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Enjoy responsibly: alcohol brands' written warnings encourage anything but

KIMBERLY GILLAN

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 4, 2014



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Thinkstock

Warnings encouraging drinkers to "drink responsibly" are futile unless they give people more detailed information, according to US researchers.

Simply telling people to "drink responsibly" or "enjoy in moderation" fails to define what responsible drinking is or provide clear warnings about the risks that are associated with excessive alcohol consumption.

Researchers from John Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health said nine out of 10 health warnings on alcohol products encourage people to be responsible but they don't articulate what that actually means, nor do they promote abstinence at certain times or in particular situations.

"While responsibility messages were present in almost nine out of 10 ads, none of them provided any information about what it means to drink responsibly," said study leader Dr Katherine Clegg-Smith said.

"Instead, we found that the vast majority of responsibility messages were used to convey promotional information, such as appealing product qualities or how the product should be consumed."

The researchers studied ads in US magazines between 2008 and 2010 and found 95 percent of ads that had an alcohol warning had it in a smaller font than a tagline or the company's logo.

In 88 percent of the ads, the responsibility messages seemed to help promote the product and many responsibility messages contradicted the wording in the ads.

One such vodka ad had a tagline that implied somebody had been drinking all night, and in small lettering it advised people drink the vodka responsibly.

"The contradiction between appearing to promote responsible drinking and the actual use of 'drink responsibly' messages to reinforce product promotion suggests that these messages can be deceptive and misleading," said Dr

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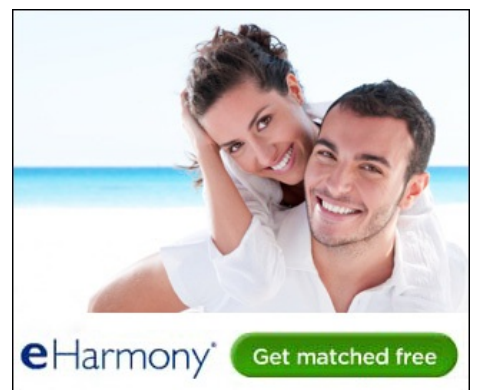
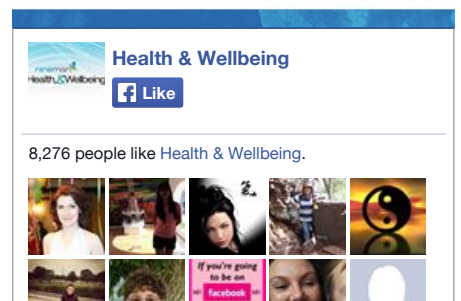
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David Jernigan, director of the Centre on Alcohol Marketing and Youth at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health.

Dr Smith said it's currently voluntary for alcohol companies to put warnings on their products. She said it would be much more effective to have messages more prominently placed and have them offer clear messages about responsible drinking.

"We know from experience with tobacco that warning messages on product containers and in advertising can affect consumption of potentially dangerous products," she said.

"We should apply that knowledge to alcohol ads and provide real warnings about the negative effects of excessive alcohol use."

The study's findings back up 2013 research from the Foundation of Alcohol Research and Education (FARE), which found fewer than four in 10 alcohol products contain a DrinkWise warning.

DrinkWise is an organisation founded by the alcohol industry to promote a healthier and safer drinking culture in Australia.

"Despite exaggerated claims to the contrary, the industry continues to drag its feet, said Michael Thorn, FARE CEO.

"The alcohol industry cannot be trusted to develop and implement alcohol warning labels. What we need are visible, evidence-based health warnings applied consistently across all alcohol products. What we are getting instead is too few products carrying weak consumer messages that are hard to find and even harder to read."

The study was published in the journal *Drug and Alcohol Dependence*.

Author: Kimberly Gillan. Approving editor: Kristen Amiet.

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Noble Darkmoon

2 days ago

I rarely drink, but in my teenage years and early twenties I did drink alot. It is not in my opinion what is to be considered in moderation.

Moderation is different for gender, race and age.

We have blood alcohol limits for driving!!!

Are alcohol companies responsible for someone who decides to become violent due to consumption?
NO they are not.

Stripping industries of the ability to advertise and promote products kills off industry. These idea's like this no matter how good they are in theory will push the idea of a socialist state.



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Bruce Simpson

2 days ago

Who gives a rats whats on a bottle or a pack of smokes, i dont smoke and although i luv a rum i chose not to drink very often - WHY, because its a CHOICE, nothing whatsoever to do with what some armchair experts says or suggests that i do. If you dogooders seriously think that human beings will stop drinking or smoking because it tells them it bad on the pack or the bottle then you are seriously deluded. We all make choices, we are responsible for them, end of story.

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dan wilson

2 days ago

alcohol should have the same type warnings as tobacco products

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rkz 234

2 days ago

For men, 2 standard drinks a day plus 2 alcohol free days a week is advisable. It's NOT a very difficult message to convey and we all know it. The issue is that people are choosing to ignore the advice.

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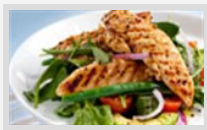
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