

The impact of alcohol advertisement elements on underage youth ad liking and desire to try the brand

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Abstract

Alcohol advertising is among the most heavily advertised products worldwide (Endicott, 2005) resulting in increasing exposure to underage youth (Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth, 2008). Evidence of high exposure levels of alcohol advertising containing appealing elements to children and underage youth suggest that these vulnerable audiences may be directly targeted by alcohol marketers (Chung et al., 2010; Fielder, Donovan; Ouschan, 2009; Ringel, Collins; Ellickson, 2006; Winter, Donovan; Fielder, 2008). Liking of many such elements contained in alcohol advertisements by children and youth has been established in the literature. This study aims to identify the specific elements contained in alcohol advertising that underage youth find appealing and entice them to want to try the alcohol brand.

Keywords: alcohol advertising elements, underage youth alcohol advertising exposure, appeal of alcohol advertisements to children, alcohol advertising regulations

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Introduction

Alcohol consumption and its related harms are a serious public health issue for many countries (World Health Organization, 2007). Young people are particularly susceptible to alcohol related harms and many countries are dealing with the social and economic impact of an increasing youth culture of risky drinking. Causality of risk of disease and injury, and social consequences relates to both the volume of consumption and pattern of alcohol use (Rehm et al., 2003). Young people frequently drink at risky levels increasing their susceptibility to these harms (Jernigan, 2001). Alcohol consumption by underage youth is often accepted as a rite of passage representing cultural entry into adulthood (US Department of Health and Human Services, 2007; Shanahan et al., 2002). Many youth consider alcohol as a form of recreation and drink with the deliberate intention of becoming intoxicated (Shand, Gates;Fawcett, 2003). Furthermore, research suggests that young people do not classify themselves as binge drinkers, despite being identified as such according to regular, weekly consumption levels(Coleman;Cater, 2007).

Research has found that alcohol advertising has the power to influence adolescents' drinking behaviours with studies reporting a positive effect between exposure to alcohol advertising and the initiation or reinforcement of alcohol consumption (Ellickson, Collins, Hambarsoomians, & McCaffrey, 2005; Hanewinkel & Sargent, 2009; Henriksen, Feighery, Schleicher, & Fortmann, 2008; McClure, Dal Cin, Gibson, & Sargent, 2006; Sargent, Wills, Stoolmiller, Gibson, & Gibbons, 2006). It has been suggested that attention to and liking of alcohol advertising is closely related to positive views on drinking, increased intentions to drink as an adult and increased drinking behaviour among youth (Agostinelli; Grube, 2002). Alcohol advertising normalises alcohol consumption by promoting positive expectancies (for example by linking consumption with attractive symbols, role models and outcomes (Austin, Chen, & Grube, 2006; Carroll & Donovan, 2002; Donovan, Donovan, Howat, & Weller, 2007; Fleming, Thorson, & Atkin, 2004). Alcohol advertising is among the most heavily advertised products worldwide (Endicott, 2005) resulting in increasing exposure to underage youth (Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth, 2008). Increasing evidence of alcohol advertising's impact on underage drinking and the prevalence of adolescents' exposure to alcohol advertisements on Australian free-to-air television flags the need for more stringent, on-going monitoring of the a self-regulated alcohol advertising system. Furthermore health researchers and advocates are questioning the efficacy of the self-regulatory system (Donovan et al., 2007; S. Jones & Donovan, 2002; S. C. Jones, Hall, & Munro, 2008). This study aims to identify the specific elements contained in alcohol advertising that underage youth find appealing and entice them to want to try the alcohol brand. The use of specific elements of advertisements which are shown to strongly appeal to youth and/or entice trial should be prohibited through alcohol advertising regulation.

Alcohol Advertising Elements Review

Several studies have shown that alcohol advertising contains elements that appeal to underage youth (Austin;Hust, 2005); Chen, 2005 #98; Donovan, 2003 #89; Donovan, 2006 #571; Waiters, 2001 #509}. Qualitative research conducted by Waiters et al. (2001) identified that the use of appealing role models, humour, animation and/or animals and youth oriented music increased advertisement recall and likeability. Austin et al. (2005) examined magazine and television alcohol advertisements and found that the most frequent themes and appeals used included relaxation and humour. Chen et al. (2005) measured liking of specific elements (humour, music, people characters, animal characters and story) contained in a sample of beer advertisements. They found liking of specific elements contributed to overall liking of the advertisement and subsequent advertising effectiveness and purchase intentions.

