Student Elena

Question: can a minimum price for alcohol help reduce ‘binge drinking’?

INTRODUCTION –

This essay will debate whether a minimum price for alcohol can help reduce ‘binge drinking’. It will highlight the key concepts regarding setting a minimal price for alcohol, while also providing a summary of different perspectives on this topic.

Binge drinking in the UK is defined as when an individual consumes over 11 drinks in a short space of time. In other countries they have their own definitions of what constitutes binge drinking.

As binge drinking becomes more of a health concern for a greater number of people, minimum pricing has been considered as the most effective policy to reduce binge drinking, and has since been implemented in Scotland. This is in an attempt to ensure alcohol is sold at acceptable prices. This means setting a price floor for unacceptably low-priced drinks, such as cheap spirits.   
Setting a price floor on some alcoholic drinks will reduce the amount consumers can purchase as the greater the number of units of alcohol in a drink the higher the price will be for that drink.

PRICING AND PROMOTION –

The first key concept identified with setting a minimum price for alcohol is pricing and promotion. The price rise on one hand will lead to the reduction in alcohol consumption in some consumers, however it will also punish consumers who do not binge drink, but do buy alcohol regularly. Consumers on a lower income will be the ones negatively affected by this policy creating a division between social groups.  
In spite of minimum pricing, alcohol manufacturers and supermarkets present offers so as to entice consumers to buy more than they need to. This would more than likely increase with the implementation of a minimum price strategy. One of the most common ways of advertisement is through sponsorship. For example in 2009 an estimated £800 million was spent in advertising showing setting a minimum price would only be a part of the problem.

HEALTH –

Setting a minimum price for alcohol would help to reduce binge drinking, as a bottle of cider would cost a minimum of £5.50. This is radically more expensive than current prices. One of the main benefits of a minimum price is the reduction in the amount that most people will be able to buy. The knock-on effect of this is that health risks would be reduced, such as high blood pressure, diabetes and heart diseases.  Research has even shown that a minimum price of 50p per unit would help to reduce premature deaths by almost 3,000 per year and chronic illnesses by 41,000.

ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR REDUCTION –

GOVERMENT POLiCIES –

Currently the government in the UK have attempted to tackle the binge drinking problem by using the ‘*Drink Aware’* scheme. Research has shown that it is most common in 16-24 year olds. Therefore, by introducing a minimum price for alcohol would help this issue, as youths and young adults, do not have the financial income to support their current drinking habits. This blunt approach may not be regarded as the most suitable, but units drank per week has reduced over the past 10 years. This could be as a result of inflation on the price of alcohol combined with the drinking initiatives provided by the government. In 1999 26 units of alcohol was on average consumed and in 2009 this has fallen to 15 units per week.  
In addition to this, the current Scottish government has reintroduced the idea of a minimum price for alcohol which was previously rejected. In this, the SNP claim that it will help to tackle crime, social and health problems. Other key concepts associated with binge drinking.

Elena,

I can see that you have the beginnings of a very good essay on the subject of the minimum price and the implications for binge drinking here. The structure appears to be well thought out and you are on the right track, as far as the content is concerned. Well done!

However, as you will notice I have made a lot of comments on the right side of this page relating to the absence of referencing in your work. You have omitted in- text references in all cases where I think there should be a reference, and perhaps I have missed a few as well.

It is very important that you reference material that you have found because it gives credibility to your writing and shows that you know how to source material that can be checked by the reader. It makes your work more reliable.

When you have added references to this text, and a conclusion I am sure it will be excellent.

Richard