Black Youth Over-Exposed to Alcohol Advertising

by Brittany Buchanan
Special to the AFRO

With references to alcohol abundant in rap songs, music videos, billboards, and commercials, a new study found African-Americans are exposed to more alcohol advertisements than those of other nationalities.

According to the study, conducted by the Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health’s study and released Sep. 27, African-American youth between the ages of 12 and 20 are overexposed to alcoholic advertisements on television, radio, and in magazines.

Compared to other racial and ethnic groups, a number of other studies found that African Americans are overexposed to alcohol advertising on billboards and in other outdoor locations. Some rap and hip-hop music, popular genres among youth in general, are replete with references to alcohol products and imagery, the study stated.

Young Blacks saw 32 percent more alcohol ads in magazines and 17 percent more on television than youth overall in 2009, according to the study. In addition, they heard 32 percent more radio ads for hard liquor. Also, African American youth were 92 percent more likely to see ads for alcohol in magazines.

“The [alcohol] industry knows quite precisely what they are doing,” David Jernigan, director of the Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth, told NBC News.

The four largest television networks, ABC, CBS, Fox and NBC, do not advertise distilled alcohol, but African American youth still saw 20 percent more ads on other television channels than the general youth population, the study reported.

“The beer, wine and spirits industry is totally opposed to underage drinking and spends millions of dollars a year fighting it,” Frank Coleman, senior vice president of the Distilled Spirits Council of the United States, a leading trade group, told NBC News.

The Johns Hopkins Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth “has repeatedly issued press releases saying the industry’s advertising is increasingly targeting youth,” Coleman added.