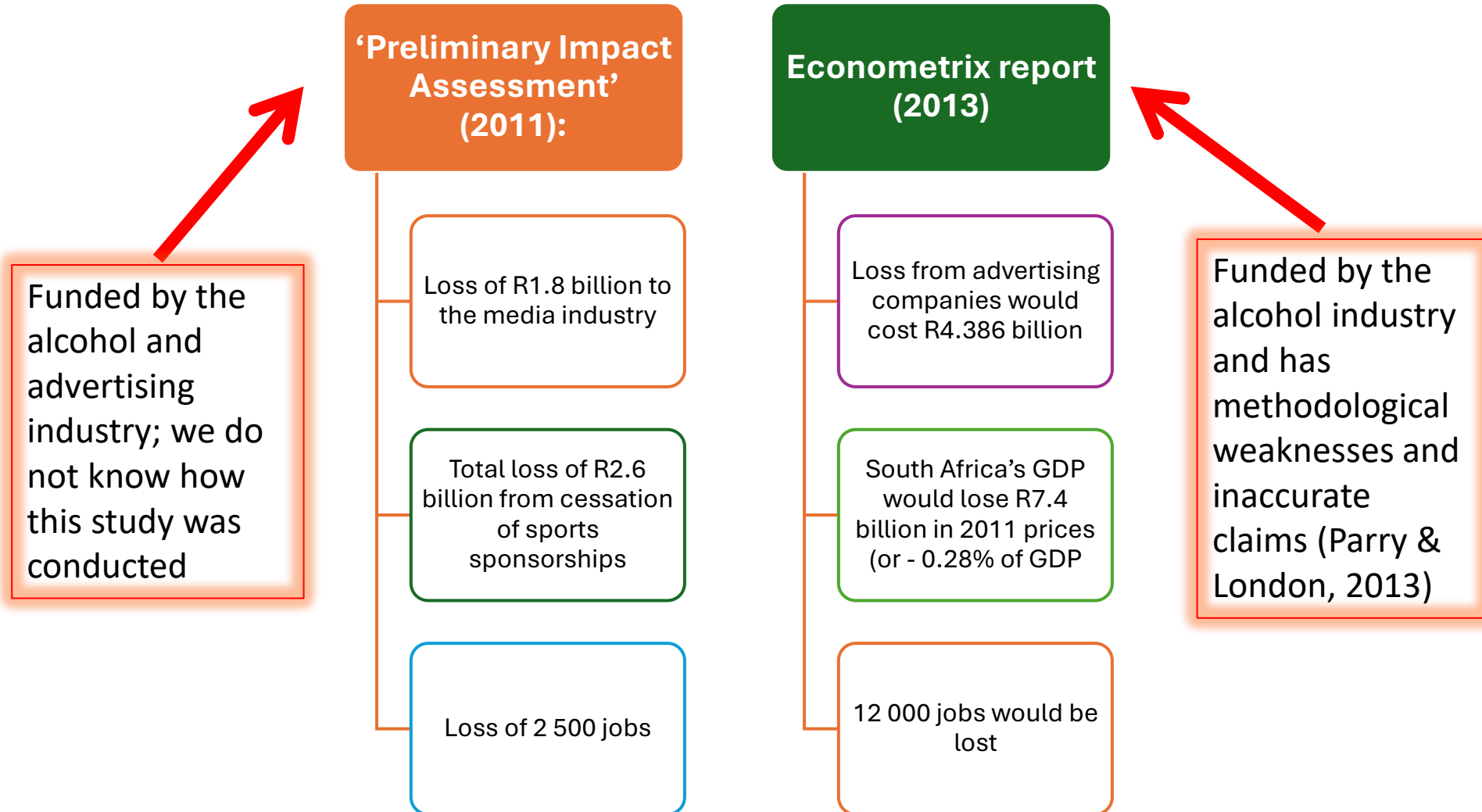


Bhekisisa breaks down three tactics Big Tobacco uses to stall the new Tobacco Bill's approval. (nensuria/Getty Images)

The 'Battle for Evidence'

Unpacking policy formulation and industry influence: the case of the draft control of marketing of alcoholic beverages bill in South Africa

Adam Bertscher^{1,*}, Leslie London² and Marsha Orgill¹



Both reports have been widely cited...