Youth liking of elements contained in alcohol advertisements has been established in the literature. Humour is a widely used advertising technique, particularly in television (Catanescu;Tom, 2001; Zhang;Zinkhan, 2006). Whilst humour appeals to most audiences, various forms appeal to different age groups. For example, whilst slapstick and clownish humour are particularly appealing to children (Buijzen;Valkenberg, 2004), adolescents also appreciate slapstick humour while also enjoying more ‘sophisticated’ forms such as sarcasm, irony and sexual allusion (Acuff;Reiher, 1997). Popular music is another element used in advertising that appeals to children and youth. As a commodity that is available to be bought and sold within a commercial system, hence it has become a pervasive element in advertising. Liking of the music in an advertisement has been identified as influencing alcohol effectiveness amongst youth(Chen et al., 2005). Research indicates that beer advertisements containing an engaging storyline have been found to be more attractive to youth than those without (Chen et al., 2005; Miller; Mizerski, 2005; Austin, Chen;Grube, 2006).

There is considerable evidence, both anecdotal and empirical, that cartoon and animal characters hold special appeal to children. Animals have been found to be a favoured topic of TV shows amongst children.,(Garitaonandia, Juaristi;Oleagaa, 2001; Waiters, Treno;Grube, 2001; Gentile et al., 2001; Chen et al., 2005). and youths pay greater attention when television advertisements feature animation and cute animals(Waiters, Treno;Grube, 2001; Gentile et al., 2001). Animal characters in particular, have been used by marketers to target children and youth for a range of products – including tobacco and alcohol. For example, with respect to R.J. Reynolds’ cartoon character Joe Camel,(DesRoches, 1994). One study found association of this character with a cigarette ranged from 30% of children as young as three years to 91% for six year olds (Fox et al., 1998). Similarly, one year after the ‘Bud Frogs’ advertising campaign began, recall of the Budweiser frogs amongst children 9 to 11 years was higher than for other commercial animal icons, even for products explicitly aimed at children, such as Tony the Tiger for Frosted Flakes breakfast cereal (Leiber, 1996). Overall, given children’s and youths’ susceptibility to the appeal of animal characters, it is likely that alcohol advertisements featuring animal characters would have substantial influence on children and youth. This study extends past research by investigating how the appeal of various advertising elements impact on underage youth desires to try the alcohol brand (i.e., goes beyond merely identifying appealing elements).

Method

We obtained exposure data for a total of 2,162 alcohol advertisements promoting 79 different brands screened from November 2005 to October 2006 in Australian capital city markets for four demographic target groups: 0-12 years; 13-17 years; 18-24 years; and 25+ years. A sub-sample of 25 alcohol advertisements most frequently exposed to the 13-17 year old demographic were identified and used as the stimulus sample for the study. A brief description of each alcohol advertisement is provided in Table 1. A total sample of 544 young people (261 males; 283 females) attending Years 8 ($N = 221$), 9 ($N = 162$) and 10 ($N = 161$) was recruited from 31 public secondary schools in the metropolitan area of Perth, Western Australia. In order to fulfil quota requirements, a further 100 respondents were recruited from a research database and using snowball technique. These respondents received an incentive of \$20.00 each. Respondents were shown a series of eight ads: five alcohol ads rotated in four different orders; and, three non-alcohol ads. A confidential self-administered questionnaire measured attitude to the ad through 10 point scales (e.g., like/dislike ads); advertising effectiveness (e.g., would like to try the advertised brand); and attitude to the various execution elements in each ad (settings; humour; music or jingle; actors; story). To be able to conduct an aggregate analysis of all the advertisements, elements only specific to some advertisements (special effects, visual appeal; sound effects; sexual appeal) were not included in this study.

