



INFORMATION SHEET: ALCOHOL AND ADVERTISING

Background

- In 1992 alcohol brand advertising was permitted in the broadcast media. Prior to that the only form of alcohol advertising permitted in the broadcast media was in the form of alcohol sponsorship.
- The Advertising Standards Authority was given jurisdiction over the content of alcohol advertising on radio and television in 1993, following an amendment to the Broadcasting Act (1989).
- The system relies on complaints based on a set of voluntary content codes within an industry self-regulatory framework.
- Alcohol brand advertising is limited to between 8.30pm – 6am on television. However, there are no such restrictions on sponsorship advertising on television or advertising in other media such as radio or internet.
- Controls on alcohol marketing via the internet and other modern media are virtually non-existent.
- Alcohol advertising and other forms of promotion have increased dramatically over recent decades.
- Sponsorship by the alcohol industry has become common in key areas of popular culture including sport, music, film, fashion, television. Sports clubs, teams and events often rely on financial support from liquor producers and retailers.
- Alcohol marketing is aimed at attracting, influencing and recruiting new generations of drinkers.ⁱ
- Alcohol advertising promotes drinking as normal and harmless – it often presents drinking as positive, glamorous or sexy, promoting feelings of togetherness, relaxation and fun.
- The acceptance of alcohol advertising helps to create a general tolerance of alcohol. This makes it difficult to convey health promotion messages and to gain support for harm prevention strategies.
- Following a review in 2006 it was recommended that the regulatory framework stay largely the same but move to “enforced” self-regulation.
- Codes covering naming, packaging and promotions have since been developed and come into force on the 1 October 2009.

Current situation

- Creative messages and imagery combined with the use of modern technology and sophisticated marketing strategies have resulted in alcohol marketing pervading every aspect of modern society.
- Research concludes that exposure to the cumulative influence of alcohol advertising promotes pro-drinking attitudes, increases the likelihood of heavier drinking, helps to shape young people’s perceptions of alcohol and

drinking norms and predisposes them to drinking well before the legal purchase age.ⁱ

- In 2004/2005, 90% of young people aged 5-17 years were exposed to alcohol advertising on television at least weekly. This compares to similar levels of exposure to those in older age groups.ⁱⁱ
- In 2005, \$25.7million was spent on alcohol advertising in broadcast media alone. This compares to \$1.2 million in 1987.ⁱⁱ
- There is a strong positive correlation between exposure to brand advertising and brand allegiance by 10-17 year olds. This applies to beer, spirits and ready-to-drink brands.ⁱⁱ
- There is also a strong positive correlation between expenditure on brand advertising and brand allegiance for beer, spirits and ready-to-drink brands.ⁱⁱ
- Research concludes that the influences of alcohol advertising are not adequately addressed by industry codes of self-regulation and that self-regulation of alcohol advertising has been shown to be fragile and largely ineffective.ⁱ

Key Themes from the Law Commission report – Alcohol in our Lives

- The Commission favours leaving the bulk of the regulation to the Advertising Standards Authority.
- However, if this system fails to promote responsible advertising, there may be a case to create a legal power that would regulate alcohol advertising.
- The Liquor Licensing Authority could have grounds to suspend or cancel a licence for the irresponsible promotion of alcohol by both on and off-licences.
- There is a case for restricting advertising on alcohol price and discounts.
- Submissions are welcomed on the above issue. The Law Commission is interested to hear suggestions on how this could be accomplished, and the likely effectiveness of such restrictions. There are some concerns around compliance costs and commercial free speech issues.

For a full list of the Law Commission's options and the Alcohol Healthwatch response please refer to our Law Commission Tool-kit at www.ahw.org.nz.

An evidenced based response

- Ban all advertising of alcohol in all New Zealand media.
- Ban all alcohol industry sponsorship.

What we can expect from restrictions on advertising alcohol

- Delayed onset of drinking among young people.
- Reduced heavy drinking.
- A social environment that supports the uptake of health promotion messages and efforts to achieve a positive change to our heavy drinking culture.

What else is needed

Other effective strategies to reduce alcohol related harms include:

- Increase the price of alcohol through increased taxation and introduce a minimum price.
- Return the minimum purchase age to 20 years.

- Reduce the number and density of liquor outlets and the hours they are permitted to sell alcohol.
- Increase and improve access and availability to appropriate treatment and rehabilitation options.
- Provide for a range of brief and early intervention options across health, education, justice and other sectors.
- Require prominent, specific and bold health warning labels on all alcohol products, at point of sale and to accompany any permitted liquor advertising.

References

ⁱ Babor T et al. 2003. *Alcohol: No ordinary commodity. Research and Public Policy*. World health Organisation, Oxford University Press.

ⁱⁱ Huckle T, Huakau J. 2007. *Exposure and response of young people to marketing of alcohol in New Zealand*. Centre for Social and Health Outcomes Research and Evaluation & Te Ropu Whariki. Auckland, Massey University.

For further information

See other Alcohol Healthwatch information sheets and comprehensive policy briefing papers at <http://www.ahw.org.nz>

To speak with a Health Promotion Advisor for assistance with your submission please call (09) 520 7036