**Advertising & Sponsorship**

**CASE FOR CHANGE**

Throughout the world, advertisers use a wide variety of media to promote their product. This includes traditional forms (e.g. newspapers, magazines, billboards, radio, television, sports sponsorship) as well as newer forms of media including social networking and digital marketing sites (e.g. Facebook, Instagram, Youtube), smartphone apps and virtual communities and websites (e.g. online games). The branding of an alcoholic product is also a powerful marketing strategy to create emotional associations with a product.

In 2009, it was estimated that approximately $200,000 was spent each day in New Zealand promoting alcohol [1]. The increasing use of the internet to market products presents many risks for our young people, as alcohol companies are increasingly using everyday consumers of their products to become promoters of their products to their friends – giving rise to the term “prosumers”. Young people are particularly targeted, and are sometimes unaware of their role. A useful website has been developed by New Zealand researchers to explain the role of the internet-based marketing (e.g. Facebook) of alcoholic products, called ‘drinking cultures’. A visit to this site is highly recommended.

***Alcohol advertising***

Advertising often displays drinking as a positive, glamorous or sexy activity, promoting feelings of togetherness, relaxation and fun. It contributes to the maintenance of existing drinking norms in society and promotes positive attitudes to drinking. By presenting the perception that drinking is a harmless activity, it ignores the reality of the range of harms which alcohol causes in our country.

International evidence has found that exposure to alcohol advertising [2]:

* Increases the likelihood that adolescents will take up drinking at an early age
* Increases the likelihood of regular and harmful patterns of drinking
* Makes it more difficult for individuals wishing to quit or cut back their drinking
* Prevents health promotion messages from being more effective.

# *Outdoor or out-of-home advertising*

Outdoor (or out-of-home) advertising is another vehicle utilised by the alcohol industry to market their products. This type of advertising includes:

* **Traditional billboards and signs**
* **Location-based promotions -** bus shelters, benches, kiosks, vehicles such as buses;
* **Indoors** - digital displays in public places, shopping centres and malls, airports, grocery stores, and commercials before movies.

This type of advertising can often be seen everywhere in the community. Advertisers recognised the value of outdoor advertisements as they can reach a mass audience and consumers who are not exposed to newspapers or television news [3]. A US study report that the alcohol industry has been one of the largest purchasers of outdoor advertising [4].

In Australia, the number of outdoor advertising of alcohol beverage has been steadily increasing, from 21% in 2005 to 36.3% in 2013 [5]. In 2008, an Australian study undertaken in Sydney and Wollongong examined the advertising around 40 metropolitan and suburban primary schools. Alcohol advertisements made up 22 per cent (n = 416) of all of the advertising surrounding schools. Alcohol advertising was also much closer to schools (less than 250 metres from a school) than all other products [6].

A paper by Alcohol Justice summarised findings from different U.S. research studies [3]:

* In a study [7] conducted in inner city neighbourhoods in ten U.S. cities, Billboard (often featured beer products) are the most prevalent form of alcohol advertisements;
* Another study [8] found that 25% of outdoor advertising in the area of Central Harlem (New York) was dedicated to alcohol advertising. In many occasions, the advertisements were near schools, churches, and playgrounds in low socio economic areas.
* A study [9] in Boston assessed the extent of alcohol advertising near subway and public transit. Alcohol ads in subway and transits reached the equivalent of every adult in the Greater Boston region, every 5th- to 12th-grade public school student, each day. More alcohol ads were displayed in public transit stations in neighbourhoods with high poverty rates than in stations in neighbourhoods with low poverty rates.
* A US study found that exposure to outdoor alcohol advertising around schools is associated with subsequent youth intentions to use alcohol [10].

In another study, exposure to outdoor alcohol advertisements among sixth graders (aged 10-12 years) were found to predict subsequent intentions to drink alcohol [11].

A 2008 systematic review of international evidence found consistent evidence that exposure to outdoor advertising, or advertisements in magazines and newspapers may increase the likelihood of young people starting to drink, the amount they drink, and the amount they drink on any one occasion” [12].

**Alcohol sponsorship of sporting, cultural and social events**

Alcohol sponsorship of sporting, cultural and social events is a key advertising strategy utilised in by alcohol companies. In particular, sport is a primary vehicle for the promotion of alcohol in New Zealand. Sponsorship in these settings may include naming rights, mentions in sports commentaries, signage, labelling on clothing apparel, exclusive rights to sell alcohol, etc. Many local sports clubs also obtain sponsorship funds from alcohol companies. Research has found that New Zealand children are particularly exposed to alcohol branding during sporting events televised in New Zealand, with alcohol branding visible for nearly 50% of broadcast time on television [13].

Sports players sponsored by an alcohol product may be at particular risk of harm. This has been shown in New Zealand research whereby alcohol industry sponsorship of sportspeople, and in particular the provision of free or discounted alcoholic beverages, was associated with hazardous drinking [14].

Finally, product labelling is also relevant in the consideration of alcohol marketing. Product labelling may be used to inform drinkers of the content and nutritional content of their drinks, as well as provide warning about the risks associated with drinking (including during pregnancy). Currently, alcoholic products are not required to show ingredients or nutritional information. Although there is limited evidence of the effect of mandated health warnings on drinking behaviour [15], there is a consistent belief that alcohol warnings (similar to tobacco warnings), play an important role in shifting cultural norms around drinking. Given they signal the risk of the hazardous commodity they may be viewed to be an important component of a comprehensive strategy to reduce alcohol consumption. Recent research has shown that individuals exposed to graphic pictorial health warnings (in comparison to text warnings) had greater intentions to reduce and quit alcohol consumption [16].

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