

**Atkin, C.K. (1990). Effects of Televised Alcohol Messages on Teenage Drinking Patterns. Journal Of Adolescent Health Care, 11, 10-24.**

## **OVERVIEW**

This study combines two key studies on the influence of alcohol advertising on adolescents and notes similar evidence relating to alcohol consumption, alcohol abuse, and drunk driving.

### **DESIGN**

The studies use the correlation survey technique. Samples of teenagers were questioned to determine how much television programming, and thus, advertising viewed. They were also asked how much beer and wine they drank. Then, the correlation between advertising and alcohol consumption was determined, positive or negative, and to what degree.

### **FINDINGS**

The second survey cited an Atkin, Hocking, and Block study, and found the correlation to be +0.20 between advertising exposure and beer drinking. Forty-six percent of teens "heavily exposed" to beer ads, versus 29% of "lightly exposed" teens reported drinking at least one beer in a typical week. And 16% of "heavily exposed," versus 10% of "lightly exposed" said that they drank five or more beers in a week.

The high exposure subgroup said that they can drive safely after 3.2 drinks, compared to 2.7 drinks for the low exposure subgroup.

### **CONCLUSION**

The study ends, "A critical review of survey research evidence indicates that alcohol commercials contribute to a modest increase in overall consumption by teenagers, and may have a slight impact on alcohol misuse and drunk driving."

### **CRITIQUE**

The researcher notes, "Only students with past drinking experience were included in the final analysis, and this might overlook the recruitment influence of advertising in stimulating the curiosity to experiment with alcohol." More research needs to specifically determine effects of different types of alcohol advertising.

## **QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION**

- What atmosphere is generated by beer and wine advertising? Which styles and themes?
- Can adolescents be influenced even if commercials are not directly aimed at them? If yes, how? If no, why not?
- How can alcohol abuse and drunk driving be promoted even when commercials do not show intoxication?
- Are advertisers responsible if their intent is not to affect the adolescent audience?

## **IMPLICATIONS**

- The relationship between alcohol advertising and adolescent drinking is described as "significant but modest." Yet, it is also found that "there is a stronger exposure-consumption relationship in the subset of adolescents who identify most closely with role models portrayed in commercials."
- Teenagers who often look to teachers, youth leaders, etc., as role models may be even more influenced by advertising. It is critical to recognize the impact of commercials.
- To address this situation, the most promising approach is to combine restrictions on advertising content with intensified educational campaigns.
- Educationally, designing programs to reduce or negate the impact of enticing commercials on teens is a way to act on this information. "One can enable teens to expose the misleading features of commercials, to demystify their persuasive devices, and to reveal the manipulative intent of advertisers."
- Looking closely at themes and styles dwelling within advertisements offers more realistic insight into the messages shown. When adolescents are aware of the potential influences of advertising and are given choices of alternative themes and

styles by which to model their lives, the negative influences of advertising will generally decrease. Youth leaders have a primary responsibility to kids to teach them how to evaluate these themes and see how they are personally affected.

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