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Alcohol Commercials Strongly Affect Underage Drinkers

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Reviewed by John M. Grohol, Psy.D. on August 3, 2014

New research shows a strong link between alcohol advertising and underage drinking. In fact, young drinkers are three times more likely to choose alcohol brands whose commercials appear on their favorite television shows compared to other alcohol brands, according to a new study from the Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth (CAMY) at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health and the Boston University School of Public Health.

The researchers investigated whether exposure to brand-specific alcohol commercials aired during 20 popular television programs was associated with brand-specific consumption.

"There is a link between exposure to brand-specific advertising and youth choices about alcohol, independent of other factors," said study author and CAMY director David Jernigan, Ph.D.

The findings, published in *Alcoholism: Clinical and Experimental Research*, is released right after another study from the same research group which showed that underage drinkers are heavily exposed to magazine ads for the alcohol brands they consume.

"Taken together, these studies strengthen the case for a relationship between brand-specific alcohol advertising among underage youth and brand-specific consumption," said lead author Craig Ross, Ph.D., MBA, president of Virtual Media Resources in Natick, Massachusetts.

"As alcohol continues to devastate so many young lives, youth exposure to alcohol advertising should be reduced."

For the study, researchers surveyed over one thousand young people, ages 13-20, recruited from a national Internet panel maintained by Knowledge Networks. All the respondents reported consuming at least one drink of alcohol in the past 30 days.

The researchers asked the participants about all alcohol brands they had consumed within the past 30 days, as well as what alcohol commercials they had seen during 20 television shows they had watched.

The findings show that the connection between drinking a particular brand and advertising exposure for that brand was significant. Interestingly, the relationship was strongest at lower levels of exposure.

These results stayed the same even after researchers controlled for other factors, such as their parents' drinking, whether the youth chose the brand themselves, the brand's average price, and the popularity of the brand among adults.

"The question now becomes what do alcohol advertisers do with this information, given the consequences of alcohol consumption in underage youth," added study co-author Michael B. Seigel, MD, MPH, of the Boston University School of Public Health.

Overall, at least 14 long-term studies have found that the more young people are exposed to alcohol advertising and marketing, the more likely they are to drink, or if they are already drinking, to drink more.

Source: [Johns Hopkins](#)



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Pedersen, T. (2014). Alcohol Commercials Strongly Affect Underage Drinkers. *Psych Central*. Retrieved on August 4, 2014, from <http://psychcentral.com/news/2014/08/03/alcohol-commercials-strongly-affect-underage-drinkers/73135.html>