

ALCOHOL ADVERTISING ON TELEVISION, 2001 TO 2003: MORE OF THE SAME

Executive Summary

The trends of an ever-increasing number of ads and continued overexposure of underage youth mark alcohol advertising on television from 2001 to 2003, according to a new analysis by the Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth (CAMY):

- The number of ads increased each year, with an explosion of ads for distilled spirits on national cable networks leading the way: 298,054 alcohol ads ran on television in 2003, up from 289,381 in 2002 and 208,909 in 2001. Distilled spirits ads on cable networks grew from 513 in 2001 to 33,126 in 2003.
- With the continued increase of alcohol ads on television, the number of ads “overexposing” underage youth, ages 12 to 20, increased each year as

well: 69,054 in 2003, up from 66,218 in 2002 and 51,084 in 2001.¹

- In this category of “overexposing” ads, beer companies ran the most ads in each of the three years, but distilled spirits advertising went from fourth place in 2001 (behind beer, “alcopops,”² and wine) to second place in 2003.
- Between 2001 and 2003, the number of ads placed on programming where underage youth, ages 12 to 20, make up more than 30% of the audience grew by 48.3%, from 24,512 to 36,344. In September 2003, the beer and distilled spirits industries announced a “reform” of their advertising codes: member companies pledged not to place ads where the underage audience is 30% or more of

the audience. The 2001 to 2003 trend indicates the industry will need to make significant shifts to comply with the new code, and a preliminary analysis of the first six months of 2004 indicates these shifts have yet to occur. Moreover, a 30% threshold allows alcohol companies to place their ads where underage youth are two times more likely to see them than adults, because 30% is twice the percentage of youth in the general population.

Why the Concern

After substantial declines in the 1980s and early 1990s, youth alcohol use has remained flat and at high levels for the past ten years.³ In 2003, approximately 10.9 million 12- to 20-year-olds

¹ Underage youth are more likely to see on a per capita basis, or be “overexposed” to a television ad for alcohol when it is placed in programming where the percentage of underage youth watching is greater than the percentage of underage youth in the general population. (In general, that means placing an ad on television where underage youth are more than 13.3% of the viewing audience.) For this report, unless otherwise noted, youth are defined as persons ages 12 to 20, and adults are defined as persons age 21 and over. “More likely to see” (as well as percentage measures of youth overexposure and other comparisons of adult and youth exposure to alcohol advertising in this report) is based on “gross rating points,” which measure how much an audience segment is exposed to advertising per capita. Another way of measuring advertising exposure is “gross impressions” (the total number of times all members of a given audience are exposed to advertising). The adult population will almost always receive far more “gross impressions” than youth because there are far more adults in the population than youth.

² “Alcopops” are also referred to as “low-alcohol refreshers,” “malternatives” or “flavored malt beverages.” Many of the brands in this category, which includes brands such as Mike’s Hard Lemonade and Smirnoff Ice, have alcohol content of between 4% and 6%, similar to most traditional malt beverages. Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau (TTB), “Notice No. 4—Flavored Malt Beverages and Related Proposals,” *Federal Register* (March 24, 2003): 14293.

³ National Research Council and Institute of Medicine, *Reducing Underage Drinking: A Collective Responsibility*, R.J. Bonnie and M.E. O’Connell, eds. (Washington, DC: The National Academies Press, 2004), 37-8.

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reported having had a drink in the past month. Of that number, nearly 7.2 million reported binge drinking (defined as drinking five or more drinks on the same occasion).⁴ These numbers are essentially unchanged from 2002. Every day, three teens die from drinking and driving, and at least six more die of other alcohol-related causes, including homicide, suicide and drowning.⁵

Public health research has found that youth exposure to alcohol advertising increases awareness of that advertising,⁶ which in turn influences young people's beliefs about drinking, intentions to drink, and drinking behavior.⁷ Brain imaging has revealed that, when shown alcoholic beverage advertisements, teens with alcohol use disorders have greater activity in areas of the brain previously linked to reward, desire, positive affect

and episodic recall, with the degree of brain response highest in youths who consumed more drinks per month and reported greater desires to drink.⁸ The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) has noted that, "While many factors influence an underage person's drinking decisions, including among other things parents, peers, and the media, there is reason to believe that advertising plays a role."⁹

