

# Alcohol Advertising and Young People

Alcohol is one of the most heavily marketed products in the world.<sup>1</sup>

**Alcohol is promoted through an ever-increasing range of media to which young people are exposed**

- › Television
- › Radio
- › Cinema
- › Print media, including magazines, newspapers and catalogues
- › Outdoor, including billboards, sporting grounds, buses and bus shelters
- › Online, including social media, smartphone apps and websites
- › Sponsorship of sport and music events
- › Branded merchandise
- › Point-of-sale promotions, including free gifts, multi-buy offers and competitions
- › Product placement in movies and music videos
- › Product packaging



## Alcohol promotion shapes young people's attitudes and behaviours

Exposure to alcohol advertising influences young people's beliefs and attitudes about drinking, and increases the likelihood that adolescents will start to use alcohol and will drink more if they are already using alcohol.<sup>2,3</sup>

Alcohol sponsorship of sport may be associated with increased drinking among school students<sup>4</sup> and increased drinking and hazardous consumption among those sponsored.<sup>5</sup>

Exposure to alcohol advertising on TV and liking of those ads influences young people's drinking and the development of alcohol-related problems.<sup>6</sup> US research shows that underage young people were more than 5 times more likely to drink brands that advertise on national TV.<sup>7</sup>

Liking or following alcohol marketing pages on social media is common among young Australians and is associated with riskier alcohol use and an earlier start to drinking.<sup>8</sup> Significant associations exist between exposure to internet-based alcohol-related content and intentions to drink and positive attitudes towards drinking among young people.<sup>9</sup>

Exposure to alcohol promotion contributes to the normalisation of alcohol use.<sup>10</sup>

## Young people are exposed to a substantial amount of alcohol advertising

Half of all alcohol advertising aired on Australian television appears during children's popular viewing times. One in ten beverage advertisements is for alcohol.<sup>18</sup>

Over 94% of Australian students aged 12 to 17 report having seen alcohol advertising on TV and the majority report having seen alcohol ads in magazines, newspapers, on the internet, on billboards/posters, and in bottleshops, bars and pubs.<sup>17</sup>

The majority of alcohol ads on TV were shown between 8.30pm and midnight in 2012, a time when large numbers of young people are watching.<sup>19</sup>

There were 25,792 alcohol ads broadcast on all commercial free-to-air channels across the 5 major Australian metropolitan cities in 2012, an average of 71 ads per day.<sup>19</sup>

Australian teenagers aged 13 to 17 years are exposed to alcohol advertising on TV at approximately the same level as young adults aged 18 to 24 years.<sup>20</sup>

Almost a quarter of music videos shown on Australian television on Saturday mornings, a time that is considered suitable for viewing by children, were found to contain legal drug references; alcohol featured in almost all of these.<sup>21</sup>

Alcohol ads are prominent on bus stops; in audits of bus stop ads in metropolitan Perth, Western Australia, the proportion of bus stop ads identified that were for alcohol varied between 1 in 4 and 1 in 7.<sup>22, 23</sup>



### Alcohol advertising appeals to young people

- › Internal marketing documents from UK alcohol producers and their advertising agencies show young people are a key target for alcohol advertisers.<sup>45</sup>
- › Children and young people are regularly exposed to ads depicting alcohol consumption as fun, social and inexpensive. The most common themes identified in Australian alcohol advertising include humour, friendship/mateship, value for money, animals and sport.<sup>18</sup>
- › Humour, music, cartoon characters, animals and stories have been shown to increase awareness, recall and liking of alcohol ads among young people.<sup>52</sup>
- › Research on an advertising campaign for a pre-mixed alcohol product in Australia showed that young women believed that the ad would appeal to younger girls, that it targeted young people, including under 18s, and that it encouraged pre-drinking among young women, including under 18s.<sup>53</sup>

## Alcohol companies have embraced social media and digital technologies

1 in 5

young people aged 16 to 24 years reported that they had visited an alcohol brand page on Facebook, including 10% of those aged under 18 years.<sup>28</sup>