Results and Discussion

The results in Table 2 show that all five alcohol execution elements had a significant impact on children liking the advertisement and accounted for 70 % of the variance ($\text{Adj.}R^2 = 0.698$). The beta values indicate that *humour* ($\beta = 0.383$) followed by the *setting* ($\beta = 0.214$) appear to have the strongest influence on ad liking, with *actors* ($\beta = 0.049$) having the least significant influence. Interestingly, not all elements have a significant impact on children wanting to try the brand. *Humour* and *actors* do not influence wanting to try the brand, whereas *setting* in the advertisements has the strongest impact ($\beta = 0.256$), followed by *music/jingle* ($\beta = 0.170$) and *story* ($\beta = 0.153$) and together they account for 31% of the variance ($\text{Adj.}R^2 = 0.312$).

Table1: Brief Description of the Alcohol Advertisements

No	Brand	Dur	Description
1	Heineken Lager	30	Central control tower technicians watch on screen as space robot lands on outer space planet, robot turns into a Heineken bar.
2	Bundaberg Rum	30	Bundaberg Rum Fine Form Awards – Bundy Bear announces nominees and winner for safe drinking awards.
3	Hahn Premium Light	30	Man and glamorous woman on a gondola ride in Venice. Romantic music plays as man reels in a large fish. The fish hits the woman in the face. The man opens a bottle of Hahn Premium Light and says to the woman “what?”.
4	Smirnoff Vodka	30	Camera spans across 21 bottles of vodka. Voiceover describes Smirnoff as the winner of 21 different vodkas judged.
5	Tooheys New Draught Beer	60	Ingredients for beer are hurled into sky on a giant slingshot from the top of a high building. A stag appears from opening elevator doors. The stag is seen flying into sky – a brief pause and then scenes of raining beer.
6	Victoria Bitter Beer 1	30	Bush setting showing meat on the barbecue and kangaroo in the background. Voiceover refers to eating the Australian Coat of Arms on a flamin’ grill.
7	Bundaberg Rum & Cola	30	Bundy Bear in the bath, mates ad red sock to the water. Bundy enters a party with pink fur, mates laugh and attractive girl approaches Bundy Bear.
8	Heineken Lager Beer	30	Landscape of city changes from modern day to the past as streets become cobbled stone and cars vintage models. He reaches a bar and orders Heineken. He tastes the drink and comments with surprise “it’s exactly the same”.
9	Jim Beam Bourbon-	30	Three different men walking down busy streetscape at night. They all reach the same bar. Voice over “the bourbon”.
10	Cascade Premium Lager Beer	30	The Cascade Way – presented as old film footage. Story of the first beer can produced (30 gallons) and problems experienced by its size leading a convenient size can used today.
11	Boags Draught	30	Boags factory workers testing the product by drinking under different conditions eg. right-hand, left-hand, listening to country music, sharing tall stories around a camp.
12	Orlando Jacobs Creek Sparkling OJC3663B	15	Slowly camera zoom into a glass of pink sparkling wine. Sub-text “say when”, voiceover “one taste and you’re tickled pink”.
13	Corona Extra Beer	30	Four animated Corona beer bottles at a bar, lids are removed and a lime sliced up by overhead fan landing a lime wedge in the top of each animated bottle (Mexican theme).
14	Absolute Cut Vodka	30	Spinning bottle top graphically presents Absolute Cut bottles spinning, then spans out to bottle. Sub-text Absolute vodka....sparkling water....natural citrus...together in spirit.
15	Carlton Draught Beer	60	Two armies, one wearing maroon and the other yellow, charge each other while singing new lyrics to the classic melody of “O Fortuna”. Aerial view shows one army form the shape of Carlton Draught beer glass and a the other forms the shape of a human body. Sub-text lyrics to the song ending with “this ad better sell some bloooooody beer”.
16	Castlemaine XXXX GoldLager	30	Character Jacko and his playing beach cricket. Dog watches ball as it is hit in the air and hits a bottle of Castlemaine XXXX held by one of the men, the ball then hits the wickets. Jacko produces a hidden video camera from a drink cooler and declares the batsman “not out”. Sandy faced batsman hugs the cooler and says “I love you”.
17	Bundaberg Rum	30	Bundy Bear arrives at the door of a house holding an invitation “Macca’s Party”. The wrong house, Bundy enters and joins a girls only pre-wedding celebration. Bundy is mistaken for a stripper as the bride-to-be yells “take your top off”. Bundy answers “sure” and takes the lid off a large bottle of Bundaberg rum.
18	Victoria Bitter 2	30	A large birthday cake is wheeled into the loungeroom of a man and his mate watching cricket. David Boon (in cricket whites) emerges from the top of the cake with a bottle of Victoria Bitter and takes a drink. Voiceover “...Boony is back for the Ashes up against his old mate Beefy Botham...” Promotion of Boony and Botham dolls with the purchase of two cartons.
19	Cougar Bourbon Dark Rum	30	Continues the series of Barry Dawson is the cougar. The cougar is drinking in a bar when he receives a phone call from his girlfriend. Demonstrating the art of invisibleness he enters his house and bed. Voiceover “enter the cougar”.
20	Tooheys Extra Dry Beer LNA772330	30	Household appliances (vacuum cleaner, washing machine, pool cleancer) fight for bottle of Tooheys Extra Dry beer. Owner of appliances pulls bottle of Tooheys out of pool cleaner. Camera close up of the bottle.
21	Becks Beer LN1521	30	Rising bubbles in beer bottle. Voiceover “each bubble in this bottle of Becks is....A. Precisely German engineered, B. Extra round for fuller flavour, or C. Extremely lucky” scene switches to silhouette of young woman drinking Becks).
22	Smirnoff Ice	15	Large block of ice in a metal vice. Ice smashed and bottle of Smirnoff Ice remains. Voiceover “Smirnoff Ice, the sharper refreshing bite”.
23	Boags St George	30	Girl enters a busy bar, approaches couch where her friends are sitting. Three guys pick up the large couch to move it back to allow the woman to sit down then move it forward again. Voiceover “Boags St George...gallantry is back (guys move chair for girl)
24	Jim Beam Bourbon	30	Can of Jim Beam rotating, turns into a barrel shape. Subtext “now drink straight from the barrel...new barrel shaped can”.
25	Carlton Draught	60	Kevin Cavendish applies for a job at Carlton Brewery. Proceeds to perform a dance to the music from the popular movie Flashdance. Gets the job.