About This Report

The Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth at Georgetown University (www.camy.org) monitors the marketing practices of the alcohol industry to focus attention and action on industry practices that jeopardize the health and safety of America's youth. Reducing high rates of underage alcohol consumption and the suffering caused by alcohol-related injuries and deaths among young people requires using the public health strategies of limiting the access to and the appeal of alcohol to underage persons. The Center is supported by grants from The Pew Charitable Trusts and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to Georgetown University.

CAMY commissioned Virtual Media Resources (VMR) to analyze all of the alcohol product advertising on television in 2003. VMR is a media research, planning, market analysis and consulting firm based in Natick, Massachusetts, serving communications organizations and marketers in a wide variety of market segments and media. VMR was established in 1992 to provide an independent

research firm serving advertising agencies, and has grown to service over 100 clients across the United States and Canada, in retail, publishing, financial, automotive, public health and other fields.

This report is based on industry-standard data sources and methods that are available to ad agencies and advertisers as they make decisions about where to place their advertising. Advertising occurrence and expenditure data came from TNS Media Intelligence/CMR (formerly known as CMR or Competitive Media Reporting). Audience data came from Nielsen Media Research, the industry-standard source for television ratings.

This report does not include alcohol product advertising bought directly on local cable systems or cable interconnects. Because distilled spirits advertisers, faced with a voluntary ban on their advertising by the four major broadcast networks, have made particular use of these outlets, this report understates their presence on television. The report also does not

include advertising data from Hispanic television networks such as Univision and Telemundo. The standard industry sources licensed for this report do not include data for either Hispanic networks or for locally purchased cable advertising.

The measures in this report are standard to the advertising research field but may not be familiar to the general reader. "Reach" refers to the number or percentage of a target population that has the opportunity to see an ad or a campaign through exposure to selected media. "Frequency" indicates the number of times individuals are exposed to an ad or campaign, and is most often expressed as an average number of exposures. "Gross rating points," or "GRPs," measure how much advertising exposure is going to a particular population on a per capita basis. For example, the measure of 100 GRPs indicates that the population received an average of one exposure per person (although this could have come from 50% of the population seeing the advertising two

⁴ Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), *Results from the 2003 National Survey on Drug Use and Health: National Findings* (Rockville, MD: Office of Applied Studies, 2004).

⁵ National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, *Traffic Safety Facts 2002*, Early ed. (Washington, DC: National Center for Statistics and Analysis, U.S. Department of Transportation, 2003), 114; D.T. Levy, T.R. Miller, K. Stewart, R. Spicer, *Underage Drinking: Immediate Consequences and their Costs* (Calverton, MD: Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation, July 1999).

⁶ R.L. Collins et al., "Predictors of beer advertising awareness among eighth graders," *Addiction* 98 (2003): 1297-1306.

⁷ S.E. Martin et al., "Alcohol Advertising and Youth," *Alcoholism: Clinical and Experimental Research* 26 (2002): 900-906.

⁸ S.F. Tapert et al., "Neural response to alcohol stimuli in adolescents with alcohol use disorder," *Archives of General Psychiatry* 60 (2003): 727-735.

⁹ Federal Trade Commission, *Self-Regulation in the Alcohol Industry: A Review of Industry Efforts to Avoid Promoting Alcohol to Underage Consumers* (Washington, DC: Federal Trade Commission, 1999), 4.

times). GRPs are the mathematical product of reach and frequency: if the reach is 80% and the average frequency is 2.5, then the GRPs total 200. GRPs thus provide a comparative measure of per capita advertising exposure. They incorporate both how much advertising exposure exists and how much of a particular population was likely to have viewed that exposure. Further information on sources and methodology used may be found in Appendix A. Appendix B provides a glossary of advertising research terminology.

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