- › There is growing concern about the promotion of alcohol using social media and digital technologies due to the rapid expansion of digital communication and the extent to which young people have taken up such forms of communication.<sup>10</sup>
- › Alcohol brands are increasingly reallocating their marketing spend away from traditional advertising towards online media.<sup>24</sup>
- › Alcohol brands have recruited millions of people to their Facebook pages. The official Smirnoff Australia and Budweiser Australia Facebook pages each have around 14 million 'likes'.<sup>25, 26</sup>
- › Over 2 months (Dec 2015 - Jan 2016), the top 10 alcohol brands in Australia shared more than 1,600 items of content, which in turn were liked more than 73 million times by almost 300,000 engaged fans.<sup>27</sup>
- › Almost 1 in 3 (30%) young people aged 18 to 34 reported having noticed alcohol advertising or promotions on social media.<sup>29</sup>
- › Children as young as 13 years from the US are able to access, view and interact with alcohol industry content posted on Instagram and Twitter. Fake Instagram accounts were used to test whether underage profiles could interact with alcohol advertising content; they received an average of 362 alcohol ads within 30 days.<sup>30</sup>
- › In the UK, music videos on YouTube deliver millions of impressions of alcohol use to young people, with girls aged 13 to 15 having the greatest exposure of all age groups. Young people's exposure to alcohol impressions in music videos was nearly 4 times higher than adults' exposure.<sup>31</sup>
- › Research into 4 large televised sporting events in Australia in 2010 and 2011 found widespread use of social media by beer and spirit sponsoring brands, with a focus on engaging young people and males.<sup>32</sup>
- › There does not appear to be any effective means of preventing young people's exposure to online alcohol advertising. Of 25 alcohol brand websites, only half had a process in place to 'block' entry to underage users, and no websites prevented users from trying again with a different birth date.<sup>33</sup>

## Sponsorship is a favoured form of promotion for alcohol companies

Alcohol companies sponsor sporting events (from local teams through to major national codes), music festivals popular with young people, and other cultural events.<sup>10, 45-47</sup>

Children absorb sports sponsorship messages. Australian research found 76% of children aged 5 to 12 years were able to correctly match at least one sport with its relevant sponsor.<sup>49, 50</sup>

Sponsorship is a powerful form of alcohol promotion; it is a way of raising brand awareness, creating positive brand attitudes, and building emotional connections with consumers.<sup>48</sup>

Alcohol sponsorship of sport, music or other cultural events is not covered by the industry's self-regulatory system, the Alcohol Beverages Advertising Code (ABAC) Scheme.<sup>51</sup>

## Alcohol promotion is prominent in sport

- ▶ There were significantly more alcohol ads per hour in daytime sports programs on Australian TV than in non-sport TV later in the day in 2012.<sup>19</sup>
- ▶ In-game alcohol advertising (e.g. ground and uniform signage) can be substantially higher than in-break advertising (e.g. TV ads). For every minute of 'in-break' alcohol advertising, there was about 4.5 minutes of 'in-game' alcohol advertising in Victorian AFL games broadcast in July 2010<sup>34</sup> and only 5% of marketing in an NRL grand final match was in commercial breaks.<sup>34, 35</sup>
- ▶ Over 18% of the entire broadcast of an NRL grand final match featured some form of alcohol marketing.<sup>35</sup>
- ▶ The 2012 NRL State of Origin three-game series broadcast featured 4062 episodes of alcohol marketing (total of 199 minutes).<sup>36</sup>
- ▶ 15 of the 18 AFL teams were sponsored by alcohol companies in 2017.<sup>37</sup>
- ▶ Cricket fans were exposed to nearly 9 hours of alcohol advertising, totalling 4,600 alcohol promotions, in just 3 one-day matches during the 2013/14 season. During another Twenty20 game, 1 in 4 ads was for an alcohol product or retailer.<sup>38</sup>
- ▶ The Formula 1 Monaco Grand Prix final featured 3 alcohol-sponsored teams and had an average of 11 promotional references to alcohol per minute, including on uniforms and team cars.<sup>39</sup>
- ▶ Hundreds of thousands of Australian children and young people watch sport on television. Up to 19% of the broadcast audience for major sporting events in 2014 and 2015 were aged under 18 years.<sup>40, 41</sup>
- ▶ Just over half of the top 30 programs watched by children aged 0 to 14 years on subscription TV were live sport events in 2013. All of the top 30 programs watched by those aged 13 to 17 years were live sport events.<sup>42</sup>
- ▶ *The Commercial Television Industry Code of Practice* permits alcohol advertising during sports programs on weekends and public holidays.<sup>43</sup> Children and young people who watch sport on TV will be exposed to alcohol promotions at times when they would normally be protected.<sup>44</sup>

