

## Alcohol Companies Target Youth With Magazine Ads, New Study Shows

ScienceDaily (Dec. 2, 2009) — Alcoholic beverages popular among youths are more likely to be advertised in magazines with high youth readership than alcoholic drinks consumed mainly by adults, resulting in disproportionately high youth exposure to such targeted alcohol ads, according to a new study.

Researchers at the Boston University School of Public Health, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, and Virtual Media Resources who conducted the study -- published in this month's issue of the *Journal of Adolescent Health* -- say their findings present the strongest evidence to date that alcohol companies are targeting youths through magazine advertising. They note that three major trade associations representing the alcoholic beverage industry -- the Wine Institute, the Beer Institute, and the Distilled Spirits Council of the United States -- have publicly stated that they do not advertise to underage youths.

"Alcohol companies are deceiving us," said Dr. Michael Siegel, professor of community health sciences at Boston University School of Public Health and a co-author of the study. "Contrary to their public statements, they are targeting youths through their advertising. They are saying one thing, but doing another."

The study compared alcohol advertisement placements in 118 magazines from 2002 to 2006, specifically looking at the relationship between a magazine's youth readership and the probability of youth alcoholic beverage types -- defined as those consumed by a large proportion of youth -- being advertised in each magazine. The researchers found that in magazines with the highest levels of youth readership, youth alcoholic beverage types (e.g., premium beer, low calorie beer, rum, vodka, and flavored alcohol beverages) were more than four times more likely to be advertised than non-youth types (e.g., gin, brandy, whiskey, and scotch). As youth readership increased in a magazine, so did the number of youth alcoholic beverage advertisements.

The researchers identified a total of 13,513 alcohol advertisements in the 118 sample magazines during the five-year study period. While 23.1% of advertisements for non-youth/adult alcoholic beverages appeared in magazines with high youth readership, 42.9% of advertisements for youth alcoholic beverage types were placed in the same magazines.

"The percentage of a magazine's youth readers was an important predictor of which alcoholic beverages were advertised in a magazine," the authors said.

The researchers noted that previous studies examining the issue of targeted advertising were limited by the problem of "lumping together types of alcohol that are and are not consumed frequently by underage youths." In this study, the researchers used 2006 data on alcohol use

among 18- to 20-year-olds that was collected as part of a large national survey called the Survey of the American Consumer.

The study notes that in 2005, the alcohol industry spent \$4 billion overall in advertising and promotion. "The question of whether this advertising is disproportionately reaching and influencing underage youths (under 21 years old) lies at the heart of the public health debate about interventions to reduce youth drinking," the authors wrote.

1. Charles King, Michael Siegel, David H. Jernigan, Laura Wulach, Craig Ross, Karen Dixon, Joshua Ostroff. **Adolescent Exposure to Alcohol Advertising in Magazines: An Evaluation of Advertising Placement in Relation to Underage Youth Readership.** *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 2009;
2. Boston University Medical Center (2009, December 2). Alcohol companies target youths with magazine ads, new study shows. ScienceDaily. Retrieved April 29, 2012, from <http://www.sciencedaily.com/~ /releases/2009/12/091202114034.htm>