Table2: Regression Results for Alcohol Advertisements (N=2665)

Cons	R	R ²	Adj. R ²	Std. Error	Standardised Coefficients			ANOVA	
					β	<i>t</i>	Sig.	F	Sig.
Advertising elements →Overall ad liking	.836	.699	.698	1.443				780.581	.000
Factors									
Constant						19.086	.000		
Setting					.214	10.001	.000		
Humour					.383	17.693	.000		
Music/jingle					.123	6.225	.000		
Actors					.049	2.256	.024		
Story					.186	8.101	.000		
Advertising elements →Like to try the brand	.561	.314	.312	2.592				154.018	.000
Factors									
Constant						3.069	.002		
Setting					.256	7.910	.000		
Humour					.008	.240	.811		
Music/jingle					.170	5.686	.000		
Actors					.051	1.569	.117		
Story					.153	4.416	.000		

Implications, Future Research and Conclusions

The findings show that all the elements examined in this study (setting, humour, music/jingle, actors and story) account for the overall liking of alcohol advertisements by underage youth. However, the appeal of the *setting* to underage youth is particular concerning as it has the strongest influence on wanting to try the brand. Thus, more research is warranted to identify what type of settings are particularly appealing to underage youth, so specific guidelines can be drafted to prohibit from using them in alcohol advertisements. *Music/jingle* and *story* also warrant inclusion in alcohol advertising regulation codes as they significantly influence liking of the advertisement and desire to try the brand. *Actors* in advertisements seem to have the weakest impact both on ad liking and wanting to try the brand. However, even though humour in the advertisements did not determine underage youth wanting to try the brand it should not be dismissed as a potential element which needs to be stringently regulated, as *humour* is the strongest predictor of ad liking. Especially because, attention to and liking of alcohol advertising is closely related to positive views on drinking, increased intentions to drink as an adult and increased drinking behaviour among youth (Agostinelli; Grube, 2002)

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