## The alcohol industry spends hundreds of millions of dollars on alcohol advertising each year

- ▶ Information on expenditure on all forms of alcohol advertising and promotion in Australia is not publicly available. The available estimates are very conservative.
- ▶ The alcohol industry is estimated to have spent \$3.4 billion on advertising in traditional and online media channels in Australia between 1997 and 2011, not including expenditure on sponsorships, discounts, in-store advertising, catalogues, pay TV and social media.<sup>11</sup>
- ▶ Diageo, an international spirits company whose brands in Australia include Smirnoff, Johnnie Walker, Baileys, Slate Bourbon, UDL, Tanqueray, Guinness and Bundaberg Rum, spends US\$2.3 billion globally on marketing each year.<sup>15</sup>
- ▶ The alcohol industry spent \$27 million on out-of-home advertising in Australia in 2016, including on billboards and public transport.<sup>12</sup>
- ▶ Expenditure on alcohol sponsorship in Australia has been estimated at approximately \$300 million per year.<sup>10</sup>
- ▶ Experience from other forms of promotion shows that anywhere between 3 and 5 times the amount spent on sponsorship can be spent on promoting that sponsorship.<sup>13, 14</sup>
- ▶ Diageo spent \$20 million during the 2016/17 summer period in Australia promoting a range of pre-mixed drinks including Smirnoff Pure, Bundaberg Rum Lazy Bear and Pimms.<sup>16</sup>
- ▶ Alcohol retailers now spend more on alcohol advertising than any specific alcohol brand or company.<sup>11</sup>

## Self-regulation has failed to protect young people from exposure to alcohol advertising

In Australia, alcohol advertising is subject to a voluntary code administered by the alcohol and advertising industries. The ABAC Scheme focuses on ad content, has only token provisions on ad placement, and fails to cover major forms of marketing such as sponsorship.<sup>51, 54</sup>

- › Existing controls on the placement of alcohol ads are weak and do not adequately protect young people.<sup>63</sup> An industry guideline which purports to restrict outdoor alcohol ads requires that its members not place alcohol ads within 150m of a school gate.<sup>55</sup> This guideline is not effectively enforced and is clearly insufficient.<sup>56</sup> Encouragingly, some state and territory governments in Australia have taken steps to remove alcohol ads from public transport.
- › *The Commercial Television Industry Code of Practice* regulates the content on Australian commercial free-to-air TV networks, including the placement of alcohol advertising. The Code permits alcohol advertising during sport programs on the weekend and after 8.30pm,<sup>43</sup> times when many young people watch TV.<sup>19</sup>
- › Alcohol brands regularly breach industry advertising codes on Facebook.<sup>57</sup>
- › 77% of parents and guardians with children under 18 years believed their children have been exposed to alcohol advertising.<sup>58</sup>
- › The world-first alternative alcohol advertising complaint review system, the Alcohol Advertising Review Board, received over 800 complaints and produced over 500 determinations in its first 4 years of operation. This far exceeded those processed by the alcohol industry's voluntary processes – the ABAC Scheme – in a similar timeframe.<sup>59</sup>

## Community support for curbs on alcohol advertising is strong

95% of West Australian adults believe children and young people are at least occasionally exposed to alcohol advertising; 73% believe they are frequently exposed.<sup>60</sup>

76% of West Australians support legal controls on alcohol advertising to reduce young people's exposure (only 5% opposed).<sup>60</sup>

77% of West Australians support removing alcohol advertising from buses and bus stops to reduce young people's exposure, with only 8% opposed.<sup>60</sup>

76% of Australians support limiting alcohol advertising on TV to late night programming only.<sup>61</sup>

74% of Australians support phasing out TV commercials for alcohol during sports broadcasts.<sup>61</sup>

69% of Australians support phasing out promotion of alcohol through sports sponsorship.<sup>61</sup>

The majority of Australian athletes (73.9%) do not support elite athletes promoting junk food or alcohol products.<sup>62</sup>



Curtin University

**MCAAY**

McCusker Centre for Action  
on Alcohol and Youth

**Contact us:** Web [www.mcaay.org.au](http://www.mcaay.org.au) Web [www.alcoholadreview.com.au](http://www.alcoholadreview.com.au)  
Email [mcaay@curtin.edu.au](mailto:mcaay@curtin.edu.au) Phone (08) 9266 9079 August 2017

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