Preliminary Impact Assessment...

(for example, Moerdyk, 2011b; 'Alcohol ad ban...' 'Alcohol ad ban will cost...', 2011; 'Ban on booze...', 2011; 'Alcohol ad ban would cost jobs... 2011b; Prince and du Plessis, 2011; Watermeyer, 2013; Wright, 2014; Grootes, 2011; Thamela, 2016; 'State's alcohol ban...', 2013; Paton, 2012; Maphai, 2012) and an online blog (Maxwell, 2011).

Econometrix Report...

(for example, Hedley, 2013; Watermeyer, 2013; Thamela, 2016; 'Alcohol ad ban will be...', 2013; Davids and Aarti, 2015; 'Alcohol ads ban may cost jobs...', 2013; Moorad, 2013; Phakathi, 2013; Strydom, 2013; Nevill, 2013; Merten, 2013a; 'Banned booze ads...', 2013; SACCI, 2013b; Moerdyk, 2011b; 'Alcohol ad ban will cost...', 2011; 'Ban on booze...', 2011; 'Alcohol ad ban would cost jobs... 2011b; Prince and du Plessis, 2011; Maxwell, 2011; Speckman, 2016; Moerdyk, 2015; Gleason, 2013; Ensor, 2013; Wright, 2014; 'Benefits of ban...', 2013; Williams, 2013; 'Sacci queries alcohol...', 2013; McQuaid, 2013; Child, 2013a; Presence, 2013; Hans, 2013; 'Booze ad ban...', 2013; 'Booze ads ban could...', 2013).

Tobacco Products and Electronic Delivery Systems Control Bill 2022

- Proposes regulating ENDS under same system as tobacco products
- Repeat industry interventions in public consultations 2023/24
- Pieces in public media from pro-vaping ‘civil society’
- Attempts to get into GP CPD
- PMI Consultant: *“I am an academic and scientist and deliver presentations on independent, evidence-based science. I only respond to scientific discussions and am not involved in debates relating to funding by tobacco companies or anything else unrelated to the science and innovation. My only interest is to assist smokers and hence I do not think that it is appropriate for me to respond.”*
- Public consultation ongoing



The screenshot shows the Sunday Times website header with the tagline 'THE PAPER FOR THE PEOPLE' and the title 'Sunday Times'. Navigation links include News, Opinion & Analysis, Sport, Business Times, Books, Lifestyle, and Puzzles. Below the header, there are news snippets: 'changed' UN Security Council and '#5 There goes my mom's fridge' — X users react to Chris Brown. An advertisement for '£20 Finance Conference and' is visible. The main article is an opinion piece titled 'Policymakers must tell smokers the truth — vaping is a safer alternative if they can't quit' by Kurt Yeo, dated 18 August 2024. The article's sub-headline is 'Proposed law will restrict smokers' rights to opt for less harmful alternatives'.



The screenshot shows a BMJ investigation article. At the top right, there is a red bar with the word 'FEATURE'. Below it is a 'Check for updates' button. The article title is 'BMJ INVESTIGATION Medscape caves in on courses funded by tobacco giant Philip Morris, while medics fear global push into medical education'. The sub-headline is 'Clinic demonstrations, podcasts, and TV shows: **Hristio Boytchev** reveals how an ambitious deal between a leading medical education provider and the tobacco industry collapsed this week'. The author's name, Hristio Boytchev, is highlighted in bold.

The BMJ
hboytchev@bmj.com
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<http://dx.doi.org/10.1136/bmj.q948>
Published: 26 April 2024

General Comment 25 on the Right to Enjoy the Benefits of Scientific Progress

- The principles of transparency and participation are essential to make science objective and reliable, and to ensure that it is not subject to interests that are not scientific or are inconsistent with fundamental human rights principles and the welfare of society. Secrecy and collusion are in principle contrary to the integrity of science at the service of humanity. Thus, **States should take measures to avoid the risks associated with the existence of conflicts of interest by creating an environment in which actual or perceived conflicts of interest are adequately disclosed and regulated, especially those involving scientific researchers who give policy advice to policymakers and other public officials.**

