

Brand-specific television alcohol ads predict brand consumption among underage youth

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Underage drinkers are three times more likely to drink alcohol brands that advertise on television programs they watch compared to other alcohol brands, providing new and compelling evidence of a strong association between alcohol advertising and youth drinking behavior.

This is the conclusion of 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 that examined whether exposure to brand-specific alcohol advertising on 20 television shows popular with youth was associated with brand-specific consumption among underage drinkers.

Published in *Alcoholism: Clinical and Experimental Research*, it comes on the heels of a study from the same researchers published earlier this month which found [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, PhD, 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."

Alcohol is the number one drug among youth and responsible for 4,300 deaths per year, yet alcohol advertising in the U.S. is primarily regulated by the industry itself through a voluntary code which serves as the main vehicle for reducing youth exposure to and appeal of alcohol advertising.

In the current study, researchers surveyed over one thousand youth ages 13-20 recruited from a national Internet panel maintained by Knowledge Networks. All reported consuming at least one

drink of alcohol in the past 30 days. The researchers determined all alcohol brands the participants had consumed within the past 30 days, as well as their exposure to alcohol brand advertising on 20 television shows they had watched within the past month.

The researchers found that the relationship between consumption of a brand and advertising exposure for that brand was significant, and that the relationship was strongest at lower levels of exposure. Their results held even after controlling for other factors influencing youth drinking, 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.

"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, PhD.

"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.

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.

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