**Final Manuscript**

**I believe that the legal drinking age in Norway should be 25 for all alcoholic beverages.**

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Persuasion and Dialogue for Leaders

BI Norwegian Business School

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My name is Håvard. I’m a 24-year-old Norwegian and I thought I should start of by telling you a story that has made me believe that a certain thing needs to be changed.

Sean was a regular 22-year-old college student. He was on the football team, popular among his friends and had a bright future ahead of him. Sean had just been at a party with some other students. He was a responsible person and decided to call a friend to get a ride back home since he’d been drinking.

What he didn’t know was that his friend, who was 23, wasn’t as responsible as him, his friend had been drinking too and was now going to drive Sean home. Sean, being drunk, didn’t notice this.

The result was that without any other parts involved, they crashed into a tree smashing the passenger side of the car really badly. They were three people in the car; two of which got away with just minor injuries, whereas Sean suffered serious injuries and was immediately taken to hospital for treatment.

After about 6 weeks in coma, Sean woke up and discovered that he couldn’t control his body like he used to. And today, 16 years later, he can only walk with assistance of someone and he must use a computer to talk for him[[1]](#footnote-1),[[2]](#footnote-2).

This story tells us that no matter how cautious you are concerning alcohol, there is always the possibility that someone else isn’t as cautious as you and as a result creates dangerous situations.

I therefor believe that the minimum legal drinking age (MLDA) in Norway should be 25 for all alcoholic beverages.

Why?  
Let’s start by looking at the situation very familiar to Norwegians and that was also the situation in the story, College.

College is a time where partying is common, where people always find a reason to celebrate something. It’s a time where you are treated as an adult, but where you’re still growing up, studying, and learning to take care of yourself. And I don’t think that this final process of growing up, just like any other process, should be ruined at the final leg of the journey.

Increasing the MLDA could make sure that the majority of people get to finish their studies, get a job and get some stability in their life before being tempted to temporarily take some of that stability away through the means of alcohol.  
There is also a financial aspect to consider as students spending more time on their education than scheduled is calculated to cost the government about 300 million NOK annually, and that’s just engineering students.[[3]](#footnote-3)

The brain generally develops until roughly the age of 25, not 15 or 18 that used to be the general perception[[4]](#footnote-4), and affecting the development is not desired as it will cause ever-lasting damage in the prefrontal cortex, the area of the brain that deals with working memory, voluntary motor behaviour, impulse control, rule learning, spatial learning, planning, and decision making[[5]](#footnote-5)

One might wonder how this sudden increase of age limit will be perceived and what might be the best way to implement this change.

In the US, the National minimum drinking age act of 1984 was passed by the congress and signed into law by President Regan, punishing all states that allowed alcohol to be bought or consumed by those under 21.

Different states adapted to this in different ways[[6]](#footnote-6).  
Most states strictly changed the age limit so that those who could drink suddenly couldn’t drink anymore. Other states applied the grandfather clause, meaning that if you could already drink, then you would still be allowed to, but those who couldn’t would have to wait a few more years.

Something more in how people will tolerate this sudden change and what signals it will send.

There is no doubt that increasing the MLDA by 7 years will make people react, some more than others. But who will react and why?

*“I moved to Michigan from Texas at the end of January 1979 with my father from Texas. Much to my chagrin, I discovered that the drinking age in Michigan had been raised to 21 on December 22, 1978.*

*The push for the new Michigan law was encouraged as a way of halting the rise in teenage drinking and of reducing an increase in traffic accidents involving drunken teenagers since the drinking age was lowered at the beginning of the decade.*

*As my birthday was fast approaching, the sense of not being able to party like a “Rockstar” made me seek out options to come back to Texas to celebrate my birthday. I panicked thinking that I would have my big 18th party and still serve 7-up or punch. The emphasis on drinking and smoking at that time was so prevalent that if you didn’t do both, you just weren’t cool, and I wanted to be cool and fit in!”* - Sharyl McGrew

*“I did not party that much due to swimming, so was never asked to buy beer for anyone. For adults/parents, police and medical folks this law was very important. The elevation in Leadville, CO is 10,151 feet or 3,094 meters. Altitude greatly affects intoxication levels. So moving the drinking age up was an important to public safety”* - S.H

From these to quotes, one can understand that the perception of the change of MLDA depends on your culture and lifestyle.

There is no vital reason to consume alcohol[[7]](#footnote-7), so why do people do it?  
There seems to be two main reasons:  
- people drink alcohol to cope with stress  
- people drink alcohol because of social influences.[[8]](#footnote-8)

As you can see from this picture (table 4 from Abbey article),heavy drinking is more correlated with your motive for it than your situation. Wheter you are just a little stressed or very stressed, what makes you drink heavily is if you actively drink to cope with it.  
The same goes with socialising, if you use drinks of a mean to act more social, the frequency of heavy drinking increase drastically, and has an easier time escalating then if you just drink to fit in.

As people are still developing their social skills until the age of 25, it lies in the human nature to be extra social up till this age[[9]](#footnote-9) meaning that socialising with people cosuming alcohol will increase your alcoholconsumpion, hence creating an domioeffect of increased drinking given that the social gathering cosnsists of those 18-24 years old.

That said though, mental health through socialising, interacting and friendship should not be forgotten. 1 out of 4 are estimated to be introverts[[10]](#footnote-10), meaning they might have a harder time taking the step into a social interaction. Maybe a glass of beer is what’s needed to make them dear to step out of the corner during a party. Or how about asking out the dream girl. Being both nervous and introvert myself, I needed well over half a bottle of wine to kiss her even though I already knew she liked me.

Research show that in the period of increasing the minimum drinking age in the US, there was a negative correlation of traffic casualties among young drivers[[11]](#footnote-11),[[12]](#footnote-12). About 98% of all US alcohol related incidents were caused by these young drivers, 53% for the age group 21-24 years and 45% for 16-20. After the increased age limit the numbers had turned to 36% and to 21% respectively.[[13]](#footnote-13)

But why did it go down for those who could still drink after increased MLDA?  
Research done by the American Public health association[[14]](#footnote-14) tells us that college students are more likely to drink heavily than their peers who do not attend college

But why are there alcohol related vehicle accidents for those under the MLDA?kalk

Research done by the American Public health association[[15]](#footnote-15) tells us that college students are more likely to drink heavily than their peers who do not attend college, especially when among other students.

Going through data from the national research database[[16]](#footnote-16), the by far most frequent age of the Norwegian student is 20-25 years.

**Other kinds of problems than drunk driving?  
Physical abuse?**

**“””  
Add counterarguments  
“””**

When increasing the MLDA, there will be more people that considers themselves adults, that do not feel like they have all the rights that an adult should have. This could lead to an increased probability of riots and an increased amount of people drinking illegally. And when people are drinking illegally, chances are greater for doing something else illegal.[[17]](#footnote-17)

There is also a question of learning and experience.  
If we look at this chart from 2015[[18]](#footnote-18), we see that Germany, a country where they get to drink 2 years before they get to drive, has the lowest drunk-driving incident rate of the western world, whereas the US and Canada, where MLDA is greater than minimum age to drive a car, has a much higher rate. This could indicate that people become more careful when they learn from a younger age how alcoholic beverages can affect you.

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